

FRAMING ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS OF CIVIL
AND UNCIVIL GROUPS IN POST-CONFLICT
NORTHERN IRELAND

PAUL REILLY
PHD POLITICS
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ways in which civil and uncivil groups in Northern Ireland use the Internet to generate soft power. This research assesses whether the Internet creates a critical multiplier effect for marginal groups, such as terrorists and interface communities. A coding scheme, adapted from previous studies of political party websites, is used to determine whether these groups have realised the potential of the Internet as a tool for political mobilisation. The dissertation considers whether there are any qualitative differences between the online framing of terrorist-linked parties and the constitutional parties in the region. The phenomenon of amateur terrorism is also analysed through the lens of Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors. The analysis determines whether solidarity actors were more likely to justify political violence on their websites than their respective political fronts. In addition, the websites of rival residents' groups are examined to determine whether the Internet can help generate social capital across sectarian interfaces. The analysis determines whether residents' groups use the Web to strengthen in-group identities, or to engage in dialogue with rival interface communities. In doing so, the research tests the cyberoptimist assertion that the Internet will facilitate forms of communication that undermine unequal power relations within nation-states. The online audience for Northern Irish terrorists is modelled using Internet usage patterns and the ranking systems used by Internet search engines. Internet usage patterns are examined to define the potential audience available to Northern Irish terrorists via their websites. The study suggests that there is little to differentiate between the websites of terrorist-linked groups, such as Sinn Fein, and the websites of constitutional parties, such as the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). In contrast, Loyalist and Republican amateurs often use paramilitary insignias on their websites to demonstrate their opposition to the peace process. However, these websites do not constitute a new dimension of terrorist threat to the peace process. Analysis of residents' group websites suggests that they further the competition of 'victimhoods'

between Loyalist and Republican interface communities. Both sides use their web presence to claim that they were constantly under threat of attack from the community situated at the other side of the 'peaceline.' Moreover, the thesis suggests that there will be a limited online audience for both civil and uncivil actors in Northern Ireland. The online audience for these actors is likely to consist of Internet users who use the Web for political research and Loyalist and Republican supporters in the 'offline' world.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis presents an analysis of how the Internet may be used to redefine the boundaries of civil society in contemporary nation-states, using Northern Ireland as its case study. While most recent studies have tended to focus upon how Islamic fundamentalists have used the Web (see Conway, 2006 Weinmann, 2004), there has been little research on how the Internet is used by terrorist organisations during a period of conflict transformation. This dissertation will investigate how terrorists engaged in a peace process use the Internet to generate soft power, as they seek to demonstrate their democratic credentials to online audiences. In addition, the cyberoptimist assertion that terrorism may be solvable if its perpetrators are given greater opportunity – via the Internet - to propagate their political ideologies will be analysed. To this effect, the potential of the Internet as a tool for organisational linkage and mobilisation will be examined. The thesis addresses these research issues by analysing the websites of Loyalist and Republicans in 2004 and 2005. This case study is pertinent to the discussion of terrorist soft power due to the paramilitary ceasefires which facilitated the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Arguably, the peace process legitimised terrorist-linked parties such as Sinn Fein, who in turn have achieved unprecedented electoral success since the late nineties. Thus, soft power has arguably become integral to the campaigns of Northern Irish terrorists who had previously perpetrated political violence to advance their political objectives. However, not all Northern Irish terrorist organisations have supported the peace process. Dissident groups on both sides continue to use both political violence and party politics to pursue their objectives. Conceivably, these groups may be using the Internet to justify their terrorist campaigns. In this thesis, an Internet coding framework, developed from previous studies of political party websites such as Gibson and Ward (2000), will be used to analyse the framing and function of these websites. The analysis considers how the online framing of terrorist-linked groups differs from the framing of civil society groups in post-conflict Northern Ireland. The function of these websites will be examined to assess the extent to which civil and uncivil groups have

realised the potential of the Internet as a tool for political communication.

TERRORIST USES OF THE INTERNET

Cyberterrorism

In this thesis, the potential of the Internet as a propaganda tool for terrorists will be examined. Authors such as Denning (2000) suggest that information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide a new medium through which the terrorist can attack the nation-state. As nation-states increasingly use ICTs to store and disseminate information, these information systems represent potential targets for terrorist actors. This has arguably led to a new form of terrorism in cyberspace, namely cyberterrorism. Cyberterrorism can be defined as “the unlawful attacks and threat of attacks on computers, networks and information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political objectives” (Denning, 2000:1). So far, only a few terrorist organisations, such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), have engaged in cyber-terrorism.¹ In 1996, LTTE e-bombs simultaneously hit several Sri Lankan diplomatic missions, creating a ‘virtual blockade’ (Zanini and Edwards, 2001: 44). The paralysis of the Sri Lankan missions marked a significant propaganda coup for the LTTE insurgents.

Overall, the methods used by ‘cyber-criminals’ [hackers] and ‘cyber-terrorists’ [terrorists on the Internet] appear similar. Both hackers and terrorists manipulate the content of popular websites to gain publicity. Personal messages and cartoon graphics are the most popular calling cards used by these ‘cyber-vandals.’² So far, terrorists appear to lack the necessary skills to hack into the websites of government agencies. There have been no recorded instances of a terrorist cyberattack on nation-states such as the United States (Weinmann, 2005: 143). Nevertheless, nation-states invariably fail to differentiate between terrorists and cyber-criminals when discussing issues like the threat of cyber-

terrorism. It is arguably politically expedient for nation-states to assert that terrorists are responsible for all hacking incidents online, as the public will be unlikely to oppose restrictions on Internet freedoms if they believe that the Web is a “haven for perverts and terrorists” (Moore, 1999: 42). Consequently, cyberterrorism receives more headlines in the conventional mass media than the covert utility of email, or bulletin boards, by terrorist actors. The research presented in this thesis will focus on how terrorists use the Internet to support their activities in the offline world, rather than the threat of cyberterrorism.

The thesis presents an analysis of the extent to which Northern Irish terrorists, and their supporters, use their websites to generate soft power in post-conflict Northern Ireland.³ Soft power is the “ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals (Nye, 2004: 5). The dissertation will consider what function Loyalist and Republican websites fulfill for their respective groups, and whether this differs from the terrorist uses of the Internet identified in previous studies. As Conway (2006) suggests, there appears to be a consensus amongst authors who have studied how terrorists use information and communication technologies (ICTs). Authors such as Cohen (2002), Thomas (2003), and Furnell and Warren (1999) have identified broadly similar terrorist uses of the Internet, such as the dissemination of propaganda, fundraising, and the planning of atrocities. In addition, Weinmann (2004) identified other core terrorist uses of the Internet, such as data mining and information sharing, in an article entitled *WWW.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism uses the Internet*. A synthesis of these studies suggests that there are five core terrorist uses of the Internet, namely publicity and propaganda, planning and coordination, data mining and information sharing, mobilisation and fundraising, and networking. In this thesis, the websites of Loyalists and Republicans will be analysed to determine whether these actors are using the Web for these purposes.

Publicity and Propaganda

Authors such as Weinmann (2004) and Cohen (2002) suggest that terrorists depict themselves as freedom fighters on their websites, in an effort to counter their violent image (p.6). In this thesis, the online framing of Loyalist and Republicans will be examined to determine whether they use their websites to circumvent the ideological refractions of the mass media. Conway (2003) suggests that the Internet allows terrorists to wage cybercortical warfare, a form of conflict conducted against minds to change the will of an enemy (Szafranski, 1997: 404). There is already some evidence to suggest that terrorists are using the Internet to “claim that their enemy is the real terrorist” (Weinmann, 2004: 3). Ethno-nationalist terrorist organisations often use their websites to discredit their critics and define themselves as members of civil society. Thus, emotive words like “freedom fighter” and “state oppression” often permeate the solidarity websites of terrorist organisations such as the Basque separatists, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA).⁴ In addition, terrorist organisations often seek publicity to further their psychological war against a target population. This may take the form of statements, released on the Internet, that are designed to intimidate a target audience. For example, terrorists have used the Internet to release images of their hostages to the conventional mass media. One such video, released on a number of Islamist websites in February 2002, showed the beheading of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.⁵ In the video, Pearl states his captors’ demands to the camera, calling for the immediate end of the US presence in Pakistan.⁶ Subsequent to the Pearl video, jihadist groups have posted videos of other hostages being executed, including British contractor Ken Bigley and American entrepreneur Nick Berg (Conway, 2006:11).

Research into how terrorists use the Internet has tended to focus on the content of these online communications rather than its likely recipients. While terrorists do appear to be using the Internet to generate their own propaganda, they must attract an online audience

if these messages are to intimidate a target population. In the case of Daniel Pearl, the extensive media coverage of his kidnapping may have led many people to search for the video of his execution on the Internet. This suggests that the online framing of terrorists may only influence public opinion if reported in the conventional mass media. As Conway points out, Hizbollah's 'cybercortical' campaign only came to prominence in 1999, when a news report about mangled remains of slain Israelis published on a Hizbollah website caused a political row between the Israeli Defence Force and the families of several murdered Israeli marines (p.13).⁷ There is limited evidence to suggest that Hizbollah's efforts to attract an American audience to their website during this period proved successful, despite the provision of English language facility on the three main Hizbollah websites (p.11). This research directly addresses the issue of who visits 'pro-terrorist' websites, using Northern Irish terrorists as its case study. In chapter 4, the online audience for terrorists will be analysed by looking at Internet usage patterns in Europe and North America, as well as the factors that influence the accessibility of a 'pro-terrorist' website on the Internet. This will determine whether Loyalist and Republican websites are likely to reach an audience beyond their core supporters.

Planning and Coordination

Authors such as Weinmann (2004) suggest that the Internet is an ideal arena for the planning of terrorist activity, as it offers cheap anonymous communication. Security sources believe that some terrorists use a single email account for intra-group communication, with the password and username of an email provided to each member of the group. Messages between group members are saved as draft rather than sent to another email account, to be deleted once read by the recipient (Hinnen, 2005: 39). This leaves no communication transaction that can be recorded by the Internet Service Provider (ISP). Terrorists already appear to be using ICTs to plan and perpetrate atrocities. Evidence gathered from a laptop belonging to Ramzi Yousef, the terrorist responsible for the failed 1993 World Trade Centre attack, showed that there were

itemized plans to destroy a number of U.S. airliners on the same day (Eid, 2006: 8). There is also some evidence to suggest that Northern Irish terrorists may be using the Internet to plan and perpetrate atrocities. Loyalist terror groups such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) have used the websites of their affiliates to identify potential targets. In March 2001, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that a message on an 'Ulster Loyalist' website directed members of the Limavady UFF to attack a bar allegedly frequented by members of the Provisional IRA.⁸ Although this particular example came to the attention of the press, the scale of such covert utility of the Internet is difficult to assess. In chapter 3, the websites of dissident Loyalist and Republicans will be examined to determine whether these groups are also using the Web to plan and perpetrate terrorist atrocities.

Data Mining and sharing information

Terrorists also use the Internet to obtain information on potential targets and share techniques with like-minded individuals. There is already some evidence to suggest that terrorists are using publicly available information to plan and coordinate atrocities. An Al Qaeda training manual, recovered in Afghanistan in 2002, stated that its operatives could gather 'at least 80 percent of information about the enemy through public sources.'⁹ Terrorists may also share information with other terrorists online. For example, the Global Islamic Media Front offered a 'degree in jihad' to Internet users who visited its website in 2005. The webmaster offered specialization in "electronic media, spiritual and financial jihad" (Ariza, 2005: 1). The evidence presented at the trial of the men responsible for the Madrid train bombings in March 2004 suggests that other jihadist groups are using the Internet for research and information sharing. One of the attackers was shown to have downloading a document entitled 'Jihadi Iraq: Hopes and Dangers' from a jihadist website (p.2).

The Ulster Loyalist Information Service (ULISNET) website illustrates the extent to which dissident Northern Irish terrorists may be using the Web for data mining.

ULISNET claimed that its basic function was to provide the media with press releases from the dissident Loyalist group, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). Yet, the organisation appealed for information about rival Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries on its website. Internet users who had “even the slightest information on active Republican terrorists” were invited to email the organisation through a secure email server.¹⁰ In chapter 3, the websites of dissident Loyalist and Republicans, who remain committed to armed struggle, will be analysed to determine whether these groups are using the Internet to gather intelligence about potential targets.¹¹

Mobilisation and Fundraising

Terrorists also use the Internet to mobilise supporters and solicit resources from sympathisers. Internet users may be asked to submit an email to the webmaster if they wish to join the organisation. For example, Fritz, Harris, Kolb, Larich, and Stocker (2004) located an Iranian website that provided an application form for Internet users who wished to become martyrs (9). Alternatively, terrorist recruiters may use online chat rooms to approach Internet users who are sympathetic to their cause (Weinmann, 2004:16). In addition, there appears to be significant evidence that terrorists are using the Internet to solicit resources from sympathisers. Fundraising may be facilitated through the website of an affiliate of a terrorist organisation, such as a political party or a charity, to avoid legal sanctions under anti-terrorist legislation such as the US Patriot Act (2001). Hinnen (2005) asserts that jihadists use sympathetic websites to post bank account details to which funds for various terrorist organisations can be transferred. One website, www.ummah.net, provided bank accounts for the Harkat ul Muhjadeen at the Allied Bank of Pakistan, urging Internet users to donate funds in support of the ‘global jihad’ (38).

While most recent studies have focused on how jihadists use the Web for recruitment, there has been relatively little research conducted into whether ethno-nationalist terrorists

use ICTs to mobilise supporters. Once again, the content of the ULISNET website suggests that dissident Loyalist and Republican terrorists may be using the Web for mobilisation and resource solicitation. Analysis of the 'Projects' section revealed that ULISNET was part of the in fact part of the 'support network' for the LVF. For example, Internet users were asked to donate bullet-proof vests to the organisation, for 'obvious uses.' Unsurprisingly, this website was shut down in late 2004.¹² Although this appears to be an isolated case, it raises issues around the extent to which 'pro-terrorist' webmasters are able to utilise the public spaces of the Web to attack the liberal democracies. In this thesis, the websites of dissident Republican terrorist organisations will be analysed to determine whether they are using the Web for recruitment and resource solicitation.

Networking

Some terrorist groups have followed the lead of transnational corporations, using ICTs to organise themselves into decentralized networks. In theory, network based terrorist organisations are immune to infiltration by the authorities, as they are "based around the idea of 'leaderless resistance'" (Tucker, 2001: 1). In the Middle East, network based groups have gradually replaced old hierarchical groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The Internet allows terrorist groups such as Hizbollah to communicate with like-minded groups based in diverse locations such as Chechnya, Palestine, and Afghanistan (Weinmann, 2004: 9). Still, it should be noted that network based terrorist organisations are not a product of the "information age." The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), a network of smaller Palestinian groups, formed as early as 1964, long before the creation of the Internet. Nevertheless, technological innovations like email have facilitated the restructuring of terrorist hierarchies into networks.

Hoffman (1998) suggests that the Internet has made terrorism "accessible to anyone with a grievance, an agenda, a purpose or any idiosyncratic combination of the above" (p.185). Thus, groups such as Hamas have developed a network structure of loosely connected

autonomous actors, which includes private individuals living outside the Middle East. The label 'amateur terrorist' can be applied to these individuals, who often "have little or no formal connection to an existing terrorist group" (Hoffman, 1998: 185). While these individuals are not full members of the organisation, they nevertheless act to further the objectives of a terrorist group. For example, lone terrorists like Ramzi Yousef, the perpetrator of the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing, have often retrospectively been linked to decentralised terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda (p.1). In chapter 5, this phenomenon of amateur terrorism on the Internet will be explored through the lens of Loyalist and Republican solidarity websites. Solidarity websites are defined here as websites that project messages of support for Loyalist or Republican terrorist groups, but reveal no formal link between the webmaster and these organisations. The framing and function of these websites will be analysed to enable a comparison with the websites of political fronts, such as Sinn Fein. This analysis will also reveal whether solidarity actors and political fronts provide links to one another on their respective websites.

Terrorist framing and soft power

Recent empirical studies have tended to focus on how terrorists use militaristic language to generate soft power and mobilise supporters. Conway (2006) asserts that Hizbollah uses its collection of websites to publish details of its military operations against Israeli forces. For example, one website features a 'military operations' section, which provides a detailed account of all Hizbollah operations since 1997 (p.110). While this information may be targeted at the Israeli media, as well as a potential global audience, it also serves another critical group objective. Commentators suggest that the Hizbollah web presence is very important for the morale of its 'resistance fighters,' as it informs them of the support they receive from across the globe (Whine, 1999:233). In a similar vein to Hizbollah, a recent study suggests that Hamas uses one of its websites, www.palestine-info.net, to encourage acts of terrorism. Research commissioned by the Center for Special Studies found that this website encouraged terrorism against Israeli targets, affirming the

movement's "commitment not to disarm and to continue its terrorist attacks on Israel until its destruction" (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2005). By way of contrast, this research analyses whether 'pro-terrorist' webmasters are likely to generate soft power if they frame their subjects as civil society actors, as opposed to freedom fighters engaged in armed conflict.

The Northern Irish conflict is pertinent to the discussion of terrorist soft power due to the paramilitary ceasefires which facilitated the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Some commentators suggest that the Northern Irish media helped build cross-community support for the Belfast Agreement (1998) through their adoption of a 'peace frame.' This peace frame created a bond between pro-peace groups from both camps, making a clear distinction between the political fronts that were engaged in the process and the violence associated with their terrorist sponsors (Wolfsfeld, 2001:36). Arguably, the peace process has legitimised terrorist-linked parties such as Sinn Fein, who in turn have achieved unprecedented electoral success. In contrast to the censorship associated with the UK Broadcasting Ban (1998), many terrorist-linked parties, or political fronts, now enjoy routine access to the news media, the public, and the government. While these terrorist organisations remain committed to their ceasefires, soft power has arguably become vital to the achievement of their objectives, with political parties the primary vehicle for these aspirations. As Sinn Fein has adopted an agenda that is broadly similar to that of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), this raises questions as to the frames employed on its website. Conceivably, these groups may be using their websites to demonstrate their commitment to democracy, differentiating themselves from the activities of their terrorist sponsors. Yet, not all Northern Irish terrorist organisations have called a permanent cessation to their military activities. Dissidents on both sides have continued to use both political parties and acts of terrorism to communicate with target audiences. These groups may be using militaristic language on their websites to suggest they are freedom fighters motivated by a just cause. In chapter 3, the online framing of political fronts will be analysed to determine whether these groups reveal their terrorist

linkages on their websites. This will also inform the wider debate about how terrorists frame conflict on their websites in order to intimidate target audiences and attract supporters.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE AND ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION: CAN TERRORISTS ACT WITH IMPUNITY ONLINE?

This dissertation will determine whether Loyalist and Republican websites are similar in content and form to the ULISNET website that was shut down in late 2004. In this respect, the research will test the hypothesis that terrorists can act with impunity online if they manipulate existing patterns of Internet governance to their advantage. Internet governance can be defined as the “collective action by governments and/or the private sector operators of Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) networks, to establish rules and procedures to enforce public policies and resolve disputes that involve multiple jurisdictions” (Mueller, Mathiason & McKnight, 2004: 4). Governments may remove offensive content from the Internet if the person responsible for its transmission contravenes national legislation. European Union member states and the United States have passed a number of laws that have defined the limits of ‘acceptable’ behaviour online. Many of these laws were passed after the terrorist attacks on Washington and New York in 2001, as evidence emerged showing that the terrorists had used email to plan the hijackings.¹³ Caral (2004) asserts that European Union and US law form a de facto global ‘regime’ governing online behaviour, through their political leadership, economic dominance and large numbers of Internet users (p.7). In this thesis, Loyalist and Republican websites will be analysed to determine the degree to which this anti-terrorist regime influences what ‘pro-terrorist’ webmasters post online.

US Anti-Terrorist Legislation post 9/11

In order to analyse the web activism of Loyalists and Republicans, one must first develop

an understanding of the legal sanctions that ‘pro-terrorist’ webmasters may face if they contravene anti-terrorist legislation. Post 9/11, anti-terrorist legislation in the United States sought to broaden the definition of a terrorist offence, to enable the prosecution of people who incited terrorist atrocities and provided resources for proscribed terrorist organisations. The US Patriot Act (2001) was one of the first pieces of legislation to target the ‘support networks’ of proscribed terrorist organisations.¹⁴ There are several sections of the US Patriot Act that apply to webmasters responsible for maintaining ‘pro-terrorist’ websites, despite the word ‘Internet’ featuring only once in the 342-page document. For example, the Act prohibited the provision of material support to terrorist organisations “when it is known and intended that it be used to prepare for, or carry out, certain terrorist related crimes.”¹⁵ The definition of a terrorist organisation was also expanded to incorporate people who incited violence and gathered information regarding the potential targets of terrorist activity.¹⁶ The FBI’s ‘Carnivore’ system was to be an integral part of a surveillance system that would monitor the activities of terrorist organisations, and in particular Al Qaeda affiliates, on the Internet.

United Kingdom Anti-Terrorist Legislation post 9/11

The United Kingdom government utilised a similar definition of terrorist offences in its anti-terrorist legislation post 9/11. The UK Terrorism Act (2000) remains the largest piece of anti-terrorist legislation passed by a Member State of the European Union to date.¹⁷ This Act also defined the “invitation of support” for a proscribed terrorist organisation as a terrorist offence.¹⁸ In addition, this legislation prohibited the provision of resources to those responsible for terrorist atrocities, although the individual would only face prosecution if they were knowingly complicit in these terrorist activities. The list of terrorist offences also included, for the first time, a specific offence relating to the disruption of a computer system (Walker, 2002: 20). However, the UK anti-terrorist legislation passed after the 9/11 atrocities did not propose the creation of a surveillance system similar to ‘Carnivore,’ or an investigatory body with the powers of the FBI. The

UK Anti-Terrorism, Crime, and Security Act (2001) proposed a diluted version of the surveillance protocols contained in the US Patriot Act. For example, Part XI of the ATCS stipulated that communication service providers should retain communications data for an 'investigatory rainy day' (Walker and Akdeniz, 1993: 162). Yet, the legislation did not specify a period for communication service providers to retain communications data, nor impose financial or legal penalties upon those who failed to comply (p.167). This has led to inconsistencies in the pattern of data retention in the United Kingdom. While companies such as British Telecom retain their traffic data for seven years, Internet Service Providers such as America Online (AOL) keep their email data for just three months (p.168).

Overall, the UK and US anti-terrorist legislation proposed similar definitions of terrorist offences. In effect, this enabled nation-states to prosecute webmasters who provided material support for terrorists, or incited others to perpetrate political violence. However, the application of anti-terrorist legislation in both polities is arguably inconsistent, despite the convergence on the definition of terrorist offences. For example, the FBI has the authority to subpoena communications data that is unavailable to their British counterparts. Furthermore, the inconsistencies in data retention between companies based in the United Kingdom and the United States illustrate the problematic nature of launching anti-terrorist operations online. Anti-terrorist legislation such as the UK Terrorism Act can be characterised as a national response against a terrorist cyber threat that may emanate from other nation-states. Therefore, terrorists and their sympathisers may be able to manipulate patterns of Internet governance in order to their keep their websites online.

Supranational Regulation: The United Nations and the European Union.

International organisations could help coordinate efforts to identify and remove 'pro-terrorist' websites from the Internet. The European Union and the United Nations have

passed a large number of anti-terrorist conventions since 9/11. These conventions broadly conform to the principles embodied in the anti-terrorist legislation of the United Kingdom and the United States. For example, the European Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2002) defined a terrorist group as a “structured group of two or more persons’ acting in concert to commit terrorist offences.”¹⁹ These offences included ‘directing’ terrorism and supplying information or material resources to a proscribed terrorist organisation. The European Union has also attempted to direct the legislation of its member states in the area of ‘cyber-crime.’ The Council of Europe’s Cyber Crime Convention (2001) included a number of new criminal offences, including the intentional illegal access of computer systems and the interception of ‘non-public transmission of computer data’ (Akdeniz, 2003:10). These offences could apply to terrorists who use illegally obtained communications data to plan and perpetrate atrocities.

The United Nations Security Council has also issued a number of Counter-Terrorism Resolutions, such as Resolution 1373, that impose binding obligations on all member states. This Resolution called on all nation-states to deny terrorist organisations “sustenance and support and to cooperate on issues such as intelligence gathering” (Graham, 2005: 48). Analysis of both the European Union and United Nations conventions suggests that websites that solicit resources, or incite political violence, on behalf of proscribed terrorist organisations should have a limited lifespan. In theory, websites hosted by companies within the European Union or United States should be subject to the terms of these conventions. If a national government is satisfied that a webmaster is aware that they are providing material support for terrorists, they can take legal action against the Internet Service Provider to remove this website from the Internet.

The failure of many nation-states to ratify the conventions of the United Nations undermines efforts to create an international consensus on the definition of terrorist offences. A convention will only govern expectations in a global policy area if all 191-

member states incorporate its terms into their own national legislation. Analysis of the 12 UN anti-terrorism conventions suggests that there is not unanimity amongst nation-states on issues such as the definition of terrorist offences. Only 57 of the 191 member states have ratified all 12 United Nations Conventions on Terrorism (de Vries, 2004: 3). In contrast to these conventions, United Nations Security Council Resolutions do impose legally binding obligations upon its member states. However, Resolutions, such as 1373, fail to provide universally accepted definitions of either terrorism or terrorist offences. UN Security Council Resolutions invariably commit member states to a series of anti-terrorist principles and norms, such as the need for international cooperation on the investigation of terrorist incidents. The ambiguity of the UN Security Council Resolutions suggests that the United Nations is incapable of creating an effective regime governing the behaviour of nation-states vis-à-vis international terrorism. Nation-states appear unwilling to conform to an international regime that governs their behaviour in this policy area, and supersedes their own national definitions of terrorism and terrorist offences.

Defining Terrorism Internationally

Individuals, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and nation-states typically use the term ‘terrorism’ to describe violence ‘of which they do not approve’ (Schmid and Jongman, 1988: 3). Governments proscribe terrorist organisations who pose a threat to their national security. For example, the US State Department is responsible for the designation of terrorist organisations in the United States. It operates a ‘two-tier’ system of proscription vis-à-vis international terrorist organisations.²⁰ Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO) must satisfy several key criteria. These groups or individuals must threaten the security of US nationals or the ‘national security, foreign policy or economy’ of the United States.²¹ The term ‘Foreign Terrorist Organisation’ can be also be applied to “those who assist, sponsor or provide financial material or technological support” to a group proscribed by the US State Department.²² The organisations that feature on the US

State Department FTO list are subject to a number of sanctions, including the freezing of financial assets, the arrest and extradition of suspected members, and the closure of websites that solicit resources on their behalf.²³ In contrast to the FTO list, the Terrorist Exclusion List (TEL) refers to terrorist organisations and individuals that do not directly threaten the security of the United States. Inclusion on this list does not incur the sanctions brought against Foreign Terrorist Organisations, although the US Patriot Act (2000) allows for the deportation of individuals linked to groups that appear on the Terrorism Exclusion List.²⁴ The US State Department as part of its annual report, 'Global Patterns of Terrorism,' constantly updates these lists.

The UK anti-terrorist legislation also illustrates the importance of 'national interest' in the proscription of terrorist organisations. The UK Terrorism Act (2000) provided a list of organisations prohibited in the United Kingdom. In addition, a Home Office press release (February 2001) outlined the factors that determined whether a group was proscribed in the United Kingdom. A terrorist organisation was defined as a group that posed a 'specific threat' to the United Kingdom and British nationals overseas (Walker, 2002: 48). The Home Secretary had the legal power to add, remove, or amend the schedule of proscribed terrorist organisations. The legislation did enable members of these groups to apply for 'de-proscription' if they could present new information to the Proscribed Organisation Appeal Commission (p.51). Thus, nation-states are unlikely to proscribe terrorist organisations that do not directly threaten their national interests, or the national interests of their close allies.

Proscription: International organisations

International organisations appear incapable of fostering international consensus on the proscription of terrorist organisations. The European Union has established a list of 45 individuals and 36 groups 'who are involved in terrorist acts' (Council of Europe, 2004: 3). The European Union directs its member states to freeze the assets of these 'terrorists'

and prohibit their financial transactions. Yet, as this directive only applies to the 25 European Union member states, these individuals can avoid sanctions by transferring their financial assets to a jurisdiction outside the European Union. As discussed earlier, the United Nations remains the only international organisation that can set universal standards on issues such as the proscription of terrorist organisations. The United Nations has issued 12 conventions and several Security Council Resolutions on terrorism. However, none of these treaties included a list of proscribed global terrorist organisations (Graham, 2005: 47).

Yet, the achievement of an international consensus on the proscription of terrorist organisations may be unrealistic. Nation-states will only proscribe terrorist organisations in line with their own national interest. It is highly improbable that the 191 member states of the United Nations will conclude that the same terrorist organisation threatens all of their respective national interests. The issue of terrorist proscription provides yet more evidence that international organisations are incapable of enforcing universal standards of behaviour upon nation-states vis-à-vis terrorism. International organisations are only able to issue conventions in areas such as terrorism, as opposed to legally binding treaties. As discussed earlier, these conventions are not legally binding unless a national parliament incorporates them into their national legislation. Therefore, nation-states may choose not to ratify the terrorism conventions that fail to satisfy their national interest. United Nations Security Council Resolutions could potentially impose a universal definition of 'terrorism' and a list of proscribed terrorist organisations upon its 191 member states. However, these resolutions tend to commit member states to a series of anti-terrorist principles and norms, many of which already feature in their respective anti-terrorist legislation.

Governments will only sign up to conventions that allow them to retain sovereignty in areas such as the proscription of terrorist organisations. This creates potential problems in combating the spread of 'pro-terrorist' propaganda online. If a national government

believes the terrorist has a legitimate grievance, it is unlikely to try to shut down websites that support this actor. Meanwhile, a webmaster may register their website in a nation-state that does not define its subject as a terrorist actor, allowing them to post material that contravenes anti-terrorist legislation in their homeland. There is already some evidence to suggest that terrorists are manipulating the patchwork nature of Internet governance in order to keep their websites online. For example, the official Hamas website, www.palestine.info, has been hosted in a number of countries for this very reason, including Russia and the Ukraine.²⁵ Azzam Publications, an Islamist terrorist website, has also been shut down several times between 1999 and 2001. During this period, registration of this website moved from one nation-state to another, from the United States to Brazil.²⁶

This research will assess whether the failure to generate international consensus on terrorist proscription allows Northern Irish terrorists to act with impunity online. It will determine whether Loyalist and Republican websites are similar in content and form to the ULISNET website that was shut down in late 2004. Analysis of anti-terrorist legislation in two nation-states, the United Kingdom and the United States, suggests that Loyalist and Republican webmasters may be able to act with greater freedom if they register their websites outside the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, there are currently 14 proscribed Northern Irish terrorist organisations, many of which were first banned under the terms of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1984).²⁷ Under the terms of the UK Terrorism Act (2000), webmasters who support these organisations may face legal sanctions if they solicit resources on behalf of these organisations, or justify their contemporary acts of political violence. In theory, similar sanctions may be applied to these webmasters in the United States under the terms of the US Patriot Act (2001). However, analysis of the US anti-terrorist legislation shows that the US government does not define many of these organisations as terrorists. Indeed, only three terrorist groups that were banned in the United Kingdom, the Loyalist Volunteer Force, Orange Volunteers and the Red Hand Defenders, featured on the US FTO list.²⁸ Therefore, it is

reasonable to assume that some webmasters may register their websites in the United States to avoid legal sanctions that might arise from their web activism, particularly if they incite others to perpetrate terrorist atrocities. The research presented in this thesis will determine whether Loyalist and Republican webmasters act in a similar fashion to their Hamas and Hizbollah counterparts, registering their websites in nation-states that do define their subjects as terrorist actors.

THE PANOPTICON: DO TERRORISTS SELF-REGULATE ONLINE?

This thesis will also test the hypothesis that ‘pro-terrorist’ webmasters may adhere to the norms of acceptable behaviour online. Irrespective of where they register their websites, ‘pro-terrorist’ webmasters may moderate content on their websites in order to avoid legal sanctions under anti-terrorist legislation. This research will assess whether the Internet can be characterised as a form of panopticon, in which webmasters voluntarily adhere to the norms of acceptable behaviour. The panopticon was a device used in correctional institutions to control the occupants. The architectural apparatus meant that the incarcerated are unable to see each other while being visible to an overseer in an inspection lodge, based at the centre of the structure (Lyon, 1994: 62). The knowledge of the super-ordinate was enough to ensure conformity and obedience amongst the incarcerated (Spears and Lea, 2000: 438). Uncertainty was used as a means of subordination, as the occupants would never know when the super-ordinate was watching them (Lyons, 1994: 60). In a similar vein to these occupants, webmasters may be well aware of what they can transmit on their websites and the likely consequence if they do not conform to the norms of acceptable behaviour online. In effect, the anti-terrorist legislation of the European Union and United States provides a de facto ‘regime’ in this global policy area, defining a set of principles and norms to which webmasters should adhere. As a result, webmasters may choose not to incite others to perpetrate political violence on their websites, nor solicit resources on behalf of proscribed terrorist organisations. In addition, terrorists are aware that intelligence agencies are monitoring

their activities online, using surveillance systems such as the FBI's 'Carnivore' program. This may prompt 'pro-terrorist' webmasters to regulate content posted on their websites.

Yet, terrorists may be able to generate soft power by adhering to the rules of acceptable behaviour online. Like other civil society actors, terrorist soft power may depend upon the attractiveness of their ideology, as well as the values of the organisation (Nye, 2004: 8). If a webmaster uses their website purely to express support for the ideology of a terrorist actor, they will usually be immune from prosecution under the terms of 'human rights' legislation and supranational International conventions. Fourth – generation rights, including the right to information and the right to communicate, are enshrined in this legislation (Council of Europe, 1997:39). For example, Article 10 of the Council of Europe's 'Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms' (1950) asserts that people should have the "freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers."²⁹

Moreover, the US First Amendment is probably the most frequently cited piece of legislation in the debate over the freedom of speech on the Internet. This Amendment asserts that the US Congress should make no law "abridging the freedom of speech or of the press" (US Constitution Online, 2005). Webmasters and Internet Hosting companies often cite 'First Amendment Rights' when justifying the continued presence of websites that project controversial views, such as 'pro-terrorist' websites. This has created a divergence between the regulation of harmful content in Europe and the United States. Critics assert that European Union member states have a 'lower threshold of proof' for regulating content than the United States (May, Chen and Wen, 2004: 269). As a result, many terrorist organisations have registered their websites with Internet hosts based in the United States. For example, the Hamas websites, www.islamicblock.org and www.fm-fm.com, were registered with Internet hosts based in Texas in 2004.³⁰ This raises issues around the extent to which nation-states are able to limit the soft power of

terrorists online, particularly if 'pro-terrorist' webmasters post material that complies with the norms of acceptable behaviour online. In this thesis, the panopticon model will be analysed through the lens of civil and uncivil actors in Northern Ireland. Conceivably, Loyalist and Republican webmasters may remove references to terrorist activity in order to comply with the norms of acceptable behaviour online.

THE INTERNET AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION

The Internet as a solution to terrorism

This dissertation will also test the cyberoptimist assertion that terrorism itself may be resolvable if its perpetrators use the Internet for political communication. Spears and Lea (1994) suggest that the Internet facilitates forms of communication, interaction, and organisation that undermine unequal status and power relations (p.428). Cyberoptimists believe that the Internet will lower the barriers to participation for individuals from marginal groups, such as terrorists.³¹ In effect, the cyberoptimist model implies that terrorists will be able to generate soft power via their websites, reducing their need to perpetrate violence in order to generate publicity for their cause. However, this analysis is based on the assumption that terrorism is a rational communication strategy, employed by sub-state actors who lack both political power and routine access to the mass media. In Chapter 2, this thesis will explore whether terrorism can be characterised as a form of 'coercive communication,' used by sub-state actors who ordinarily receive minimal coverage in the mass media. The terrorism as political communication model will be analysed in order to determine whether all forms of terrorism are publicity oriented. Throughout the thesis, the online framing of Loyalist and Republicans will be examined to determine whether these actors are using the Internet to attract an audience beyond their core supporters.

The cyber paradigms

In chapter 6, the potential of the Internet as a tool for mobilisation will be analysed through the lens of Loyalist and Republican interface communities. The online framing of rival residents' groups will be analysed to determine whether they are using their websites to generate social capital. The analysis will determine whether these groups are using the Web to strengthen in-group identities, or to engage in dialogue with rival interface communities. In this respect, this dissertation will provide further evidence as to whether the Internet will create a multiplier effect for marginal groups within contemporary nation-states. Authors such as Bimber (1998) and Rheingold (1993) suggest that the Internet reduces the costs of political mobilisation for political groups, including terrorists. As Mueller, Mathiason, and McKnight (2004) suggest, the principles that govern behaviour on the Internet stipulate that the enabling power of the Internet should be available for both 'good and bad information and communications behaviour' (p.20). So far, there has been no consensus amongst academics as to how ICTs will transform politics. Norris (2001) suggests that there are three cyber paradigms that describe the impact of ICTs on contemporary nation-states.

These are:

1. The cyberoptimist model suggests that the Internet will undermine unequal power relations, creating a multiplier effect for marginal groups,
2. The cyberpessimist model proposes that the Internet will 'unleash new inequalities of power and wealth,' reinforcing the gap between activists and the disengaged,
3. The cybersceptic model suggests that it is too early to tell whether ICTs will have a lasting effect upon patterns of political organization and behaviour.

The research presented in this thesis will determine whether civil and uncivil groups in Northern Ireland are realising the potential of the Internet as a tool for political mobilisation and organisational linkage. In doing so, the dissertation discusses which of these cyber paradigms, if any, are suitable conceptual tools for characterising the web activism of these groups.

The Internet as a tool for mobilisation: the cyberoptimist view

Mobilisation can be defined as “the process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate” (Krueger, 2006: 760). Thus far, studies of online mobilisation have tended to be used as evidence to support one of the three cyber paradigms. Cyberoptimists, such as Corrado and Firestone (1996), speculate that new media technologies could provide a solution to the problem of voter apathy in advanced industrialised nation-states. This malaise is illustrated by the decline in election turnouts in the United Kingdom over the past two decades.³² For example, Owen (2006) suggests that the Internet has facilitated a new form of political activism amongst young people in the United States. Recent studies suggest that young people [aged between 18 and 29 years old] use Internet information in their political decision-making, and are increasingly likely to produce political content online (Owens, 2006: 35). In addition, low electoral turnouts may be partially remedied by the utility of electronic voting systems similar to the QUBE “teledemocracy” piloted in California in the 1980s (Barber, 1984: 275). Budge (1996) suggests that ICTs could facilitate a mediated form of direct democracy, in which ‘push button’ voting would allow for the regular use of referendums in government decision-making. Political parties would organise the political agenda and assume responsibility for putting government bills to the public vote.³³ Under this proposed ‘plebiscitary democracy,’ people who were unable to attend a polling station would be able to cast their vote without leaving their own home.

Cyber enthusiasts suggest that a well-placed computer could be as important a development tool as an irrigation pump in isolated communities (Norris, 2001: 36). Cyberoptimists also believe that ICTs could help foster a global civil society, in which transnational advocacy networks operate across the globe to strengthen the voice of the developing world (Norris, 2001: 8). According to some commentators, civil society in the Information Age represents “both a withdrawal from the state and a move towards global rules and institutions” (Kaldor, 2003: 588). The structural concept of global civil society refers to all civil society actors, with the exception of governments, private sector companies, and families, which act internationally (p: 590). For example, the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign could be considered a transnational advocacy network by virtue of its appeal for support from people across the globe.³⁴ The organisers of the MPH campaign used ICTs to coordinate a series of public demonstrations - also known as White Band Days - in cities across the globe, including Rio, Dublin, and Calgary. While the MPH campaign may not have achieved all of its objectives, it nevertheless illustrates how civil society actors can use ICTs to mobilise support for political campaigns across national borders.³⁵

The Internet, civil society, and semi-authoritarian states: cyberoptimism?

It is in semi-authoritarian nation-states that ICTs have arguably generated the most tangible political change to date. Cyberoptimists point to the Chiapas uprising in Mexico (1994) as an example of how ICTs can help mobilise opposition against semi-authoritarian states. Support for the Zapatista insurgents mobilised on websites hosted across the globe, as non-governmental organisations lobbied nation-states to intervene in the region.³⁶ While not representing a coup d'état via cyberspace, the lessons of Chiapas for the political elites of semi-authoritarian states were clear. Sub-state political activists in semi-authoritarian states are able to attract a multitude of sympathisers worldwide utilising the public spaces of the Internet. Thus, when Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic attempted to limit the activities of Radio B92 in August 1999, ICTs enabled the station to continue broadcasting to international audiences. As Milosevic had shut

down the station premises, radio transmissions were sent via satellite to other Association of Independent Media (ANEM) groups, who in turn transmitted the material on the Internet.³⁷ The radio station was to play a critical role in organising the demonstrations that ended Milosevic's government in October 1999. Both of these case studies suggest that the Internet may enable marginal groups to mobilise support for their cause on the Internet. This dissertation will examine whether the Internet is creating a similar multiplier effect in terms of mobilisation for civil and uncivil groups in Northern Ireland.

The Internet and political mobilisation: the cyberpessimist view

Cyberpessimists assert that the Internet will reinforce the gap between rich and power, as well as between activists and the disengaged (Norris, 2001: 12). Authors such as Putnam (2000) argue that the Internet does not have a significant impact upon civic engagement within nation-states. The digital divide, the gap between those who are able to benefit from ICTs and those who are not, is cited as evidence that the Internet may not live up to the hype of the cyberspace model. Recent studies suggest that although the digital divide may be narrowing, Internet consumers are still most likely to be drawn from Europe and North America. Despite having only 5.1 percent of the world's population, North America provides 21.5 percent of the total number of Internet users worldwide. Meanwhile, Internet penetration in Africa remains low, with an estimated 3.5 percent of its population having access to the Internet (Internet World Statistics, 2007). This 'First World' hegemony is also reflected in the prevalence of English as the vernacular of cyberspace. While some citizens in the developing world may speak fluent English, the vast majority may lack the necessary linguistic skills to understand English language websites. As a result, so-called 'Fourth Generation Rights,' which include the right to information and the right to communicate, may be denied to these people on the Internet.³⁸ Hence, cyberpessimists suggest that the Internet facilitates new forms of asymmetric communication between the developed and developing worlds, rather than the level playing field prescribed in the equalization model.

Cyberpessimists also suggest that the Internet will reinforce existing patterns of political participation within liberal democracies. There is already some empirical evidence to support the reinforcement model. Political bulletin boards appear to promote ‘homophily’ rather than stimulate genuine political debate between societal groups. People choose to post to groups that contain people with similar political ideologies to their own. For example, a survey of political Usenet groups found that only 9.3 percent of leaders posted messages to ideologically dissonant groups (Hill and Hughes, 1997: 13). Moreover, data collated from the Minnesota E-Democracy project suggests that a high level of ‘cultural capital’ is a fundamental prerequisite for political participation online.³⁹ The volunteers who subscribed to the project in 1994 tended to have university level education, incomes well above the national average, and an interest in politics in the offline world (Jensen, 2006: 44). The project did not tend to attract volunteers who had little or no prior interest in politics. Thus, cyberpessimists contend that ICTs are not a potential solution to voter apathy in liberal democracies, as people cannot be compelled to engage in political activism online. This model suggests that marginal groups, such as dissident terrorists in Northern Ireland, may not experience a critical multiplier effect in terms of mobilisation using their websites.

The Internet and political mobilisation: the cybersceptic view

The cybersceptic viewpoint is perhaps the most apposite conception of how ICTs have altered power relations within nation-states to date. Norris asserts that while the ICTs have the potential to amplify the voice of ‘less resourced insurgent and challengers,’ it is too early to tell whether they will alter power relations within contemporary nation-states (Norris, 2001: 39). In a similar vein to the other cyber paradigms, there is empirical evidence to suggest that ICTs have yet to have a dramatic impact on political mobilisation within nation-states. Recent studies suggest that political parties across the globe use their websites to provide standard information about the party, most of which

can be accessed in the offline world (Nixon, Ward and Gibson, 2003:235). Political parties tend to use their websites for top-down communication, rather than encourage dialogue with their grass roots and Internet users. Furthermore, peripheral political parties do not appear to have experienced the critical multiplier effect postulated in the cyber optimist model. While these fringe parties have an official website, they may have limited success in reaching large online audiences due to their low visibility on Internet search engines.⁴⁰ As Nixon et al assert, ICTs may “allow these parties to survive, but they hardly allow them to thrive” (P.35).

The early indications are that people are using Web 2.0, the section of the Internet that provides a platform for user-generated content, for similar purposes. People tend to use social networking websites, such as Facebook and Myspace, to reinforce their own identities. However, one cannot assume that this form of web activism will not evolve in the future. The recent mobilisation of protestors against proposals for road pricing in the United Kingdom, which saw 1,274,362 people sign a petition on the Downing Street website, may be the standard-bearer for a new form of web activism.⁴¹ In addition, the advent of *Webcameron* may provide an insight into how political party websites will evolve in the future.⁴² Political leaders may turn to blogging as a means of communicating with target audiences in the near future. Therefore, cybersceptics believe that it is too early to claim that ICTs will reinforce patterns of political behaviour within nation-states.

While the Internet may be creating a multiplier effect for some NGOs in terms of organisational linkage, there is limited evidence to suggest that this constitutes a critical mass as was suggested in the cyberoptimist model. Many civil society organisations have yet to realise the potential of the Internet as a means of facilitating new forms of political deliberation and protest. NGOs have used ICTs in a conservative fashion to date, with the notable exception of high-profile campaigns such as Make Poverty History (2005). For the majority of NGOs, the Internet has enabled new forms of intra-group communication,

rather than provide forms of communication that undermine unequal power relations within nation-states. Transnational advocacy networks, such as GreenNet, use ICTs for recruitment, fund-raising, issuing press releases, and advertising their core values to Internet users who visit their websites. The GreenNet website provides a portal for environmental NGOs based across the globe.⁴³ This website provides information as to how Internet users can join an environmental NGO in their respective polities. Yet, there is limited evidence to suggest that these campaigns have influenced the environmental policies of nation-states. In contrast to the Make Poverty History campaign, NGOs such as GreenNet do not receive extensive media coverage nor attract the attention of influential politicians or celebrities. This suggests that factors in the offline world may determine the ability of transnational advocacy networks to influence government policy. As Shah et al (2001) suggest, the relationship between new media and social capital may be “dynamic and highly contextual” (p.154). The research presented in this thesis will determine whether the Internet is likely to have a critical multiplier effect for marginal groups in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

This thesis systematically explores the ways in which civil and uncivil groups use the Internet to generate soft power. This research assesses whether the Internet creates a critical multiplier effect for marginal groups, such as terrorists. A coding scheme, adapted from previous studies of political party websites, is used to determine whether these groups have realised the potential of the Internet as a tool for political mobilisation. The online frames of all Northern Irish political parties are examined to assess the extent to which they have been influenced by the peace frame employed by the Northern Irish media in the late nineties. The dissertation examines whether there are any qualitative differences between the online framing of terrorist-linked parties and the constitutional parties in the region. The phenomenon of amateur terrorism is also analysed through the lens of Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors. The analysis determines whether solidarity actors were more likely to justify political violence on their websites than their respective political fronts. In addition, the websites of rival residents’ groups are

examined to determine whether the Internet can help generate social capital across sectarian interfaces. The analysis determines whether residents' groups use the Web to strengthen in-group identities, or to engage in dialogue with rival interface communities. In doing so, the research tests the cyberoptimist assertion that the Internet will facilitate forms of communication that undermine unequal power relations within nation-states. The online audience for Northern Irish terrorists is analysed using Internet usage patterns and the ranking systems used by Internet search engines. Internet usage patterns are examined to define the potential audience available to Northern Irish terrorists via their websites. Factors that influence the ranking of websites, including the sale of priority retrieval to the highest bidder and website linkage, are analysed to determine their potential impact upon the audience available to Northern Irish terrorists online.

Chapter 2: Media and Terrorism: can political violence be characterised as a communication strategy?

INTRODUCTION

The cyberoptimist model implies that terrorism itself may be solvable if its perpetrators are given greater opportunity – via the Internet - to propagate their political ideologies. In order to test this hypothesis, one must first develop an understanding of the relationship between terrorism and the mass media. Crelinsten (2002) characterises terrorism as a form of ‘coercive communication,’ used by sub-state actors who ordinarily receive minimal coverage in the mass media (p.83). In this chapter, Margaret Thatcher’s assertion that the media provides terrorists with the ‘oxygen of publicity’ will be analysed using case studies such as the TWA 847 hostage crisis (1985). The norms that influence the editorial decisions of journalists will be analysed to determine whether they encourage marginal groups to perpetrate political violence. In addition, the ideological justifications for political violence will be examined to determine whether all forms of terrorism are media-oriented. The ‘terrorism as communication model’ will then be discussed with reference to Loyalists and Republican terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland. The analysis suggests that although terrorism can be characterised as a form of political communication, it is too simplistic to suggest terrorism is resolvable if its perpetrators are granted greater access to the media. Political ideologies motivate terrorists to perpetrate political violence, rather than the pursuit of media attention. The chapter concludes by analysing the nuances of the Northern Irish conflict, in order to contextualise the research in this thesis.

DO THE NORMS THAT INFLUENCE THE MEDIA ENCOURAGE TERRORISM ?

In this section, the proposition that the media encourages terrorism is analysed with reference to the four media models, as originally conceived by Siebert, Peterson, and

Schramm (1963). This hypothesis suggests that terrorism is a rational communication strategy, utilised by actors who receive little or no coverage in the mass media. Media models are relevant to the analysis of the 'terrorism as political communication' model as they define how mass media organisations should behave vis-à-vis terrorist organisations. These models could potentially create a context in which sub-state minorities perceive that political violence is the only communication strategy available to them. This reflects the role of the mass media in political communication within nation-states. The mass media can be characterised as an "agent of political socialisation" within nation-states, presenting a set of cultural values that their audience tacitly accept as typical of a particular society (Graber, 1997: 3). Terrorists typically perceive that the media do not reflect their ideological values, nor provide a space in which they can communicate with both sympathetic and hostile audiences. Thus, terrorists arguably perpetrate atrocities to forcibly gain access to the "triangle of political communication," encompassing the news media, the public, and the government (Nacos, 2003: 3). Terrorists claim that their grievances are only likely to receive media coverage if illuminated by a high profile atrocity.

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1963) identified four models that characterise the behaviour of the mass media in advanced industrialised nation-states (See Table 2.1). There is a high degree of convergence between these models on the issue of censorship. All four models assert that the media should not enjoy absolute freedom of expression within nation-states, irrespective of whether they are fully independent from the ruling government. The Soviet and authoritarian models converge on the principle that the media should 'support and advance' the policies of the government in power (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1963: 18). Both models also prescribe that the government should exercise monopoly powers over indigenous mass media organisations, prohibiting privately owned media companies. Therefore, these models suggest that the ruling government should receive more press coverage than small sub-state minorities.

[Table 2.1 here]

Both the libertarian and social responsibility models suggest that the media should enjoy a greater degree of autonomy from their respective governments. The libertarian model suggests that the media should inform, entertain, and encourage critical thinking amongst their audience on political issues (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1963: 51). The media are characterised as a 'check' on the power of the government, rather than a vehicle for its propaganda (Negrine, 1994: 25). In theory, the editorial independence of the media stems from its financial self-sufficiency, as each media organisation relies upon private investment for sustenance rather than government funding. Therefore, libertarian norms in the mass media may benefit terrorists in terms of the level of coverage they receive in the aftermath of an atrocity. People inevitably turn to media sources for information on terrorist atrocities. Therefore, media organisations will provide extensive coverage of a terrorist atrocity if it affects a large population, as this will reflect the interests and values of their target audience. This leads to terrorists receiving extensive coverage in the mass media long after they have perpetrated an atrocity. However, the model identifies several circumstances in which a national government should limit the freedom of its indigenous mass media. Governments can restrict the flow of information from the media to its audience in order to protect the reputation of individuals from defamatory comments, or to prevent the dissemination of obscene and indecent materials (p.55).

The social responsibility model suggests that journalists should forsake the lure of large audiences and “behave responsibly in the interests of society” (Graber, 1997: 19). In theory, the media should provide an arena for both the government and its citizens - including minorities - to express their political opinions within democratic nation-states. However, the ambiguity of this model enables governments to use the norms of social responsibility to attack the right of the media to criticise their policies, a policy arguably consistent with the norms of the authoritarian model. This reflects the 'philosophical' similarities between the authoritarian and social responsibility paradigms (p: 22). The

'interests of society' in these media models typically equates to the interests of the nation-state, and by default those of the ruling government. Furthermore, both models advocate the use of the media to support the 'basic ideas' of society and to “shape people into more perfect social beings” (p.22). Political minorities, whose interests conflict with the ‘basic idea of society,’ are thus unlikely to receive routine coverage if these models influence the behaviour of the mass media.

The Hallin and Mancini media models

Hallin and Mancini (2004) add more nuances to the libertarian model, suggesting there are in fact three models that influence media behaviour within democratic nation-states. In contrast to the media models devised by Siebert et al, these models are all based upon cases studies.

These are:

1. The liberal (North Atlantic) model, used to describe the media systems in the United Kingdom and the United States.
2. The Democratic Corporatist model derived from studies of media systems in northern Europe.
3. The Polarised Pluralist model, used to describe media systems within Mediterranean countries in southern Europe

All of these models are based on the idea of political parallelism, that is to say the extent to which each media system reflects the political climate of a nation-state.⁴⁴ The liberal model is probably the most similar to the libertarian model devised by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm. This media system is characterised by the relative dominance of commercial media, with governments exerting an appreciable influence upon the activities of public sector broadcasters, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 11). However, minorities are still likely to receive limited

media coverage under this media system. In the United Kingdom, one of the examples used by Hallin and Mancini to illustrate this model, the press is overtly political and linked to political parties (p.246). As such, the media are still likely to reflect the views of the political elite, as opposed to provide an outlet for minorities who have limited political power.

The other models suggest that there should be a closer relationship between the political establishment and the media. For example, the Democratic Corporatist model suggests that the commercial media should have a strong association with organised political forces (p.170). Although the state has a legally limited role in the media, political parties may still influence the news agenda. This is in sharp contrast to the level of state interference prescribed by the Polarised Pluralist model. This system has lower levels of journalistic autonomy in comparison to the other two models. This model envisages a close relationship between the media and the state, as the media is heavily reliant upon state subsidies (p.119). In the absence of a strong commercial media, journalists are often pressurised to comply with the wishes of the political elite. Overall, minorities are unlikely to receive the press coverage they often crave in liberal democracies, as organised political forces have the ability to influence the news agenda. All of the media models suggest that the freedom of the mass media should be restricted in accordance with the interests of their respective government. Sub-state minorities will remain outside the 'triangle of political communication' if these models influence the behaviour of the media in their respective polities.

Do these norms encourage sub-state minorities to perpetrate political violence?

Media models describe how the media "should or could operate," rather than provide accurate descriptions of how they actually operate.⁴⁵ Few, if any, nation-states have established systems of control over the media that comply with any of these media models in their totality. Nevertheless, when these norms influence the behaviour of the

mass media they indirectly contribute towards the circumstances that drive some sub-state actors towards political violence. For example, the authoritarian model suggests that the media should represent the views and interests of the government in power. Therefore, sub-state minorities, whether radicalised or not, are not supposed to have access to the mass media due to the close relationship between the media and the political elite. As a result, groups defined as terrorists will face widespread censorship in semi-authoritarian nation-states. Many of these states will control their indigenous mass media with reference to the norms of the authoritarian model.

The mass media also contributes towards the exclusion of minorities within liberal democracies. The libertarian model, which views the media as a check on the government, prescribes a system of media ownership that minimises government interference with the freedom of the press. In theory, the mass media should highlight the ideologies of anti-state groups for the benefit of the wider population. However, the reliance on advertising revenue forces media organisations within liberal democracies to seek large audiences to satisfy the requirements of their sponsors. This pursuit of higher viewing and circulation figures inevitably reduces the space allocated to less popular pursuits, such as the interests of political minorities. Nation-states may also use the norms of social responsibility to justify censorship of the media within democratic nation-states. Governments, that define the 'interests of society' as synonymous with their own, may prevent the media from providing a platform to radical minorities that threaten the political status quo. In addition, the Hallin and Mancini models suggest that there may be strong ties between organised political forces and the media in liberal democracies. These political forces are unlikely to encourage the media to focus on the interest of radical minorities, particularly if this is at the expense of their own political agendas.

Clearly, the norms that influence the media do contribute to the context that drives some sub-state actors towards political violence. Within liberal democracies, disillusioned minorities do not receive media coverage due to the free market principles that determine

the system of media ownership and financing. In semi - authoritarian nation-states, there is an ideological rationale for the exclusion of political minorities from the 'triangle of political communication,' particularly if they do not express support for the ruling government. However, it is perhaps too simplistic to suggest that terrorism would be solvable if disillusioned groups were given greater access to the conventional mass media. Terrorists may perpetrate violence for reasons other than attracting the attention of the mass media. There will always be people who perceive that the status quo is intolerable, violence being the only remedy available to them (Laqueur, 1978: 255). Even so, they may cite their exclusion from the mass media as one of the grievances that has led them to use violence for political advantage. Conceivably, governments may justify the removal of a 'pro-terrorist' website with reference to one of the media models. In this thesis, the research will determine whether the potential of the Internet as a means of generating soft power depends upon the limits placed on the use of these technologies by nation-states.

TERRORISM AND THE MEDIA

The analysis will now focus on whether all forms of terrorism rely upon the 'oxygen of publicity.' The 'oxygen of publicity' axiom first came to prominence in 1985, when British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously declared that the media "provides the oxygen of publicity upon which terrorists depend" (Hoffman, 1998: 143). Thatcher insinuated that all forms of terrorism depend upon the coverage of the mass media, irrespective of their objectives, ideologies, and the context in which they operate. Yet, this axiom fails to acknowledge that terrorism is a subjective, rather than an objective, political issue. Terrorism is a generic term used to describe 'non-permissible' violence, whether it be perpetrated by states, groups, or individuals. There is no consensus amongst academics or national governments upon a universal definition of terrorism. For example, if all national governments accepted the 'oxygen' axiom, the majority of academic and government definitions of terrorism would presumably identify publicity as one of the

desired effects of political violence. The evidence provided by the Schmid and Jongman study of 'official' definitions of terrorism (1988) would appear to offer only moderate support for this proposition. Publicity appeared in only 21.5 percent of the definitions analysed, far behind the most commonly identified variables of violence (83.5 percent), political motivation (65 percent), and fear (51 percent) (Schmid and Jongman, 1988: 3). The Wieviorka models will be analysed to determine whether terrorists perpetrate political violence solely to capture the attention of the mass media, or to achieve other individual and collective objectives (See Table 2.2).

[Table 2.2 here]

Passive Attitude

Wieviorka suggests that terrorists may be indifferent to how the media reacts to their political violence (Wieviorka, 1993: 44). Two forms of political violence may persist irrespective of whether they receive media coverage, namely state sponsored terrorism and terrorism motivated by a religious imperative. These terrorist actors do not perpetrate political violence solely to capture the attention of the mass media. The perpetrators of state-sponsored terrorism use acts of political violence to “covertly bring pressure to bear upon the sponsor’s opponents” (Hoffman, 1998: 189). State sponsors often provide logistical support - such as intelligence data - to ‘hired gun’ terrorist organisations, and in return, these groups perpetrate atrocities that advance the foreign policy objectives of their sponsor (p.186).

Publicity is arguably neither the intention nor the desired outcome of state-sponsored terrorism. Nation-states use ‘hired gun’ terrorist groups as a “potentially risk-free means of anonymously attacking stronger enemies,” assuming that international organisations remain unaware of their complicity with the terrorists (p.186). Consequently, state sponsors, like Libya, usually deny their links with ‘hired gun’ terrorists, despite often-

incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. The Libyan authorities repeatedly denied any involvement in the terrorist bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in December 1988, which resulted in 270 fatalities (p.190). The scale of Libyan involvement in the bombing became apparent at the subsequent trial of two Libyan nationals for the attack in 2000, which resulted in the conviction of Abdel Basset Al-Megrahi in January 2001.⁴⁶ The Libyan authorities eventually accepted responsibility for the attack in April 2003, setting up a benevolent fund for the victims' families.⁴⁷

Terrorism motivated by a religious imperative is also conceived primarily as an end in and of itself. 'Holy' terrorists perpetrate atrocities for themselves rather than a target audience, their violence perceived as a 'divine duty' (Hoffman, 1993: 3). Practitioners of 'Holy Terror' perceive that they are participating in a global struggle between the Islamic and non-Islamic peoples, their duty being to export Islamic values throughout the world (Hoffman, 1993: 4). 'Holy Terror' is not constrained by the need to secure publicity, nor the "political, moral, or practical constraints" that affect other terrorists (p.2). Islamic fundamentalist terrorists justify the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians on the basis that the perpetrator will gain "an afterlife in paradise" (Moghadam, 2003: 87). Groups such as Hamas have used suicide attacks to bring pressure upon the Israeli government during the last decade. For example, Islamic Jihad, widely believed to be an affiliate of Hamas, claimed responsibility for the Bet Lid massacre in 1995, which left 21 people dead including the perpetrator (Laqueur, 1999: 139).

Militant white supremacists in the United States also use religion to justify the murder of innocent civilians. The white supremacists believe that a conspiracy of Jewish interests is plotting to overthrow the US government (Hoffman, 1993: 6). These groups often cite *The Turner Diaries*, the 'bible' of the white supremacist movement, as the theological justification for their anti-Semitic political violence. This book, written by William Pierce in 1978, tells the story of an underground white supremacist movement that engages in a 'race war' against a 'Jewish-Negro' alliance. The *Turner Diaries* allegedly inspired a

number of attacks by white supremacists in the 1990s. For example, the book describes how white supremacists use an ammonium nitrate oil truck to disrupt a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) computer installation.⁴⁸ Timothy McVeigh's attack on the Alfred P Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City (1995), which resulted in 168 fatalities, bore a remarkable similarity to the attack envisaged in Pierce's book.⁴⁹ In sum, both 'Holy' and state sponsored terrorists do not perpetrate violence solely to gain the oxygen of publicity. These actors are likely to continue to perpetrate atrocities, irrespective of whether they receive coverage in the mass media.

Relative Indifference

Alternatively, the terrorist could have a 'relatively indifferent' relationship with the mass media (Wieviorka, 1993: 43). In this scenario, the terrorist continues to manipulate the mass media coverage of their atrocities while simultaneously using alternative channels of political communication, such as legally constituted political front organisations or insurgent guerrilla armies (p.43). Ethno-nationalist terrorist organisations, such as Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), have established political fronts to compete in regional elections. Herri Batasuna (later renamed Batasuna) was set up in 1978 to create a new front in the struggle for Basque self-determination.⁵⁰ In theory, participation in local and national elections provides a platform hitherto unavailable to terrorist organisations, enabling them to generate publicity for their cause without the need to perpetrate high profile atrocities. In reality, these political 'fronts' often receive minimal electoral support and terrorist organisations invariably persevere with their military campaigns in order to gain publicity. For example, in the 2001 Basque regional elections, the Batasuna party received just 10.12% of the votes cast, giving them just seven seats in the 75 strong regional Assembly.⁵¹ Predictably, the Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) military campaign continued unabated after this election result.

On the other hand, terrorists may have sufficient human resources to exert physical

control over a disputed territory. The establishment of a 'military' presence in a territory will inevitably expose its inhabitants to the rationale of the terrorist organisation. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) more closely resemble a 'guerrilla' army than a sub-state terrorist organisation. The Tamil Tigers have an estimated 10,000 'soldiers' at their disposal, compared to the average terrorist organisation that possesses between 10 and 100 members.⁵² The group has utilised these 'soldiers' to wage what in effect has become a civil war against the central government, asserting their hegemony over a quarter of Sri Lanka's territory.⁵³ These examples illustrate how high profile atrocities - designed to maximise publicity for the terrorist organisation via manipulation of the mass media - can be just one of several methods used in a terrorist's psychological war against a target audience.

Media-Oriented Strategy

Terrorists pursue a media oriented strategy if they manipulate their knowledge of media operations in order to maximise publicity (Wieviorka, 1993: 44). In this scenario, the terrorist commits an atrocity at a time and location conducive to securing the maximum possible media coverage. These terrorist actors perpetrate high profile atrocities in order to further their campaign of 'psychological warfare against a target audience. This psychological campaign typically has two central aims, to increase public recognition of the terrorist's rationale and reduce public confidence in the national government (Gerritts. 1992: 30). If an individual identifies with the victim, perpetrator, or the motivation behind the atrocity, then the terrorist can claim a psychological victory (Schmid, 1989: 545). Terrorists often perpetrate atrocities that force television broadcasters to interrupt their regular schedules with 'news flashes.' News flashes allow these actors to 'terrorise' large audiences who have no prior knowledge of the terrorist actor or their ideology. The harrowing pictures of two commercial airliners flying into the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, and its subsequent collapse, perhaps best illustrate the power of the 'news flash.' The World Trade Center attacks were a "perfectly

choreographed production” aimed at American and international audiences (Nacos, 2003: 3). The first aircraft, American Airlines flight 11, crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8.45am (EST).⁵⁴As news networks such as *CNN* began to transmit live footage of the burning North Tower, United Airlines flight 175 crashed into the South Tower, watched by a global television audience.⁵⁵

Ultimately, a media - oriented strategy may only provide ephemeral gains for a terrorist actor engaged in a ‘psychological’ war. The media bombard audiences with images of both ‘man-made’ and natural disasters on an almost daily basis (Negrine, 1994:30). Consequently, the mass media can only bestow transcendental qualities upon a terrorist atrocity, like 9/11, if it periodically follows up on the event in question. The terrorist who adopts this strategy arguably has to execute a series of cataclysmic atrocities to retain the attention of the mass media in the medium to long - term. The message behind the terrorist campaign changes accordingly, as the initial plea of ‘look at me’ evolves into a different message, namely, ‘I’m still here’ (Gearty, 1991: 13). In sum, terrorists who lack the resources of groups like the Tamil Tigers may choose to adopt a media - oriented strategy. Yet, this strategy provides only short-term gains, unless the terrorist perpetrates a series of high profile atrocities that repeatedly capture the attention of the mass media.

Total Break from Society

Wieviorka’s final model suggests that an antagonistic relationship may develop between the terrorist and the mass media. Terrorists may target media personnel, as they perceive that they are collaborators with an ‘unjust’ political regime (Wieviorka, 1993: 44). For example, a group calling itself the Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) held the BBC correspondent Alan Johnston in captivity for nearly four months in the Gaza Strip in 2007. During this period, a number of video tapes featuring images of Mr. Johnston were sent to media organisations, such as Al Jazeera TV. In these videos, Mr. Johnston’s captors stated that they would release the BBC journalist if a number of Islamist prisoners

were released from British prisons.⁵⁶ This provided a propaganda coup for the Army of Islam, who received extensive media coverage until Mr. Johnston was eventually released in July 2007. Alternatively, terrorists may murder journalists because they are outspoken on issues that resonate with their supporters.⁵⁷ In 2004, terrorists murdered 53 journalists from countries as geographically diverse as Russia and Iraq.⁵⁸ Overall, terrorists may target media personnel if they consider they are complicit with their enemies. However, most terrorists adopt an ambivalent attitude towards media personnel, rather than perceive them as collaborators with an 'unjust' regime.

Can terrorists really be indifferent to the mass media?

Wilkinson (1997) asserts, "If there is no aim to instill terror through the mass media, then the violence is not of a terroristic nature" (p: 52). Schmid & Jongman (1988) provide support for this proposition, 'fear' featuring in 51 percent of the definitions of terrorism in their study (p.3). As such, terrorism can be characterised as a 'psychological' weapon, used by actors to generate publicity for their ideologies, enabling them to communicate with their supporters and opponents (Chermak, 2003:7). Journalist Ted Koppel suggests that terrorism without television coverage is similar to the philosopher's 'tree in the forest,' "if nobody hears it fall, it does not exist" (Clawson, 1990: 242). All terrorists benefit from media coverage of their atrocities as it exposes audiences to their political ideologies, albeit for a brief period.

The development of the mass media has altered the means by which politics identify with the causation and effects of political violence. In 1881, Narodnya Volya, arguably the world's first terrorist organisation, assassinated Tsar Alexander II in the world's first high - profile terrorist atrocity (Clutterbuck, 2004: 154). People identified with the victim or perpetrator of this assassination through the publication of their names in newspapers across the globe. After the first television satellite launched in 1968, 'real time' colour television pictures aided the process of identification. Terrorism, like the mass media, has

evolved over the past century as new phenomena such as state-sponsored and 'holy' terror have emerged. Publicity is less important for state-sponsored terrorism, with most state sponsors refusing to claim responsibility for atrocities perpetrated in their name. State-sponsored terrorists do not need to publicise their cause or to solicit financial support from a particular constituency (Clawson, 1990: 242). For terrorists motivated by a religious imperative, the act of political violence also constitutes an end in and of itself. Superficially, at least, these terrorist actors do not require the oxygen of publicity provided by the mass media.

Although publicity may not be the primary goal of 'holy' or state-sponsored terrorists, both are still likely to benefit from media attention. For state-sponsors of terrorism, the media speculation on their alleged responsibility for an atrocity may represent a propaganda coup in itself. For example, the extensive media coverage that followed Lockerbie arguably enhanced Libya's reputation as a leading sponsor of international terrorism.⁵⁹ For terrorism motivated by a religious imperative, suicide-bomb attacks arguably fulfil two sets of objectives, namely the objectives of the individual and those of the terrorist organisation. A suicide attack draws the attention of the media towards the terrorist organisation and its grievances, as well as turning the individual terrorist into a martyr. For example, Al Qaeda and its affiliates have been responsible for a number of lethal suicide attacks in the past decade, such as the 9/11 atrocities. Al Qaeda publications stress the importance of 'oxygen of publicity' to the organisation. The Al Qaeda 'Jihad' urges its adherents to target 'sentimental landmarks,' such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, in order to maximise publicity for the organisation (Nacos, 2004: 3). In sum, all forms of terrorism rely upon the mass media to further their campaigns of psychological warfare. Some terrorist actors are less dependent upon the mass media for sustenance than others are, as they conceive their violence as an end in and of itself. Elsewhere, some terrorist actors may not claim responsibility for atrocities, for fear of implicating a state sponsor. Nevertheless, by definition, all terrorist actors use political violence as an instrument to achieve strategic political and 'military' objectives. The manipulation of the mass media

via high profile atrocities remains the most effective method of 'terrorising' a target audience.

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA REPORTING (1) PRO - TERRORIST

Sympathetic Constituencies

In this section, the positive and negative effects of media reporting on terrorist atrocities will be discussed. Media coverage has the potential to bestow a 'transcendental' quality upon a terrorist atrocity, as graphically illustrated by the 9/11 atrocities. Terrorists achieve psychological victories over a target audience hours, days, and even years later if television news networks capture their atrocities live and replay these images constantly. Media coverage of terrorist atrocities also enables terrorist actors to communicate with sympathetic constituencies. Most terrorist actors, with the notable exception of state - sponsored terrorists, solicit financial and human resources from sympathetic communities. Terrorists perceive that sympathetic constituencies are more likely to offer this support when 'terrorist deeds' are perpetrated, and, more importantly, seen to be perpetrated in their name (Gerrits, 1992: 40).

Terrorists may justify individual atrocities on the basis that they represent the 'will' of the people that they purport to represent. For example, in the wake of the Republican hunger strikes in 1981, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams suggested there was a 'considerable popular demand' for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) to take 'punitive action' against Britain (Adams, 1986: 86). Sympathetic Irish American 'solidarity' groups such the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAIID) funded the Provisional IRA activity that followed the hunger strikes (Horgan and Taylor, 1999: 8). The Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAIID) has allegedly funded the 'military' campaign of the Republican movement since the beginning of the Northern Irish 'Troubles.' In 1977, the US government provided further evidence of the organisation's links to the Republican

movement, forcing it to register as an 'agent' of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA).⁶⁰ Nonetheless, Irish American groups, irrespective of their complicity with acts of terrorism, have remained steadfast supporters of the Republican movement since the late 1960s. The Provisional IRA arguably perpetrated high profile atrocities in this period to demonstrate to sympathetic audiences that they were committed to the 'armed struggle. Media coverage not only allows terrorists to intimidate target audiences, but also provides a means of mobilising support from sympathetic constituencies. Terrorists perpetrate high-profile atrocities in order to convince their patrons that they are still actively pursuing their common objectives.

The Contagion Effect

Media coverage of atrocities may provide a model for future terrorist operations. Schmid (1989) asserts that successful hijackings of aircraft in the 1970s influenced 53 percent of attempted transportation hijackings in 1989 (p.558). The TWA 847 hostage crisis (1985) arguably illustrates this 'contagion effect.' The hijacking of TWA 847, en route from Rome to Cairo on 14th June 1985, bore a strong resemblance to previous acts of aviation terrorism, such as the Dawson's Field hostage crisis. On 6 September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) seized control of four aircraft travelling from Europe to New York, two of the hijacked planes being forced to land at the Dawson's Field airfield in Jordan. After a fifth aircraft had been hijacked and taken to Dawson's Field a day later, the terrorists demanded the release of Palestinian terrorist Leila Kaled in return for the return of the passengers. The hostage crisis culminated in the destruction of the three aircraft in front of the assembled international media, the release of Khaled and the imprisonment of three of the Palestinian guerrillas.⁶¹ The Lebanese Shi'a terrorists who hijacked flight TWA 847 also demanded the release of incarcerated Palestinian terrorists in exchange for the safe return of their hostages. Similar to the events at Dawson's Field, the international media assembled in Beirut to record the hostage crisis as it unfolded. The blanket television coverage provided by the American Broadcasting

Corporation (ABC), National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) networks deeply traumatised millions of Americans. Coverage across the three networks amounted to 491 reports, totalling 729 minutes, in the 17-day period of the hostage crisis (Choi, 1994: 122). The TWA 847 hostage crisis itself arguably provides a model for future aircraft hijackings, as “behaviour rewarded is typically behaviour repeated” (Schmid, 1989: 558). The hostage crisis ended after the Reagan administration met the demands of the terrorists, forcing Israel to release 756 Shi’a prisoners (Hoffman, 1998: 133).

The Reagan administration complied with the demands of the terrorists, as public opinion in the United States demanded the safe return of the 39 American hostages at almost any cost. The ‘human-interest’ stories reported by the three main news networks affected public opinion vis-à-vis the hostage crisis (P.133). News networks concentrated upon the plight of the hostages and their families to justify the expense of their continued presence in Beirut, allowing relatives a platform to call for the release of the 756 Shi’a prisoners in exchange for the 39 American hostages (p.133). The TWA 847 model suggests that the media could prove to be a valuable weapon for a terrorist engaged in a protracted hostage crisis. Concessions are more likely to be achieved by the terrorist if public opinion - influenced by ‘human interest’ stories reported by the media - favours the safe return of the hostages over other political considerations, such as a government’s refusal to negotiate with terrorists. Overall, media reporting of atrocities creates a contagion effect for terrorism, allowing terrorists to copy the successful methods and strategies used by others elsewhere.

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA REPORTING (2) ANTI-TERRORIST?

‘Culturally Relevant’ Terrorism

The coverage of terrorism in the mass media may not benefit all groups who perpetrate

political violence. Some terrorist atrocities may receive blanket coverage in the mass media while others fail to make the front pages of newspapers or appear as a ‘headline’ on television news bulletins. For example, between 1968 and 1974, *The London Times* reported only 57 percent of all international terrorist incidents, as defined by the RAND Corporation.⁶² The norms of the four media models arguably affect the level of media coverage afforded to a terrorist atrocity. As discussed in this chapter, the four media models suggest that national governments can restrict the freedom of the media in a number of circumstances. Governments may justify such restrictions on the basis that a story is offensive, defamatory of certain individuals, or constitutes a threat to national security. Media organisations cannot broadcast material that draws attention towards a terrorist without some consideration of the political ramifications of their actions. In addition, media editors must decide whether a terrorist atrocity is more ‘newsworthy’ than the other breaking stories of the day. Newspaper editors devote limited space to politics and rely upon advertising revenue or government subsidy to maintain their operations. 24-hour ‘rolling’ television news networks such as *CNN* also have to satisfy their corporate sponsors, although they can ‘break’ live news stories as they unfold, as demonstrated by the blanket coverage of the 9/11 atrocities. Thus, all news media organisations must decide whether a terrorist atrocity is ‘relevant’ to its core audience.

The Western mass media tend to focus upon terrorism directed against ‘elite nations,’ such as the United States, rather than atrocities perpetrated elsewhere. Galtung & Ruge analysed the factors that influenced the coverage of three foreign crises in the Norwegian mass media. Their study concluded that an event, like a terrorist atrocity, had to be “culturally relevant, unexpected, and of a certain amplitude” to gain media coverage in Norway (Negrine, 1994: 120). The 9/11 atrocities arguably illustrate how these factors influence the behaviour of the mass media worldwide. These attacks on Washington D.C. and New York were both unexpected and unprecedented in terms of the number of fatalities. If a terrorist atrocity fails to satisfy at least one of the conditions outlined by Galtung and Rye, it is unlikely to receive coverage in the Norwegian mass media.

Terrorism does not sell as well as 'sex and money' and editors have to consider the interests of both their audience and sponsors in deciding whether a story is 'newsworthy' (Wieviorka, 1993: 47).

UK Media Perspective on Northern Ireland: Hierarchy of Death?

The murders of three juveniles in March 1993 illustrate how seemingly identical terrorist atrocities can receive vastly different levels of media coverage. In March 1993, the murders of three-year-old Jonathan Ball and twelve-year-old Tim Parry in a Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) bomb attack in Warrington received extensive media coverage in the United Kingdom. Tabloid newspapers such as *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Daily Star* were littered with condemnations of the Provisional IRA atrocity for several days after the atrocity.⁶³ Just five days later, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) murdered 17-year-old Damien Walsh in West Belfast. The three tabloid newspapers, so vitriolic in the editorials published in the aftermath of the Warrington murders, failed to mention the West Belfast murder in their subsequent publications.⁶⁴ The young age of the two victims may partly explain the ferocity of the media coverage that followed the Warrington attacks. Jonathan Ball was one of the youngest victims of the Northern Irish conflict.

An alternative explanation might be that the editors of tabloid newspapers in the United Kingdom did not consider the murder of Damien Walsh newsworthy. Greenslade (1998) suggests that the disparity in media coverage of the two attacks is indicative of a 'hierarchy of death' that permeates British media coverage of Irish terrorism. British people killed in mainland Britain [England, Wales or Scotland] are rated the most 'newsworthy,' receiving the most headlines in tabloid newspapers such as *The Sun*. The second rank of 'victimhood' consists of army personnel killed on active service in Northern Ireland, with civilian victims of Loyalist and Republican paramilitary attacks in Northern Ireland rated the least 'newsworthy.' There is a high degree of convergence

between the Greenslade analysis and the Galtung and Ruge study. The Warrington bomb captured the attention of the mass media because one of the victims was just three years old. In contrast, the British tabloid press considered the murder of Damien Walsh “another statistic in an old story with too many tragedies.”⁶⁵ The ‘hierarchy of death’ paradigm suggests that the British mass media focus upon atrocities that resonate with its core audience. Northern Irish terrorist organisations will receive greater coverage in the mass media if they perpetrate atrocities on the UK Mainland, rather than within Northern Ireland.

NEWS FRAMING AND TERRORISM

The chapter will now consider how news framing affects a terrorist’s psychological war against a target population, and whether terrorists always benefit from the negative publicity generated by their atrocities. News framing is the process whereby media organisations “define and construct political issues and public controversies” (Nelson, Clawson and Oxley, 1997: 657). The media models analysed earlier in this chapter inform how media organisations frame a terrorist atrocity. The TWA 847 hostage crisis demonstrates how news framing, with reference to the libertarian model, can benefit the terrorist. The US government acceded to the demands of the terrorists after US public opinion - influenced by the soft human-interest stories in the mass media - demanded the safe return of the 39 hostages at virtually any cost (Hoffman, 1998: 133). Yet, news framing may not always work to the advantage of a terrorist actor. For example, the grievances that inspired Al Qaeda were largely overlooked by the US media in the aftermath of the 9/11 atrocities. Analysis of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines in the five-week period that followed 9/11 showed that “journalists strongly affirmed a sense of US national identity,” rather than analyse the factors that led to the atrocities in the first place (Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeau, and Garland, 2004: 46). Consequently, terrorists cannot assume that the media will publicise their grievances if they report on one of their atrocities.

The mass media can provide a terrorist actor with the ‘oxygen of publicity’ with reference to the norms of the social responsibility model. In this scenario, the terrorist actor does not exert control over the mass media *per se*, although they may continue to benefit from the publicity surrounding their activity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the social responsibility model suggests that the media should act ‘responsibly’ and in support of the basic ideas of society. In theory, this might include participation in a counter-terrorist operation. For example, the US news media played a critical role in the capture of Theodore Kaczynski, also known as ‘The Unabomber,’ in April 1996.⁶⁶ Federal agents apprehended Kaczynski in September 1995 after several people recognised his writing style in a number of manifestos published in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Kaczynski had initially promised to restrict his terror campaign if these newspapers agreed to publish one of his manifestos (Hoffman, 1998: 155). The newspapers published the manifestos at the request of the US Justice Department, who hoped that someone might recognise the writing style of the author. Kaczynski was captured shortly afterwards, when his brother informed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that he recognised the writing style in the manifestos (p.155).

Therefore, high profile atrocities can have unanticipated - and occasionally negative - consequences for terrorist actors if the mass media do not reproduce the ‘irresponsible’ journalism that infected the TWA 847 hostage crisis. In some cases, media coverage may constrain the activities of terrorist organisations. For example, American journalist Jerry Levin, taken hostage in Lebanon in 1984, believed that extensive media coverage forced his captors to spare his life. After his release, Levin claimed that he had not been executed because his captors were concerned about the possible impact of his death on international opinion (Kegley, 1990: 242). Both these incidents demonstrate that the ‘oxygen of publicity’ may come at a high price for terrorist actors. If the media frame an atrocity with reference to the norms of social responsibility, the terrorist may face capture or other unanticipated outcomes.

The Effect of News Framing on Support for Terrorism

News framing can change public attitudes at an aggregate level towards terrorism if a number of conditions are fulfilled. Philo suggests that three factors are important in audience reception, namely direct experience of the issue being reported, the use of logic to identify contradictions within the media account, and the cultural, political and value systems of the audience members (Philo, 1999: 284). Therefore, the mass media can strongly influence perceptions about events if an audience has no direct experience of the event and does not share similar cultural values to the protagonists involved (Philo, 1994: 30). The Philo analysis suggests that news framing could have a significant impact upon perceptions of terrorism perpetrated abroad, rather than at home. The Arab-Israeli conflict can be used to illustrate the impact of news framing upon perceptions of international terrorism. The widely held perception amongst the American public is that terrorism in the region is almost universally of Palestinian origin. This reflects the fact that the words 'Muslim' and 'fanatic' are almost interchangeable in the US media (Alali and Byrd, 1994:11) These frames carry such influence on the opinions of the audience as several of Philo's conditions are present. The American public - with the notable exception of the Jewish and Muslim communities - have neither direct experience of the Arab-Israeli conflict nor any cultural or political ties to the principal political actors in the region. This audience is therefore more likely to be attentive to the cues of the American media on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Yet, news framing may have little or no effect upon the terrorist's ability to mobilise support from sympathetic constituencies. Many terrorists perpetrate high profile atrocities in order to mobilise support from constituencies, many of whom broadly support their aims and methods. These groups are unlikely to cut their ties with terrorist organisations, even if they receive negative publicity in the mass media. Moreover, terrorists perpetrate political violence to subject a target audience to a psychological war, rather than to win

popular support. As discussed in this chapter, a terrorist can claim a psychological victory if their activities receive any media coverage, good or bad. Therefore, terrorists perpetrate atrocities which are likely to secure media coverage, as demonstrated by the 9/11 atrocities. This raises questions as to whether media manipulation remains the most effective vehicle for a terrorist's psychological warfare. Cyberoptimists suggest that the Internet can create a critical multiplier effect for these marginal groups, allowing them to choose their own frames and attract a potential global audience. In this thesis, the online framing of Loyalist and Republicans will be analysed to determine how these actors use their websites to mobilise supporters and intimidate target audiences.

THE TROUBLES: AN OVERVIEW

Ethnic Nationalism and 'Double Minority'

In order to analyse online communications in post-conflict Northern Ireland, it is necessary to develop an understanding and appreciation of the nuances of the Northern Irish conflict and the actors, both state and non-state, that have been party to this conflict. The Northern Irish 'Troubles' can be characterised as the clash of two strands of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalist movements seek to 'politicise' an ethnic group through the exploitation of its history and culture that distinguishes it from other ethnic groups. Invariably, these groups will reject political assimilation and cultural accommodation in multi-ethnic states (O'Sullivan See, 1986: 148). Since the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921, Protestant and Catholic communities have failed to agree upon a common identity to which they both can subscribe (Graham, 2004: 484). Catholic and Protestant social identities remain predominantly tied to their external 'ethno-guarantors,' the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain respectively (Byrnes, 2001: 341). Catholics typically identify themselves as Irish, while Protestants identify themselves as British. These social identities directly influence the political aspirations of these ethnic communities. The majority of Catholics vote for nationalist or republican political parties, who wish to see

Northern Ireland reunite with the Republic of Ireland. Republicans are differentiated from nationalists by virtue of their support for political violence. Meanwhile, the majority of Protestants vote for Unionist and Loyalist political parties, who support the existing union with Great Britain. In a similar vein to Republicanism, Loyalism is based upon a 'narrative of violence,' with 'pro-state' terrorists claiming that they exist purely to protect the province from Republican attacks (p.488). Moreover, Bryan (2000) asserts that the terms Protestant, Unionist, and Loyalist are used in some discourses 'almost interchangeably,' as are the terms Catholic and nationalist (p.15).

The 'Double Minority' model illustrates the mutual distrust between Northern Ireland's two main communities. Protestants and Catholics tend to believe that one side can only gain at the expense of the other (O'Connor, 1993: 142). Both communities perceive that they are a politically disadvantaged minority in the region, albeit for very different reasons. Catholics in Northern Ireland believe that they are an oppressed minority in a state dominated by their Protestant neighbours. The economic and political discrimination against the Catholic community in Northern Ireland before 1968 [and recent surveys suggest persists today in some sectors] has contributed towards this negative stereotyping of the Protestant community.⁶⁷ Protestants also perceive that they are a minority, although this is in comparison to the entire population of the island of Ireland (Roe, Pegg, Hodges & Trimm, 1999: 125). Unionists perceive that members of the Catholic community are not loyal to the British monarchy, as demonstrated by their support for the reunification of Ireland (Hennessey, 1994: 128). As the notion of being British in an Irish context is an integral part of Protestant identity, the perceived disloyalty of the Catholic community has reinforced the siege mentality amongst the unionist community. In sum, both Protestants and Catholics in the province perceive that politics in Northern Ireland is a zero-sum game. Despite potential cross cutting cleavages like language and class, conflicting national aspirations have undermined efforts to reduce inter-communal tensions in Northern Ireland since 1921.

Unionist Control: 1921-1972

The roots of the Northern Irish conflict can be traced back to the system of governance established in the Province in 1921. Cochrane (1994) asserts that these governing arrangements embedded sectarianism “deep into the fabric of the Northern Irish state” (p.164). The Stormont ‘control system’ bestowed power upon the Ulster Unionist Party, who predominantly acted in the interests of the Protestant community (McGarry, 2002: 455). The redrawing of electoral boundaries, also known as ‘gerrymandering,’ ensured that Unionist politicians dominated the Stormont Assembly at the expense of their Nationalist counterparts. In addition, Catholics faced discrimination in local government employment and the allocation of public sector housing (Bew and Gillespie, 1993: 1). This control system collapsed because of changes in the social composition of the Catholic community. A confident, energized, Catholic middle class emerged in the late 1960s that were no longer willing to accept second - class citizenship in Northern Ireland (McGarry, 2002: p.455). The Stormont Assembly was unable to satisfy the political, social, and economic aspirations of the newly politicised Catholic middle class. Accordingly, the Catholic middle classes featured prominently in the civil rights demonstrations that defined the era. Reflecting the zero-sum nature of Northern Irish politics, both communities reacted differently to the imposition of Direct Rule from Westminster in March 1972. While the Catholic community saw the removal of the Unionist control system as a victory, Protestants saw it as an embarrassing defeat. Brian Faulkner immediately tendered his resignation as Northern Irish Prime Minister, declaring that the transfer of power to London “cannot be supported or accepted by us” (Bew & Gillespie, 1993: 48). In sum, the Stormont Assembly allowed one community to impose its will upon the other. This system fell apart when the emergent Catholic middle classes challenged the institutionalised discrimination associated with the Unionist control system.

From Sunningdale to the Anglo-Irish Agreement: Unionist Divisions

The Sunningdale Agreement (1973) marked the first attempt by the British government to create a 'consociationalist' power-sharing coalition in Northern Ireland. In contrast to the Unionist control system, the reconstituted Northern Ireland Executive contained members of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), with its' leader Gerry Fitt named as Deputy Chief Executive. However, the power-sharing executive lasted less than six months, collapsing in May 1974 due to a strike organised by the Ulster Workers' Council (UWC). The UWC strike received support from a large cross section of the Protestant community including the Ulster Vanguard Party (UV) and Dr Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The collapse of the power-sharing institutions illustrated the 'intra-segment' divisions within the Protestant community. The Protestant community was - and remains - a heterogeneous unit. In contrast to the relatively homogeneous Catholic community, the Protestant community encompasses over 50 religious denominations, the various Loyal Orders, and a number of political parties (Monaghan, 2004: 484). The failure to gain the support of these groups undermined efforts to establish power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland.

Sunningdale also highlighted the siege mentality that existed within the Protestant community. The Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) opposed the power-sharing executive due to the creation of a cross-border body, the Council of Ireland. This reflected the widely held perception amongst the unionist community that increased cross-border cooperation would lead to unification with the Republic of Ireland. After the collapse of the Executive in May 1974, there were several failed attempts to reintroduce devolved government to Northern Ireland, such as the 'Rolling Devolution' scheme in 1982. All of these initiatives failed due to their inability to command the support of the main political parties in Northern Ireland. For example, the Alliance Party of the Northern Ireland was the only political party to express its support for the restoration of devolution to the province, as was proposed in a government White Paper in April 1982.⁶⁸ The British and

Irish governments finally agreed to manage the conflict together via the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in November 1985 (Byrnes, 2001: 338). Although the Agreement increased cross-border cooperation on a number of security and legal issues, it did not directly address the problem of reconciling the Protestant and Catholic communities. Indeed, the inter-governmental negotiations that led to the treaty widened the schism between Unionists and Nationalists in the province. The Democratic Unionist Party and the Ulster Unionist Party were united in their vehement opposition to the treaty. Both parties organised a Unionist 'Day of Action' in March 1985, which saw businesses across the region shut down in protest against the proposed treaty (Bew and Gillespie, 1993: 196). Meanwhile, nationalists viewed the treaty as a positive development, which secured a role for Dublin in the constitutional affairs of Northern Ireland. For nationalist politicians, such as Brid Rogers of the SDLP, the treaty meant that 'there was no going back' to the Unionist control system (O'Connor, 1993: 373).

The 'Civil Society' Paradigm: The 1990s

While efforts to reintroduce a 'consociationalist' power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland continued into the nineties, they went hand-in-hand with a new 'civil society approach' (Byrnes, 2001: 328). The rationale for the civil society approach was that social identities could be 'reconstructed' by altering the patterns of social interaction between Protestants and Catholics in the region. In Northern Ireland, the necessity to oppose the 'other' community - or 'out-group' - has played a key role in social identity formation in both communities (p: 330). Children learn at an early age the images used to categorise members of the other community (Carter & Byrne, 2000: 56). The creation of the Community Relations Council (CRC) in 1990 marked the beginning of a process to encourage dialogue at grass roots level between Northern Ireland's two main communities. The CRC provided funding and advice to civil society groups who sought to "build trust, transparency, and openness" between Protestant and Catholic communities (p: 328). Throughout the 1990s, the CRC provided support to community

groups such as Corrymeela, who attempted to build sustainable links between the two communities (McCartney, 2003: 3). Evidence from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILTS) suggests that attitudes towards the 'other' community improved slightly during the early 1990s. Between 1989 and 1996, the proportion of survey respondents wishing to work in a mixed religion workplace increased from 84 percent to 95 percent (Hughes & Donnelly, 2004: 579). In addition, the proportion of respondents who believed that inter-communal relations would improve in the future increased from 32 percent in 1989 to 62 percent in 1998 (p.577). Although projects like Corrymeela may have made some inroads into the 'siege mentality' of both communities in the nineties, there was limited evidence to suggest that the civil society approach was directly responsible for these attitudinal changes.

The Good Friday Agreement: Post Conflict?

The Good Friday Agreement (1998) marked a return to the consociationalist power-sharing model created by the Sunningdale Agreement. The Belfast Agreement sought to deconstruct the siege mentality within both communities that had caused the collapse of the Sunningdale institutions two decades earlier. This was to be achieved through the re-conceptualisation of the role of the external 'ethno-guarantors' in Northern Ireland ((Byrnes, 2001: 341). Britain and the Republic of Ireland were to become the 'trustees' of the Northern Irish peace process, rather than antagonists involved in a power struggle over the disputed province. In addition, a series of political concessions were made to the unionists and nationalist political parties that had been involved in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement. Cross border-bodies, a long-term aspiration for nationalists since the ill-fated Council of Ireland, were a key component of the Belfast Agreement. Increased cooperation with the Republic of Ireland implied that Northern Ireland was no longer an 'internal' British concern (Williams & Jesse, 2001: 572). The constitution of the Republic of Ireland (1936) was amended to ease the security concerns of the unionist community. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution had originally

asserted the jurisdiction of the government of the Republic of Ireland over the six counties of Northern Ireland. This territorial 'claim' was removed under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

Moreover, the 'principle of consent' was designed to alleviate Protestant and Catholic concerns regarding the sustenance of their ethnic identity. Protestants could console themselves with the fact that the status quo would remain due to their greater numbers. Catholics could look forward to the prospect of a united Ireland once they became the largest community in Northern Ireland. Demographic studies suggested that this would happen soon, perhaps within a few generations. The number of people defining themselves as Protestant had declined since the start of the 'Troubles,' from 63.2 percent in 1961 to 50.6 percent in 1991. By 1991, 38.4 percent of the population of Northern Ireland defined themselves as Catholic (McGarry, 2002: 460). In sum, the Belfast Agreement provided incentives to persuade political representatives from both communities to participate in a power-sharing executive. The siege mentality of both communities was to be alleviated through constitutional reform in both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. In this thesis, the online communications of civil and uncivil groups in the region will be analysed to assess the extent to which Northern Ireland's two main communities still perceive politics as a zero-sum game.

NORTHERN IRISH TERRORISTS AND THE MASS MEDIA

Information Management: 'Psyops'

In this section, the Northern Irish conflict will be used to illustrate the nexus between news framing and terrorism. The Northern Irish conflict can be characterised as a 'propaganda war supported by a shooting war' (Clutterbuck, 1983: 87). Both terrorist organisations and the security forces in Northern Ireland have engaged in 'information management' operations, or 'psyops,' since the outbreak of the Northern Irish conflict.

'Psyops' refers to the use of propaganda to "influence the opinions, emotion, attitudes and behaviour of enemy, neutral and friendly groups during a military action" (Curtis, 1988: 229). In the early 1970s, the British authorities made conscious efforts to discourage publicity for both Loyalist violence and the killing of terrorist suspects by the security forces, while using terrorist atrocities to discredit their principal enemy, the Provisional Irish Republican Army. In 1971, the British Army recognised the importance of 'psyops' by creating an Information Policy Department in Northern Ireland. This department enjoyed a few early successes, most notably when the British media blamed the Provisional Irish Republican Army for the McGurk's bar atrocity in December 1971. The British army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) provided misleading information to journalists that linked the Provisional Irish Republican Army to the atrocity. In his article a day later, London Times journalist John Chartres reproduced the army's version of events 'word for word' (Curtis, 1988: 91). In reality, a group who identified themselves as the 'Empire Loyalists' had claimed responsibility for the attack on the North Belfast public bar.⁶⁹

Loyalist and Republican terrorist organisations responded to British 'disinformation' by creating their own brand of 'psyops,' delivered through their own organisations rather than the conventional mass media. Political 'front' organisations such as Sinn Fein and the Progressive Unionist Party played a critical role in countering the propaganda of both the British media and state.⁷⁰ As these were legal political parties, they were able to project the ideologies of their terrorist sponsors in local and national elections. In addition, Republicans sought to publicise their own narrative via the newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, which first appeared in June 1970 (Curtis, 1988: 264). This enabled Republicans – in particular those who supported the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) - to publish their own political views free from the constraints of the conventional mass media. Publications such as *The Loyalist* and *Combat* were launched to provide a similar narrative stream for Loyalist terrorist groups, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). However, these publications have arguably failed to generate the

high levels of publicity that would enable Loyalist and Republican terrorist organisations to counter the ‘psyops’ of the British state. Loyalist publications in particular have remained a minority interest, consumed mainly by hardcore members of each movement and sympathisers (Cooke, 2003: 81). Nevertheless, these publications have enabled both Loyalist and Republican terrorist groups to communicate more effectively with the conventional news media. For example, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* has provided a useful news source for journalists who seek statements from the Provisional IRA in relation to a policy issue (p 81).

Before the Good Friday Agreement, the British media routinely deprived Loyalist and Republican terrorists of the ‘oxygen of publicity.’ This censorship also affected political parties who had close links to paramilitary organisations, such as Sinn Fein. Despite Sinn Fein’s strong showing in the 1983 UK General Election, securing 13.4 percent of the vote and having its leader Gerry Adams elected in the West Belfast constituency, the party continued to receive minimal press coverage throughout the 1980s (Bew and Gillespie, 1993:170). For example, in the calendar year of 1988, Independent Television devoted just four minutes of its schedule to interviews with members of Sinn Fein, a political front for the Provisional Irish Republican Army.⁷¹ Meanwhile, Loyalists had little or no representation in local or national politics, as demonstrated by the Progressive Unionist Party’s failure to win a single council seat across Northern Ireland in the 1981 local election (Bruce, 2001:36). In a similar vein to Republicans, these groups received little or no routine media coverage during the Northern Irish conflict (Bruce, 1994: 62). This paucity of media coverage was due to several pieces of government legislation that sought to curb the ability of Loyalist and Republicans to expound their ideologies. In the Republic of Ireland, Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act (1960) allowed the Minister for Communications to prohibit television and radio appearances from groups “likely to promote crime or undermine the authority of the state” (Purcell, 1991: 53). By the mid 1970s, groups such as the Ulster Defence Association and Sinn Fein faced censorship in the Republic of Ireland. The ban applied to statements from these proscribed

organisations in the 'persuasive' media channels, namely television and radio. Although newspaper coverage of these groups was in theory still permitted, editors usually adhered to the regulations covering the 'persuasive media' (Purcell, 1991: 63).

The UK government imposed even greater restrictions on media coverage of Northern Irish terrorist organisations. In a similar vein to newspaper editors in the Republic of Ireland, British television and radio broadcasters voluntarily prohibited interviews with paramilitary groups throughout the 1970s. In addition, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television coverage of Northern Ireland was subject to a number of additional checks. All news reports covering the Northern Irish conflict had to be 'referred up' to the Controller of the Corporation, and subject to scrutiny by UK government ministers (Miller, 1995: 48). For example, Home Secretary Leon Brittan objected to the broadcast of a documentary entitled *Edge of the Union* in July 1985 because it featured an interview with Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein. Brittan, in a letter written to the chairperson of the BBC, claimed that the documentary would "enable McGuinness to advocate or justify the use of violence for political ends, and thus the murder or maiming of innocent people, before a huge public audience" (Bolton, 1990:161). The documentary was withdrawn, only to be shown later in a truncated format after several journalists threatened to resign (Bew & Gillespie, 1993: 186). In sum, the British and Irish mass media attempted to deny Northern Irish terrorists the 'oxygen of publicity' in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In spite of these restrictions, Northern Irish terrorists were still able to obtain publicity by perpetrating high profile atrocities during this period.

The UK Broadcasting Ban: Direct Censorship

The UK Broadcasting Ban, announced by Home Secretary Douglas Hurd on 19th October 1988, enabled the British government to censor groups that were not only legal but had elected representatives in the Westminster parliament (Maloney, 1991: 10). The Broadcasting Ban arguably had a twofold effect upon Republican terrorist organisations

and their political fronts. On the one hand, the ban made the democratic activities of political fronts such as Sinn Fein increasingly difficult, as they were no longer considered “worthy of inclusion in news reports” (p: 68). Sinn Fein members were not only forbidden from making direct statements on television, but were also banned from entering mainland Britain. On the other hand, the ban was counter-productive as it mobilised support for the Provisional IRA across the globe, as Irish diasporas reacted angrily to the censorship of Sinn Fein in the mass media (Maloney, 1991: 46). Miller (1994) suggests that the Broadcasting Ban helped push Sinn Fein to the ‘outer margins of political life,’ exempting both the terrorists and the British government from ‘effective scrutiny’ in Northern Ireland (p.68). Sinn Fein was no longer held accountable for the ‘military’ activities of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, as its members were unable to give direct interviews to large sections of the British media. Meanwhile, the British government was able to censor groups and individuals who were critical of British policy in the region under the terms of this legislation. However, Loyalist and Republican political fronts were able to circumvent the Broadcasting Ban. The broadcast media were able to circumvent the ban by employing unseen actors to voice the words of Sinn Fein politicians. As the ban did not apply to Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs), the media were also able to broadcast statements from political fronts, such as Sinn Fein, during local and national elections. In addition, parliamentary speeches were exempt from censorship under the terms of the ban, enabling Members of Parliament such as Ken Livingstone to lobby against the censorship of Republicans in Westminster (Maloney, 29: 1991).

‘Qualified Humanisation’ of Terrorists and Megaphone Diplomacy

In the late 1980s, the UK government commissioned a series of television commercials for the ‘Confidential Telephone Number’ from local agency McCann Erickson. These adverts reflected a shift in the attitude of the British government towards both Loyalist and Republican terrorists. The misinformation spread by the Information Policy Department in the aftermath of the McGurk’s bar atrocity sought to demonise the

'ruthless killers' of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. In contrast, the 'Confidential Telephone Number' commercials appeared to offer a 'qualified humanisation' of terrorists, portraying them as 'victims of circumstances' (Finlayson & Hughes, 2000: 397). For example, one of these commercials features the story of a father and son, set to the music of 'Cats in the Cradle' by Harry Chapin. In the commercial, the father is too busy being a terrorist to pay attention to his son, and ends up in prison. Upon his release, he has grown apart from his son, who has become involved in terrorism just like his father. It concludes with the father standing at the graveside of his son, killed due to his involvement in a terrorist murder. The voice-over informs viewers, 'don't suffer it, change it,' inviting people to contact the Confidential Telephone number (p.404).

The McCann Eriksson 'Confidential Telephone' advertisements arguably formed part of a 'megaphone diplomacy' that originated in the early 1990s. Megaphone diplomacy is the "practice of engaging in dialogue and sending messages via the media to other parties in a conflict, in a situation where it is not possible or desirable to conduct formal negotiations for whatever reason" (Sparre, 2001: 89). As discussed earlier, a combination of the Broadcasting Ban and editorial self-censorship had militated against the regular appearance of Sinn Fein members on television since the outbreak of the 'Troubles.' By the early 1990s, there were no open channels of communication between the British government and Sinn Fein. For example, the 'back' channel had broken down in response to Unionist anger at the exposure of this covert communication between Republicans and the British government in an article by *The Observer* in November 1993 (p.92). This channel had previously allowed the UK government to supply the Republican movement with advance copies of speeches by the Northern Irish Secretary of State and updates on the ongoing talks between the main Northern Irish political parties (p.92). The mass media became a critical communication channel between the UK government and the Republican movement in the mid 1990s as it attempted to deliver a peace settlement in Northern Ireland.⁷²

From war to peace frame?

Prior to the negotiations that led to the Belfast Agreement, Loyalist and Republican groups employed a 'war' frame in their media statements. This frame depicted these organisations as civil society actors engaged in a legitimate war against their opponents. Invariably, the terrorist organisations themselves issued statements to the press to reiterate the legitimacy of their military activities. Both Loyalist and Republican terror groups used language in their press releases that indicated that they saw themselves as legitimate armies with military structures and ranks (Cooke, 2003:79). For example, the Provisional IRA frequently referred to its Army Council and Prisoners of War on statements released to the media during the 1980s (p.79). Paramilitary statements were also published in newspapers linked to Loyalist and Republican terrorist organisations, such as *An Phoblacht* and *Combat*. The 'war' frame was also expressed through paramilitary 'shows of strength,' which saw journalists invited to Loyalist or Republican areas to witness hooded gunmen discharge firearms into the air in front of assembled supporters (p.80). Loyalist and Republicans also used posters and wall murals to convey the impression that they were legitimate armies of national liberation, as opposed to illegal terrorist organisations. For example, Danny Devenney, the designer of many Sinn Fein posters in the 1980s, used images inspired by the propaganda of the African National Congress (ANC) to highlight the similarities between the two national liberation movements.⁷³

The Republican and Loyalist ceasefires marked the beginning of the normalisation of relations between terrorist-linked parties and the two [British and Irish] governments (Cooke, 2003: 84). During the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement, Loyalist and Republicans were given unrestricted access to the mass media. At the same time, the media adopted a peace frame, which created a bond between pro-peace groups from both camps. This frame made a clear distinction between the political fronts that were engaged in the process and the violence associated with their terrorist sponsors

(Wolfsfeld, 2001:36). While dissident Republicans, such as the Continuity IRA, remain actively engaged in terrorism, the majority of Northern Irish terrorists have maintained their ceasefires throughout this period.⁷⁴ This research will determine whether the peace frame has influenced the online communications of all Loyalists and Republicans, or whether some groups use their websites to legitimise their historic or contemporary military campaigns. As discussed in this chapter, legislation such as the UK Broadcasting Ban (1988) restricted media coverage of these terrorist groups during the Northern Irish conflict. Loyalists and Republicans developed newspapers, such as *An Phoblacht* and *Combat*, in order that they could circumvent the ideological refractions of the media. At a time when many of these groups were engaged in armed struggle, these publications facilitated intra-group communication and provided a propaganda tool for their terrorist sponsors. While political fronts such as Sinn Fein now enjoy routine access to the media courtesy of their support for the peace process, dissidents on both sides are arguably as peripheral now as they were during the era of the Broadcasting Ban. The research presented in this thesis will determine whether dissident Loyalist and Republicans are using their websites to counter the peace frame, in a similar fashion to their use of alternative media channels during the 'Troubles.'

Table 2.1 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's media models (1963).

| Model | Function | Media Ownership | Freedom of expression as absolute right |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Authoritarian | advance government policies | State Monopoly | No |
| Libertarian | Encourage critical thinking, check government, Entertain. | Private Enterprise and Public Service | Yes |
| Social Responsibility | Represent societal interests e.g. citizens, government | Private Enterprise and Public Service | No |
| Soviet | Advance government policies | State Monopoly | No |

Table 2.2: Relationships between Terrorism and the Mass Media

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Passive Attitude | Relative Indifference |
| Media-Oriented | Total Break from Society |

Chapter 3 The Peace Frame? Comparing the websites of Northern Irish political fronts and political parties

INTRODUCTION

Goffman (1974) asserts that frames are the ‘schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences or information’ (p.21). Some commentators suggest that the Northern Irish media helped build cross-community support for the Good Friday Agreement (1998) through their adoption of a ‘peace frame.’ This peace frame created a bond between pro-peace groups from both camps, making a clear distinction between the political fronts that were engaged in the process and the violence associated with their terrorist sponsors (Wolfsfeld, 2001:36). In this chapter, the peace frame will be analysed through the lens of Loyalist and Republican political fronts, defined here as organisations “for and under the control of a terrorist group” (Richards, 2001:73). The master frames of Northern Irish political parties will be examined to assess the extent to which they have been influenced by the peace frame employed by the Northern Irish media in the late nineties. In addition, the websites of political fronts and constitutional political parties are analysed to determine whether these groups have realised the potential of the Web as a tool for mobilisation and organisational linkage. The study suggests that the websites of organisations closely linked to Northern Irish terrorist groups not only do not differ markedly from those of ‘civil’ groups, but also do not seem to offer any new dimension of terrorist threat. All political fronts use language on their websites that suggests they are cultural democrats, as opposed to the public relations department of a terrorist organisation.

THE PEACE FRAME

In this section, the evolution of the peace frame will be traced from three perspectives, namely the mass media, the two [British and Irish] governments, and Northern Irish

terrorist organisations. Levin (2005) defines a frame as a “publicly presented definition of a situation containing three elements, a problem, protagonist and a solution” (p.84). For Northern Ireland’s two communities, the problem and protagonists have remained unchanged since the beginning of the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’ in 1968. Nationalists remain committed to securing both a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and the creation of a socialist 32 county Irish Republic. Meanwhile, Unionists remain fervent supporters of the Union with Great Britain and oppose integration into a 32 county Irish Republic. However, the solutions identified by some terrorist organisations have altered by virtue of their support for the Good Friday Agreement. Paramilitaries on both sides, who had previously been committed to armed struggle, agreed to use exclusively democratic means in pursuit of their group objectives and oppose “any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose.”⁷⁵ In turn, political parties linked to pro-Agreement terrorist groups have altered their frames. These groups have sought to differentiate themselves from the violence associated with their terrorist sponsors.

Political actors used the peace frame to build cross-community support for the Good Friday Agreement. Supporters of the Belfast Agreement differentiated political fronts from the violence associated with their respective terrorist organisations, portraying parties such as Sinn Fein as cultural democrats, committed to democracy come what may” (Richards, 2001: 83). This was necessary to convince sceptics within both communities that these terrorist organisations were sincere in their commitment to using exclusively peaceful means. Critics of the Belfast Agreement had claimed it allowed terrorist organisations to participate in elected bodies while retaining the option to return to political violence should they grow frustrated with the peace process. In the opinion of anti-Agreement unionists, political fronts were only functional democrats, their support for the Good Friday Agreement perceived as instrumental and even opportunistic (Pridham, 1990:14). Clearly, if the electorate shared this view it would be harder to mobilise support for the inclusion of these political fronts in the newly constituted Stormont Assembly. Pro-peace groups from both communities had to be convinced that

the Good Friday Agreement was the only means of securing permanent peace in the province.

The media and the peace frame

The media environment within Northern Ireland helped expose both communities to this peace frame. The worldview, or master frame, of each media organisation reflected their support for the Belfast Agreement and, by implication, the inclusion of terrorist-linked groups in the newly created power-sharing institutions. Between July 1997 and April 1999, newspapers on both sides of the sectarian divide published editorials urging their readership to support the peace process. For example, the *Belfast Telegraph* published 62 editorials in favour of the peace process during this period.⁷⁶ The *Irish News*, traditionally considered a nationalist newspaper in favour of a united Ireland, published 64 editorials in support of the peace process during this period (p.34). Elsewhere, national and international news media organisations conformed to the framing of the Northern Irish media, even in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing in August 1998. Wolfsfeld (2001) suggests that the media ‘amplified’ the peace frame after an atrocity that could have been a major setback for the peace process (p.36).

It is too simplistic to suggest that the framing of the Northern Irish mass media alone united pro-peace groups in both communities, or convinced them that terrorist-linked groups should be included in the Stormont Assembly. Chong and Druckman (2007) argue that the critical determinants of framing effect include not just the strength and prevalence of the frame, but also the knowledge and motivation of its recipients (p.110). Evidently, the media were responsible for the strength and prevalence of the peace frame between 1997 and 1999, as illustrated by the number of ‘pro-peace’ editorials in newspapers such as the *Irish News*. The media did not deploy an alternative frame in their editorials during this period, leading to accusations from anti-Agreement Unionists that they had stifled any serious debate about the risks associated with the peace process

(Wolfsfeld, 2001: 31). Yet, the Northern Irish media's peace frame also reflected public opinion within the province. If these media organisations were to retain their audience share, their editorials had to adopt a political perspective that was acceptable to both communities (p.36). There was sufficient evidence to suggest that the majority of people within Northern Ireland favoured the peace process, particularly after May 1998 when 71.1 percent voted 'yes' in the referendum on the Good Friday Agreement.⁷⁷ Moreover, the media routinely projected the peace frame through their coverage of political actors that actively supported the inclusion of political fronts in the peace process, such as the UK and Irish governments. Many pro-peace groups, such as the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, had already adopted this master frame during the peace negotiations, and in the referendum campaign that followed the Good Friday Agreement.

Megaphone diplomacy: antecedent for the peace frame?

Richards (2001) suggests that the two [UK and Irish] governments 'legitimised' the IRA, its political front, and armed struggle through their support for the Good Friday Agreement (p.77). The use of demilitarisation as a quid pro quo for decommissioning had reinforced "Republican impressions that they had been right all along" (p.77). Irrespective of the choreography that lay behind efforts to secure IRA decommissioning, it would appear that the two governments viewed the 'Troubles' through the lens of the peace frame, and wished others to do the same. Essentially, both governments favoured an all-inclusive peace process, one in which terrorists were encouraged to abandon political violence and work towards their objectives through their political affiliates. This process arguably began with the 'megaphone diplomacy' that surrounded the clarification of the Downing Street Declaration (1993).⁷⁸ Both governments issued a series of strategic statements designed to persuade paramilitaries on both sides to call ceasefires and create a context in which negotiations could take place with the mainstream political parties. For example, the declaration called for an end to all forms of paramilitary violence, stating that only democratically mandated parties, who were committed to "exclusively peaceful

methods,” could participate in negotiations regarding the future of Northern Ireland.⁷⁹ This marked the first time that the two governments had talked publicly about the inclusion of terrorist-linked groups in the peace process. The frame adopted by the UK and Irish government reflected a change in their approach to the management of the Northern Irish conflict. After all, the political fronts invited to join the peace negotiations were the same organisations that had been denied the ‘oxygen of publicity’ in the previous decade.

Newspaper columns become the arena for the clarification of the declaration, as there was no channel of communication open between the British government and Sinn Fein during this period. UK government ministers presented information to journalists in ‘newsworthy formats,’ such as public speeches and press conferences, in the expectation that they would be picked up by Sinn Fein representatives in the press (Sparre, 2001: 90). The UK government issued a number of statements to the media suggesting that the Republican movement would gain entry into the political process if they declared a permanent ceasefire, even if they did not accept the terms of the declaration (p.102). Simultaneously, Sinn Fein used its press releases to call for face-to-face meetings with UK government Ministers to clarify the declaration (p: 97). The subsequent Loyalist and Republican ceasefires (1994) paved the way for a ‘normalisation of relations’ between parties such as Sinn Fein and the UK and Irish governments (Cooke, 2003:84). From 1994 onwards, terrorist-linked groups were given regular access to the news media, in sharp contrast to the censorship associated with the Broadcasting Ban a few years earlier (see chapter 2). These political fronts had become “woven into the tapestry of daily news” through their contact with the White House, regular meetings with the British Prime Minister, and their participation in negotiations over the future of Northern Ireland (p.83).

Terrorist frames after the Good Friday Agreement

The frames adopted by Loyalist and Republican terrorists altered by virtue of their support for the peace process. The nexus between pro-Agreement terrorist organisations and their political fronts had arguably shifted in favour of the latter in 2001. Richards (2001) asserts that the 9/11 attacks on Washington and New York led to a transfer of power within the Republican movement, Sinn Fein becoming the “driving force of the movement,” in place of the PIRA Army Council (p: 84). Concurrently, Sinn Fein received unprecedented level of popular support, the party receiving 17.3 percent of the vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly Elections (June 1998) and achieving two ministerial portfolios in the new Stormont Executive.⁸⁰ One explanation for this electoral success was that Sinn Fein had adopted a political agenda closely modelled on that of the largest Nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). Sinn Fein was no longer a subservient organisation projecting a ‘war frame’ that justified acts of political violence (see chapter 2). Equality, human rights and democracy had become central planks of Sinn Fein political manifestos since the Belfast Agreement (McGovern, 2004: 623). Bruce (2001) asserts that Sinn Fein was able to compete with the SDLP by “not just be wanting some different things but also by wanting the same things more aggressively” (p.40). In order to appeal to nationalist voters, the party differentiated itself from the Provisional IRA. Sinn Fein claimed that it had a legitimate right to be involved in the political process “purely on the strength of the party’s electoral mandate,” rather than as negotiators acting on behalf of the Provisional IRA (O’Docherty, 1998: 158).

The pro-Agreement Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), a political affiliate of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), also altered its political discourse after the Good Friday Agreement. The PUP presented a liberal political agenda that was critical of unionists who opposed the Belfast Agreement. The party claimed that these groups had a lack of confidence in the power of unionism, and that they should follow the lead of the PUP in dealing with its opponents within the Stormont Assembly (Bruce, 2001:45). However, the

PUP and the other Loyalist political parties have failed to match the electoral performance of Sinn Fein since 1998. For example, the PUP has received no more than 1.4 percent of the votes cast in elections since 1998 (McAuley, 2004: 537). Meanwhile, the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), political affiliates of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), failed to win a single seat in the 1998 Assembly Elections (Cooke, 2003: 89). These parties were arguably unable to emulate Sinn Fein's relationship with the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), as the Democratic Unionist Party was already established within the unionist community as the primary opposition to the Ulster Unionist Party (p.40). Overall, Loyalist terrorist organisations have struggled to find a satisfactory role in the new political landscape ushered in by the Good Friday Agreement. Bruce (2004) asserts, in the wake of the Belfast Agreement, the intended supporting population for Loyalist terrorist organisations have felt less of a need to create a range of institutions outside or against those of the state (p: 505). In effect, the Provisional IRA ceasefire may have removed the need for Loyalist terrorist organisations to protect their communities.

Anti-Agreement Groups and the Peace Frame

The peace frame was not accepted by all political organisations in Northern Ireland. Dissidents on both sides of the sectarian divide rejected the Good Friday Agreement. These groups disagreed with the solution put forward in the peace frame, namely that terrorist organisations should pursue their objectives through exclusively democratic means in the new power-sharing institutions. On the Republican side, groups such as the Real IRA formed due to discontent at concessions made by Sinn Fein during the peace process. The Real IRA claimed that the Sinn Fein leadership had jettisoned a number of core Republican principles by abandoning the 'armed struggle' (Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2004). However, these groups have failed to mobilise support amongst the Northern Irish electorate for their master frame. For example, a poll conducted for the BBC Northern Ireland television programme *Hearts and Minds* (October 2002) found

that only 7.1 percent of respondents in the West Belfast constituency supported dissident Republican organisations, such as Republican Sinn Fein. In the same poll, a clear majority of respondents (49.8 percent) stated that Sinn Fein “best represented” the view of the West Belfast electorate (Tonge, 2004: 688).

The peace frame has done little to convince anti-Agreement Unionists that terrorist-linked groups should be involved in power-sharing institutions. The release of paramilitary prisoners, police reform, and the involvement of Sinn Fein in the Northern Ireland Executive has proven particularly contentious for anti-Agreement Unionists. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has been the most vociferous opponents of the Good Friday Agreement, with its leader Ian Paisley claiming it was a “complete and total sell-out of the province.”⁸¹ Loyalist terrorist organisations have also grown increasingly disenchanted with the peace process. Nearly all of the Loyalist terrorist organisations that initially supported the Belfast Agreement have been ‘specified’ as ‘active’ terrorist organisations at one time or another since 1998. For example, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was specified in October 2001, as the UK Home Office believed that the terror group had once again been engaged in violence.⁸² Nevertheless, the Progressive Unionist Party has remained a fervent supporter of the peace process, despite its military organisation returning to violence. In sum, the peace frame has not become the master frame for all political actors involved in the Northern Irish ‘Troubles.’ Dissident terrorist organisations on both sides do not support the power-sharing institutions, nor have committed to using exclusively peaceful means to achieve their objectives. In addition, the Democratic Unionist Party rejects the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, as it opposes the participation of terrorist-linked groups in the power-sharing institutions. These groups frame the Northern Irish conflict with reference to their own values, as opposed to the peace frame projected by the two governments and the Northern Irish media in the late nineties. The chapter now turns to a consideration of how these different frames are projected online.

THE CIVIL WEB: POLITICAL FRONTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES ONLINE

Sample

The material posted on the websites of political parties was analysed to determine the strength of the peace frame. Constitutional political parties were defined as those parties that have always been against the use of political violence (Cooke, 2003:83). This category included not just Unionist and Nationalist political parties, but also left wing political organisations such as the Socialist Environmental Alliance. Of the 13 constitutional political parties that participated in the Assembly Elections, the Independent Labour Party and the Northern Ireland Unionist Party were the only organisations that did not maintain an official web presence during the period of data collection (See Table 3.1).

[Table 3.1 here]

Six political fronts - two Loyalist and four Republican - were identified with reference to both the First Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission (April 2004) and the Conflict Archive on the Internet (See Table 3.2). Many of the organisations defined in the study as political ‘fronts’ have publicly denied their complicity in the military activities of proscribed terrorist organisations, despite compelling evidence to the contrary. Sinn Fein’s inclusion as the Provisional IRA’s political front was based upon evidence presented by the Independent Monitoring Commission, a body formed to assess paramilitary activity in the province. The IMC report states that with regard to the link between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA, “senior members of Sinn Fein are in a position to exercise considerable influence on PIRA’s major policy decisions” (Independent Monitoring Commission, 2004).

[Table 3.2 here]

The Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) was included as it was the political front of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). The IMC report states that the Irish National Liberation Army is the “paramilitary wing of the Irish Republican Socialist Party” (Independent Monitoring Commission, 2004). The other Republican political fronts had links to dissident Republican terrorist organisations such as the Continuity IRA. Republican Sinn Fein (RSF) was included due to its links with the Continuity Army Council, widely believed to be a synonym for the proscribed Continuity IRA. According to security sources, the Continuity IRA is in effect the “military wing” of Republican Sinn Fein (Conflict Archive on the Internet, 2005). Despite their repeated denials to the contrary, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement was included in the study as it was the “political wing” of the Real IRA (Conflict Archive on the Internet, 2005). The Real IRA, although not listed as a terrorist organisation in the UK Terrorism Act (2000), had claimed responsibility for a number of high profile atrocities such as the Omagh bombing in August 1998.

The two Loyalist political fronts identified in the study had links to four of the seven pro-union terrorist organisations currently proscribed in the United Kingdom. Since the dissolution of the Ulster Democratic Party in November 2001, the Ulster Defence Association has received political counsel from an alternative Loyalist advisory body, the Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG). The IMC report asserts that the Ulster Defence Association is ‘associated’ with the Ulster Political Research Group and “operates through other paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Freedom Fighters” (Independent Monitoring Commission, 2004). The Tullycarnet UPRG was included as it was the only branch of the Ulster Political Research Group to maintain a website during the period of data collection. The Progressive Unionist Party was the other Loyalist political front included in the study. The IMC report states that the Progressive Unionist Party exerts “appreciable influence” upon the activities of both the Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commandos (Independent Monitoring Commission, 2004).

Website Registration Data

The majority of the websites under analysis were registered with Internet Hosts based in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland (see Table 3.3). For example, a subsidiary of a local television station, UTV Internet, hosted the websites of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and the Workers Party. However, it should be noted that companies based in Canada hosted the websites of two political fronts, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement and the Progressive Unionist Party.⁸³ Irrespective of where these websites were hosted, the webmasters tended not to provide personal information on domain registration websites, such as Nominet (www.nominet.co.uk) and Whois (www.whois.net). The Green Party proved exceptional, providing extensive information on whois.net as to how internet users could contact its webmaster, such as a registered postal address in Germany.⁸⁴ Yet, the omission of this information was not in and of itself evidence of the webmaster's complicity in illegal activity. Both civil and uncivil actors may request that domain registration companies, such as Whois, refrain from publishing their contact details online. Furthermore, as these websites were registered in Europe and North America, they were not expected to incite political violence or solicit resources on behalf of proscribed terrorist groups. These webmasters were expected to self-regulate online, due to the anti-terrorist regime governing the behaviour of pro-terrorist webmasters.

[Table 3.3 here]

Research Design: Website Function

The framing and function of websites maintained by Northern Irish political parties was analysed during the study. Data was collected during May 2004 to enable a comparison of material posted online by these groups.⁸⁵ Website function was analysed to determine

how these groups used their websites to mobilise supporters. Cyberoptimists suggest that the Internet can have a critical multiplier effect for civil society organisations via improvement in organisational linkage, bureaucratic efficiency and the advertisement of group values to a potential global audience. The study assessed whether Northern Irish political parties and political fronts were realising this potential, particularly in terms of organisational linkage and mobilisation. Irish Republicans have received support from diaspora communities since the beginning of the Northern Irish conflict, particularly from Irish – Catholic communities in the United States (O’Dochartaigh, 2003: 1). Conversely, Northern Ireland’s loyalist and unionist communities have been unable to mobilise a similar emigrant population, despite a large number of people with Ulster Protestant ancestry residing in North America (p.1). The study assessed whether the Internet enabled Loyalist political fronts to create international support networks similar to those established by their Republican counterparts in the late 1960s. It also analysed whether Republican political fronts used the Web to mobilise their established support networks. This was determined through an analysis of the links available on each website. Finally, the study determined how terrorist-linked groups and constitutional political parties present their frames online. It was anticipated that only political parties with large financial resources would be able to afford innovations such as video streaming on their websites.

These websites were located using the Google search engine and archived for future research.⁸⁶ In order to assess their function, each website was scored with reference to a coding scheme. This allowed a direct comparison between the websites of political fronts and constitutional political parties. It also enabled the websites to be ranked in terms of their interactivity, presentation, organisational linkage and online recruitment. The coding scheme was similar to the coding framework devised by Rachel Gibson and Stephen Ward to analyse the function and effectiveness of party websites (Gibson & Ward, 2000: p.307). A point was given to a website if it included one of the features identified in the coding scheme. These points were then compiled to give an overall score in each of the

four categories measuring website function, namely interactivity, target audience, presentation and organisational linkage (See Table 3.4). The presentation, interactivity, and target audience categories provided evidence of how these groups used their website to communicate with target audiences. The organisational linkage category provided an insight into how these organisations used the Web to link with like-minded groups online. A website received a point if it provided links pointing towards the websites of external institutions, such as the news media and government agencies. For the purposes of the study, solidarity websites were defined as those that expressed support for the ideology of the actor under analysis. This did not include websites dedicated to the Irish language or the Orange Order, as these were considered cultural rather than political projections of the two traditions in Northern Ireland. International terrorist websites were those that offered support for an international ethno-nationalist movement, such as Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA). This feature was included to determine whether Loyalists and Republican exposed their links to international terrorist organisations on their websites. A point was also awarded to organisations that provided a large number of links on their websites, defined here as a minimum of 15 links.

[Table 3.4 here]

Online Framing

The study also used qualitative frames to analyse the websites of political parties and political fronts. Online framing was analysed by examining the language and images used by these groups on their websites. It was anticipated that some terrorist-linked parties - such as Sinn Fein - would purposely remove references to their terrorist sponsors to suggest they were cultural democrats. This reflected their support for the power-sharing institutions created under the terms of the Belfast Agreement. However, the study was also designed to test the hypothesis that the Internet provides a space for dissidents to oppose this peace frame. As such, political fronts and constitutional political parties that

opposed the Belfast Agreement were expected to use their websites to criticise its supporters, albeit for different reasons. The Tullycarnet UPRG and the Democratic Unionist Party would reject the peace frame because they believed that Sinn Fein was only functionally democratic, with the Republican movement likely to return to armed struggle if it failed to achieve its objectives through politics. Dissident Republicans were also expected to reject the peace frame on their websites. Groups such as Republican Sinn Fein would claim Sinn Fein had abandoned core Republican principles, and use their website to justify the use of political violence to achieve a united Ireland.

RESULTS

Online Framing

The majority of political actors under analysis used frames that were similar to the peace frame projected by the mass media in the late nineties. Themes such as ‘equality’ and ‘shared responsibility’ were prevalent on the websites of many political fronts and constitutional political parties. These themes evoked comparison with the editorials of the *Belfast Telegraph* in 1999, which had attempted to create a bond between pro-peace groups in the Protestant and Catholic communities. The Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and Sinn Fein employed virtually identical frames on their respective websites, stressing their support for both the equality agenda and a 32 county Irish Republic. The Social Democratic and Labour Party asserted on its website that it was committed to building new agreed Ireland based on “equality for all, partnership and respect for difference.”⁸⁷ Simultaneously, the headline on the Sinn Fein website stated, “The task of building an Ireland of equals is a huge and exciting challenge for all of us.”⁸⁸ This theme of ‘equality’ resonated with the material posted online by the Progressive Unionist Party, the Loyalist political front with links to the Ulster Volunteer Force. Its website detailed how the Progressive Unionist Party supported both the ‘principle of consent’ and a ‘sharing of responsibility’ between Unionists and Nationalists.⁸⁹ Similar

themes were evident on the websites of all pro-Agreement political parties. For example, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland asserted on its website that “cultural participation and self-expression should be developed in the context of respect and understanding of our own and others’ heritage.”⁹⁰

Anti-Agreement Frames

The peace frame did not influence the framing of all Northern Irish political groups online. Two constitutional political parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP), used their websites to criticise the Belfast Agreement. Both parties supported the exclusion of Sinn Fein from the Northern Ireland Executive until the Provisional IRA had decommissioned all its arms and declared a permanent end to its terrorist campaign. For example, the Democratic Unionist Party’s Seven Principles stated, “terrorist structures and weaponry must be removed before the bar to the Stormont Executive can be opened.”⁹¹ The UKUP also stated on its homepage that it was opposed to the “immoral provisions of the Belfast Agreement that have violated the basic principles of democracy by installing the frontmen for terror into Government.”⁹² Anti-Agreement Unionists used their websites to suggest that Sinn Fein should be removed from the peace process as they were functionally democratic, their commitment to democracy both opportunistic and ephemeral. This was in total contrast to the peace frame that suggested Sinn Fein had to be included in a peace process that represented all shades of political opinion.

Dissident Republican political fronts also attacked the peace frame on their websites. These groups rarely referred to the political entity of Northern Ireland on their websites. For example, the Irish Republican Socialist Party website repeatedly referred to Northern Ireland as a ‘colonial statelet’ or the ‘occupied six counties,’ thus denying the legitimacy of its position within the United Kingdom.⁹³ Dissident Republicans used frames that justified the use of armed struggle to achieve the reunification of Ireland. Republican

Sinn Fein President, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, asserted on its website, “All necessary means must be used to restore Ireland and her resources to the Irish people, not precluding as a last resort the use of physical force against the British Army of Occupation.”⁹⁴ The 32 County Sovereignty Movement also used its website to attack the Good Friday Agreement. The 32CSM website stated, “The Good Friday Agreement, built as it is around continuing partition and a Unionist veto, makes the possibility of Britain declaring their intention to withdraw even less likely.”⁹⁵ These political fronts attacked Sinn Fein for participating in the peace process, claiming that they had abandoned core Republican principles for a peace agreement that fell far short of achieving their objectives.

Political Fronts and Grass Roots Politics

There was little to differentiate between constitutional political parties and the terrorist-linked parties in terms of their discussion of local politics. Political parties such as the Ulster Unionist Party posted policy documents on their websites for public consumption, covering issues as diverse as Provisional IRA decommissioning and the proposed location of a John Lewis store near Lisburn.⁹⁶ Terrorist-linked parties also used their websites to discuss local political issues. The Progressive Unionist Party used its website to detail a list of policies that addressed the interests of their voters, including proposals to reintroduce student grants and tackle homelessness.⁹⁷ Sinn Fein also kept an archive of policy documents, conference speeches and party election manifestos on its website.

For the smaller political fronts, grass roots politics formed the centrepiece of their websites. The Tullycarnet UPRG website defined neither the strategic objectives of the UPRG, nor its position on whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom. Instead, the website focused entirely upon issues affecting the Tullycarnet district in Belfast, demonstrating the UPRG’s role as a community group. For example, plans for the redevelopment of a local playground were published on the UPRG website,

with local residents invited to post their views on this development.⁹⁸ Republican Sinn Fein also highlighted the work of its local councillors on its website. One of the headline stories on the website highlighted a Republican Sinn Fein councillor's efforts to create more effective rubbish disposal systems in County Wicklow.⁹⁹ The focus on local politics suggested these groups were cultural democrats, as opposed to the political wing of an armed terrorist organisation.

Self-identification

Pro-Agreement political fronts did not disclose their links to terrorist organisations on their websites. The Provisional IRA appeared little more than a historical footnote on the Sinn Fein website, featuring only in the 'History' section. In this section, Republican 'armed struggle' in 1969 was justified in the context of Unionist political discrimination and British military aggression against Catholics in the region.¹⁰⁰ The two Loyalist political fronts, the Tullycarnet UPRG and the Progressive Unionist Party, also omitted references to their respective terrorist organisations from their websites. For example, the Progressive Unionist Party used its website to respond to an IMC report that alleged it had close ties with the Ulster Volunteer Force. This was the only reference to the UVF throughout the entire website.

These political fronts demonstrated their credentials as cultural democrats through the images they used on their homepage. None of these websites featured emblems associated with their respective paramilitary organisations. The Sinn Fein homepage featured pictures of its elected representatives, framed against a distinctive blue background.¹⁰¹ This was somewhat surprising as blue is a colour traditionally associated with the mainstream Unionist parties in the region, while Nationalist and Republican parties have traditionally favoured green and red on their political manifestos. The two Loyalist political fronts also used colours and emblems on their websites that were not traditionally associated with their respective 'military' organisations. For example, the

Progressive Unionist Party homepage framed its leader, David Ervine, against a white background, as opposed to the blue associated with Unionist and Loyalist political parties. The Union Jack, a key emblem of the party in its election manifestos, was conspicuous by its absence from this website. Overall, these political fronts used their web presence to project a key principle of the peace frame, namely that they were cultural rather than functional democrats.

Dissident Republicans did refer to their terrorist organisations on their websites. They also used language that revealed their support for political violence. For example, the Irish Republican Socialist Party website carried a number of statements from its military wing, the proscribed Irish National Liberation Army. One statement referred to an assault on an alleged police informer, warning that “if his family think he is above any responsibility to the local community for his actions, let this be a salutary lesson.”¹⁰² This website also depicted members of the movement as ‘comrades,’ reflecting not just the military ambitions of the movement but also its Marxist principles.¹⁰³ The 32 County Sovereignty Movement also revealed its links to its terrorist sponsors, the Real IRA, on its website. The constitution and membership rules of the party indicated that, at the very least, there were cross-cutting cleavages between the 32 County Sovereignty Movement and the Real IRA. The constitution asserted that the 32 CSM was not interested in participating in elections and intended to “build a movement that can one day convince Britain” to withdraw from Ireland.¹⁰⁴

Conversely, dissident Republicans used images on their homepages that suggested they were cultural democrats. For example, the Republican Sinn Fein homepage featured a series of photographs of its elected representatives, alongside the party emblem. The 32 County Sovereignty Movement did not feature any images on its website. However, the colour scheme did reflect the ideological position of the group, the use of green text against a white background evoking comparison with the green white and gold flag of the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Republican Socialist Party proved exceptional amongst the

political fronts under analysis. Its website used 'militaristic' images on its website that suggested it was aligned with a proscribed terrorist organisation. The 'Roll of Honour' section provided an image of two hooded gunmen flanked by the names of every [INLA] 'volunteer' that had lost their life during the Troubles.¹⁰⁵ In sum, the content analysis suggested that anti-Agreement political fronts were functional democrats. These groups were more likely to reveal their terrorist sponsors than pro-Agreement groups such as Sinn Fein.

Website Function

Organisational Linkage

Overall, constitutional political parties demonstrated a greater range of organisational linkages on their websites than Loyalist and Republican political fronts (See Table 3.5). The Green Party and the Social Democratic Labour Party were the only political parties to achieve the maximum score in this category. The Green Party of Northern Ireland website provided links not only to the websites of environmental pressure groups such as Greenpeace (www.greenpeace.org), but also to a number of non-political websites, such as Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk).¹⁰⁶ The Social Democratic Labour Party provided links on its website not only to the sites of ideologically similar political parties such as Fianna Fail (www.fiannafail.ie) but also to civil society organisations such as the Ulster Scots Agency (www.ulsterscotsagency.com).¹⁰⁷ However, a number of political parties, including the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland and the Workers Party, did not provide any links on their websites.

[Table 3.5 here]

Republican political fronts did not use their websites to network with terrorist groups who shared their left-wing political ideologies. This was an unexpected observation given

the historic links between the Republican movement and ethno-nationalist terrorist groups such as Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2004). Instead, Sinn Fein provided links to the websites of community groups such as the Bloody Sunday Trust (www.bloodysundaytrust.org) and British–Irish Rights Watch (www.birw.org). The 32 CSM provided no links on its website. The Irish Republican Socialist Party proved exceptional in the study, providing links to such diverse international groups as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (www.pflp-pal.org), Jaleo (www.geocities.com.independentistas) and the Kurdish Workers Party (<http://pkk.org/pkk>).¹⁰⁸

There was little to differentiate between Loyalist and Republican parties in terms of the organisational linkages visible on their websites. However, there was no evidence to suggest that Loyalist parties were using the Internet to mobilise support from diaspora communities. The Progressive Unionist Party was the political front that achieved the highest score in this category, providing links to the websites of external news media organisations, such as the Belfast Telegraph (www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk), and government websites such as the Northern Ireland Assembly (www.ni-assembly.gov.uk).¹⁰⁹ Although the website provided a large number of links, none of these pointed towards the websites of diaspora communities that expressed support for Loyalist paramilitaries. The other Loyalist political front included in the study, the Tullycarnet UPRG, did not provide any links on its website. In sum, the study suggested that constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland have been more effective than political fronts at harnessing the ‘interconnectedness’ offered by the internet, using their websites to connect with external political, cultural, and media organisations online.

Interactivity

Constitutional political parties offered a high degree of interactivity on their websites (See Table 3.6). In some cases, smaller political parties provided more interactive

features on their websites than those with greater human and financial resources. This was demonstrated by the access given to political leaders on these websites. While the Ulster Unionist Party website provided the telephone number of the constituency office of leader David Trimble, the Green Party of Northern Ireland provided personal email addresses and mobile telephone numbers for their co-leaders Dr John Barry and Lindsay Whitcroft on their website.¹¹⁰ However, the Social Democratic Labour Party, one of the largest political parties in the region, achieved the same score in this category as the Green Party of Northern Ireland. The SDLP website provided the telephone numbers and correspondence addresses for each of its constituency offices in the region.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, the study found that only one political party, the Socialist Workers Party, provided a bulletin board on its website.

[Table 3.6 here]

Republican political fronts also provided a large number of interactive features on their websites, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement amongst the parties that achieved the highest score in this category. Each of the Republican groups examined provided correspondence details for their organisations on their websites, although only the 32 County Sovereignty Movement published the email addresses of individual members on its websites.¹¹² Republican organisations were more likely to encourage Internet users to subscribe to email newsletters on their websites than the constitutional political parties were. For example, Sinn Fein advertised its email newsletter, *The Irish Republican Media*, on its website. This service granted the subscriber access to video and audio clips, exclusive interviews with the leadership of the party and downloadable copies of the Sinn Fein newspaper, *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.¹¹³ The study also found that Republican political fronts used their websites to solicit resources from sympathetic constituencies. For example, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement used its website to sell merchandise such as t-shirts to Internet users.¹¹⁴

In sharp contrast, neither of the Loyalist political fronts used their websites to solicit resources from sympathisers. This was indicative of the lower levels of interactivity available on the websites of the Tullycarnet UPRG and Progressive Unionist Party. Neither of these websites provided interactive features such as an email newsletter or a Bulletin Board for its membership, although the Progressive Unionist Party did publish personal email addresses for both its leader David Ervine and its Chief Electoral Officer on its website.¹¹⁵ The Tullycarnet UPRG website was the least interactive of the websites analysed during the study. Interaction between Internet users and the organisation was only possible via an email to an anonymous webmaster.¹¹⁶ While constitutional political parties and Republican groups used their websites to encourage interaction with Internet users, Loyalists provided no such opportunity for visitors to their websites.

Recruitment Resources

The study suggested that the majority of Northern Irish political parties favour face-to-face recruitment strategies, rather than allow prospective members to apply online. Almost all of the groups included in the study - with the exception of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland - used their websites to advertise for new members (See, Table 3.7). Yet, few of these organisations provided an online application form for prospective new members. For example, the United Kingdom Unionist Party asked those interested in joining the party to email the webmaster for further information.¹¹⁷ In a similar vein to the UKUP, the Workers Party asked Internet users to apply for membership at local branches.¹¹⁸ The Democratic Unionist Party proved exceptional amongst the constitutional political parties, asking potential new members to submit personal details and a £12 subscription charge on its website.¹¹⁹ Few Northern Irish political groups used the Internet to disseminate downloadable public relations material, defined here as election posters that could be downloaded and displayed by supporters. Once again, the Democratic Unionist Party was a notable exception, providing downloadable desktop

backgrounds, bearing election slogans such as “Time for a Fair Deal,” on its website.¹²⁰

[Table 3.7 here]

A similar pattern emerged from the analysis of Loyalist and Republican websites. The Irish Republican Socialist Party and Sinn Fein were the only political fronts to provide downloadable public relations material on their websites. Although each political front provided information on how Internet users could become members of their respective organisation, potential recruits invariably had to contact the webmaster for further information. For example, the Progressive Unionist Party website invited potential members to phone or email the webmaster in order to get an application form.¹²¹ In a similar fashion to the PUP website, the Irish Republican Socialist Party invited Internet users to submit an electronic form with their email address and telephone number, presumably in order that the organisation could vet potential new members.¹²² Nonetheless, a clear majority of political fronts used their websites to attract support from across the globe. For example, Sinn Fein devoted space on its website specifically to detail how supporters in the United States could donate resources to the Republican movement.¹²³ Republican Sinn Fein proved exceptional in the study, asserting, “Members must live in Ireland, Wales, Scotland or England.”¹²⁴ Overall, the study suggested that both civil and ‘uncivil’ Northern Irish political actors have chosen to rely upon traditional methods of recruiting new members and disseminating propaganda.

Presentation

Both constitutional political parties and political fronts maintained static web pages, devoid of multimedia facilities (See Table 3.8). The Democratic Unionist Party website was the exception to this rule, providing video footage of Ian Paisley on its website and

copies of manifestos as downloadable PDF files.¹²⁵ The other constitutional political parties did not provide sound or video facilities on their websites. For example, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition provided only text and a few images of its politicians, such as leader Monica McWilliams, on its website.¹²⁶ In a similar vein, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland provided a text-based webpage, illuminated only by a few pictures of party members such as Eileen Bell and Naomi Long.¹²⁷

[Table 3.8 here]

Republican political fronts achieved scores that were well above the mean score for this category. In particular, Sinn Fein appeared to have invested heavily in its official website. This was illustrated by the layout of the Sinn Fein homepage, a series of clear navigation menus enabling Internet users to view the history of the organisation, contact local constituency offices, donate resources to the Republican movement, and subscribe to electronic publications such as 'sinnfeinnews.com.' Upon visiting the website, Internet users were drawn towards a banner suggesting that the website was available in multiple languages such as French and German. Although the message 'Welcome' appeared in a number of different languages on the homepage, the website was only available in English. Sinn Fein was also one of the few political fronts to use video streaming on its website. Both members and non-members could download video footage of speeches made by its leader, Gerry Adams.¹²⁸ The Irish Republican Socialist Party was the only other political front to use video streaming on its website. The IRSP website enabled Internet users to download video footage of an Irish Republican Easter commemoration service.¹²⁹

Loyalist political fronts employed less sophisticated presentation methods on their websites in comparison to the other political parties included in the study. For example, the Progressive Unionist Party did not employ frames, sound or video streaming on its website.¹³⁰ There were no clear menus for navigation, although the postal address and

contact telephone number of the organisation was clearly displayed on the PUP homepage. The Tullycarnet UPRG also maintained a mainly text based website, punctuated by pictures of its proposed development of a local park.¹³¹ In sum, although Republican political fronts achieved higher than average scores, the study suggested that both political fronts and political parties favour static websites over sophisticated presentation methods such as video streaming.

DISCUSSION:

Tactical frames

The study suggested that each Northern Irish political party, irrespective of its links to terrorism, used tactical frames to articulate its position on the peace process. Levin (2005) asserts that social organisations use tactical frames to demonstrate to the public that their master frame is the “best definition of the reality that society is facing” (p.85). Northern Irish political parties used end-run, denial, and incorporation frames on their websites to express their opinions about the peace process. Constitutional political parties such as the Ulster Unionist Party employed end-run frames to reach out to potential supporters, claiming, “new considerations were necessary for decision-making” (p.86). For example, the ‘Disarmament for Peace’ policy document called for the completion of Provisional IRA decommissioning before the restoration of the power-sharing institutions. This reflected growing concern within the unionist community about the Provisional IRA’s capacity to resume its terrorist campaign. Loyalists and Republicans who supported the Belfast Agreement used incorporation frames, to “cut off support for others by absorbing their values” (p.87). The Sinn Fein website referred to the equality agenda traditionally associated with its rival, the Social Democratic and Labour Party. On the Loyalist side, the Progressive Unionist Party used its website to offer a new strand of ‘liberal’ unionism, moving into the middle ground traditionally associated with the Ulster Unionist Party.

The peace frame did not influence the framing of all Northern Irish political parties. Denial frames, which claim that the values of the other side are 'invalid,' permeated the websites of anti-Agreement unionists and dissident Republicans, albeit for different reasons (p.86). While the Democratic Unionist Party condemned the Belfast Agreement for allowing 'unreconstructed' terrorist organisations into government, dissident Republicans criticised Sinn Fein for abandoning its armed struggle. One interpretation of these denial frames might be that it reflects the growth in opposition to the Belfast Agreement since 1998, particularly amongst the unionist community. Anti-Agreement Unionists have used incidents such as the Northern Bank robbery (December 2004) to cast doubt upon the validity of the Provisional IRA's commitment to exclusively peaceful means.¹³² This has resonated with the unionist community, with the anti-Agreement Democratic Unionist Party becoming the largest unionist party after the Northern Ireland Assembly elections (November 2003).¹³³ However, an alternative explanation might be that the Internet has provided a platform for anti-Agreement groups to choose their own frames, one that was not available to them in the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. Essentially, the political opponents of the Belfast Agreement have remained the same, with dissident Republicans and anti-Agreement unionists having opposed the peace process since 1998. The media's adoption of the peace frame in the late nineties arguably left little space for these groups to voice their opposition to the Belfast Agreement. The study suggests that these groups have used their websites to choose their own frames, free from the editorial constraints of the mass media.

Online framing and public opinion

Online framing may only affect attitudes towards the peace process if the master frame is publicised heavily and resonates with the values of a large audience. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the strength and prevalence of a frame are critical determinants of its ability to affect public opinion. Individuals favour frames that are consistent with their

own values (Chong and Druckman, 2007:102). Campaigns with greater resources will be able to identify frames that appeal most to the public, and advertise these themes more frequently than groups who project opposing frames (p.102). The study found that the Internet provided political fronts, such as Sinn Fein and the Progressive Unionist Party, with a space in which they could demonstrate their democratic credentials - irrespective of their sincerity- to a potential global audience. For example, Sinn Fein published policies on its website that appealed not just to Republicans but also to the broader nationalist community. However, this online framing has not created public support for the master frame of Sinn Fein in and of itself. Rather, the Sinn Fein website holds a mirror to its political activism and electoral success in the offline world. The party has achieved unprecedented electoral success by adopting policies traditionally associated with the Social Democratic and Labour Party, such as the equality agenda. Sinn Fein has publicised these policies via a number of media platforms, including television, newspapers, and the Internet.

The offline world also determines how the frames adopted by anti-Agreement groups affect public opinion. The Democratic Unionist Party's framing has become increasingly influential, as it has achieved significant gains in consecutive elections at the expense of other pro-union political parties, such as the Ulster Unionist Party. In contrast, dissident Republicans remain "politically marginalised, short of weaponry and lacking in popular support" (Tonge, 2004:678). Therefore, these groups arguably require a large audience for their websites if their online framing is to affect public opinion towards the peace process, given their relative obscurity in the mass media. Yet, this proposition is based upon the assumption that these groups wish to influence public opinion using their websites. These groups remain committed to their 'military' campaigns to further their political objectives, a strategy that inevitably brings them into conflict with the majority of public opinion. In contrast to Sinn Fein, they do not need to convince the public that they are cultural democrats, nor seek to influence public opinion using their websites and the mass media. Therefore, dissident Republicans may be using their websites primarily

for intra-group communication, rather than to generate soft power amongst internet users who have no links to their respective organisations. In sum, online frames reinforce attitudes towards the Northern Irish peace process, leaving marginalised political groups outside the triangle of political communication that includes the government, the media and the public.

Information vs. Interaction

Northern Irish political parties use their websites to modernise their bureaucracies, as opposed to create a space for genuine political deliberation amongst its membership. This was similar to the findings of previous studies, such as the Gibson and Ward analysis of Australian political party websites (2003). Gibson and Ward characterised the level of web activity amongst Australian political parties as 'patchy,' some parties lacking an official web presence while other party websites were hard to locate on the Internet (p.152). The internet enabled Australian political parties to "feed information to the mass media, rather than rather than promote a "transparent, interconnected and interactive face" (p.152). In a similar vein to Australian parties, Northern Irish political parties used their websites primarily for top-down political communication and providing statements to the mass media. The study found that most political parties - irrespective of their terrorist linkages - favoured face-to-face recruitment strategies and traditional methods of disseminating propaganda. Many political parties chose to remain anonymous on their official website, directing potential supporters towards local constituency offices if they wished to join the organisation. Although groups such as the Socialist Workers Party did provide Bulletin Boards on their websites, the study produced insufficient evidence to suggest that minority political groups provide higher degrees of interactivity online than larger political parties do.

Several of the political fronts arguably had no interest in promoting political deliberation on their websites. Political fronts such as the Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group

do not compete in local or national elections, and therefore have no need to attract voters on their websites. Moreover, the groups themselves may not wish to interact with Internet users. Dissident Republicans such as the 32 County Sovereignty Movement do not support democracy nor possess internal democratic structures, as demonstrated by the material posted on their websites. For example, the 32 CSM rules out the adoption of 'constitutional parliamentary sovereignty' to achieve its aims, as it might 'alienate' them from the people on whose behalf they were organising.¹³⁴ The 32 CSM remains committed to using armed struggle to achieving its political objectives, setting itself in opposition against the majority of public opinion that favour the peace process. Interaction with anonymous Internet users online might compromise the security of its members, thus hindering the future military operations of its respective terrorist organisation. Instead, these groups use their websites to issue statements to the conventional mass media. Internet users are invited to contact the organisation via telephone to obtain information about membership. Overall, Northern Irish political groups use their websites for top-down communication rather than encouraging interaction between its members and internet users.

Organisational Linkage: Critical Multiplier Effect?

The cyberoptimist model suggests that small sub-state groups may experience a critical multiplier effect in terms of their organisational linkage if they use information and communication technologies (ICTs). The study of constitutional political parties online provided limited evidence to support this proposition. There was no divergence between the large and small parties in terms of the scores received in this category. For example, both the Green Party of Northern Ireland and the Social Democratic and Labour Party shared the highest score in this category. Despite the Greens Party's low media profile and lack of electoral success, there was little to differentiate between these two websites in the analysis of their 'links' section. In addition, the study found that political parties of all sizes were likely to provide no links on their websites, with the Democratic Unionist

Party and Alliance Party of Northern Ireland receiving no score in this category.

Political fronts also demonstrated variable levels of organisational linkage on their websites. The study found that no evidence to suggest that Loyalist political fronts were using their websites to mobilise diaspora communities in North America, the Tullycarnet UPRG providing no links whatsoever on its website. Republican websites also achieved relatively low scores in this category in comparison to the constitutional political parties. The Irish Republican Socialist Party proved exceptional, as it was the only political front to provide links pointing towards the websites of international terrorist organisations. One interpretation of these results might be that these groups do not wish to publicise their links to ethno-nationalist terrorist groups such as Euskadi ta Askatasuna. Political fronts such as Sinn Fein have adopted frames on their websites that suggest they are cultural democrats rather than the propaganda wing of a terrorist organisation. The disclosure of links to groups that remain engaged in political violence would seem to be at odds with Sinn Fein's commitment to the peace process, potentially souring relations with the influential Irish-American lobby. Alternatively, these groups may be experiencing a critical multiplier effect in terms of organisational linkage via other 'less public' aspects of the Internet, such as email. This would allow these groups to network with other terrorists without the risk of compromising the security of its members. In sum, the study would appear to cast doubt upon the enabling potential of information and communication technologies, as detailed in the cyberoptimist model. None of the groups appear to be experiencing a critical multiplier effect via their websites, although, this conclusion is based upon the organisational linkage that each group is willing to disclose on its website.

CONCLUSION

The study suggests that there is little to differentiate between terrorist-linked groups and constitutional political parties in terms of website function and online framing. All

Northern Irish political parties have yet to realise the potential of the Web as a tool for organisational linkage and mobilisation. These groups use their website primarily for disseminating information about their grass roots political activism to the mass media, rather than encouraging interaction between Internet users and the organisation itself. All Northern Irish political parties, irrespective of their links to terrorists, use tactical frames online to define their position vis-à-vis the peace process. Terrorist-linked parties such as Sinn Fein use their web presence to define themselves as cultural democrats rather than the propaganda machine of a terrorist organisation. Themes such as equality and shared responsibility permeate the websites of these groups, with little or no reference made to their terrorist sponsors. This framing has an antecedent in the peace frame projected by the mass media in the mid-nineties, which sought to build public support for a political process that included the political representatives of Loyalist and Republican terrorists. However, not all political parties subscribe to the peace frame. Anti-Agreement Unionists and dissident Republicans use their websites to attack the peace process and its supporters, albeit for different reasons. The Democratic Unionist Party suggests that Sinn Fein should be excluded from the power-sharing institutions, as they are not fully committed to using exclusively democratic means to achieve their aims. Meanwhile, dissident Republicans criticise Sinn Fein for abandoning Republican principles, believing that armed struggle is still necessary to remove British troops from the province. In contrast to Sinn Fein, dissident Republicans did reveal their links to terrorist organisations on their websites. These denial frames will only affect public opinion vis-à-vis the peace process if they feature prominently in the mass media and resonate with the values of a large audience. Yet, dissident Republicans do not rely solely on the soft power generated by their websites to further their objectives. These groups use hard power to terrorise a target population, perpetrating atrocities to maximise publicity for their organisation and its goals. As such, they will make no effort to portray themselves as cultural democrats on their websites. In sum, the offline world determines not just the content and audience for a Northern Irish political party website, but also its likely effect upon public opinion.

Table 3.1: Northern Irish Political Parties, NI Assembly Election (November 2003)

| <i>Political Party</i> | <i>Website</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Alliance Party NI | http://www.allianceparty.org/ |
| Conservative Party NI | http://www.conservativesni.com/main_main.htm |
| Democratic Unionist Party | http://www.dup.org.uk/ |
| Green Party NI | http://www.greens-in.org/tiki-index.php |
| Independent Labour Party | N/A |
| NI Unionist Party | N/A |
| NI Women's Coalition* | http://www.niwc.org/ |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | http://www.sdlp.ie/ |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | http://socialistenvironmentalalliance.org/cgi-bin/sea/index.pl |
| Socialist Workers Party | http://www.swp.ie/html/home.htm |
| Ulster Unionist Party | http://www.uup.org/ |
| United Kingdom Unionist Party* | http://www.ukup.org/ |
| Workers Party | http://www.workers-party.org/wphome.htm |

* Website no longer available (08/02/07).

Table 3.2: Northern Irish terrorist organisations and political fronts

| <i>Terrorist Organisation</i> | <i>Political Front Organisation</i> |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Continuity Army Council ¹ | Republican Sinn Fein |
| Cumann na mBan | None |
| Fianna na hEireann | None |
| Irish National Liberation Army | Irish Republican Socialist Party |
| Irish People's Liberation Organisation | None |
| Irish Republican Army | Sinn Fein |
| Loyalist Volunteer Force | None |
| Orange Volunteers | None |
| Real Irish Republican Army | 32 County Sovereignty Movement |
| Red Hand Commandos / | Progressive Unionist Party |
| Ulster Volunteer Force | Progressive Unionist Party |
| Red Hand Defenders | None |
| Saor Eire | None |
| Ulster Defence Association/ | Ulster Political Research Group |
| Ulster Freedom Fighters | Ulster Political Research Group |

Sources: Independent Monitoring Commission *First Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission* (2004); Conflict Archive on the Internet, *Loyalist and Republican Groups*.

Table 3.3: Website registration data provided by Northern Irish political parties

| Website | Host | Location of Host | Webmaster Name | Webmaster Email Address | Registered Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Alliance Party NI | Firenet | UK | NIA | NIA | IA | IA |
| Conservative Party NI | Bargain Hosts | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Democratic Unionist Party | Direct IT | UK | NIA | NIA | IA | NIA |
| Green Party NI | Kontent | Germany | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Irish Republican Socialist Party | Network Solutions | USA | NIA | NIA | IA | IA |
| NI Women's Coalition | UTV Internet | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Progressive Unionist Party | Global.Net | UK | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Republican Sinn Fein | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Sinn Fein | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | Supanet | UK | NIA | NIA | IA | NIA |
| Socialist Workers Party | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| 32 County Sovereignty Committee | Netfirms | Canada | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Tullycarnet UPRG | Hyperspace | Canada | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Ulster Unionist Party | TIB | UK | NIA | NIA | IA | IA |
| Workers Party | UTV Internet | UK | IA | IA | IA | IA |

IA- Information Available

NIA- No Information Available

Table 3.4 Coding Scheme.

Interactivity

Email Newsletter- (1)

Bulletin Board/Chatroom - (1)

Correspondence Address (Postal) (1)

Telephone/Fax Number (1)

Email Webmaster (1)

Email Individual Members (1)

Donations (1)

Maximum Score Available : 7

Online Recruitment

Members Only Section- (1)

Full Membership Advertised (1)

Full Membership available (1)

Public Relations “paraphernalia” Available for Download (poster, placards) (1)

Maximum Score Available: 4

Organizational Linkage

Solidarity Organisations/Websites- (1)

International Terrorist Organisations/Websites- (1)

Educational Websites (Universities, external news media) – (1)

Commercial/non-political Links- (1)

Number of Links >15 - (1)

Maximum Score Available: 5

Presentation

Graphics (1)

Frames (1)

Sound (1)

Video/Live Streaming (1)

Pages available in PDF/alternative format- (1)

Maximum Score Available: 5

Table.3.5. Organisational Linkage exhibited on official Northern Irish political websites

| Website | Solidarity Links | International Terrorist Links | Educational Links | Commercial/ Non-Political Links | Number of Links (>15) | Score (/6) |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Alliance Party NI | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Conservative Party NI | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Democratic Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Green Party NI | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Irish Republican Socialist Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| NI Women's Coalition | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Progressive Unionist Party | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Republican Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Socialist Workers Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 32 County Sovereignty Movement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| United Kingdom Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Workers Party | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 0.5 | 0.29 | 0.29 | 0.24 | 0.47 | 2.14 |

Table.3.6. Interactive features available on official Northern Irish political websites

| Website | Email Newsletter | Bulletin Board | Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number | Email Webmaster | Email Members | Resource Solicitation | Score |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Alliance Party NI | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Conservative Party NI | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Democratic Unionist Party | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Green Party NI | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Irish Republican Socialist Party | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| NI Women's Coalition | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Progressive Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Republican Sinn Fein | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Socialist Workers Party | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| 32 County Sovereignty Movement | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ulster Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| United Kingdom Unionist Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Workers Party | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Mean | 0.47 | 0.24 | 0.94 | 0.88 | 0.94 | 0.65 | 0.53 | 4.65 |

Table.3.7. Online recruitment resources of official Northern Irish political websites

| Website | Members Only Section | Full Membership Advertised | Full Membership Available via Online Application | Downloadable Public Relations Material | Score |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|-------|
| Alliance Party NI | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Conservative Party NI | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Democratic Unionist Party | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Green Party NI | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Irish Republican Socialist Party | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| NI Women's Coalition | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Progressive Unionist Party | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Republican Sinn Fein | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Sinn Fein | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Socialist Workers Party | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 32 County Sovereignty Movement | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 0.08 | 0.92 | 0.46 | 0.38 | 1.85 |

Table.3.8. Presentation and delivery of official Northern Irish political websites

| Website | Graphics | Frames | Sound | Video Streaming | Pages Available in alternative format e.g. PDF | Score |
|---|----------|--------|-------|-----------------|--|-------|
| Alliance Party NI | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Conservative Party NI | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Democratic Unionist Party | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Green Party NI | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Irish Republican Socialist Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| NI Women's Coalition | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Progressive Unionist Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Republican Sinn Fein | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Social Democratic Labour Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Socialist Environmental Alliance | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Socialist Workers Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 32 County Sovereignty Movement | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Ulster Unionist Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| United Kingdom Unionist Party | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Workers Party | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Mean | 1.00 | 0.59 | 0.12 | 0.24 | 0.82 | 2.76 |

Chapter 4: Googling Terrorism: How visible are Northern Irish terrorists on the Internet?

INTRODUCTION

The Internet enables Northern Irish terrorists to choose their own frames and circumvent the ideological refractions of the conventional mass media. However, this framing may only affect the attitudes of the public if the master frame is publicised heavily and resonates with the values of a large audience. In this chapter, the online audience for Northern Irish terrorists will be discussed with reference to data already available in the public domain, such as Internet usage patterns and the ranking systems used by Internet search engines. Factors such as the number of Internet users who use the Web for political research will be included to determine the potential audience available to Northern Irish terrorists. As a majority of Internet users rely upon search engines for information retrieval, visibility on search engine listings is invaluable to political actors who wish to affect public opinion using their online frames. Internet users are more likely to click on links to the more 'visible' websites on Internet search engines, such as those listed on the first page of results generated by a search query. Factors that influence the ranking of websites, including the sale of priority retrieval to the highest bidder and website linkage, will be analysed to determine their potential impact upon the audience available to Northern Irish terrorists online. The study suggests Northern Irish terrorists are only visible on search engines if Internet users select the correct search terms. This limits the audience for Northern Irish terrorists to those Internet users who have prior knowledge about the links between these organisations and political fronts such as Sinn Fein.

INTERNET USAGE PATTERNS: THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES

In this section, the potential audience for Northern Irish terrorists will be examined using

Internet usage patterns. The analysis presented in this thesis suggests that the Internet provides a space in which dissident Republicans can use their own frames to reject the Good Friday Agreement (see chapter 3). For their frames to affect public opinion, groups such as Republican Sinn Fein require a large number of Internet users to access their websites. This is because people access the Internet in a qualitatively different fashion to the conventional mass media. Media 'literacy' is arguably a universal good in advanced industrialised nation-states. For example, television is a low - cost public medium available in virtually every household in advanced industrialized nation-states. In addition, newspaper penetration in advanced industrialized nations remains high. For example, in Northern Ireland, almost two - thirds of the adult population read at least one paid for newspaper on a daily basis (Wilson, 1997: 1). In contrast, ICTs require a new form of media literacy. Literacy comes with experience; the more familiar a person is with ICTs, the more fluent they become (Locke, 1999: 219). Existing evidence on Internet usage in the United Kingdom and the United States may provide some insight into these issues.

Digital Divide and Internet Access

In order to explore the potential audience for Northern Irish terrorist websites, one must first determine who has access to the Internet. The digital divide refers to the gap between "those able to benefit from digital technology and those who are not" (International Telecommunication Union, 2007). Evidently, private citizens are more likely to benefit directly from digital technology if they have access to the Internet. People can use the Internet for a variety of activities, including shopping, research, political activism, or the pursuit of hobbies and interests. The indications are that Internet consumption is growing rapidly across the globe, as more people begin to use the Internet on a regular basis. In January 2007, there were more Internet users (389 million) in Asia than in any other continent. Research also indicates that there were 33 million Internet users in Africa and 19 million in the Middle East during this period (Internet World Statistics, 2007). Europe

and in particular North America have taken a 'strong lead in realising digital opportunity' (International Telecommunication Union, 2007). Despite having only 5.1 percent of the world's population, North America provides 21.5 percent of the total number of Internet users worldwide. Meanwhile, Internet penetration in Africa remains low, with an estimated 3.5 percent of its population having access to the Internet. Although 14.2 percent of the world's population lives in Africa, it provides only 3 percent of the total number of Internet users worldwide (Internet World Statistics, 2007). This First World hegemony is reflected in the predominance of English as the vernacular of cyberspace. This suggests that so-called 'fourth-generation rights' are being denied to developing countries, for whom English is not the common tongue. These rights include the right to information and the right to communicate (Council of Europe, 1997:39). However, Africa has seen a 635.8 percent growth in Internet consumption between 2000 and 2007, as broadband services become available in countries such as Ghana (Internet World Statistics, 2007). The digital divide between the West [North America and Europe] and Africa may narrow if this rate of growth continues.

The digital divide affects all nation-states, irrespective of their prosperity and the available digital infrastructure. In the United States, an estimated 27 percent of people have never accessed the Internet (Madden, 2006: 1). Meanwhile, 36 percent of Britons claim to have never used the Internet (Shepherd and Bryson, 2007:8). There is little to differentiate between men and women in terms of their use of the Internet in these countries. The Oxford Internet Survey (2005) found that 63 percent of men and 57 percent of women claimed to have used the Internet (Di Gennaro and Dutton, 2006: 301). The socio-economic profile of Internet users provides greater insight into the digital divide within advanced industrialised nation-states. For example, only 40 percent of adults in the United States who have less than a high school education claim to use the Internet, compared to 64 percent of adults with a high school education (Madden, 2006: 3). Research from the United Kingdom shows a similar correlation between educational attainment and Internet use. An estimated 88 percent of people with a degree

qualification, or higher, use the Internet in the United Kingdom. The same study suggested that only 22 percent of Britons with no qualifications use the Internet (Shepherd and Bryson, 2007:13).

Annual income and age also influence whether people use the Internet. The wealthiest households in both countries are more likely to be online than the poorest households. For example, 80 percent of American households with annual income of between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year are online, in comparison to 53 percent of households with income less than \$30,000 (Madden, 2006:3). Internet use varies significantly across different age groups in these countries. While 88 percent of 18-29 year olds in the United States use the Internet, only 32 percent of those aged over 65 go online (Madden, 2006: 3). Children and young people are also more likely to be Internet users than old people in the United Kingdom are. A recent study suggested that 84 percent of people aged between 16 and 24 years old use the Internet, in comparison to 15 percent of those aged 65 and over (Shepherd and Bryson, 2007:12). Overall, it would appear that the online audience for Loyalists and Republicans is likely to come from Europe, North America, and Asia, given their high rates of Internet penetration. These Internet users are more likely to be educated to at least high school level, wealthy, and aged less than 25 years old. However, it is conceivable that these groups might attract support from Internet users who do not match this profile, depending on what people search for online.

Internet usage patterns

The online audience available to Northern Irish terrorists is diffuse, as people use the Internet as a private viewing box (Noveck, 1999: 30). Loyalist and Republicans might seek to mobilise support from the United Kingdom, as well as diaspora communities in the United States (see chapter 3). Internet usage patterns within both states suggest that the online audience may be limited to those Internet users who are familiar with Loyalism and Republicanism in the offline world. This is because people invariably use

information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a stimulus for ‘pursuing existing interests’ rather than creating new interests (Selwyn, Gorard, and Furlong, 2005: 13). Americans and Britons are most likely to check their email when they use the Internet. For example, 92 percent of Internet users in the United Kingdom used the Internet for this purpose in a recent survey (Di Gennaro and Dutton, 2006: 303). The next most common online activity was looking up information about products and services, while 61 percent of respondents reported that they used the Internet to look for information on current affairs (p.303). Only one in five Britons went online to obtain political information, suggesting that the potential for enhancing political engagement using the Internet remains unfulfilled (p.307). Moreover, people themselves perceive that the Internet is a means for pursuing their private interests, rather than a tool for political engagement and education. This was illustrated by the share of online Americans who claim that the Internet had greatly improved the way they pursue their hobbies and interests, rising from 20 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2005 (Madden, 2006:2). Some commentators suggest that this is evidence that the Internet may not help generate social capital in liberal democracies, as was suggested in the cyberoptimist model. Shah, Kwak and Holbert (2001) assert that recreational uses of the Internet may “erode individual level production of social capital, as these activities are generally asocial or anonymous but foster a sense of social interaction” (p.144).

Loyalists and Republicans may be able to reach out beyond their grass roots support to young people who use the Internet for research. Young people, who are under-represented in ‘offline’ politics, appear more likely to engage in politics online (Di Gennaro and Dutton, 2006: 306). In addition, approximately 58 percent of people aged between 16 and 24 use the Internet to find information for their studies (Madden, 2006: 48). Young people who study the Northern Irish ‘Troubles’ may reference online sources, such as the websites of Loyalists and Republican political fronts, in their assignments. Owens (2006) suggests that young people in the United States have a high level of trust in Internet sources and produce political content online that has influenced mainstream

media reports (p.35). This suggests that young people who access the websites of Loyalist and Republican may accept their online framing unconditionally. However, only a minority of young people will turn to the Internet for political information or the latest news stories. The Pew Media Consumption survey (2006) suggests that only 25 percent of Americans aged between 18 and 25 will go online to follow news stories (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2007: 27). The survey respondents were more likely to follow news stories television news or in a newspaper.

Nevertheless, Internet news consumers may be a potential target audience for Loyalist and Republicans. Recent studies suggest that people are increasingly likely to use the Internet for their political news sources. For example, data gathered from two recent US mid-term elections showed that the Internet news audience had more than doubled, from 7 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2006 (Fallows, 2007:1). Yet, Internet news consumers may choose to access the same news sources they rely upon in the offline world. The Pew Media Consumption Survey found that 20 percent of people who get political news online use the websites of international news media organisations, with a further 25 percent favouring state and local government websites (Fallows, 2007:6). Nonetheless, the survey did find that 25 percent of Internet news consumers would visit issue-oriented websites for an alternative viewpoint on a breaking news story (p.6). Conceivably, these people might access the websites of 'primary definers,' such as Loyalist and Republican political fronts, to follow a news event involving the group in question (Negrine, 1994: 127). This news event would presumably be publicised first in the conventional mass media, prompting people to seek this information in the first place. In other words, Loyalist and Republican websites may attract more Internet news consumers if their subjects receive the 'oxygen of publicity' from the conventional mass media. In sum, there does appear to be an online audience for Loyalist and Republicans websites, one that does not consist solely of supporters and sympathetic diaspora communities. This audience may be receptive to the framing of Loyalist and Republican political fronts if they broadly agree with the values on their websites. If Internet news consumers have no

prior knowledge of the 'Troubles,' it is imperative for Loyalist and Republicans that their websites are accessible on the Internet. In particular, Internet users should be able to see these websites on search engines when looking for information on their respective organisations.

SEARCH ENGINES: ROLE IN COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

The online audience for Northern Irish terrorists may depend upon the visibility of their websites on Internet search engines. In this section, the role of Internet search engines in computer-mediated communication will be discussed. Internet search engines can be best characterised as 'digital librarians,' as opposed to the 'gatekeepers' that are employed in the conventional mass media. Internet search engines index websites, having little or no direct influence on the tone and content of the websites in question. Nevertheless, the order of websites within a particular search engine directory is comparable to decisions made by editorial staff in the news media. Editors have to deliberate over which stories are worthy of greater coverage in conventional media products, such as television news bulletins or newspapers. On the one hand, they have to ensure that large numbers of media consumers access their products, particularly when advertising revenues are critical to the sustenance of their respective organisations. Advertisers are only likely to invest in media organisations that provide large numbers of readers or viewers that are able to purchase their products (Negrine, 1994: 67). On the other hand, editors have to make the decision to drop news stories, as they have finite resources and space with which to give equal coverage to all events that occur within their jurisdiction.

In a similar vein to the mass media, Internet search engines are unable to give equal attention to the millions of websites contained in their respective directories, nor index all of the websites available on the Internet. One study suggested that all of the major search engines combined only covered 16 percent of the total number of 'indexable' websites on the Internet (Bar-Ilan, 1999:1). Consequently, by virtue of their criteria used to index a

website and their popularity with Internet users, search engines direct web traffic towards certain websites rather than others on the Web.

Internet users, whether expert or non-expert, feel comfortable using Internet search engines as navigational ‘tools’ on the Internet. They rarely know the exact Universal Resource Locator (URL) of a website, typically entering ‘keywords’ into search engines to locate information relevant to their area of interest. Studies suggest that as much as 90 percent of all traffic on the Internet comes directly from search engines (Submit Corner, 2004). For example, Internet users across the globe spend a total of 13 million hours per month interacting with the Google search engine alone (Ntoulas, Cho, and Olson, 2004: 1). Furthermore, Internet users are unlikely to look beyond the first 25 results generated by a particular search query. Similar to the content of newspapers, the most visible items are likely to receive more ‘hits’ than those situated on the third or fourth page of links generated by a search term. This suggests that search engines can influence the choices of Internet users in terms of which websites they access in order to pursue their private interests. Overall, the popularity of search engines suggests that the Internet enables new forms of ‘mediated interaction,’ as opposed to the ‘unmediated’ interaction that might benefit those who receive minimal coverage in the conventional mass media (Wouters and Gerbec, 2003: 4). The creation of a website will not necessarily lead to greater levels of popular recognition for actors that lack a visible presence in the conventional mass media. Conversely, visibility on Internet search engines appears to be equally as important as visibility in the conventional mass media. The websites of publicity-starved sub-state actors must consistently appear in the top 25 results generated by search engines, if they are to achieve a high degree of visibility online.

HOW DO SEARCH ENGINES WORK?

‘Googearchy’

In this section, the factors that determine whether a website is ‘visible’ on Internet search

engines are analysed. Internet search engines do not behave like 'objective, well informed librarians' (Gerhart, 1994: 3). Instead, each individual search engine has a set of protocols that determine whether a website is included in its directory and its position vis-à-vis other indexed websites. There is little specific information available on these protocols, also known as 'algorithms.' This is because the companies behind Internet search engines are reluctant to disclose information explaining how they rank websites to their competitors. Internet search engines compete not only to secure the patronage of Internet users but also to accrue revenue from companies wishing to place advertisements on their websites.

Google remain the only search engine company to have published details of how they rank websites in their directory. The original Google algorithm 'ranks' a website in its directory through an assessment of the links pointing towards it, and an assessment of the 'standing' of these linking pages themselves (Thelwall, 2001: 3). Google equates a link from one website to another as an endorsement of both websites, attributing an undisclosed value to each website (Walker, 2002: 3). For a website to receive a high ranking in the Google search engine, it clearly pays to reciprocate links with other websites, regardless of whether they share similar themes. This phenomenon, whereby the most heavily linked websites received the highest ranking in the Google directory, is also known as Googlearchy (Hindman, Tsioutliklis, and Johnson, 2003). It would appear to militate against the cyber-optimist conception of the Internet as a political communication device open to all sections of society. As small sub-state actors are unlikely to have large numbers of supporters, they are unlikely to reciprocate links with large number of actors online. Therefore, the websites of these actors are likely to be less 'visible' on search engines than the sites of extensively linked organisations, such as government agencies, research institutes, and media outlets (Gerhart, 1994: 22).

Updating Frequencies

Wouters, Helsten & Leydesdorff (2004) characterise Internet search engines as the 'clocks' of cyberspace, representing the updating frequency of both the Web and the underlying Internet (p.15). The maintenance of search engine directories reflects the closure of websites, changes to the search engine algorithms, and the extent to which 'old' pages remain in their databases (p.17). Internet search engines use a combination of automated website crawlers (or 'spiders') and human editors to index websites and update their directories. On the one hand, directory search engines, such as DMOZ (www.dmoz.org), employ as many as 50,000 human editors to decide whether a website should be included in their database and how it should be ranked in comparison to other sites (Search Engine Yearbook, 2003). On the other hand, the majority of commercial Internet search engines use browser like programs, like 'spiders,' to follow the links from one website to another, indexing everything that they find.

Both human editors and automated web crawlers look for the same information on websites before deciding whether, or invariably where, they are to be included within their respective directories. Meta tags, containing information like the name of the webmaster and which 'keywords' best describe the content of the website, are used to determine whether a site should be indexed by an Internet search engine (Webopedia, 2004). In this respect, Meta tags arguably perform a similar function to the 'headlines' deployed by conventional news media organisations to boost public consumption of their products. The Meta tag description is critical in determining how high a website will be 'ranked' in the results generated by 'keyword' searches on search engines. Meta tags present the content of a website - in no more than 256 characters - in an effort to attract the attention of both human editors and automated web crawlers (Softsteel Solutions, 2003).

Internet users are more likely to access websites that are visible on Internet search

engines, defined in this chapter as websites that feature in the top 25 results generated in response to a particular search query. Yet, the visibility of websites is also subject to the constant updating of Internet search engine directories. Internet search engines have to update their databases constantly due to the high turnover of websites on the Internet, an estimated 80 percent of websites available today likely to be inaccessible after one year (Ntoulas, Cho, and Olson, 2004:2). Companies such as Yahoo, and even the market leader, Google, do not have the resources to index all available websites on the Internet, or to trawl through these websites in order to generate a list of results in response to a search query. The implication for marginalised sub-state political actors would appear stark. Failure to achieve a 'high' search engine ranking will inevitably lead to these actors remaining anonymous on the Internet, in effect replicating the paucity of coverage they receive in the conventional mass media. Consequently, webmasters that seek greater visibility online must market their websites at a target audience that not only includes Internet users, but also search engines.

DO SEARCH ENGINES 'SUPPRESS' INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET?

In this section, the proposition that search engines actively 'suppress' information on the Internet is analysed. As discussed earlier, search engines are more likely to direct Internet users towards the websites of extensively linked organisations than peripheral sub-state actors. Some analysts suggest that there may be an alternative explanation for controversial websites not featuring in the top 25 results generated by Internet search engines. Internet search engines may filter information with reference to many of the norms that inform the behaviour of the conventional mass media. The four media models [the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and soviet models respectively] permit government censorship of the conventional mass media because a story might endanger national security, defame character, or offend public 'decency.'¹³⁵ Recent studies suggest that these norms also influence the editorial process within Internet search engines, particularly in the omission of controversial websites from certain search engine

directories. Zittrain and Edelman (2005) compared the availability of white supremacist websites on the French and German Google portals, google.fr, and google.de. The study concluded that 113 websites, such as 'Stormfront White Pride World Wide' (www.crusader.net), could not be located on both the French and German versions of Google, despite being listed on google.com (Zittrain and Edelman, 2005). Government legislation forced Google to remove these websites from their French and German portals. In December 2000, the German Supreme Court, the Bundesgerichtshof, had ruled that German laws against neo-Nazi propaganda would apply to websites maintained by both German citizens and foreign nationals (Bodard, 2003: 266).

There is also some evidence to suggest that political actors may use legal sanctions to remove controversial websites from Internet search engine directories. In 2002, the Church of Scientology forced Google to remove references to websites that were critical of its religion. The Scientologists lobbied for the removal of these websites with reference to the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act (1998), as they contained 'copyrighted material' (Zittrain and Edelman, 2005). However, groups that lobby for the removal of websites are powerless to prohibit its transmission on the Internet, as webmasters are able register their domains in other nation-states. For example, the Chinese Ministry of Information has forced search engines such as Google to remove politically sensitive material from their directories. Thus, if an Internet user searches for information about Falun Gong on Google's Chinese portal (www.google.cn), they will be directed towards government websites rather than websites that express support for the Falun Gong.¹³⁶ However, if an Internet user accesses another Google portal, such as google.co.uk, they will be directed towards websites that are maintained by practitioners of these meditation exercises.¹³⁷

Yet, the norms of the libertarian media model may also contribute to the predominance of 'more of the same' organisational websites on Internet search engine directories. In the conventional mass media, advertising revenue and private investment are critical to the

longevity of media organisations, particularly in the United States. Internet search engines also maintain their financial self-sufficiency through the sale of advertising space on their respective web portals. Search engines, like Geocities, have even sold 'priority retrieval' to companies, placing their websites first in the results generated by a relevant query. (Noveck, 2000: 24). This is often invisible to Internet users who use these web portals, as both private companies and search engines are reluctant to disclose this information to the public. As small sub-state actors are unlikely to be able to afford priority retrieval, they are likely to be less visible on search engine directories than the websites of large media companies.

The filtering of information by search engines has implications for those Internet users who wish to research controversial political issues on the Internet. Some commentators suggest that Internet search engines reward 'more of the same' organisational websites at the expense of less popular content. Gerhart (1994) asserts that 'controversy- revealing' websites are only visible in search engine results through a combination of the right search 'query' and offline experience of the relevant subject (p.22). Internet users who lack background knowledge of a controversial political issue are increasingly likely to turn to Internet search engines for links to websites of interest. As discussed above, Internet search engines are likely to direct these Internet users towards the websites of extensively - linked organisations, many of whom have the capacity to purchase 'priority retrieval.' Therefore, the predominance of 'more of the same' organisations on Internet search engines reduces the 'visibility' of 'controversy – revealing' websites online. If the Internet user is not familiar with the actor behind a controversial website, they are likely to turn to the most 'visible' websites on Internet search engines. These websites are likely to be those of media organisations, which dominate the first page of results generated by their query.

The algorithms of the major commercial search engines arguably perpetuate the suppression of 'controversy – revealing' websites on the Internet. If these websites do not

receive a large number of 'hits' from Internet users who lack relevant background knowledge of their subject, they are likely to remain a minority interest online. Consequently, webmasters that publish controversial opinions on their websites are likely to be communicating with people who share their views, as opposed to a potential global audience with no preconception of their particular subject. In sum, Internet search engines filter information with reference to some of the norms of the mass media models. Extensively - linked organisations are likely to populate the top 25 results generated by most search queries, often at the expense of 'controversy - revealing' websites. These organisations are more visible on search engines because a higher volume of web traffic passes through their websites, and, in some cases, because they have paid companies like Geocities to ensure a high search engine ranking.

NORTHERN IRISH TERRORISTS AND INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES

In this section, the potential online audience for Northern Irish terrorists is analysed with reference to the visibility of their websites on search engines. Internet news consumers and young people might use the Internet to look up information about Northern Irish terrorists, particularly if they are following a news event or studying the Northern Irish conflict. This study, conducted in 2004 and 2005, examined whether these Internet users would be directed towards the websites of Northern Irish terrorists if they used Internet search engines to locate this information. The online audience available to Republicans was expected to be much larger than that available to Loyalists, as their websites would be more visible to Internet users on search engine directories. Republican terrorists and their supporters would receive a higher search engine ranking than their Loyalist equivalents, as they provide more links on their website and receive more web traffic due to their higher international profile (see chapter 3). In addition, the study tested the hypothesis that 'more of the same' organisational websites would dominate the search results generated by a variety of Loyalist and Republican keyword searches. It was anticipated that websites that expressed support for Northern Irish terrorist organisations

would be vastly under-represented in the top 25 results generated by related search queries. Media organisations, with their greater volume of Internet traffic and the ability to purchase priority retrieval from search engines, were expected to feature prominently in the results generated by Loyalist and Republican search queries.

SAMPLE

The sample selected for the study consisted of four leading Internet search engines, namely DMOZ (www.dmoz.org), Google (www.google.co.uk), MSN (www.msn.co.uk), and Yahoo (www.yahoo.co.uk). The British versions of Google, MSN, and Yahoo were utilised for the study as they included results from their global directories. During the period of data collection, they were also the most regularly used Internet search engines across the globe.¹³⁸ The three commercial search engines were included to test the rule of ‘Googlearchy.’ As discussed earlier, search engines such as Google rank websites within its directory in accordance with the volume of web traffic that passes through each website. Therefore, the study was designed to test the hypothesis that extensively linked organisations would populate the top 25 results generated by these search engines, as opposed to ‘controversy-revealing’ websites, like those that expressed support for Northern Irish terrorists. The DMOZ search engine (www.DMOZ.org) was also included in the study to reflect the new generation of search engines based entirely upon human editorial, rather than automated Web crawlers. Consequently, the DMOZ search engine was expected to return more links to websites that could be characterised as either ‘pro-Loyalist’ or ‘pro-Republican’ than the other search engines included in the study. Human editors would presumably be less likely to provide links to websites that had nothing to do with the terrorist organisations under analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A series of keyword searches were conducted using the four Internet search engines in

October 2004. The names of the 14 Northern Irish terrorist organisations, proscribed under anti-terrorist legislation such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1984), were entered into the basic search facility of the four Internet search engines (See Table 4.1). Two ideological descriptions, 'Ulster Loyalist' and 'Irish Republican,' were also entered into the basic search facility of the four search engines. These phrases were selected as they were commonly used to describe the ideological position of Northern Irish terrorist organisations, as illustrated by the names of the 14 proscribed terrorist groups under review. It was anticipated that webmasters who projected 'pro-Loyalist' or 'pro-Republican' propaganda on the Internet would use these words, or the name of one of the proscribed terrorist organisations, in the Meta tag descriptions of their websites. The number of links generated by each individual search query was recorded for further analysis. These statistics provided a rudimentary method of comparing the number of websites whose Meta tags resembled Loyalist and Republican keywords.

[Table 4.1 here]

Searches were conducted using the two ideological descriptions and two terrorist group names, the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Volunteer Force. These groups were selected on the basis that they were two of the most well known terrorist groups in the region. As such, it was anticipated that there would be numerous websites dedicated to these groups on the Web. The search results were then analysed to determine whether the most 'visible' websites belonged to organisations that supported Northern Irish terrorists. The top 25 results of these keyword searches were analysed as they were considered the results that most closely resembled the search terms entered in the respective Internet search engines. The websites that featured in these 25 results were then classified as one of eight categories (See Table 4.2). During the period of analysis, none of the 14 proscribed Northern Irish terrorist groups maintained an official web presence under that particular name. Therefore, the category of official website was designed to include the websites of Loyalist and Republican political fronts in the study (see chapter 3). For example, the Sinn Fein and Progressive Unionist Party websites were considered

'official' Republican and Loyalist websites with reference to the First Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission (see chapter 3). The category of 'solidarity' websites referred to those websites that existed solely to provide support for Loyalist or Republican terrorist groups. This support could take many forms, including soliciting resources for paramilitary prisoners or issuing propaganda in favour of one of the terrorist groups under analysis.

[Table 4.2 here]

The other six categories incorporated websites that did not express support for Loyalist or Republican terrorist organisations. Personal webpages and blogs were defined as websites maintained by individual Internet users to express opinions on a variety of issues, such as terrorism. Although many 'bloggers' expressed opinions on Northern Irish terrorists, personal webpages were not considered to be 'solidarity' websites dedicated to the terrorist groups under analysis. It was anticipated that these websites were set up to record the opinions of their respective authors, rather than just issue propaganda in favour of Northern Irish terrorist organisations. It was expected that 'pro-Loyalist' and 'pro-Republican' webmasters might use their websites to criticise the activities of their opponents. Many of these websites might use words relating to their opponents in their Meta tag descriptions, thus making their websites visible in results generated by searches conducted using the names of their rivals. Thus, the 'Opposition Website' category was created to incorporate 'Republican' websites in the analysis of Loyalist keyword searches and vice versa.

The next three categories were designed to test the Gerhart hypothesis, namely that 'more of the same' organisational websites dominate search engine results at the expense of less popular websites. The websites of research institutes, external mass media organisations, and government agencies were all expected to receive high search engine ratings due to the rule of 'Googlearchy.' It was anticipated that research institutes and government

agencies, that analysed the Northern Irish conflict, would use keyword Meta tag descriptions on their sites that were similar to the keyword searches used in the study. External news media organisations, who reported on the activities of Northern Irish terrorists in newspaper, radio, and television formats, were expected to replicate this coverage on their websites. The category of 'Other' was used to describe websites that did not comment specifically on contemporary Northern Irish terrorist organisations. This category included websites that promoted cultural aspects of Loyalism and Republicanism but offered no overtly political analysis of contemporary Northern Irish terrorist organisations. It also included websites that did not explicitly refer to Northern Ireland, but had Meta tags that were similar to the keyword searches used in the study. For example, websites dedicated to the Irish language or Orange flute bands were considered cultural rather than political projections of the two traditions in Northern Ireland.

The data was entered into SPSS for Windows and frequency tables were created to provide a breakdown of the top 25 results by website category. Inferential statistics were not used to analyse the data due to doubts over the suitability of using Internet search engines for creating data sets. It was anticipated that the stability of results could not be guaranteed, as the behaviour of search engines lacked transparency. As discussed in this chapter, the algorithms behind search engines such as Google are invariably shrouded in secrecy (Thelwall, 2001:12). The top 25 results could vary from one day to another due to the updating frequency of each individual search engine, prompted by the high birth and death rates of websites on the Internet. A second phase of data collection in October 2005 was intended to allow a comparison of the descriptive statistics over a period of a year, but these comparisons were illustrative only and no generalisations could be made based upon them.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The study found that there were more results generated by searches conducted using 'Irish Republican' than 'Ulster Loyalist' (See Table 4.3). As expected, the DMOZ search engine produced the fewest number of search results, although they appeared more stable as there was minimal deviation between the two phases of data collection, particularly in the 'Irish Republican' keyword search. The other descriptive statistics appeared to illustrate the problem of stability in using search engines to construct data sets. There were some notable differences in the number of search results returned by the other three search engines. For example, the mean score for the number of results generated by the 'Ulster Loyalist' search rose from 32611.8 to 216930.8, between the two phases of data collection.

[Table 4.3 here]

Searches conducted using terrorist group names also cast doubt over the stability of results generated by search engines. The DMOZ search engine again produced the fewest number of links in response to searches conducted using the names of Northern Irish terrorist groups. Searches conducted using names such as the Continuity Army Council generated no links on the DMOZ search engine (See Table 4.4). Similar to the ideological descriptions, the mean scores across all four search engines for Republican group names varied greatly between the two phases of data collection. For example, searches conducted using 'Saor Eire' produced mean scores of 344.75 and 4681.25 in phases one and two respectively.

[Table 4.4 here]

Searches conducted using Loyalist terrorist group names generated a larger number of links than their Republican counterparts did (See Table 4.5). The search conducted using 'Orange Volunteers' received the highest mean score in both phases of data collection. However, searches conducted using Loyalist terrorist group names also showed wide variations between the two periods as data collection. For example, searches conducted using 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' produced mean scores of 8655.25 and 52864.75 in the two phases of data collection.

[Table 4.5 here]

Analysis of search engine results using website categories.

Irish Republican

The analysis of the type of websites generated by the ideological descriptions suggested that Republican political fronts were more visible on search engines than their Loyalist counterparts were. For example, while the Irish Republican Socialist Party featured prominently in the Republican search engines results, the Ulster Political Research Group was conspicuous by its absence from the Loyalist results. Overall, the majority of links generated by the 'Irish Republican' search pointed towards 'pro-Republican' websites (See Table 4.6). There was a high degree of convergence between the four search engines in terms of the results generated by this query. For example, all four search engines provided links pointing towards the Ireland's Own website (www.irelandsown.net). Furthermore, the majority of websites generated by this search query could be characterised as either 'pro-Republican' or 'more of the same' organisational websites, all of which provided analysis of Republican terrorist groups. A low percentage of links generated by the four search engines pointed towards websites that offered no political analysis of the Northern Irish conflict. In addition, there were no Loyalist websites visible in the results generated by the 'Irish Republican' query.

[Table 4.6 here]

Ulster Loyalist

The majority of links generated by the 'Ulster Loyalist' search pointed towards websites that were supportive of Loyalist terrorist organisations (See Table 4.7). Loyalist solidarity websites, such as Swansea Loyal (www.swansealoyal.co.uk), featured prominently in the results generated by all four search engines. The study also found that there were no Republican websites visible in the results generated by the 'Ulster Loyalist' search query. In addition, a significant number of links pointed towards the websites of actors that appeared to have no direct affiliation with Loyalist terrorists. For example, the personal webpage of Philip Johnston (www.philipjohnston.com) featured prominently in the study, presumably because of one article he had published on his website that referred to the Northern Irish conflict. Overall, the study suggested that Internet users would be more likely to reach 'pro-Republican' websites than 'pro Loyalist' websites if they used ideological descriptions as search terms.

[Table 4.7 here]

Terrorist Group Name

Irish Republican Army

Searches conducted using the 'Irish Republican Army' search query generated fewer links to 'pro-Republican' websites than those conducted using the ideological description, 'Irish Republican' (See Table 4.8). However, the percentage of 'official' terrorist organisation websites generated by the search query was distorted by a very small DMOZ sample. As expected, the DMOZ search engine returned fewer links than

the other Internet search engines, the 'Irish Republican Army' search generating a maximum of 16 links in both phases of data collection. Nevertheless, few links generated by the other search engines pointed towards the websites of Republican political fronts, such as Sinn Fein (www.sinnfein.ie). For example, the Google search engine sample did not provide any links to official Republican organisations during both phases of data collection.

[Table 4.8 here]

Republican solidarity websites, like the Irish Republican Movement (www.members.lycos.co.uk/taaraanois), were slightly more visible in these search results than Republican political fronts. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, the majority of links generated by DMOZ did not point towards websites that were 'pro-Republican.' The DMOZ search engine was more likely to provide links pointing towards the websites of external media organisations, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (www.bbc.co.uk), than those of 'pro-Republican' actors. Overall, the majority of links within each search engine sample pointed towards the websites of research institutes, or those that offered no political analysis of Northern Irish terrorist groups. For example, the MSN search engine generated links to websites such as Anagram Genius (www.anagramgenius.com) in response to this search. Furthermore, Loyalists received greater representation on the results generated by this search, in comparison to the results generated by the 'Irish Republican' search. Both the MSN and Yahoo search engines pointed Internet users seeking information on the Irish Republican Army towards Loyalist solidarity websites.

Ulster Volunteer Force

Searches conducted using the 'Ulster Volunteer Force' query generated fewer links towards the websites of Loyalist political fronts than the 'Ulster Loyalist' search (See

Table 4.9). Only the DMOZ search engine generated a link that pointed towards an official Loyalist organisation, namely the website of the Progressive Unionist Party (www.pup-ni.org.uk). It should be noted that the relatively high percentage of links (25 percent) pointing towards official websites on DMOZ was mainly due to the small number of websites (four) generated by this search. However, this search did generate a larger number of links pointing towards Loyalist solidarity websites in comparison to the number of Republican solidarity websites generated by the 'Irish Republican Army' search. Once more, a large percentage of links generated by this search pointed towards websites that offered no political analysis of contemporary Northern Irish terrorism, such as the UVF Regimental Band (www.uvfregimentalband.co.uk). There was some evidence to support the hypothesis that the DMOZ engine would generate a larger proportion of links to sites that dealt explicitly with Northern Irish terrorism. As expected, the DMOZ search engine generated fewer links than the other search engines under analysis, generating a maximum of four links in response to this query over both periods of data collection. However, the study found that all of the links generated by the DMOZ search engine pointed towards either the websites of Loyalist political fronts, or those maintained by their supporters.

[See Table 4.9]

DISCUSSION

Do search engines limit the audience for Northern Irish terrorists online?

Overall, the results of the study provided some evidence to support the hypothesis that 'more of the same' organisational websites are more visible on Internet search engines than 'controversy-revealing' websites. Internet search engines direct Internet users towards the websites of media organisations and universities, as opposed to the websites of Loyalist and Republican political fronts. These 'more of the same' organisations

appear more visible on Internet search engines, by virtue of the amount of web traffic that passes through their website, and, in some instances, due to their prior purchase of priority retrieval. Furthermore, 'more of the same' organisational websites are more likely to adhere to a set of informal rules that guarantee a high search engine rating for a website. Companies like Softsteel Solutions recommend that webmasters remove page redirects and place key information about the website towards the top of the page in order to secure a high search engine ranking (Softsteel Solutions, 2003). The webmasters of 'organisational' websites are likely to possess the resources to hire companies to design their websites in order to maximise their search engine rating.

Although some Northern Irish terrorist organisations may possess the necessary resources to purchase priority retrieval and hire web consultants, the prospect of government sanctions against search engines that facilitate the activities of terrorists is likely to lead them to offer priority retrieval to actors who have no tangible link to these terrorist organisations. National governments can also pressurise search engines to remove terrorist websites from their directories altogether, citing a perceived threat to national security as their justification for such censorship. In March 2005, Google was forced to remove an advertisement placed by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas from its search engine following a barrage of criticism from the international media and diplomatic pressure from the US and Israeli governments (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2005). These factors would appear to militate against official Loyalist and Republican terrorist organisations appearing in the top 25 results of Internet search engine results, particularly in response to searches conducted using the names of proscribed terrorist groups. The audience for these groups may therefore be limited to those who already were familiar with the Universal Resource Locator (URL) of their official website.

Yet, the websites of 'third party' actors can generate soft power on behalf of a terrorist organisation. Soft power relies upon "the appeal of one's ideas or culture," as opposed to

the activities of one particular actor (Keohane and Nye, 1998: 86). Diverse groups such as political parties, the conventional mass media, and private individuals may use their web presence to project the ideology of the terrorist actor.¹³⁹ If one of these websites remains online, terrorists may gain support through the exercise of soft power on their behalf. However, the extent of terrorist soft power still depends upon the attractiveness of their political ideologies, and the accessibility of websites that transmit propaganda in their favour.

Have Internet users lost interest in Northern Irish terrorists?

Loyalist and Republican websites may lack visibility on search engines because they receive fewer visitors than the websites of media organisations. The volume of traffic that goes through a website is one of the factors that determine its ranking on search engines. Terrorist atrocities often lead to increased web traffic, as people search for information about the perpetrators online. For example, an estimated 36 million Internet users in the United States went online looking for news in the first two days after the attacks on New York and Washington in September 11th 2001 (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2001:3). This temporarily increased the online audience for radical Islamists online, as people used search engines to look for information on what had motivated the perpetrators.

Contextual factors might also explain why people are less inclined to search for information on Northern Irish terrorists online. The political process in Northern Ireland had stagnated during the period of data collection, as the British and Irish governments sought to restore devolution to the province. Nevertheless, paramilitaries on both sides continued to declare publicly their support for the peace process and did not renew their 'armed struggle' to achieve their objectives. It could be argued that these groups were not as newsworthy as other 'active' international terrorist organisations, such as Al Qaeda, during the study. It is also reasonable to speculate that the number of people using search

engines to follow news stories involving Loyalists and Republicans declined during this period. As such, the volume of traffic through Loyalist and Republican websites would decrease, leading to a lower profile on search engines in comparison to more popular media websites. This suggests that global search patterns, as well as the number of links available on their websites may limit the audience for these groups. Future research should consider how global search patterns influences the visibility of websites on Internet search engines. This research might utilise innovative research tools that were not available during the study, such as Google Trends (www.google.com/intl/en/trends). Google Trends enables Internet users to view the fastest growing search queries across the globe. This would enable researchers to determine whether terrorist atrocities lead to a rapid increase in the number of search queries about their perpetrators.

Terrorist Framing and search engine visibility

Loyalists and Republicans may not wish to appear visible on search engines when Internet users look for information on their respective terrorist organisations. Many of these groups have pursued their political objectives through their political representatives since the Belfast Agreement (1998). Parties such as Sinn Fein use their websites to differentiate themselves from their terrorist sponsors, suggesting they are cultural democrats. The content of political front websites is virtually indistinguishable from the content posted on the websites of constitutional political parties (see chapter 3). As such, these terrorist organisations are unlikely to maintain a website under the guise of their military organisation, as this would cast doubt upon their long-term commitment to the peace process. The low visibility of these groups on search engines might prove beneficial to these political fronts as they attempt to demonstrate their support for the peace process. These groups might not wish to attract an online audience that is looking for information on their military activities.

Yet, low search engine visibility does not guarantee that Internet users will differentiate

political fronts from terrorist organisations. People who look for information on the 'Troubles' include not just those who rely upon search engines to direct them towards relevant websites, but also those who have 'offline' knowledge of the Northern Irish conflict. Internet users with prior knowledge of Northern Irish terrorists groups will be able to locate their official websites by altering their search terms. In particular, knowledge of the link between political front and terrorist organisation will lead many Internet users to use different search terms than those employed in the study. Conversely, people who rely upon search engines will be directed towards the most visible websites, such as those of media organisations and universities. These Internet users are still likely to be made aware of the links between political fronts and terrorist organisations. The websites of media organisations are likely to provide information on the links between political fronts and their terrorist sponsors, as well as providing links to their websites. This suggests that the online framing of Loyalists and Republicans may have limited effect upon people who use search engines as research tools. Irrespective of their background knowledge, people who use search engines to research the Northern Irish conflict will be able to view the links between political fronts and their respective terrorist organisations.

Dissident terrorists may not wish people to visit their websites if they have no link to their organisation. A higher profile on Internet search engines will inevitably lead to increased scrutiny of the group's covert activities by intelligence agencies and the potential closure of the site by national governments. Weinmann (2004) suggests that terrorists might use the Web for a number of covert purposes like data mining and providing tutorials on sabotaging computer networks (p.7). Consequently, dissidents on both sides might seek to avoid a higher degree of exposure on Internet search engines. Many of these groups have continued to perpetrate acts of political violence since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. Dissident Republican groups, such as the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, use their websites to justify political violence and to make thinly veiled threats against supporters of the Belfast Agreement (see chapter

3). In addition, nearly all of the Loyalist terrorist organisations that initially supported the Good Friday Agreement have been 'specified' as 'active' terrorist organisations since 1998. There is already some evidence to suggest that these groups use ICTs to plan and perpetrate atrocities in the 'offline' world. For example, the Ulster Freedom Fighters have used websites to select potential targets. In March 2001, a message posted on an 'Ulster Loyalist' website urged UFF members to attack a named bar where it claimed members of the Irish Republican Army regularly visited.¹⁴⁰ For groups who use the web covertly to support their military operations, a high degree of visibility on search engines might prove a hindrance.

CONCLUSION

The online audience for Loyalists and Republicans consists primarily of Internet users who use the web for political research and supporters of these groups. While there is some evidence to suggest that the digital divide is narrowing, this audience is still likely to be male, middle class, well educated, and situated in Europe or North America. People without links to Northern Irish terrorists may use search engines to locate information about the Northern Irish conflict online. The analysis presented in this chapter suggests that search engines can also be characterised as 'gatekeepers,' albeit without the ability to shape the content of websites before it reaches Internet users. Internet search engines direct this audience towards 'more of the same' organisational websites rather than 'pro-Loyalist' or 'pro-Republican' websites. The rule of Googlearchy and the sale of priority retrieval militate against a high search engine ranking for websites that express support for these terrorists. In addition, the study found that search engines did not provide links to the websites of political fronts when searches were conducted using the names of their respective terrorist organisations. This might actually benefit groups who wish audiences to differentiate their political front from the atrocities of their military wings. Internet users, with limited offline knowledge about the Northern Irish conflict, may accept the framing of pro-Agreement groups such as Sinn Fein if their websites are not visible on

these search results. However, media organisations - often the most visible websites on search engine results- will still direct people with limited knowledge about the Northern Irish conflict towards the websites of Loyalist and Republican political fronts. Thus, search engines enable a 'mediated interaction' between terrorist-linked groups and a potential global audience online. This might not be to the detriment of some Northern Irish terrorist organisations. Low visibility on search engines may prove beneficial to dissident Republicans who are still engaged in 'armed struggle,' such as the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. These groups may not wish to attract a large audience online for fear of compromising future military operations and the security of their members. Overall, the analysis suggests that the online audience for Northern Irish terrorists may fluctuate in response to events in the offline world. As these political fronts have committed to the peace process, they have arguably become less newsworthy. Internet users are more likely to use the Web to follow breaking news stories than look up information on Northern Irish terrorists, many of whom have declared a cessation to their military activities.

Table 4.1 Northern Irish Terrorist Groups currently proscribed in the United Kingdom.

| Group | Estimated Strength | Pro/Anti Good Friday Agreement | Website of Politically Linked Group | Unofficial (Solidarity) Website |
|---|--|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Continuity Army Council ¹ | Under 50 active members. | Anti | Yes (as Republican Sinn Fein) | Yes |
| Cumann na mBan | No Data Available | No Data Available | No | No |
| Fianna na hEireann | Unknown | Anti | Yes | No |
| Irish National Liberation Army | Under 50 active members. | Anti | Yes (As Irish Republican Socialist Movement) | Yes |
| Irish Peoples ² Liberation Organisation | No Data Available | No Data Available | No | No |
| Irish Republican Army (aka PIRA) | Several hundred active members. | Pro | Yes (As Sinn Fein) | Yes |
| Loyalist Volunteer Force | 50-150 active members, 300 supporters. | Anti | No | Yes |
| Orange Volunteers | 20 active members ³ | Anti | No | Yes |
| Red Hand Commandos | No Data Available | Pro | No | Yes |
| Red Hand Defenders | Up to 20 active members | Anti | No | No |
| Saor Eire | No Data Available | No Data Available | No | No |
| Ulster Defence Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters ⁴ | Few dozen active members | Pro | Yes (As Ulster Political Research Group) | Yes |
| Ulster Volunteer Force | Few dozen active members | Pro | Yes (As Progressive Unionist Party) | Yes |

¹ Linked to Republican Sinn Fein, Continuity IRA, and according to some sources, the Real IRA.

² The Irish Peoples Liberation Organisation (IPLO) announced its dissolution in October 1992 following an internal feud.

³ Security sources believe that Red Hand Defenders and Orange Volunteers are served by same pool of volunteers.

⁴ These two organisations are defined as autonomous terrorist organisations on the UK list of proscribed terrorist groups (2005). However, these groups are considered by many sources to be one and the same organisation.

Table 4.2 Categories of Website generated by search engines.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------|
| Official Terrorist Organisation/ Political Front | Solidarity Website | Personal Webpage/Blog | Research Institute/ University | External News Media | Opposition Website | Government | Other |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------|

Table.4.3. Results generated by words ‘Irish Republican’ and ‘Ulster Loyalist.’

| Group Name | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | | Mean | |
|---------------------|------|----|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Irish Republican | 50 | 46 | 404000 | 3930000 | 160883 | 384124 | 867000 | 5040000 | 357983.3 | 2338542.5 |
| Ulster Loyalist | 20 | 12 | 34200 | 290000 | 13127 | 59711 | 83100 | 518000 | 32611.9 | 216930.8 |

Table.4.4. Number of results for searches conducted using Republican group names.

| Group Name | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | | Mean | |
|---|------|----|---------|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|------------|
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Continuity Army Council | 0 | 0 | 105,000 | 1780000 | 25,413 | 188702 | 144,000 | 751000 | 68603.25 | 679925.5 |
| Cumann na mBan | 0 | 0 | 1,860 | 137 | 405 | 3648 | 383 | 2180 | 662.00 | 1491.25 |
| Fianna na hEireann | 0 | 0 | 640 | 9600 | 570 | 5434 | 1690 | 18900 | 725.00 | 6243.5 |
| Irish National Liberation Army | 1 | 1 | 59200 | 1430000 | 25696 | 136722 | 146000 | 807000 | 57724.25 | 593430.75 |
| Irish Peoples Liberation Organisation | 0 | 0 | 12900 | 724000 | 8898 | 111000 | 51,100 | 35371 | 18224.50 | 217592.75 |
| Irish Republican Army | 0 | 16 | 148000 | 2300000 | 66197 | 214159 | 366000 | 2430000 | 145049.30 | 1236043.75 |
| Saor Eire | 0 | 0 | 592 | 13000 | 280 | 4215 | 507 | 1510 | 344.75 | 4681.25 |

Table.4.5. Number of results for searches conducted using Loyalist group names.

| Group Name | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | | Mean | |
|-------------------------------|------|----|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|------------|
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Loyalist Volunteer Force | 0 | 0 | 13800 | 148000 | 5801 | 29292 | 33400 | 195000 | 13250.25 | 93073.00 |
| Orange Volunteers | 0 | 4 | 328000 | 5010000 | 154339 | 816841 | 857000 | 4790000 | 334834.80 | 2654211.3 |
| Red Hand Commandos | 0 | 1 | 53100 | 1790000 | 22157 | 130969 | 158000 | 732000 | 58314.25 | 663242.5 |
| Red Hand Defenders | 0 | 1 | 130000 | 1600000 | 71007 | 365944 | 398000 | 2100000 | 149741.80 | 1016486.25 |
| Ulster Defence Association | 0 | 3 | 48700 | 423000 | 9371 | 53011 | 58700 | 307000 | 29192.75 | 195753.5 |
| Ulster Freedom Fighters | 0 | 0 | 7920 | 92300 | 3401 | 17159 | 23300 | 102000 | 8655.25 | 52864.75 |
| Ulster Volunteer Force | 4 | 1 | 18200 | 222000 | 7711 | 43526 | 50800 | 241000 | 19178.75 | 126631.75 |

Table.4.6. 'Irish Republican' search results by website category.

| Category | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | |
|--|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | |
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Official Republican Organisation | 32 | 24 | 36 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 52 | 32 |
| Republican Solidarity Website | 24 | 32 | 28 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 12 | 44 |
| Personal Webpage/Blog | 20 | 16 | 4 | 12 | 20 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Research Institute/University | 4 | 8 | 20 | 32 | 8 | 20 | 16 | 16 |
| External News Media | 12 | 16 | 4 | 8 | 8 | 16 | 0 | 40 |
| Loyalist | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Government | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 8 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 20 | 20 | 16 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table.4.7 'Ulster Loyalist' results by website category.

| Category | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | |
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Official Loyalist Organisation | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loyalist Solidarity Website | 50 | 58.3 | 36 | 12 | 48 | 36 | 48 | 36 |
| Personal Webpage/Blog | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Research Institute/University | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 | 8 | 12 | 12 | 16 |
| External News Media | 0 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 8 | 16 | 8 |
| Republican | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Government | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 45 | 41.7 | 52 | 32 | 28 | 44 | 24 | 40 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table.4.8 'Irish Republican Army' results by website category.

| Category | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | |
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Official Republican Organisation | 0 | 18.75 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 8 |
| Republican Solidarity Website | 0 | 12.5 | 12 | 8 | 24 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Personal Webpage/Blog | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Research Institute/University | 0 | 56.25 | 40 | 68 | 12 | 48 | 28 | 60 |
| External News Media | 0 | 12.5 | 0 | 8 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 4 |
| Loyalist | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Government | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 4 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 44 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 36 | 12 |
| TOTAL | N/A | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table.4.9 'Ulster Volunteer Force' results by website category.

| Category | DMOZ | | Google | | MSN | | Yahoo | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | | Percent (%) | |
| | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 | 04 | 05 |
| Official Loyalist Organisation | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loyalist Solidarity Website | 75 | 100 | 16 | 8 | 24 | 24 | 32 | 20 |
| Personal Webpage/Blog | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 4 |
| Research Institute/University | 0 | 0 | 28 | 56 | 8 | 24 | 16 | 36 |
| External News Media | 0 | 0 | 8 | 12 | 12 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Republican | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Government | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 48 | 20 | 44 | 40 | 32 | 32 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

INTRODUCTION

Hoffman (1998) suggests that the Internet has made terrorism “accessible to anyone with a grievance, an agenda, a purpose or any idiosyncratic combination of the above” (p.185). In this chapter, the above proposition is tested through an analysis of Loyalist and Republican solidarity websites. Solidarity websites are defined here as websites that project messages of support for Loyalist or Republican terrorist groups, but reveal no formal link between the webmaster and these organisations. The function and framing of solidarity websites will be examined in this chapter. Website function will be analysed to determine whether these groups have realised the potential of the Internet as tool for organisational linkage and mobilisation. The study will assess whether dissident Republicans were more likely to justify political violence on their websites than their respective political fronts. It will also examine to what extent the peace frame, which differentiates parties such as Sinn Fein from their terrorist organisations, influences the content of Loyalist and Republican solidarity websites. The study suggests that there is little differentiation between the online framing of amateur terrorists and political fronts. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on these websites to suggest their webmasters have links to terrorist organisations. The label ‘amateur terrorist’ may be inappropriate, given that many of these webmasters use their websites to focus upon the history of the Northern Irish conflict, rather than justify contemporary political violence.

AMATEUR TERRORISTS AND THE INTERNET

Tucker (2001) suggests that there has been a “proliferation of amateur terrorists” since the early nineties, many of whom have used the Internet to network with like-minded actors (p.2). The label ‘amateur terrorist’ can be applied to terrorists “who have little or no formal connection to an existing terrorist group” (Hoffman, 1998: 185). The

'Unabomber,' Theodore Kaczynski, and Timothy McVeigh, the lone terrorist responsible for the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, are probably the most well-known amateur terrorists. Kaczynski, a University of California mathematician, declared war on society as a whole. This was evident in the 'Unabomber manifesto,' which described the Industrial Revolution as a 'disaster' for the human race.¹⁴¹ During his seventeen - year campaign, Kaczynski sent homemade bombs to people associated with universities or the airline industry, killing three people and wounding twenty - three others (Hoffman, 1998: 155). In contrast to Kaczynski, Timothy McVeigh was responsible for only one lethal act of terrorism. The US army veteran perpetrated the attack on Alfred P Murrah building in Oklahoma City in April 1995, which resulted in 168 fatalities. He had been a member of the American Christian Patriots, who believed that a secretive elite was planning world domination through institutions such as the United Nations. The Alfred P Murrah building was targeted because McVeigh believed it was to be a processing centre for detention camps in the region.¹⁴² These case studies suggest that there is no typical amateur terrorist. Any individual may perpetrate political violence if they have the will and capacity to do so.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have greatly increased the pool of resources available to terrorists who have limited resources in the offline world (Tucker, 2001:2). It has also enabled lone terrorists to network with established terrorist groups. Terrorist groups such as Hamas, have developed a network structure of loosely connected autonomous actors, which includes private individuals living outside the Middle East. While these individuals are not full members of the organisation, they nevertheless act to further the objectives of a terrorist group. Lone terrorists like Ramzi Yousef, the 'mastermind' behind the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing, have often retrospectively been linked to decentralised terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda (p.1) Moreover, amateur terrorists may benefit from the low-cost communication available on the World Wide Web. Whereas terrorists previously required extensive training and knowledge in the offline world, this information can now be located online for a relatively low cost.

Terrorists may obtain bombmaking instructions from the World Wide Web, and mine data on potential targets using ICTs. In addition, terrorists can choose their own frames on the Internet, circumventing the ideological refraction of the conventional mass media. They no longer need to threaten violence in order for newspapers to print their manifestos, as was the case during the Unabomber campaign.¹⁴³ Yet, amateur terrorists may not post incriminating material online which draws attention to their illegal activities. In a similar fashion to terrorist groups themselves, they are more likely to use the Web covertly for these purposes, while their websites conform to the norms of acceptable behaviour online.

LOYALIST AND REPUBLICAN SOLIDARITY WEBSITES

Sample

The material posted on Loyalist and Republican websites was analysed to determine whether their webmasters were in fact amateur terrorists. The total population of Loyalist and Republican websites is probably undefinable, given the high ‘birth’ and ‘death’ rate of websites on the Internet. Therefore, a sample size of 40 websites - 20 Loyalist and 20 Republican websites – was selected for the study (see Table 5.1). These websites were located by entering the names of the 14 proscribed Northern Irish terrorist organisations into the basic search facility of the Google and Yahoo Internet search engines.¹⁴⁴ The links generated by the top 25 search engine results were then analysed to locate the websites of Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors.¹⁴⁵ The term ‘solidarity actor’ referred to a political actor that expressed support for Loyalist or Republican terrorists. This did not include cultural projections of the two traditions in the province, such as Orange Order and Irish language websites.

[Table 5.1 here]

Website Registration Data

The majority of Loyalist websites under analysis were registered with Internet hosts based in the United States (see table 5.2). For example, Freewebs, an American company, hosted the websites of the Ulster Defence Association and the Birches Guerrilla Movement. Two websites, the UVF-The People's Army and the British Ulster Alliance – were registered to a German Internet host, Schlund. In a similar vein to the constitutional political parties, few of the Loyalist solidarity websites provided registered postal addresses or telephone numbers for their respective webmasters on Whois.net. Only three Loyalist websites, including the British Ulster Alliance (www.britishulsteralliance.co.uk), provided the name of their respective webmaster. It should be noted that registration details for two Loyalist websites, the West of Scotland Ratpack and Yorkshire Loyal, could not be located on either Nominet or Whois.

[Table 5.2 here]

The majority of Republican solidarity websites were registered to Internet Hosts based in North America (see table 5.3). This reflected the large number of websites in the sample that were linked to Irish-American political organisations. For example, the Na Gael website (www.nagael.com) was registered via an American subsidiary of Yahoo. Whois.net gave Internet users the name of the webmaster and a postal address in the United States should they wish to contact the organisation.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to the Loyalist websites, Republican solidarity sites provided extensive information about their webmasters on Whois.net. Five of the Republican websites provided comprehensive contact details such as a registered postal address and personal email address. For example, the Irish American Unity Conference website (www.iauc.org) provided a correspondence address in Washington DC for its webmaster.¹⁴⁷ In sum, solidarity websites were more likely to be hosted outside the United Kingdom than websites maintained by constitutional political parties in the region. However, these websites were

not expected to offer support for terrorist organisations in a similar fashion to the ill-fated ULISNET website.¹⁴⁸ As all of the websites were registered in the United States and Europe, they were expected to comply with the norms of acceptable behaviour online.

[Table 5.3 here]

Research Design: Framing

The study was designed to test the hypothesis that some webmasters would purport to be members of proscribed terrorist organisations, despite evidence to the contrary on their websites. In order to test the amateur terrorist hypothesis, the study analysed how these solidarity actors identified themselves on their websites. The information provided by each webmaster was scrutinised to determine whether they had any links with a proscribed terrorist organisation. The study also examined to what extent the peace frame influenced the online framing of Loyalist and Republican supporters. Online framing was analysed by examining how each actor used language and images on their websites. It was anticipated that the framing of each solidarity website would reflect its webmaster's support for one of the 14 proscribed Northern Irish terrorist groups. For example, actors that aligned themselves with the Provisional IRA, would project the peace frame espoused by its political front, Sinn Fein. Conversely, opponents of the Belfast Agreement on both sides would use their websites to criticise its supporters. Dissident Republicans would use their websites to attack Sinn Fein for abandoning the armed struggle and participating in the power-sharing institutions. These frames would be virtually indistinguishable from those employed by dissident Republican parties, such as Republican Sinn Fein. Loyalist amateurs would use identical frames to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), highlighting the links between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA on their websites (see chapter 3). However, it was anticipated that solidarity websites would refer to the military campaigns of their nominated terrorist organisations. Amateur terrorists would use their websites to celebrate the lives of Loyalist and Republican

‘martyrs,’ and provide their own history of the Northern Irish conflict. In contrast to political fronts, these actors would not have to establish their credentials as democratic political parties, nor court the electorate online.

[Table 5. 4 here]

Research Design: Function

Data was collected during April 2005 to enable a comparison of material posted online by these groups.¹⁴⁹ These websites were located using the *Google* search engine and archived for future research.¹⁵⁰ In order to assess their function, each website was scored with reference to the coding scheme used earlier in this thesis (see chapter 3). It enabled the websites to be ranked in terms of their interactivity, presentation, organisational linkage, and online recruitment. It also enabled a direct comparison between the websites of political fronts, amateur terrorists, and other Northern Irish societal groups. The study assessed whether Loyalists and Republicans solidarity actors have realised the potential of the Internet as a tool for organisational linkage and mobilisation. As discussed earlier in this thesis, no political party in Northern Ireland is experiencing a critical multiplier effect via their websites, particularly in terms of organisational linkage (see chapter 3). Cyberoptimists suggest that the Internet can provide a degree of organisational coherence to political actors that ordinarily are incapable of ‘punching above their weight’ in the international community. The study assessed to what extent amateur terrorists used the Internet to mobilise support for their cause around the globe, particularly in terms of recruitment and resource solicitation. It also tested the hypothesis that amateur terrorists on both sides would provide more links on their websites than their respective political fronts. Loyalist and Republican amateurs would not have to demonstrate their democratic credentials by removing all references to terrorism from their websites, such as links pointing towards the websites of ethno-nationalist terrorists, such as Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. The study also determined how Loyalist and Republican actors present their frames online. It was anticipated that only large organisations, such as the Irish-American

Unity Conference, would possess the resources to afford innovations such as video streaming on their websites.

RESULTS

Online Framing: Pro-Agreement Frames

Few solidarity actors projected the peace frame on their websites. Cairde Sinn Fein, a support group for Sinn Fein, was the only Republican actor to express support for the peace process on its website. This group used identical online frames to its patron, calling for a United Ireland “based on internationally accepted democratic principles.”¹⁵¹ A similar pattern emerged from the analysis of Loyalist solidarity websites. Only two Loyalist actors expressed support for the peace process on their websites. The Red Hand Land website called on Loyalists to engage in the political process. Accordingly, the webmaster urged Loyalists to abandon their military campaigns and “use the Internet fully to spread our argument.”¹⁵² Similar sentiments featured on the Liverpool UDA website, although it adopted a more pragmatic approach towards the peace process. This group declared its continued support for the peace process, although its webmaster stated that the group “would defend Ulster if and when the need arises.”¹⁵³ Overall, it appeared that only groups with close ties to political fronts used their websites to express their support for the peace process.

Anti-Agreement Frames

The majority of Republicans used their websites to reject the ‘peace frame,’ focusing instead on how Sinn Fein had ‘sold out’ the Republican movement. Dissident Republicans criticised Sinn Fein for abandoning core Republican values and “administering British rule in Ireland.”¹⁵⁴ In the opinion of these actors, the Provisional

IRA ceasefire had left the Catholic community at greater risk of attack from Loyalist paramilitaries, and had failed to remove the 'British imperialists' from Ireland. These groups often referred to themselves as 'Fenians' on their websites, reinforcing the perception that Catholics still faced discrimination from the unionist community in Northern Ireland.¹⁵⁵ For example, the New Republican Forum asserted on its website that they would have to "chart a course for the future of the republican struggle due to the Provisionals' collaboration with the London and Dublin governments."¹⁵⁶ These anti-Agreement sentiments were repeated on the Hardline IRA website. On this website, the webmaster declared that the PIRA ceasefire had "nullified the defense of catholics and nationalists, and left them vulnerable to brutal attacks from Loyalist paramilitaries."¹⁵⁷

Loyalist solidarity actors sought to unite the 'Protestant/Loyalist people' against the 'farce' of a Good Friday Agreement.¹⁵⁸ In a similar vein to anti-Agreement Unionists, these actors rejected the notion that political fronts should be differentiated from their respective terrorist organisations. Groups such as the British Ulster Alliance used their websites to highlight the links between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA, often referring to them as one and the same organisation, 'Sinn Fein/IRA.'¹⁵⁹ These actors also used their websites to criticise unionists who supported the Belfast Agreement. For example, the webmaster responsible for the Loyalist Network website declared, "the sooner we are rid of Trimble and his followers the better for Ulster."¹⁶⁰ Pro-Agreement Unionists were criticised for allowing Sinn Fein to enter government before the completion of Provisional IRA decommissioning. The Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice encapsulated this sentiment in its slogan, 'No Guns, No Government.'¹⁶¹ The Belfast Agreement was also rejected on the basis that it did little to reassure 'besieged' Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. This was particularly evident in the use of the term 'ethnic cleansing' on Loyalist websites, such as the West of Scotland Ratpack. In one article on this website, it was alleged that 'Sinn Fein/IRA' were engaged in a campaign of intimidation, designed to force Protestants out of the Glenbryn district in North Belfast.¹⁶² In sum, Loyalist and Republicans use their websites to suggest that the Belfast

Agreement has left their communities at greater risk from one another.

Justification of political violence

Loyalists and Republicans did not tend to justify contemporary political violence on their websites. Only three Republican solidarity actors provided a rationale for 'armed struggle' on their websites. For example, the webmaster who maintained the Ireland's Own website did little to hide his or her support for the continued military activity of dissident Republican organisation, the Real IRA. In an article entitled 'Guerrilla Warfare,' the webmaster justified the Real IRA military campaign, asserting that Britain "has never left any of its so-called colonies without an armed struggle."¹⁶³ The support for terrorists was often implicit in statements posted on Republican websites, such as Eire Saor. The webmaster responsible for this website pledged to "support to any organisation fighting for a 32-County Irish Republic free of British imperialism."¹⁶⁴ Similar language was used on the website of the Hardline IRA, the organisation stating its desire to "drive out the British army in a war of attrition."¹⁶⁵ In general, none of the Republican websites carried statements on behalf of proscribed terrorist organisations, such as the Real IRA. This was perhaps to be expected, given that Republican terrorists issued press releases through the websites of their political fronts (see chapter 3).

Only three Loyalist actors provided a justification for political violence on their websites. Loyalists groups also used language on their websites that implied they supported contemporary political violence. For example, the Birches Guerrilla Movement (BGM) used its website to respond to the growing numbers of Catholics who wished to reside in their area. In one statement, the BGM asserted that they would do their utmost to ensure that "Robinsonstown has not a single Catholic in its dwelling and shall never have either."¹⁶⁶ Two Loyalist solidarity actors appeared to act as intermediaries between the paramilitaries and the mass media. The Volunteer website carried a number of statements from the North Antrim Brigade of the Ulster Volunteer Force. In one of these statements,

the Brigade warned that “members [of the UVF] caught dealing drugs would be court-martialed and severely dealt with.”¹⁶⁷ This resonated with the material posted on the Loyalist Voice website, which reproduced statements from the Orange Volunteers. In one such article, entitled, ‘We will kill freed IRA, says group,’ the Orange Volunteers threatened to kill Republican prisoners who had been granted early release under the terms of the Belfast Agreement.¹⁶⁸ In sum, the material posted on Loyalist and Republican websites did not appear to contravene the terms of anti-terrorist legislation, such as the UK Terrorism Act. Accordingly, few of these webmasters justified contemporary terrorist atrocities on their websites, or encouraged Internet users to perpetrate political violence themselves.

Self-identification

The study found that a clear majority of Loyalist and Republican actors chose to remain anonymous online. Only Irish-American groups, such as the Friends of Irish Freedom, provided extensive information regarding their leadership on their website. This organisation, based in New York City, provided the names of all of its high ranking officials, such as National Co-Chairmen John Hurley and Charles McLoughlin.¹⁶⁹ The Irish Freedom Committee website also named all of its senior figures, including National Chairman Joe Dillon.¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere, webmasters appeared reluctant to reveal their true identities on their websites. Most of the websites under analysis contained a disclaimer, possibly to prevent the webmaster from prosecution under the terms of anti-terrorist legislation, such as the US Patriot Act (2001). For example, the West of Scotland Ratpack website contained numerous references to the Loyalist Volunteer Force, including pictures of hooded gunmen that were allegedly members of the proscribed terrorist organisation. Yet, the website did not provide any information on the identity of its webmaster, and carried a disclaimer stating that it did “not speak for the Loyalist Volunteer Force.”¹⁷¹

A number of websites in the study purported to be the official web presence of a proscribed Northern Irish terrorist organisation, or had Universal Resource Locators (URLs) that contained the names of these groups. Yet, upon further investigation, many of these websites contained disclaimers stating that they were not linked to proscribed terrorist organisations. On the Republican side, the Eire Saor website appeared to have no links to the terrorist organisation from which it took its name. This was apparent in the first line on the homepage, which described Eire Saor as a “web-based project dedicated to the traditional Irish Republican goal of a 32-County Irish Republic free of British imperialism.”¹⁷² There was also little evidence to suggest the Hardline IRA were a terrorist organisation. This webmaster appeared to support any Republican organisation that opposed the Belfast Agreement, providing links to a variety of dissident Republican political fronts including Republican Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party.

Four Loyalist actors in the study shared the name of a proscribed terrorist organisation. In a similar vein to the Republican websites, there was little evidence on these websites to verify their credentials as terrorist organisations. These websites invariably carried disclaimers stating that their webmaster was not a member of a proscribed terrorist organisation. For example, the Ulster Defence Association disclaimer stated that its webmaster “did not support any terrorist organisation.”¹⁷³ The Ulster Volunteer Force website also contained a disclaimer that denied any links between the webmaster and the subject of the website.¹⁷⁴ In the case of the Fife Loyalists website, the webmaster appeared to have accidentally exposed himself as an ‘amateur terrorist.’ This website was alleged to be the official web presence of the Ulster Volunteer Force’s West Fife battalion. Yet, upon further inspection, the website turned out to be the personal webpage of a Fife teenager, known simply as ‘Euan.’ This was revealed through analysis of the photograph section of the website, in which ‘Euan’ was seen posing with a group of teenagers at a Glasgow Rangers FC football match.¹⁷⁵ The Liverpool UDA proved

exceptional amongst the websites that shared the title of a terrorist organisation. There was no evidence on this website to refute the organisation's claims that they were linked to the Ulster Defence Association.¹⁷⁶ Overall, it appeared that Loyalist and Republican actors made a conscious effort to remain anonymous on their websites. Although few solidarity sites justified contemporary political violence, the majority of webmasters nevertheless chose to conceal their identities online.

Images

The images used on solidarity websites illustrated whether their respective webmasters supported or opposed the Good Friday Agreement. Pro-Agreement Republicans, such as Cairde Sinn Fein used similar images to those employed on the Sinn Fein website. Pictures of gunmen and the national flag of Ireland were conspicuous by their absence from this website, which featured pictures of Cairde Sinn Fein officials at fund-raising dinners on its homepage.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the majority of Republican actors used 'militaristic' images on their websites to demonstrate their opposition to the peace process. For example, the Irish Freedom Committee used a recurring motif of a baseball bat on its website, a weapon associated with paramilitary 'punishment beatings.'¹⁷⁸ The Hardline IRA website also projected a violent image of Republicanism, the centrepiece of its homepage featuring a Union Jack flag being torn apart by two clenched fists.¹⁷⁹ Elsewhere, Republican actors used iconic Republican propaganda to demonstrate their opposition to the Belfast Agreement. For example, the Ireland For the Irish website was dominated by a mural of Margaret Thatcher sneezing across the island of Ireland, entitled, 'Get the Brits Out.'¹⁸⁰ Republicans also used their websites to laud fallen 'comrades,' such as the ten Republican prisoners who died on hunger strike in the Maze prison in 1981. The Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project provided pictures of each of the "ten men who died on the doorstep of the British government" during the hunger strike.¹⁸¹ Although this might suggest that these actors supported a particular terrorist group, none of the Republican websites contained paramilitary emblems, or

pictures of hooded gunmen.

Loyalists used more militaristic images on their websites than their Republican counterparts did. Paramilitary insignias were prominent on all of the Loyalist websites under analysis, such as the Red Hand Land. This website displayed an Ulster Volunteer Force badge on its homepage, leaving Internet users with little doubt that the webmaster supported this proscribed paramilitary organisation. The Loyalist Volunteer Force and the Orange Volunteers were also lauded on many of the Loyalist websites under analysis. For example, the West of Scotland Ratpack homepage was dominated by a flag, with the Loyalist Volunteer Force emblem as its centrepiece.¹⁸² Eulogies for “fallen comrades” were also common on the Loyalist websites under analysis. For example, the Liverpool UDA provided a Ulster Defence Association Roll of Honour on its website, featuring pictures of members such as John McMichael who had been killed during the Troubles.¹⁸³ In a similar vein, the Scottish Loyalists website provided articles on a host of slain Loyalist leaders, such as UDA Brigadier John Gregg and Loyalist Volunteer Force leader Billy Wright.¹⁸⁴ Loyalist opposition to the peace process was also conveyed through the images of hooded gunmen that permeated their websites. This was particularly evident on the Loyalist Voice website, which carried statements from the Orange Volunteers. These press releases were listed below a picture of six hooded gunmen, all of whom were allegedly members of the Loyalist terror group.¹⁸⁵ In a similar vein to Republicans, Loyalists turned to murals to demonstrate their opposition to the Belfast Agreement. The Greenock Loyalist website was in effect an archive of Loyalist murals in East Belfast. This homepage was dominated by a picture of two gunmen, beneath the slogan “Prepared for Peace, Ready for War.”¹⁸⁶ In sum, Loyalist and Republican amateurs employed more violent images on their websites than their respective political fronts. However, Loyalists were more likely to use paramilitary emblems on their websites, perhaps to suggest that they were actual members of these organisations.

Website Function

Organisational Linkage

The study found that Republicans demonstrated the greatest range of organisational linkages on their websites. Five Republican websites, including the Irish Anti-Partition League, received the maximum score in this category (See Table 5.4). This website not only provided links to other Republican websites, such as the Sovereign Nation (www.members.aol.com/ir32s), but also to the websites of media organisations, such as Reuters (ww.reuters.com).¹⁸⁷ Republican solidarity actors were also noteworthy for their reciprocation of links with actors engaged in ‘armed struggle’ elsewhere. For example, Coiste na n-larchimi was an umbrella organisation for groups and individuals who worked with former Republican prisoners. Reflecting the long-established links between the Republican movement and Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Coiste na n-larchimi website provided links to the websites of Basque separatist prisoner groups, such as Senideak (www.senideak.org).¹⁸⁸ Yet, not all of the Republican solidarity websites provided such an array of links on their websites. Two Republican solidarity actors – Fourthwrite and the Irish Northern Aid Committee – did not provide any links on their respective websites.

[Table 5.4 here]

Loyalist actors also reciprocated links with like-minded groups online, including many of the actors analysed in the study (see Table 5.5). For example, the Scottish Loyalists website provided links to the websites of the West of Scotland Ratpack, Ulster Defence Association, and Greenock Loyalists.¹⁸⁹ Yet, none of the Loyalist solidarity websites provided links to the websites of groups engaged in armed struggle outside the United Kingdom. In addition, Loyalist websites did not tend to provide links to the websites of universities or external agencies. Nevertheless, a few Loyalist websites did achieve high

scores in this section of the coding scheme. The Loyalist Network received the highest score of all the Loyalist websites included in the study. This website provided links pointing towards a diverse set of websites, including ‘The Ulster Loyalist,’ the Northern Ireland Executive, and the Belfast Telegraph.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the study found that there was little to differentiate between Loyalist and Republicans in terms of the number of links on their websites. This was illustrated by the analysis of the Scottish Loyalists website, which revealed it provided the greatest number of links (142) in the study. In sum, amateur terrorists on both sides do not appear to have realised the potential of the Internet as a tool for organisational linkage. As was the case in the analysis of political front websites, Republicans were the most likely to provide links to the websites of external agencies and diaspora communities. However, there was limited evidence to suggest that these actors were experiencing a critical multiplier effect in terms of organisational linkage.

[Table 5.5 here]

Interactivity

Both Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors offered a relatively low degree of interactivity on their websites. Overall, Republicans provided a higher degree of interactivity on their websites than their Loyalist counterparts. The Irish American Unity Conference received the highest score in this section of the coding scheme (See Table 5.6). This website enabled Internet users to not just send correspondence to a registered postal address, but also to email individual members of its organisation.¹⁹¹ It also provided an innovative way for people to express their ‘solidarity’ with the organisation. Internet users were invited to add their personal details to a standard email in support of the Irish American Unity Conference. Once submitted, this email would be sent to the editors of over 400 daily newspapers in the United States.¹⁹² The Fourthwrite website also encouraged interaction between Internet users and its members. The Republican

magazine invited people to contribute to the latest edition of their online journal, providing postal addresses and telephone numbers for its editorial staff.¹⁹³ However, it should be noted that two of the Republican websites under analysis – Mise Eire and Australian Aid for Ireland – received no score in this category.

[Table 5.6 here]

Republicans were more likely to solicit resources from Internet users who visited their websites than Loyalists. In this respect, the research findings were similar to the pattern that emerged from the study of Loyalist and Republican political fronts (See chapter 3). The results suggested that some of the Republican solidarity actors were closely connected with their respective political fronts. These websites often had self-evident titles, drawing attention to the link between the solidarity actor and its nominated terrorist organisation. Consequently, it was perhaps no surprise that groups such as Cairde Sinn Fein would use their websites to directly solicit resources for the Republican movement. After all, Cairde Sinn Fein declared on its homepage that it was “a support group for Sinn Fein, the Irish political party striving for the achievement of a united Ireland.”¹⁹⁴ This group appealed for assistance from both the United Kingdom and North America on its website. The other Republican solidarity websites solicited resources on behalf of Republican prisoners and their families. For example, the Irish Republican Political Prisoners website provided links to a number of websites dedicated to Irish Republican “Prisoners of War.” This website raised funds for these prisoners through the sale of Republican merchandise like books and audio cassettes.¹⁹⁵ The Irish Northern Aid Committee also sold merchandise to raise funds for Republican prisoners. A range of videos and books were available for purchase on this website, along with a t-shirt with the slogan ‘Sniper at Work.’¹⁹⁶

Few of the Loyalist actors in the study provided interactive features like email newsletters, postal addresses or telephone numbers on their websites (See Table 5.7).

Interaction with most Loyalist actors was limited to an email to an anonymous webmaster, as was the case on the Birches Guerrilla Movement website.¹⁹⁷ The West of Scotland Ratpack and Ulster Defence Association websites provided even less opportunity for Internet users to interact with their respective webmasters. On both websites, an email webmaster function was listed as “under construction.”¹⁹⁸ However, these results arguably demonstrated the extent to which these actors were amateur terrorists. As discussed earlier, many Loyalist actors purported to be terrorist organisations despite compelling evidence on their websites that suggested they were private individuals. Thus, websites such as Fife Loyalists would be unlikely to provide email addresses for its members, as its membership was probably limited to one private individual, namely a Fife teenager known as Euan.¹⁹⁹

[Table 5.7 here]

Loyalist solidarity actors used their websites for the dissemination of propaganda rather than generating new revenue streams. Only two of the Loyalist solidarity actors under analysis sought to solicit resources from their supporters online. For example, the British Ulster Alliance sought to generate revenue through the sale of Loyalist memorabilia. A range of t-shirts, mugs, ties, and mousemats – all emblazoned with the Union Jack – could be purchased from the British Ulster Alliance, although these items could not be obtained direct from the website.²⁰⁰ In a similar vein to the Republican websites, Loyalist Voice solicited resources on behalf of prisoners and their families. This website appealed for Internet users to make a donation to the Dissident Loyalist Prisoners’ Aid, providing a postal address for this organisation.²⁰¹ In sum, the analysis suggested that Republican websites offer more interactive features than their Loyalist counterparts. However, similar to political fronts, Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors do not use their websites to increase the transparency of their respective organisations.

Online Recruitment Resources

Few of the websites under analysis allowed prospective members to apply for membership online. The Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice website received the highest score in this category, although it did not provide an online application form for prospective members (See Table 5.8). This website provided a correspondence address for those who wished to apply for membership.²⁰² It was also the only Loyalist solidarity website to provide a ‘members only’ section, in which members could submit a password to gain access to restricted material. A large number (14) of Loyalist solidarity websites received no score in this section of the coding scheme. As discussed above, it appeared that the majority of Loyalist solidarity actors were private individuals who purported to be terrorist organisations. For example, Loyalist View did not provide any information regarding its membership on its website. Instead, the disclaimer on this website asserted that it was for “informational, research purposes only.”²⁰³ In addition, Loyalist solidarity actors did not provide downloadable propaganda like posters on their websites. The Liverpool UDA was one of the few Loyalist solidarity actors to enable Internet users to download posters from its website. This website enabled Internet users to download a number of desktop backgrounds, one of which featured a group of masked Loyalist gunmen engaged in a paramilitary “show of strength.”²⁰⁴

[Table 5.8 here]

There was little to differentiate between Loyalists and Republicans in terms of online recruitment. Consequently, a large number (12) of Republican solidarity websites received no score in this section of the coding scheme (See Table 5.9). Yet, some Republican solidarity actors, such as the Irish Anti-Partition League, did use their websites to advertise the benefits available to those who joined their respective

organisations. This Derry - based organisation invited Internet users to apply for one of three categories of association with the organisation, namely registered societies, associate members, and external correspondents.²⁰⁵ The Irish Northern Aid Committee also sought to attract new members using its website. Internet users were able to join the organisation for as little as \$25, with an online application form provided on its website.²⁰⁶ Republican websites were also unlikely to provide posters for Internet users to download and display in their homes. The Irish Freedom Committee was one of the few websites under analysis to provide downloadable propaganda. This website enabled Internet users to download a number of articles expressing sympathy for dissident Republican terrorists, as well as a list of correspondence addresses for “Republican P.O.Ws” that remained in British and Irish prisons.²⁰⁷ Overall, the results appear to suggest that Loyalist and Republicans prefer traditional methods of recruitment and distributing propaganda. However, an alternative interpretation of the results might be that these online terrorists may have no organisation to sustain, as they are private individuals masquerading as terrorist organisations.

[Table 5.9 here]

Presentation

Both Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors used plain text and still photographs on their websites. This was in contrast to the more sophisticated presentation methods used by Northern Ireland’s mainstream political parties on their websites (see chapter 3). Only a few of Republican solidarity actors under analysis provided audio and video streaming on their websites. The Irish Freedom Committee website received the highest score of all the websites under analysis (see Table 5.10). This website provided streaming video images, including footage of the trial of Real IRA leader Michael McKevitt and a controversial Fox report on the death of the hunger striker Bobby Sands.²⁰⁸ The National Irish Freedom Committee website also received a high score in this category. This

website provided audio downloads of Radio Free Eireann broadcasts, one of which analysed the events surrounding Bloody Sunday.²⁰⁹ The other Republican solidarity actors did not provide audio or video facilities on their websites. For example, the Australia Aid for Ireland website consisted mainly of plain text punctuated with a few photographs, such as a picture of a Republican memorial outside Sydney.²¹⁰ A similar basic web design was evident on the Ireland for the Irish website, which featured a few 'grainy' pictures of Republican gunmen.²¹¹

[Table 5.10 here]

A similar set of results was generated by the analysis of Loyalist solidarity websites (See Table 5.11). Loyalist solidarity actors did not provide audio or video facilities on their websites. The United Loyalist Movement website was notable as it was the only website to receive no score in this category. This was partly explained by the fact that this website was in effect a Loyalist chat forum, in which Internet users could network with fellow Loyalists and discuss pertinent issues.²¹² There was arguably no need for the United Loyalist Movement to employ sophisticated presentation methods on its website, as the majority of people who visited it did so in order that they could post to its discussion forum. The Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice proved exceptional amongst the Loyalist solidarity websites under analysis, using audio streaming and pictures to convey their propaganda. This website enabled Internet users to sample music from Loyalist bands and download images of Republican atrocities, such as the aftermath of the Omagh bomb in August 1998.²¹³ However, in a similar vein to the Republican actors, the other Loyalist actors tended to provide only still photographs on their websites. For example, only a few photographs of Loyalist 'P.O.Ws' punctuated the plain text on the Ulster Defence Association website.²¹⁴ In sum, the study suggested that Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors favour static text-based websites over sophisticated methods like audio and video streaming.

[Table 5.11 here]

DISCUSSION

Amateur terrorists?

The study provided insufficient evidence to suggest that these actors were ‘amateur terrorists,’ although they did appear to use the Web in a similar fashion to terrorist-linked groups. In terms of website function, there was little to differentiate between these solidarity actors and political fronts such as Sinn Fein. The Internet provided a space in which Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors could define their political ideologies, a space that was unavailable to them in the conventional mass media. In addition, these actors used their websites to provide their own history of the Northern Irish conflict, invariably blaming the ‘other community’ for the Northern Irish conflict. However, solidarity actors differed from political fronts in terms of their online framing. Clearly, the peace frame had a negligible influence upon the online framing of many Loyalist and Republican actors. These solidarity actors criticised the Belfast Agreement on their websites, claiming that the peace process had left them at greater risk of attack from the ‘other’ community. In contrast to political fronts, these actors did not have to convince Internet users of their democratic credentials, and could openly refer to terrorist organisations on their websites. Consequently, images of hooded gunmen and paramilitary insignias were frequently used on the websites of Loyalist and Republican supporters. In some cases, solidarity actors provided a justification for political violence on their websites, and paid tribute to dissident terrorist organisations that were still engaged in armed struggle.

Yet, the webmasters themselves often revealed they were not amateur terrorists on their websites. Disclaimers on many of these websites informed Internet users that the

webmaster was not affiliated with a proscribed terrorist organisation. In other cases, the webmaster inadvertently revealed that they had no links to terrorism, as illustrated by the analysis of the Fife Loyalists website. One interpretation of the study might be that Loyalist and Republican amateur terrorists produced websites similar to those maintained by their respective terrorist organisations. Solidarity actors used their websites to show their support for terrorist organisations and their political representatives. In a similar vein to political fronts, none of the actors analysed in the study solicited resources for proscribed terrorist organisations, nor incited others to perpetrate terrorist atrocities. However, it is barely conceivable that terrorist organisations would directly shape the material posted on the websites of their supporters, particularly if they are not directly affiliated to their organisation. Ensuring that all amateur terrorists adhered to the editorial adopted by a political front would seem a tall order, given that many of the websites under analysis appeared to be maintained by private individuals based outside the United Kingdom.

An alternative interpretation of the study might be that amateur terrorists are unlikely to highlight their illegal activity on their websites. The research hypothesis presented in this chapter assumed that Loyalist and Republican actors would post incriminating material on their websites. There were two factors that militated against these actors posting material online that revealed the extent of their terrorist linkages. Firstly, a number of websites under analysis did not focus upon the current activities of Loyalist and Republican terrorist groups. In particular, websites dedicated to 'Prisoners Of Wars,' with self-evident titles such as the Irish Republican Political Prisoners, focused upon raising funds for their families. As such, these actors were unlikely to use their websites to suggest they themselves were members of a proscribed terrorist organisation. Secondly, the hypothesis failed to take account of the legal sanctions that might apply to a webmaster if they supported contemporary terrorism on their websites. As was the case with political fronts, these actors might face prosecution if they posted material online that contravened anti-terrorist legislation such as the UK Terrorism Act. Yet, the results

of the study are based upon the evidence that each webmaster is willing to disclose on his or her website. While the study suggested many webmasters were fraudulently claiming to be members of terrorist organisations, it did not rule out the possibility that these actors may be amateur terrorists. It is conceivable that many of these amateurs are using 'less public' forms of computer-mediated communication, such as email, to plan and perpetrate atrocities in the offline world.

Cultural organisations and the peace frame

This research also raises questions as to how the peace frame has influenced the worldview of Catholic and Protestant cultural organisations in Northern Ireland. Websites dedicated to the Orange Order and the Irish language were not defined as solidarity actors as they were considered cultural projections of Northern Ireland's two main communities. Yet, cultural institutions may play a significant role in building support for the Belfast Agreement, particularly amongst the Protestant community. Whyte (1990) suggests that the Protestant community can be sub-divided into 50 religious denominations (p.28). These religious organisations may have a view on the Belfast Agreement that differs from that of the constitutional unionist parties. For example, recent studies suggest that the Orange Order has between 80,000 and 100,000 members.²¹⁵ The Order has not had any tangible links to a political party since it severed its links to the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) in March 2005, although there does appear to be significant overlap between its membership and that of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).²¹⁶ Conceivably, the Orange Order may be influencing the opinion of not just the DUP but also its own membership vis-à-vis the peace process. Therefore, future research should consider how the online framing of cultural websites differs from the websites analysed in this chapter.

The Zapatista Effect?

These websites may be a manifestation of a social netwar strategy designed to build

support for Loyalist or Republican terrorists. Social netwar refers to a form of “conflict and crime at societal level, short of traditional military warfare, in which the protagonists use network forms of organisation and related doctrines, strategies and technologies attuned to the information age” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001: 6). The Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion National (EZLN) were the subject of the first successful social netwar. Curiously, the Zapatista netwar occurred with little or no premeditation on the part of the EZLN insurgents. Initially, there was little to differentiate between the EZLN military campaign in Chiapas and other traditional Maoist insurgencies of the period (Ronfeldt and Arquilla, 2001: 177). On 1 January 1994, a group of guerrillas seized control of several towns in the Chiapas region to highlight the Mexican government’s discrimination against the indigenous people of the Chiapas province. The clashes between the insurgents and the Mexican army lasted for 11 days before both sides agreed to cease military operations in the region. During the fighting and the subsequent peace negotiations, support for the Zapatistas began to mobilise on Internet newsgroups such as Chiapas-1 and other sympathetic websites hosted by American universities such as the University of Texas (Cleaver, 1997: 7).

The dispersed ‘nodes’ that mobilised in favour of Subcommandante Marcos and the Zapatistas included activist non-governmental organisations and individuals from five continents, aligned together via a network structure rather than under a traditional top-down hierarchy (Cleaver, 1997: 2). Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the term ‘swarm networks’ to describe these non-governmental organisations, reflecting the speed with which they descended upon the Chiapas region during the mid-nineties (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001:177). These ‘swarm networks’ raised the international profile of the EZLN insurgents within days of the first military skirmishes in January 1994, leading ultimately to a jointly agreed ceasefire and a three-year period of protracted peace negotiations. This online mobilisation led to increased international scrutiny of the Mexican government and a number of strategic gains for the Zapatistas and their supporters. The netwar led to two successive Mexican Presidents, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Ernest Zedillo, halting

military operations in Chiapas and engaging in political negotiations with the insurgents (Ronfeldt and Arquilla, 2001: 188).

The context in which sub - state actors operate determines whether netwar is a suitable vehicle for achieving their political or military objectives. The EZLN insurgents had no access to the Internet during their insurrection in January 1994.²¹⁷ The activities of non-governmental organisations drew the attention of the global media towards the Chiapas region of Mexico, highlighting the grievances of the EZLN insurgents in the process. Clearly, Northern Irish terrorists and their political fronts operate in a much different political context than the EZLN insurgents. While Subcommandante Marcos had to rely upon 'swarm networks' to convey EZLN propaganda to international audiences, Northern Irish terrorists face fewer restrictions on their use of the conventional mass media. Irish terrorism has created international headlines since the outbreak of the Troubles in the late 1960s, primarily as a result of the activities of influential Irish Diasporas scattered across the globe. Irish-American support groups have lobbied in favour of the Republican movement for over three decades, achieving some degree of influence over US policy vis-a-vis Northern Ireland. Furthermore, Loyalist and Republican political fronts have become regular fixtures in the conventional mass media since the late nineties, due to their support for the peace process (see chapter 2). In contrast to the EZLN insurgents, some political fronts now have the ability to influence government policy in the region. In particular Sinn Fein has grown increasingly influential as a result of the peace process, receiving two ministerial portfolios in the power-sharing institutions that were set up in 1998. Therefore, in some cases, Northern Irish terrorists may not need social netwar, as they already possess the means to turn government policy in their favour.

Dissident terrorists would be the political actors most likely to benefit from social netwar, given their lack of electoral support and political clout. These groups have limited access to the conventional mass media, and limited influence over key decision-makers in

Northern Ireland. Yet, dissident terrorists and their supporters are unlikely to attract the support of 'swarm networks,' a prerequisite for a social netwar. While these groups continue to use political violence, they are likely to remain a minority interest with limited ability to mobilise supporters across the globe. Political violence is now considered less permissible in the region, even amongst the Irish-American groups that provided logistical support to the Republican movement during the 'Troubles.' Opposition towards dissident Republicans stirred after the Omagh bombing (August 1998), which was condemned by groups such as the Irish American Unity Conference on their websites.²¹⁸ Dissident Loyalist groups, such as the Loyalist Volunteer Force, are even less likely to persuade global non-governmental organisations to act on their behalf. To date, Loyalist terrorists have only been able to develop "weak and thin" support networks outside the United Kingdom, despite several million Americans having Ulster Protestant ancestry (O'Dochartaigh, 2003: 17). Dissidents on both sides may be unable to benefit from a social netwar strategy, as the international community is unequivocal in its support for the peace process. Moreover, these actors may be unable to attract an online audience for their websites, given their low visibility on Internet search engines and lack of regular access to the mass media (see chapter 4).

Yet, netwar is perhaps better understood as a description of events surrounding the the Zapatista insurgency in 1994, which marked the first occasion that the Internet had facilitated mobilisation on a global scale. The 'coordinated anarchy' that characterised the pro-Zapatista mobilisation reflected the diverse non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that took an interest in the Chiapas region of Mexico. For many activists, the Chiapas insurrection was a way of gaining greater media exposure for their own broad political objectives. Many of the swarm networks used the Chiapas insurrection to voice their opposition to the NAFTA treaty. In addition, groups that supported the rights of indigenous peoples in Latin America used the Zapatistas to highlight their own campaigns. Chiapas encapsulated many of the problems identified by non-governmental organisations that were already active in the region, highlighting the potential detrimental

effect of the NAFTA treaty upon indigenous people in Latin America. As the Zapatistas had struck a particular chord with these groups, they were more likely to use all forms of media - including the Internet – to project messages of support for Marcos and his insurgent army. Therefore, the Zapatista case study suggests that a successful netwar is contingent upon securing support amongst geographically dispersed groups, many of whom coalesce around high profile international issues. If a sub-state actor fails to secure support amongst such influential international actors, their netwar campaign is less likely to generate strategic gains. In sum, a netwar is unlikely to be perpetrated on behalf of a dissident Loyalist or Republican terrorist group, as they lack support amongst the international community.

CONCLUSION

Some actors were ‘amateur terrorists’ in the sense that they purported to be terrorists on their websites. Many of these webmasters used paramilitary insignias and pictures of hooded gunmen on their websites, providing eulogies for ‘fallen comrades.’ The framing of Loyalist and Republican amateurs was also clearly influenced by terrorist-linked groups, such as the 32 County Sovereignty Committee. Most of the webmasters under analysis criticised the Belfast Agreement and its supporters, claiming the peace process had left them at greater risk of attack from the ‘other’ community. In contrast to political fronts, these actors did not have to convince the electorate that they were cultural democrats. Consequently, Loyalist and Republican amateurs frequently highlighted the links between political fronts and terrorist groups, and used language which reflected their support for ‘armed struggle.’ However, there was negligible evidence on these websites to suggest these actors were actually involved in terrorist activity. Many of these websites appeared to have no links to the terrorist organisations from which they took their names. A large number of webmasters issued disclaimers on their websites, denying they had any links to a banned terrorist organisation. Furthermore, none of the webmasters risked potential legal sanctions by inciting others to perpetrate political

violence, or soliciting resources on behalf of terrorist groups. Yet, one cannot assume these webmasters have no links to terrorism whatsoever. Conceivably, they may be using more anonymous forms of computer-mediated communication, such as email, to plan and perpetrate terrorist atrocities. Irrespective of their links to terrorism, these actors did not appear to have realised the potential of the Web as a tool for organisational linkage and political communication. These websites did not constitute a new dimension of terrorist threat in the region. This form of web activism fell far short of constituting a social netwar, illustrating how dissident terrorists have become increasingly marginalised in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Indeed, the study suggests that social netwar is merely a description of the extraordinary political mobilisation in favour of the EZLN insurgents in Chiapas, as opposed to a durable conceptual tool for characterising online political activism.

Table 5.1 Loyalist and Republican solidarity websites

| Loyalist | Republican |
|--|--|
| Birches Guerrilla Movement | Australian Aid for Ireland |
| British Ulster Alliance | Cairde Sinn Fein |
| Fife Loyalists | Coiste na n-Irchimi |
| Greenock Loyalists | Eire Saor |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | Fourthwrite |
| Liverpool UDA | Friends of Irish Freedom |
| Loyalist Network | Give Ireland Back to the Irish |
| Loyalist View | Hardline IRA |
| Loyalistvoice.co.uk | Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project |
| Red Hand Land | Ireland for the Irish |
| Scottish Loyalists | Ireland's Own |
| The Loyalist | Irish American Unity Conference |
| The Volunteer | Irish Anti-Partition League |
| Ulster Defence Association | Irish Freedom Committee |
| United Loyalist Movement | Irish Northern Aid Committee |
| Ulster Online | Irish Republican Political Prisoners |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | Mise Eire |
| UVF-The Peoples Army | Na Gael |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | National Irish Freedom Committee |
| Yorkshire Loyal | New Republican Forum |

Table 5.2: Website registration data provided by Loyalist solidarity actors.

| Website | Host | Location of Host | Webmaster Name | Webmaster Personal Email Address | Registered Postal Address | Telephone Number/Fax Number |
|--|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Birches Guerrilla Movement | Freewebs | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| British Ulster Alliance | Schlund | Germany | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Fife Loyalists | Pipex | UK | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Greenock Loyalists | Yahoo | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | Lycos | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Liverpool UDA | Fasthosts | UK | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Loyalist Network | Freeserve | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Loyalist View | Bravenet | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Loyalist Voice.co.uk | Network Solutions | USA | NIA | No IA | NIA | NIA |
| Red Hand Land | Freeserve | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Scottish Loyalists | Calton Hosting | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| The Loyalist | Wanadoo | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| The Volunteer | Host Master | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Ulster Defence Association | Freewebs | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Ulster Loyalist Movement | Bravenet | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Ulster Online | Wanadoo | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | Pipex | UK | NIA | IA | NIA | NIA |
| UVF-The People's Army | Schlund | Germany | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Yorkshire Loyal | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

IA- Information Available

NIA- No Information Available

Table 5.3. Website registration data provided by Republican solidarity actors.

| Website | Host | Location of Host | Webmaster Name | Webmaster Personal Email Address | Registered Postal Address | Telephone Number/Fax Number |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Australian Aid For Ireland | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Cairde Sinn Fein | UTV Internet | UK | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Coiste na n-larchimi | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Eire Saor | Network Solutions | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Fourthwrite | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Friends of Irish Freedom | Geocities | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish | Wild West Domains | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Hardline IRA | Geocities | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project | Pairnic | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Ireland for the Irish | Bravenet | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Irelands Own | Ipower | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Irish American Unity Conference | Network Solutions | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Irish Anti-Partition League | Wild West Domains | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Irish Freedom Committee | Network Solutions | USA | NIA | IA | IA | NIA |
| Irish Northern Aid Committee | Network Solutions | USA | NIA | IA | IA | IA |
| Irish Republican Political Prisoners | Pairnic | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| Mise Eire | Tripod | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Na Gael | Yahoo | USA | IA | IA | IA | IA |
| National Irish Freedom Committee | Ipower | USA | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| New Republican Forum | IEDR | Republic of Ireland | NIA | NIA | NIA | NIA |

IA- Information Available

NIA- No Information Available

Table.5.4. Organisational Linkage exhibited on Republican solidarity websites

| Website | Solidarity Links | International Terrorist Links | Educational Links | Commercial/ Non-Political Links | Number of Links (>15) | Score (/5) |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Australian Aid For Ireland | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Cairde Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Coiste na n-Irchimi | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Eire Saor | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Fourthwrite | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Friends of Irish Freedom | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Hardline IRA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Ireland for the Irish | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ireland's Own | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Irish American Unity Conference | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Irish Anti-Partition League | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Irish Freedom Committee | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Irish Northern Aid Committee | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Irish Republican Political Prisoners | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Mise Eire | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Na Gael | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| National Irish Freedom Committee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| New Republican Forum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Mean | 0.85 | 0.6 | 0.55 | 0.4 | 0.45 | 2.85 |

Table.5.5. Organisational Linkage exhibited on Loyalist solidarity websites

| Website | Solidarity Links | International Terrorist Links | Educational Links | Commercial/ Non-Political Links | Number of Links (>15) | Score (/5) |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Birches Guerrilla Movement | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| British Ulster Alliance | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Fife Loyalists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Greenock Loyalists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Liverpool UDA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Loyalist Network | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Loyalist View | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Loyalistvoice.co.uk | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Red Hand Land | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Scottish Loyalists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| The Loyalist | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The Volunteer | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ulster Defence Association | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| United Loyalist Movement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Online | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| UVF-The Peoples Army | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Yorkshire Loyal | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Mean | 0.8 | 0 | 0.25 | 0.3 | 0.45 | 1.8 |

Table 5.6. Interactive features available on Republican solidarity websites

| Website | Email Newsletter | Bulletin Board | Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number | Email Webmaster | Email Individual Members | Resource Solicitation | Score |
|--|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Australian Aid for Ireland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cairde Sinn Fein | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Coiste na n-larchimi | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Eire Saor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Fourthwrite | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Friends of Irish Freedom | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hardline IRA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Ireland for the Irish | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irelands Own | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish American Unity Conference | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Irish Anti-Partition League | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish Freedom Committee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Irish Northern Aid Committee | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Irish Republican Political Prisoners | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Mise Eire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Na Gael | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| National Irish Freedom Committee | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| New Republican Forum | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Mean | 0.2 | 0.15 | 0.45 | 0.2 | 0.85 | 0.25 | 0.4 | 2.5 |

Table.5.7. Interactive features available on Loyalist solidarity websites

| Website | Email Newsletter | Bulletin Board | Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number | Email Webmaster | Email Individual Members | Resource Solicitation | Score |
|--|------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Birches Guerrilla Movement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| British Ulster Alliance | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Fife Loyalists | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Greenock Loyalists | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Liverpool UDA | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Loyalist Network | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Loyalist View | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Loyalistvoice.co.uk | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Red Hand Land | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Scottish Loyalists | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The Loyalist | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| The Volunteer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ulster Defence Association | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| United Loyalist Movement | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Ulster Online | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| UVF-The Peoples Army | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Yorkshire Loyal | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Mean | 0.05 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.8 | 0 | 0.15 | 1.55 |

Table.5.8. Online recruitment resources on Loyalist solidarity websites

| Website | Members Only Section | Full Membership Advertised | Full Membership Available via Online Application | Downloadable Public Relations Material | Score |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------|--|--|-------|
| Birches Guerilla Movement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| British Ulster Alliance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Fife Loyalists | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Greenock Loyalists | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Liverpool UDA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Loyalist Network | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loyalist View | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loyalistvoice.co.uk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Red Hand Land | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scottish Loyalists | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The Loyalist | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The Volunteer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Defence Association | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| United Loyalist Movement | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ulster Online | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| UVF-The Peoples Army | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Yorkshire Loyal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 0.05 | 0.1 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.4 |

Table.5.9. Online recruitment resources on Republican solidarity websites

| Website | Members Only Section | Full Membership Advertised | Full Membership Available via Online Application | Downloadable Public Relations Material | Score |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------|--|--|-------|
| Australian Aid for Ireland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cairde Sinn Fein | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Coiste na n-larchimi | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Eire Saor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fourthwrite | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Friends of Irish Freedom | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hardline IRA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ireland for the Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Irelands Own | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Irish American Unity Conference | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Irish Anti-Partition League | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Irish Freedom Committee | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Irish Northern Aid Committee | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish Republican Political Prisoners | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mise Eire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Na Gael | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| National Irish Freedom Committee | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| New Republican Forum | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 0.05 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.6 |

Table.5.10. Presentation methods used on Republican solidarity websites

| Website | Graphics | Frames | Sound | Video Streaming | Pages Available in alternative format e.g. PDF | Score |
|--|----------|--------|-------|-----------------|--|-------|
| Australian Aid for Ireland | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cairde Sinn Fein | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Coiste na n-larchimi | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Eire Saor | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Fourthwrite | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Friends of Irish Freedom | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Give Ireland Back to the Irish | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hardline IRA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ireland for the Irish | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Irelands Own | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish American Unity Conference | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish Anti-Partition League | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Irish Freedom Committee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Irish Northern Aid Committee | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Irish Republican Political Prisoners | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mise Eire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Na Gael | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| National Irish Freedom Committee | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| New Republican Forum | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Mean | 1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.05 | 0.2 | 1.55 |

Table.5.11. Presentation methods used on Loyalist solidarity websites

| Website | Graphics | Frames | Sound | Video Streaming | Pages Available in alternative format e.g. PDF | Score |
|--|----------|--------|-------|-----------------|--|-------|
| Birches Guerilla Movement | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| British Ulster Alliance | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Fife Loyalists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Greenock Loyalists | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Larne UVF/YCV/RHC | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Liverpool UDA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Loyalist Network | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Loyalist View | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Loyalistvoice.co.uk | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Red Hand Land | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Scottish Loyalists | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The Loyalist | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The Volunteer | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Ulster Defence Association | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| United Loyalist Movement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ulster Online | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| UVF-The Peoples Army | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| West of Scotland Ratpack | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Yorkshire Loyal | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Mean | 0.95 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 1.55 |

Chapter 6: Competing Victimhoods: the websites of Northern Irish residents' groups

INTRODUCTION

Cyberoptimists believe that the Internet reduces social context “in or around a message transmitted from sender to receiver” (Spears and Lea, 1994: 431). In this chapter, the cyberoptimist model will be tested using Loyalist and Republican residents' groups, many of whom are separated by ‘peacelines’ in the ‘offline’ world. Giddens (1995) asserts that a positive spiral of communication could reduce inter-communal tensions between interface communities in Northern Ireland (p.16). The online framing of these groups will be analysed to determine whether they are using their websites to generate social capital. The analysis will determine whether these groups are using the Web to strengthen in-group identities, or to engage in dialogue with rival interface communities. The study also considers whether these groups reveal their links to paramilitary groups on their websites, or whether they conceal terrorist linkages in a similar vein to Loyalist and Republican political fronts. Website function will also be measured to determine whether these groups have realised the potential of the Internet as tool for organisational linkage and mobilisation. The study suggests that residents' groups use their websites to further their ‘competition’ of victimhood. Both Loyalist and Republican groups post material on their websites that suggests they are constantly under attack from communities situated at the other side of the ‘peaceline.’ There is no evidence on the websites of residents' groups to suggest they are using the Internet to promote better community relations in interface areas. However, these groups may be using ‘less public’ forms of computer-mediated communication, such as email, to manage conflict between interface communities.

Segregation: An Inevitable product of Consociationalism?

In this section, the impact of the peace process upon community relations will be

discussed. A form of 'benign apartheid' has developed in Northern Ireland since the mid nineties (O'Connor, 1993: 195). The Good Friday Agreement promoted multiple layers of identity and representation, allowing Catholics to identify themselves as Irish while their Protestant neighbours could identify themselves as British (Williams & Jesse, 2001: 571). Societal cleavages were to be recognised, and even encouraged, through the 'single identity' community development projects that followed the Belfast Agreement. This has entrenched divisions between Northern Ireland's two communities, with some commentators claiming that the province can now be divided into two separate Unionist and Nationalist polities.²¹⁹ This 'benign apartheid' is evident in the attitudes held by Protestant and Catholics towards one other. The early nineties had seen increasing numbers of people from both communities express a preference for mixing with members of the 'other' community (see chapter 2). The early indications are that the Good Friday Agreement has reversed this trend. Evidence from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2004) suggests that the two communities have become more 'isolationist' since 1998. For example, the total number of respondents wishing to live in mixed religion neighbourhoods fell from 82 percent in 1996 to 73 percent in 1999. The Protestant community has seen the biggest shift in attitudes towards the 'other' community. A higher proportion of Protestants (26 percent) than Catholics (18 percent) said that they would prefer to live in neighbourhoods with only their own religion (Hughes and Donnelly, 2001). This reflects the widely held perception amongst the Protestant community that the Catholic community has been the prime beneficiary of the Good Friday Agreement (Hughes and Donnelly, 2004: 573). Polarisation has also been viewed in the voting patterns of the two communities since the Agreement was signed in 1998. In the most recent Northern Ireland Assembly elections (November 2003) there was a notable decline in support for moderate political parties such as the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). The anti-Agreement Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Fein emerged from this election with an increased electoral mandate (Wilson and Fawcett, 2004).

Increased segregation is possibly the logical outcome of a consociationalist political settlement. Consociationalism seeks to 'manage rather than eliminate' differences in ethnically divided societies (Peleg, 2004: 21). Differences are managed through elite cooperation within an inclusive power-sharing executive at national level. At sectarian interfaces, consociationalists argue, "good fences make good neighbours" (Lijphart, 1977: 140). In theory, the potential for conflict in ethnic cleavages is reduced if ethnic communities chose to isolate themselves from each other. Thus, voluntary segregation in local districts provides an effective method of managing differences between ethnic communities. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of this segregation is compatible with the civil liberties embedded in pluralist liberal democracies. In pluralist democracies, people are free to purchase property in areas that they perceive as being 'safe' neighbourhoods.

In Northern Ireland, the majority of people choose to live in politically and religiously homogeneous areas that do not include members of the 'other' community. In the words of a resident of the Fountain enclave in Londonderry, people feel "safe and secure within the [interface] area especially with the walls and barricades" (Templegrove Action Research Ltd, 1996: 29). The 'benign apartheid' critique reflects the continued high levels of mistrust and suspicion between the two communities. It also suggests that the Good Friday Agreement has perpetuated the 'zero-sum' model of Northern Irish politics. Yet, the framework of the Good Friday Agreement has not generated segregation and polarisation. Residential segregation can be traced back as far as the 17th century plantation of Ulster. Hepburn (1994) suggests that patterns of segregation in Northern Ireland have increased more in 'bad times' than they decrease in good times (p.93). Therefore, the Good Friday Agreement may represent a 'bad time' in which people have returned to the 'trenches' of their own communities.

DEFINING THE PROBLEMS OF INTERFACE COMMUNITIES

What is an Interface?

An interface is a “conjunction or intersection of two or more territories or social spaces which are dominated, contested, claimed by some or all members of the differing ethno-national groups” (Jarman, 2004: 8). Interfaces are typically located in urban working class districts, where Protestant and Catholic populations are highly interspersed. The Belfast Interface Project (2004) identifies three different types of interface area in Northern Ireland. ‘Enclaves’ are ‘island’ communities like the Short Strand in East Belfast. This staunchly Republican area is situated in the middle of an area populated predominantly by the Protestant community. ‘Split’ interfaces can be defined as walls or boundaries evenly separating two communities. For example, the Westlink motorway junction forms a barrier between the Protestant and Catholic residents of the Donegal Road in South Belfast. A ‘buffer zone’ is a mixed area, such as the Ballynafeigh district in South Belfast that provides a barrier between the two communities (O’Halloran, Shirlow, and Murtagh, 2004: 6). Interface areas have suffered disproportionate levels of political violence since the outbreak of the ‘Troubles’ in the late 1960s. Approximately one third of the victims of political violence between 1966 and 2001 were killed within 250 metres of an interface (Shirlow, 2003: 81).

Cross-Community Contact

In this section, the problems affecting interface communities are analysed. The erection of physical barriers to reduce inter-communal tensions has amplified the ‘siege mentality’ of opposing interface communities. Shirlow (2003) asserts that these ‘peacelines’ appoint the opposing community as a “menacing spatial formation” (p.81). In particular, there is a lack of ‘bridging’ social capital between Loyalist and Republican interface communities. Social capital refers to the “institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions” (Griffiths, 2004: 4). Common interests, such as language and social class, do not transcend the ethno-political identities of communities situated at sectarian interfaces. Consequently, interface communities do not

often interact with their counterparts situated on the other side of the 'peaceline.' A survey of adults in the Ardoyne and Glenbryn districts of North Belfast illustrates the low levels of cross - community interaction across these 'peacelines.'²²⁰ Only 20 percent of the Glenbryn residents surveyed used shopping facilities situated in the Ardoyne, while 18 percent of the Ardoyne residents used the nearest sports complex, situated in the Glenbryn district (Shirlow, 2003: 81). Both Catholic and Protestant residents cited the fear of attack as the primary reason for their low level of interaction with the 'other' community (p: 85).

Perceptions of the 'Other' Community

Low levels of cross-community interaction have reinforced the negative stereotyping of the 'other' community amongst interface communities. Protestant residents believe that an 'expansionist' Catholic community is trying to force them out of areas like North Belfast. The Protestant community perceives that their areas are turning 'green,' as a young Catholic community displaces an ageing Protestant community (Jarman, 2002: 16). The murals in Loyalist interface areas illustrate this 'siege mentality.' Loyalist interface communities are demarcated via red, white, and blue kerbstones, the flying of Union Jacks, and murals that celebrate Loyalist terrorist groups such as the Ulster Volunteer Force. These 'militaristic' murals invariably depict men in balaclavas brandishing AK47s, alongside provocative political statements such as 'No Surrender.'²²¹ Loyalist residents invariably resist efforts by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to allocate houses in their areas to members of the Catholic community. For example, an estimated six percent of public sector houses in North Belfast remained unoccupied throughout the calendar year of 2004 (North Belfast Community Action Group, 2002: 27). The majority of these empty houses were located in Loyalist interface areas. In March 2004, The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) had a waiting list of 951 applicants who wished to move into the North Belfast constituency, the majority of whom (82 percent) were members of the Catholic community. (O'Halloran, Shirlow, and

Murtagh, 2004: 42). The decision to leave these houses vacant was presumably influenced by the objections of local residents, and the potential conflict that might arise from Protestants and Catholics living in the same district.

Hughes and Donnelly (2004) assert that Catholics have become more confident about their equal status in Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement (p.588). This confidence is projected via the murals that demarcate the boundaries of Republican areas. Republican murals project a more nuanced image of their community than the images of 'gunmen in balaclavas' that greet visitors to Loyalist interface areas. These murals convey local opposition to contentious Orange Order marches, and highlight the perceived 'oppression' of the Catholic community at the hands of the British security forces (Rolston, 1995: 5). Nevertheless, this propaganda is underpinned by a high level of mistrust towards the Protestant community. The Protestant community is frequently accused of 'ethnic cleansing' in contested areas like North Belfast. This negative stereotyping is often influenced by people's memories of living under Unionist rule in the 1960s. Many of the Catholic residents in interface areas have vivid memories of being driven out of their homes in the late 1960s, primarily due to the violence of their Protestant neighbours (O'Connor, 1993: 160). Furthermore, the Catholic community also faced discrimination in terms of public housing provision in the late sixties, as highlighted during the Caledon protest in June 1968.²²² In sum, the physical barriers at interfaces have entrenched the hostility and mistrust between Loyalist and Republican communities.

MANAGING INTERFACE VIOLENCE

'Good Fences Make Good Neighbours'

In this section, the management of inter-communal violence at sectarian interfaces is discussed. There have been two approaches to the management of violence at interface

areas since the mid-1990s. The consociationalist model suggests that 'segmental isolation' can reduce inter-communal violence in ethnically divided societies (Lijphart, 1977: 140). The construction of 'peacelines' between Loyalist and Republican areas is congruent with the consociationalist principle that 'good fences make good neighbours.' This process has continued unabated throughout the nineties, with security barriers erected between the White City and Whitewell areas of North Belfast just a few weeks after the Good Friday Agreement was signed in June 1998. Security measures have also been increased at the 'peacelines' themselves. Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) have been deployed to monitor the 'peacelines,' and to deter violence between the two communities. This has reduced the number of violent incidents in sectarian interfaces like Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast. Yet, in many cases, the violence has been displaced to nearby streets, creating new interfaces such as Whitewell within the same area (Jarman, 2002: 10). The level of violence across interface areas has also remained high despite these increased security measures. For example, there were 1,444 cases of criminal damage, 409 assaults, and 316 cases of rioting recorded in North Belfast between 1996 and 1999 (p: 10). The continued high levels of inter-communal violence suggest that the consociationalist model is not a 'good fit' for the regulation of inter-communal violence in interface areas. This reflects the absence of certain conditions conducive to ethnic conflict regulation under the consociationalist model. There is no history of 'elite' compromise between Republican and Loyalist interface communities. This was demonstrated by the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in May 1974 (see chapter 2). In addition, intra-segment stability has not been achieved despite the population transfers of the late 1960s. Loyalist and Republican communities remain highly interspersed in contested interface areas like North Belfast.

The Civil Society Paradigm: Community Development

Many community activists suggest that community development is 'a more pressing need' for the communities they represent, as opposed to the construction of cross -

community relationships (Hall, 2001: 7). Interfaces tend to be located in urban areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. For example, most of Northern Ireland's 'peacelines' are located within the North Belfast electoral constituency. Ten of the wards within the electoral constituency are ranked in the 20 percent most deprived areas within Northern Ireland (p: 26). In particular, North Belfast has high levels of unemployment, and poor public sector housing provision in comparison to the rest of Northern Ireland. The North Belfast Community Action Group (2002) reported that 9.4 percent of houses in the constituency were 'unfit' throughout 2002, compared to the average of 7.3 percent across Northern Ireland (p: 26). During the same period, the unemployment level recorded in North Belfast (24.1 percent) was over twice the level (9.8 percent) recorded across the jurisdiction of Belfast City Council (O'Halloran, Shirlow and Murtagh, 2004: 11). The Protestant community in North Belfast has been disproportionately affected by this social and economic deprivation. Recent studies suggest that that Protestants are 30 percent more likely than Catholics to live in unfit houses in the constituency (p.26).

Many community groups argue that efforts to reduce inter-communal tension are undermined by the high levels of social deprivation that blight sectarian interfaces. Young people living in the shadow of interfaces invariably lack skills, jobs, money, and access to facilities such as community centres. This has contributed to a pattern of 'recreational violence' amongst teenagers in interface areas (Jarman, 2002: 29). Throwing stones at people living on the other side of an interface may represent a 'cheap night out' for teenagers in these areas. Consequently, the levels of violence at interface areas tend to peak during the school holidays (p.32). Community activists suggest that young people who engage in recreational violence might desist if they were given greater access to facilities, training, and employment. (Hall, 2001: 25). The 'siege mentality' of both communities might be relieved if improvements were made to public sector housing and local infrastructures.

Yet, not all interfaces are situated in working class districts with high levels of poverty

and unemployment. Interfaces have developed in rural areas, middle class suburbs, parks, open spaces, and shopping centres (Jarman, 2004: 7). These interfaces are often demarcated by a turn in the road or a local landmark, rather than a physical structure such as a 'peaceline.' Some commentators suggest that the existence of segregated working class areas allows the middle class to project onto such areas "the image of the bad area where bigots live and violence happens as a result" (Smyth, 1996: 45). Evidence from the Belfast Interface Project suggests that while working class interface communities are more likely to be the victims of violence, they are usually not responsible for these attacks (O'Halloran, Shirlow, and Murtagh, 2004:9). The perpetrators of inter-communal violence tend to come from the hinterland of interface communities. The emergence of middle class interfaces also suggests that community development can only partially relieve the 'siege mentality' of interface communities. Inter-communal violence in middle class suburbs is caused by a variety of non-economic factors, such as contentious Orange Order demonstrations. These issues are arguably irresolvable unless there are open channels of communication between Loyalist and Republican interface communities.

Community Relations and Dialogic Democracy

Community activists assert that the term 'community relations' is better understood as 'cross-community' relations (Hall, 2001: 5). In contrast to the community development model, community relations projects can be applied to any type of sectarian interface. Community relations projects aim to generate 'bridging' social capital between interface communities. In the summer of 1997, a mobile phone network was piloted to try to reduce the inter-communal tensions generated by the contentious 'Tour of the North' march in North Belfast. Mobile telephones were distributed to nominated individuals within both Loyalist and Republican communities in North Belfast. The phones enabled these individuals to inform their opposite numbers of potential 'flashpoints' when crowds gathered on either side of the interface (Jarman, 2002: 43). By 2000, there were similar

mobile phone networks in 25 interface areas across Belfast. The mobile phone network created a dialogue between Republican and Loyalist interface communities. Nevertheless, the network has limited utility in relieving the 'siege mentality' of the two communities. Indeed, it is conceivable that mobile telephones may be used to organise recreational rioting between young people living on either side of an interface.

Loyalist and Republican interface communities are often critical of the coverage they receive in the conventional mass media. Protestants feel that the media only want the opinions of Catholics (Jarman, 1997: 91). Catholics perceive that the media favour the police version of events, and fabricate stories about civil unrest in interface areas (p.64). Giddens' 'dialogic democracy' could provide a context in which residents' groups could address the causes of inter-communal violence. Giddens asserts that in an ethnically divided society, such as Northern Ireland, the creation of a public arena could help constrain inter-communal violence (Giddens, 1995: 16). The Internet could provide an arena in which these communities could 'frame' their own stories and communicate directly with members of the 'other' community. This has been highlighted as an action point for community activists working in interface areas. The North Belfast Community Action Group (2002) suggests that an extension of broadband cabling networks could provide a means for developing intra and cross-community dialogue (p.80). The Internet has the potential to build bridging social capital between communities that are suspicious of each other's intentions.

INTERFACE COMMUNITIES AND THE INTERNET

In this section, the websites of Loyalist and Republican residents' groups are examined. The websites were selected with reference to the conclusions of the Belfast Interface Project publication 'A Policy Agenda for the Interface' (O'Halloran, C, Shirlow, P, and Murtagh, 2004). The names of residents' groups were entered into the British versions of two search engines, Google (www.google.co.uk) and Yahoo (www.yahoo.co.uk), to

locate their official websites. The sample [three Loyalist and three Republican] represented the total population of Northern Irish residents' groups available during the period of the study (see Table 6.1). The study refers to these groups as either Loyalist or Republican with reference to the rhetoric used on their websites, as well as evidence presented in the Belfast Interface Project publication.

[Table 6.1 here]

Website Registration Data

Only three of the websites under analysis provided registration details on Nominet.co.uk or Whois.net. The Cluan Place was the only residents' group to register its website with a British company, namely Fasthosts. In a similar vein to Republican solidarity actors, the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition registered its website in the United States, with a company called Go Daddy. Meanwhile, the Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative websites was registered to Schlund, the German host of Loyalist websites such as the British Ulster Alliance. In contrast to Loyalist and Republican solidarity websites, the webmasters did reveal their identities on the Whois and Nominet websites. For example, the webmaster responsible for the Cluan Place website provided both his name and a full Belfast postal address for Internet users to contact the organisation. Meanwhile, a contact was given for the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition on its Whois entry. As these websites were registered in Europe or North America, it was anticipated that their webmasters would self-regulate to comply with the norms of acceptable behaviour online.

[Table 6.2 here]

Research Design: Online Framing

The framing and function of websites maintained by residents' groups was analysed

during the study. Data was collected during February 2005 to enable a comparison of material posted online by these groups.²²³ Online framing was analysed by examining the language and images used by these groups on their websites.²²⁴ The study focused upon whether these groups were trying to generate bridging social capital via their websites. Both Loyalist and Republican residents' groups claim that they have no real voice in the conventional mass media. In addition, the lack of cross-community contact militates against the resolution of local disputes, like the route of contentious Orange Order demonstrations. The study was designed to test whether Loyalist and Republican residents' groups would use their official web presence to communicate with their counterparts on the other side of the 'peaceline.' Conceivably, these websites might facilitate a form of 'megaphone diplomacy' between Loyalist and Republican interface communities. In the absence of open channels of communication, residents' groups might use their websites to present information to the media in newsworthy formats. This would facilitate communication with community representatives who lived on the other side of the 'peaceline,' in a similar vein to the interaction between Sinn Fein and the UK government during the mid – nineties (see chapter 2).

The study also examined whether residents' groups would reveal links to proscribed terrorist organisations on websites. Anecdotal evidence, which is rarely reported in the conventional mass media, suggests that these residents' groups are manipulated by paramilitary organisations. Local journalist Malachi O'Doherty, attending a meeting of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community in July 1995, commented, "the people who had gone to call for an end to the protests might as well not have gone at all" (O'Doherty, 1998: 130). In the meeting, approximately one third of the attendees declared themselves to be against further street protests against an impending Orange Order parade in the area. Gerard Rice, spokesperson for the residents' group passed the motion without a vote, later declaring that there was a unanimous consensus against the parade.²²⁵

Loyalist websites, such as "Sinn Fein and the so-called residents groups in Northern

Ireland,” also cast doubt upon the civil society ‘credentials’ of Republican residents’ groups. The webmaster responsible for this website asserts that Sinn Fein exerts an appreciable influence upon Republican residents’ groups. The paramilitary past of Garvaghy Road Resident Coalition spokesperson Brendan MacCionnaith [McKenna] is highlighted as evidence that Portadown Orangemen are on the “receiving end of a well planned and executed conspiracy.”²²⁶ Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has also contributed to the conspiracy theories about Republican residents’ groups in Northern Ireland. At a meeting in Athboy in 1997, Adams claimed that the Drumcree standoff was the culmination of 3 years hard work by [Sinn Fein] activists (O’Doherty, 1998: 176). In a similar vein to political fronts, it was anticipated that these residents’ groups would omit references to paramilitary organisations, in order to demonstrate their civil society credentials.

Website Function

Website function was analysed using the coding scheme developed earlier in this thesis (see chapter 3). A point was given to a website if it included one of the features identified in the coding scheme. These points were then compiled to give an overall score in each of the four categories measuring website function, namely interactivity, target audience, presentation, and organisational linkage. The presentation, interactivity, and online recruitment categories determined how effective these websites were in delivering information to a target audience. This allowed a direct comparison between the websites of residents’ groups and those maintained by other Northern Irish societal groups, such as solidarity actors and political parties. Authors such as Bimber (1998) and Rheingold (1993) suggest that the Internet reduces the costs of political mobilisation for political groups. The study assessed whether Loyalist and Republican residents’ groups were realising the potential of the Internet as a tool for organisational linkage. It was anticipated that the Loyalist websites analysed in the study would reciprocate links with one another, as all three groups were based in Belfast. Loyalist residents in Glenbryn and

White City, separated by just a few streets, would presumably have common interests and regular contact with each other in the offline world. Republican residents' groups were also expected to reciprocate links with each other online. In contrast to their Loyalist counterparts, Republicans were expected to provide links to a range of other websites. For example, it was anticipated that these groups would direct Internet users towards the websites of groups that opposed Orange Order demonstrations. This reflected the primary focus of groups such as the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, namely to oppose contentious Orange Order demonstrations that passed through Republican areas.

RESULTS

Online Framing: Victimhood

Roe, Pegg, Hodges, and Trimm (1999) assert that there are "competing psychologies of victimhood" between Northern Ireland's Protestant and Catholic communities (p.125). The study suggested that the Internet perpetuated this competition. In a similar vein to solidarity actors, residents' groups used their websites to suggest they had suffered at the hands of the 'other' community (see chapter 5). Consequently, the term 'ethnic cleansing' featured on all of the websites under analysis. For example, the Short Strand under Siege website featured a 'diary of attacks,' which alleged that Loyalists from nearby Cluan Place were attacking residents on a daily basis between May and June 1998.²²⁷ The website repeated the threats that were posted on the walls of nearby Loyalist areas, such as "Short Strand taigs enter at your own risk."²²⁸ The websites of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community and the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition focused upon contentious Orange Order demonstrations in their districts, highlighting alleged human rights abuses against their communities. These residents' groups also portrayed Catholics as second-class citizens on their websites. Invariably, these residents' groups alleged that their rights were suppressed by a combination of the Orange Order, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and the institutions of the 'Orange' state. For example, the

Garvagh Road Residents' Coalition declared on its homepage "the residents continue to stand strong and struggle for their right to equality, freedom from sectarian discrimination and harassment."²²⁹ This resonated with the material posted on the website of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community. Its webmaster discussed the problems caused by 'sectarian' parades in the area, including "curfews for up to 25 hours, plastic bullets, and beatings."²³⁰

Loyalist residents' groups also focused upon alleged 'ethnic cleansing' within their districts. Republicans were accused of intimidating local residents within Loyalist interface areas. For example, the Cluan Place residents' group declared on its website, "Republicans are trying to ethnically cleanse the area. THEY WILL NOT SUCCEED!"²³¹ This website also featured an article written by local MP, Peter Robinson, which described the "daily nightmare of living with orchestrated Sinn Fein/PIRA violence."²³² This article dismissed the material posted on the Short Strand under Siege website as Republican 'spin.' The other websites featured accounts of alleged Republican intimidation against members of the local community. The White City under Attack webmaster claimed that Republicans were responsible for graffiti sprayed on derelict houses in the area, questioning why the offenders had not been caught on CCTV situated nearby.²³³ In a similar vein to the Short Strand website, the website provided a chronology of alleged Republican attacks in the area. The Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative also highlighted vandalism on its website. The webmaster responsible for this website was scathing in his criticism of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), claiming "thugs are perfectly free to enter Glenbryn at will, do whatever damage they please, with absolutely no response from the muppets in the PSNI."²³⁴ Overall, both Loyalists and Republicans used their websites to suggest they were victims of ethnic cleansing at sectarian interfaces. These groups did not use their websites to promote a dialogue with residents based on the other side of the 'peaceline.'

Images

The theme of victimhood was also evident in the images used on the websites of residents' groups. All of the Republican residents' groups used their websites to publish pictures of local residents who had allegedly been 'brutalised' by either Loyalists or the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). For example, the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community website featured images of armoured British Army Saracen vehicles 'hemming in' members of the Catholic community as an Orange Order parade passed through the area.²³⁵ Similar images featured on the website of the Garvaghy Road Resident Coalition. The first page of the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition website featured an image of a woman comforting a man with an open head wound. As if to confirm that Northern Irish Catholics are an oppressed minority, the man in the picture is wearing a Glasgow Celtic football jersey.²³⁶ The Short Strand under Siege website also alleged that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had 'brutalised' the Catholic community. This website featured images of local residents displaying injuries attributed to PSNI attacks on a peace rally in the Short Strand. A 14-year-old boy appeared in one of these images displaying a scar [the site alleges was] caused by a PSNI plastic baton round.²³⁷

Each of the Loyalist websites under analysis contained pictures of property allegedly vandalised by 'Republican thugs.' For example, a picture of a row of vandalised derelict houses welcomed visitors to the White City under Attack website. The slogan beneath these stark images read, "Who lives in houses like these? NOBODY!"²³⁸ The homepage of the Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative also drew attention to Republican attacks on Loyalist residents. The menu at the top of the screen featured images of boarded up houses, PSNI armoured vehicles, and members of the loyalist community displaying injuries, presumably caused by Republicans.²³⁹ This website was notable as it published photographs of Republicans, who the webmaster alleged were involved in a campaign of intimidation against Loyalist residents in North Belfast.²⁴⁰ In a similar vein to the solidarity actors, the Cluan Place residents used pictures of murals and 'peacelines' on their website. The central image on this homepage was a mural painted on a gable wall at

the interface between Cluan Place and Short Strand. This mural contained a Union Jack and the sentence “Cluan Place - 20 families intimidated by Sinn Fein/IRA.”²⁴¹ In sum, the study provided some evidence to support the notion that there is a competition of victimhood between loyalist and republican communities situated at sectarian interfaces. These groups used images and language on their websites that suggested the community situated at the other side of the ‘peaceline’ was besieging them. The online framing of these groups appeared more likely to strengthen the bonding social capital of their communities, as opposed to generate dialogue with rival residents’ groups. However, this observation was congruent with previous analyses of social capital. Putnam (2000) suggested that bonding social capital was good for mobilising solidarity in ethnic enclaves, as it provided “social and psychological support for less fortunate members of the community” (p.22).

Self-Identification

In a similar vein to dissident political fronts, residents’ groups did not reveal any links between themselves and terrorist organisations on their websites. Instead, these groups used their websites to refute claims that they were being manipulated by terrorist organisations. To varying degrees, the Loyalist residents’ groups claimed to be representatives of the people living in their areas. For example, the Cluan Place group claimed to be the voice of the “good British residents of Cluan Place.”²⁴² The Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative issued a disclaimer on its website. In this disclaimer, the webmaster declared that “no part of this website has been supported either financially or otherwise by ANY companies, funding agencies whether government or private or by any individuals.”²⁴³ In the case of the White City under Attack website, the civil society credentials of the webmaster were less clear. The homepage merely described itself as the “official website for White City under attack online.”²⁴⁴ Yet, irrespective of how they defined themselves, Loyalist residents’ groups did not name their leadership on their websites.

A similar pattern emerged from the analysis of Republican websites. These groups also established their civil society credentials online, while simultaneously omitting information about their leaders from their websites. For example, the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition described itself as an "umbrella group set up by the residents of the Catholic/Nationalist Garvaghy Road area of the town of Portadown."²⁴⁵ The name of its leader, Brendan MacCionnaith, was conspicuous by its absence from this website. The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community also defined itself as a community group, asserting on its website, "It was set up solely to campaigns for civil rights for our community."²⁴⁶ The Short Strand website was remarkably similar to the White City under Attack website in terms of self-identification. It also gave no indication as to whether this website was sanctioned by a community group. One interpretation of these findings might be that local residents, who were not affiliated with residents' groups in the area, maintained these websites. An alternative interpretation might be that these websites articulated the view of local residents in the absence of a formally constituted residents' group. At the time of writing, there was no evidence to suggest that the people of the Short Strand and White City districts had formed a residents' group in the offline world. In any case, there was insufficient evidence on their websites to make a judgement on the sincerity of their claims to represent their local communities. In sum, these groups sought to establish their civil society credentials on their websites. However, none of the websites under analysis provided information about their members online, despite this information already being in the public domain.

WEBSITE FUNCTION

Organisational Linkage

Loyalist residents' groups demonstrated a greater range of organisational linkages on their websites than Republican residents' groups. The Cluan Place and Greater Glenbryn

Community Initiative achieved the highest score in this category of the coding scheme (see Table 6.3). These websites tended to provide links pointing towards the websites of external news media organisations, Loyalist solidarity organisations, and Northern Irish political parties. For example, the Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative website provided links to such diverse groups as Disability Action, NHS Direct, and the Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice.²⁴⁷ This website was also noteworthy as it was the only one to provide links to the websites of the other Loyalist residents' groups under analysis. The Cluan Place website also provided links pointing towards the websites of external agencies, organisations such as the *Belfast Telegraph*, and the University of Ulster's Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN).²⁴⁸ However, there was limited evidence to suggest that these groups were using the web to mobilise support from groups based outside the United Kingdom. As such, none of the Loyalist websites received a point in the 'International Terrorist Link' section.

[Table 6.3 here]

Surprisingly, Republicans achieved a lower average score in this category. In contrast to Republican amateurs and political fronts, these groups did not provide a broad range of links on their websites (see chapters 3 and 5). Like their Loyalist counterparts, these residents' groups did not offer links to 'international solidarity' websites. The links provided by Republican residents' groups tended to reflect the 'single issue' around which these groups formed, namely to oppose Orange Order demonstrations that passed through Republican areas. The Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition shared the highest score in this category (see Table 6.4). It provided links to websites maintained by groups involved in the debate over 'sectarian' marches, including the Irish Parades Emergency Committee and Orange Watch.²⁴⁹ The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community also used its web presence to direct Internet users towards websites that addressed the marching issue, such as the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland.²⁵⁰ Short Strand was the only group under analysis to receive no score in this section, as it provided no links on its

website. Overall, the links page of these websites reflected the single issue around which these groups formed. In a similar vein to the analysis of political fronts and amateur terrorists, there was limited evidence here to suggest that residents' groups were experiencing a critical multiplier effect in terms of organisational linkage.

[Table 6.4 here]

Interactivity

Republican residents' groups achieved a higher score in this category than their Loyalist counterparts. The websites of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community and the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition contained the largest number of interactive features in the study (see Table 6.5). The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community solicited donations from Internet users on its websites, providing bank details and a postal address.²⁵¹ The Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition provided a similar 'donation' facility on its website. The Friends of Garvaghy Road USA encouraged people living in North America to provide material support for the Garvaghy Road community group.²⁵² In addition, both these residents' groups provided postal addresses and telephone numbers for Internet users who wished to contact their respective organisations for further information. However, despite these websites promoting interaction between Internet users and their respective organisations, none of the Republican groups provided details about their leadership online. The Short Strand under Siege website received the lowest score in this category. It limited interactivity on its website to an 'Email Webmaster' facility, and did not provide a postal address for written correspondence.²⁵³

[Table 6.5 here]

Loyalist residents' groups provided limited interactivity on their websites (See Table 6.6). Inclusive of political fronts and amateur terrorists, these websites received the

lowest score in this category of all the websites analysed in the thesis. The White City under Attack website proved the most interactive of the Loyalist websites analysed in the study, providing an 'Email Webmaster' facility and a bulletin board.²⁵⁴ The other Loyalist residents' groups limited interactivity on their websites to an 'Email Webmaster' facility. None of the groups under analysis used their websites to solicit resources from sympathisers. Overall, both Loyalist and Republican residents' groups provided limited opportunity for Internet users to contact their organisations online.

[Table 6.6 here]

Online Recruitment Resources

Both Loyalist and Republican residents' groups achieved low scores in this category of the coding scheme. The analysis suggested that Loyalist residents' groups did not use their official web presence to recruit new members (See Table 6.7). Furthermore, none of the websites included a 'Members Only' section. This was perhaps to be expected, given that none of the Loyalist residents' groups under analysis referred to their membership on their website. Both the Cluan Place and White City under Attack websites did enable Internet users to download propaganda onto their desktops. The Cluan Place website enabled Internet users to download a Cluan Place booklet, which told the 'tale of the trouble' at the sectarian interface.²⁵⁵ The White City under Attack website also provided a series of posters for Internet users to display, including one drawing attention to the murder of a local resident.²⁵⁶

[Table 6.7 here]

There was little to differentiate between Loyalists and Republicans in terms of online recruitment resources. Republican residents' groups also received low scores in this category (See Table 6.8). None of these groups used online recruitment strategies, or provided a 'Members Only' section. Yet, Republican residents' groups did enable

Internet users to download material from their website in an alternative format. For example, the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition website provided a downloadable map of the contentious Orange Order parade, along with a Peace Watch report containing statements from local residents.²⁵⁷ Overall, residents' groups did not appear to use their official web presence to draw Internet users into their respective organisations. However, this reflected the fact that these groups were essentially a 'closed shop,' with membership limited to people who lived in Loyalist and Republican areas.

[Table 6.8 here]

Presentation

Overall, residents' groups provided little innovation in terms of information delivery online, receiving lower scores than both political parties and solidarity actors in this category (see chapters 3 and 5). Loyalist residents' group websites achieved a higher score in this category than their Republican counterparts. The Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative website received the highest score in this section of the coding scheme (See Table 6.9). This website contained a section entitled 'Media Files,' which included a recorded video statement by local Democratic Unionist Party MP, Nigel Dodds. The website also provided video footage of nationalist 'thugs' attacking young [Protestant] children as they waited to board a school bus.²⁵⁸ The White City under Attack also provided video streaming on its website. The documentary film 'Victims of Sinn Fein/IRA,' produced by the Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice (UPMJ), was available for free download on its website. In contrast, the Cluan Place website was devoid of multimedia facilities and received a low score in this category.

[Table 6.9 here]

Republican residents' groups received low scores in this category (See Table 6.10). These groups relied upon text and scanned pictures for information delivery on their websites.

As discussed earlier, the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community website contained pictures of local residents who were allegedly attacked by the PSNI. This resonated with the images used on the websites of the other Republican residents' groups under analysis. For example, pictures of local residents' protesting against an Orange Order demonstration dominated the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition website.²⁵⁹ Overall, the study suggested that residents' groups provide 'basic' websites, devoid of technological innovations such as live video streaming.

[Table 6.10 here]

DISCUSSION

Why might residents' groups conceal their links to terrorist organisations online?

There are several reasons why Loyalist and Republican residents' groups might omit leadership details from their websites. A personal email address or phone number could be used to issue threats to leaders of these organisations. The fear of being 'exposed' as a community activist, and subject to attack by the 'other' community has been identified as a key factor inhibiting community relations' projects in interface communities (Jarman, 1997: 102). As discussed in this chapter, North Belfast has seen disproportionately high levels of criminal assault and murders compared to Northern Ireland as a whole during the 'Troubles.' Therefore, members of local residents' groups might prefer to remain anonymous in order to avoid any violent repercussions for themselves, or their families. Yet, the appearance of Republican residents' leaders on television, particularly during periods of civil unrest, suggests that fear of personal attack does not explain the omission of leadership details from their websites.

The impact on international audiences is arguably of greater concern to Republican residents' groups. Online framing is more likely to have an impact on audiences that do

not have access to the Northern Irish media (see chapter 3). Conceivably, international audiences might look less favourably upon these residents' groups if their links to paramilitary organisations were publicised on their websites. As a result, residents' groups are unlikely to reveal on their websites that their membership include former paramilitary prisoners, such as Brendan MacCionnaith. If they were to reveal terrorist linkages, whether historic or contemporary, they might lose support from influential diasporas. In sum, residents' groups are less transparent on their websites than they appear to be in the conventional mass media. The websites analysed in the study cast little light upon the membership of Loyalist and Republican residents' groups. Although concerns for the personal safety of members might be relevant, the study suggests that these groups omit references to terrorism in order to demonstrate their civil society credentials.

Bonding or Bridging Social Capital?

Despite allegations of paramilitary orchestration, residents' groups do appear to articulate the interests of their local communities on their websites. In terms of social capital, these websites appeared to promote 'bonding' social capital within Loyalist and Republican communities, as opposed to 'bridging' social capital between rival residents' groups. Bonding social capital can be characterised as a form of "sociological superglue that creates strong in-group loyalty and occasionally strong out-group antagonism" (Putnam, 2000: 23). This was illustrated in the study, as residents' groups invariably blamed the 'other' community for their communal problems. The 'other' community, situated at the other side of the 'peaceline,' was portrayed as an expansionist, invariably violent, and homogeneous political entity. The websites allowed residents' groups to further define rather than solve the problems facing their respective communities. The study suggests that prospects for 'dialogic' democracy are not enhanced via these websites, as they represent a series of monologues rather than a dialogue between the two communities.

Yet, this also reflects the intended audience for each website, namely members of the local community and their supporters. Internet users who visit these websites are likely to be sympathetic towards the plight of interface communities (see chapter 4). As discussed in this thesis, Northern Irish political actors, whether they are political fronts, amateur terrorists, or residents' groups, use the Web primarily for intra-group communication. These actors use their websites to choose their own frames, to circumvent the ideological refraction of the conventional mass media. Therefore, it is perhaps no surprise that residents' groups, who feel both the media and policymakers ignore them, use their websites to air their grievances. In sum, the webmasters responsible for these websites use 'victimhood' to generate bonding social capital in interface communities. Bridging social capital can only be generated in a neutral political space online, one that can be accessed by both Loyalist and Republican communities. Conceivably, these residents' groups may be using less public forms of computer-mediated communication, such as email, to facilitate dialogue across sectarian interfaces.

Are these websites a manifestation of consociationalism?

Consociationalists believe that segmental isolation and intra-segmental stability are critical to the management of conflict in ethnically divided nation-states. The study suggested that the residents' groups themselves favoured the 'good fences make good neighbours' principle, with groups such as Cluan Place calling for 'peacelines' to be strengthened in interface areas. However, Loyalist and Republican interface communities are different in character to civil society groups in pluralist democracies, such as the Netherlands. The theory of consociationalism was based upon the management of societal cleavages in Holland during the late 1960s. Lijphart (1968) asserted that Holland was "a nation divided, but not one divided versus itself" (p.59). There were four blocs within the Netherlands, each with their own political and social organisations. Yet, differences between the blocs were relatively easy to manage, as Holland was a racially homogeneous nation, and had a stable and viable democracy (p.59). It is perhaps

premature to suggest that Northern Ireland is an example of a consociationalist democracy, in a similar vein to the Netherlands. While this may be the logical outcome for the peace process, many of the necessary preconditions for a consociationalist political settlement have yet to be achieved. Ideally, a balance of power between at least three segments, all of equal size, is required to sustain a consociationalist democracy (Lijphart, 1977: 55). In Northern Ireland, there are only two segments of almost equal size, namely the Protestant and Catholic communities. In addition, intra-segmental stability remains elusive, as inter-communal violence has continued unabated at sectarian interfaces since the Belfast Agreement. There is also no history of elite cooperation in the region (O'Duffy, 1992: 128). Instead, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland form "two quite distinct and separate segments, each with their own social, educational, and recreational organisations" (Lijphart, 1977:134).

These websites are perhaps better understood as a manifestation of community relations in post-conflict Northern Ireland. The websites analysed in the study provide an outlet for the peripheral political actors within Northern Irish civil society, for whom the peace process has made little difference. As such, Loyalist and Republican residents' groups use their websites to focus upon grievances that have festered for decades, such as social deprivation and Orange Order demonstrations. Furthermore, these websites held a mirror to a political context that is without precedent. A 'benign apartheid' has developed in the province since the Belfast Agreement, as Catholics and Protestants increasingly wish to live in 'single identity' neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, interface communities continue to endure inter-communal violence, in much the same way as they did before the Good Friday Agreement. There are no residents' groups based outside the province that have operated in a comparable political context, in which 'low-intensity' conflict has existed for such a long period between highly interspersed ethnic communities.

The Internet: A primary tool of political communication?

The frequency of updates on these websites suggests that residents' groups have yet to realise the potential of the Internet as a tool for political communication. The study found that there had been no updates on each of the Republican websites for several years. The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community could be characterised as an archive, with the last update recorded on 9 July 1998.²⁶⁰ This was also evident in the chronology of events provided on these websites. The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community and Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition websites focused upon the Orange Order 'marching seasons' of 1995-1997, a few months before the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and the political reforms that accompanied it. In addition, these websites frequently referred to the police as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), rather than the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) that was established in its place in 2001. The Short Strand under Siege website was the only Republican site to have been updated since 2003. The most recent entry on this website referred to Loyalist attacks on the area that took place in July 2003.²⁶¹

Although the White City under Attack provided a UPMJ documentary on its website, presumably for journalists to download and incorporate into their media packages, a similar pattern emerged in the study of Loyalist residents' groups. None of these websites had been updated in the 12 months prior to the study, as illustrated by the Cluan Place website, which had last been updated in January 2003.²⁶² The Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative website was the most recently updated, with an article on a Loyalist rally uploaded in March 2003.²⁶³ Therefore, the study suggests that residents' groups do not use the Internet as a primary tool of political communication. The lack of regular updates on these websites suggests that residents' groups still prefer to use the conventional mass media as a tool of political communication. This may reflect the fact that the mass media provides a larger audience to residents' groups than the websites analysed in this chapter. Indeed, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the online audience for residents' groups is likely to consist of sympathisers and journalists, as opposed to the large audience available to these groups if they gain the attention of the

mass media (see chapter 4). In sum, Northern Irish residents' groups do not appear to have realised the full potential of the Internet as a communication device. Although there is some evidence to suggest these residents' groups are using their websites to offer support for one another, this does not in itself constitute a critical multiplier effect.

CONCLUSION

These websites illustrate the 'competition of victimhood' between interface communities. In a similar vein to political fronts, residents' groups use their web presence to portray themselves as legitimate members of civil society. In order to achieve this, these groups used their websites to refute accusations that they were manipulated by terrorist organisations, despite often compelling evidence to the contrary in the conventional mass media. Irrespective of their terrorist linkages, these groups did articulate the interests of their local communities online. Loyalists highlighted the social and economic deprivation that blights their local communities, while Republicans focused upon the disruption caused by Orange Order demonstrations passing through their communities. Both Loyalist and Republican residents' groups used their websites to suggest that the community situated on the other side of the 'peaceline' was responsible for inter-communal violence. Consequently, the term 'ethnic cleansing' appeared on all of the websites under analysis, usually accompanied by pictures of local residents' who had allegedly been attacked by people from the 'other' community. Contrary to the assertions made by cyberoptimists, this study suggests that the Internet may erode social capital between rival interface communities. Rather than facilitate dialogue between residents' groups, these websites were more likely to generate bonding social capital amongst these communities. Yet, these websites were only likely to be viewed by people who are sympathetic to the plight of interface communities. The study suggests that these websites are a manifestation of the 'benign apartheid' that has spread across the province since the Good Friday Agreement. Therefore, bridging social capital can only be created in an independent arena online, where residents' groups can freely discuss solutions to

communal problems rather than simply redefine their problems.

Table 6.1 Loyalist and Republican residents' groups

| Loyalist | Republican |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cluan Place | Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | Lower Ormeau Concerned Community |
| White City Under Attack | Short Strand Under Siege |

Table 6.2 Website registration data provided by Northern Irish residents' groups

| Website | Host | Location of Host | Webmaster Name | Webmaster Personal Email Address | Registered Postal Address | Telephone Number/Fax Number |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cluan Place | Fasthosts | UK | IA | NIA | NIA | NIA |
| Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition | Go Daddy | USA | IA | NIA | IA | IA |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | Schlund | Germany | NIA | NIA | IA | NIA |
| Lower Ormeau Concerned Community | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Short Strand Under Siege | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| White City Under Attack | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

IA – Information Available NIA – No Information Available

Table 6.3 Organisational Linkage visible on Loyalist Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Solidarity Links | International Terrorist Links | Educational Links | Commercial/ Non-Political Links | Number of Links (>15) | Score (/5) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Cluan Place | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| White City Under Attack | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 1 | 0 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 2.33 |

Table 6.4 Organisational Linkage visible on Republican Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Solidarity Links | International Terrorist Links | Educational Links | Commercial/ Non-Political Links | Number of Links (>15) | Score (/5) |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Lower Ormeau Concerned Community | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Short Strand | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 0.67 | 0 | 0 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 1.33 |

Table.6.5 Interactive features available on Republican Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Email Newsletter | Bulletin Board | Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number | Email Webmaster | Email Individual Members | Resource Solicitation | Score |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Lower Ormeau Concerned Community | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Short Strand | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 0 | 0 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 1 | 0 | 0.67 | 3 |

Table.6.6 Interactive features available on Loyalist Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Email Newsletter | Bulletin Board | Postal Address | Telephone /Fax Number | Email Webmaster | Email Individual Members | Resource Solicitation | Score |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Cluan Place | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| White City Under Attack | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Mean | 0 | 0.33 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1.33 |

Table.6.7 Online recruitment resources of Loyalist Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Members Only Section | Full Membership Advertised | Full Membership Available via Online Application | Downloadable Public Relations Material | Score |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--|--|-------|
| Cluan Place | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White City Under Attack | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.67 | 0.67 |

Table. 6.8 Online recruitment resources of Republican Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Members Only Section | Full Membership Advertised | Full Membership Available via Online Application | Downloadable Public Relations Material | Score |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--|--|-------|
| Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Lower Ormeau Concerned Community | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Short Strand | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.67 | 0.67 |

Table.6.9 Presentation and delivery of Loyalist Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Graphics | Frames | Sound | Video Streaming | Pages in alternative format e.g. PDF | Score |
|---------------------------------------|----------|--------|-------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Cluan Place | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| White City Under Attack | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Mean | 1 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0 | 2.67 |

Table 6.10 Presentation and delivery of Republican Residents' Group Websites

| Website | Graphics | Frames | Sound | Video Streaming | Pages Available in format e.g. PDF | Score |
|-----------------------------------|----------|--------|-------|--------------------|---|-------|
| Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Lower Ormeau Concerned Community | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Short Strand | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study suggests that both civil and uncivil actors in Northern Ireland are yet to realise the potential of the Internet as a tool for political communication. Many of these groups appear to use the Internet to supplement their existing relationships with the mass media, rather than to adopt innovative forms of political activism like social netwar. Pro-Agreement groups use their websites to demonstrate their support for the peace process. Meanwhile, the Internet may provide a channel of communication for dissidents that is not available to them in the conventional mass media. Yet, this research suggests that the Internet may not provide a critical multiplier effect for these marginal groups in terms of political mobilisation. These groups need to attract a large audience to their websites if their online framing is to influence public opinion at an aggregate level. The key findings of this thesis are discussed in sections below.

All Northern Irish political fronts use the Web to establish their credentials as cultural democrats

The study suggested that all Northern Irish political parties use their websites to verify their democratic credentials. There was little to differentiate between the websites of terrorist-linked groups, such as Sinn Fein, and the websites of constitutional parties, such as the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). Terrorist political fronts posted material online that was compliant with the regime created by anti-terrorist legislation, such as the UK Terrorism Act (2000). As such, groups such as Sinn Fein and the Progressive Unionist Party did not justify contemporary political violence on their websites, nor raise funds on behalf of their respective terrorist organisations. Irrespective of their continued support for armed struggle, all political parties in the region used their websites to suggest they were cultural democrats, committed to democracy “come what may” (Richards, 2001: 83). The study suggested that the frames adopted by terrorist-linked groups were indistinguishable from those used by constitutional political parties.

Themes such as equality and shared responsibility permeated all of the party websites analysed in this thesis. For example, Sinn Fein used its website to further the equality agenda that was traditionally associated with the moderate nationalist party in the region, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).

The Internet provides a space for supporters and opponents of the peace process

The online framing of political parties reflected their position vis-a-vis the Good Friday Agreement. Pro-Agreement parties used their official web presence to offer support for the power-sharing institutions. In this respect, the online framing of these groups had an antecedent in the peace frame projected by the mass media in the mid-nineties. However, a clear majority of actors under analysis used their websites to criticise the Belfast Agreement and its supporters. Anti-Agreement unionists such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) criticised the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) for sharing power with Sinn Fein. In the opinion of these groups, Sinn Fein had yet to demonstrate that it was committed to the use of exclusively democratic means to achieve its objectives. Dissident Republicans were also critical of the peace process, albeit for a different reason. Groups such as the 32 County Sovereignty Movement believed that Sinn Fein had abandoned core Republican principles, leaving the Catholic community at greater risk of attack from Loyalist paramilitaries. In addition, these groups still believed that terrorism was the only way to remove the British presence from Ireland. Anti-Agreement sentiments were also evident on the websites of Loyalist and Republican supporters. In contrast to dissident political fronts, these actors did not have to demonstrate their civil society credentials to the Northern Irish electorate. Therefore, many solidarity actors used paramilitary insignias and pictures of hooded gunmen on their websites to illustrate their support for armed struggle.

Loyalist and Republican websites will attract a limited audience

The online audience for Loyalist and Republican websites is likely to be limited to Internet users who use the Web for political research, and supporters of Northern Irish terrorist groups. In addition, the analysis of Internet usage patterns suggests that these Internet users are likely to be male, middle class, well educated and situated in Europe or North America. People with no prior knowledge of Northern Irish terrorism may turn to Internet search engines to locate information on these organisations online. These search engines facilitate a form of mediated interaction between webmasters and Internet users. They will direct Internet users towards 'more of the same' organisational websites, rather than the websites of Loyalist and Republican political fronts. The sale of priority retrieval and the rule of Googlearchy are just two reasons why terrorists may not be visible on search engine directories. However, low visibility on search engines may be to the advantage of terrorist organisations who remain engaged in armed struggle. These groups may not wish to attract a large online audience for fear of compromising future military operations.

The threat of amateur terrorism online may be illusory

As Loyalist and Republican amateurs did not have to convince the electorate of their democratic credentials, they highlighted the links between political fronts and terrorist groups. In a similar vein to political parties such as Republican Sinn Fein, Republicans claimed that political violence was necessary because the Provisional IRA ceasefire had left the Catholic community at greater risk of attack from Loyalist paramilitaries. Loyalists criticised the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) for allowing 'unreconstructed' terrorists, in the form of Sinn Fein, to participate in the Stormont Assembly. Support for political violence was expressed through the use of militaristic language and paramilitary emblems on solidarity websites. Yet, there was limited evidence to suggest that Loyalist and Republican solidarity actors themselves were engaged in acts of terrorism. Despite

many of these actors purporting to be members of terrorist organisations, many webmasters issued legal disclaimers stating they had no links to the paramilitaries. Furthermore, none of these webmasters risked potential legal sanctions by inciting others to perpetrate political violence, or soliciting resources on behalf of a proscribed terrorist organisation. The study suggested that ‘unofficial’ Loyalist and Republican websites did not constitute a new dimension of terrorist threat in Northern Ireland.

Loyalist and Republicans use the Web to further their competition of victimhood

Loyalist and Republican residents’ groups upload their grievances into cyberspace. Loyalists use their websites to highlight the social devaluation that blights their areas, while Republicans focus on the disruption caused to their areas by Orange Order demonstrations. Residents’ groups on both sides of the sectarian divide claim that inter-communal violence is solely the responsibility of the ‘other’ community. As a result, the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ featured on all of the websites maintained by interface communities. In addition, residents’ groups used their websites to publish pictures of local residents who had allegedly been ‘brutalised’ by either the ‘other’ community or the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Overall, these websites represent the competition of victimhoods between Loyalist and Republican residents’ groups that exists in the offline world. As such, these websites are more likely to generate bonding social capital, as opposed to creating bridging social capital between communities divided by so-called ‘peacelines.’ These websites are a manifestation of the ‘benign apartheid’ that has emerged in Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement.

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Do existing patterns of Internet governance allow terrorists to act with impunity online?

Critics assert that the Internet is ‘pretty much a free for all’ for terrorists due to the failure

of nation-states to agree uniform rules regarding 'harmful' website content (Penfold, 2004: 285). As discussed in this thesis, the failure to achieve an international consensus on terrorist proscription creates spaces in which terrorists can operate online. For example, a 'pro-terrorist' webmaster may register their website in a nation-state that does not define its subject as a terrorist actor. There is already some evidence to suggest that terrorist groups, such as Hamas, move the registration of their website from one nation-state to another in order to remain online. Moreover, the principles behind the Global Internet stipulate that its enabling power should be available to both 'good and bad information and communications behaviour.'²⁶⁴ This can be illustrated by the culture of anonymity that has developed around the domain registration system. There is no legal requirement for webmasters to provide accurate personal information to companies such as Nominet (www.nominet.co.uk) who administer the domain name system. A webmaster may request that organisations such as Nominet refrain from publishing their personal details on their website. Alternatively, a webmaster may choose to register their website via a third party, such as an Internet Host. Conceivably, this may make it more difficult for nation-states to identify - and prosecute - webmasters who justify terrorism on their websites.

While terrorists may be able to manipulate the patchwork nature of Internet governance to their advantage, one cannot assume that they will always do so. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that contextual factors determine the content of 'pro-terrorist' websites. Contrary to our initial hypothesis, dissidents did not register their websites outside the United Kingdom in order to post material that would contravene UK anti-terrorist legislation. Although some websites were registered in the United States and Germany, all of the webmasters under analysis conformed to the norms of acceptable behaviour online. As such, none of the webmasters used their websites to justify contemporary acts of terrorism, nor solicit resources on behalf of proscribed groups. However, this research provided insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that the Internet is a form of panopticon, in which webmasters voluntarily adhere to the norms of

acceptable behaviour due to the perceived threat of legal sanctions. While some webmasters may have removed references to contemporary terrorism for this purpose, the majority did so in order to frame themselves as civil society actors. Political fronts used their websites to differentiate themselves from the violent activities of Northern Ireland's paramilitaries. For solidarity actors, the Internet provided a space in which they could commemorate fallen comrades and provide their own history of the Northern Irish conflict. Therefore, the messages posted by these webmasters online did not contravene anti-terrorist legislation. However, it is conceivable that these actors are using less public forms of computer-mediated communication, such as email, to plan and perpetrate atrocities. Overall, the thesis suggests that contextual factors determine the framing and function of 'pro-terrorist' websites, as opposed to the anti-terrorist regime in Europe and North America.

Terrorists, ICTs and soft power: is there a cyber-optimist solution for terrorism?

Crelinsten (2002) characterises terrorism as a form of 'coercive communication,' used by sub-state actors who ordinarily receive minimal coverage in the mass media (p.83). Cyberoptimists believe that the bridging of the 'digital divide,' the gap between those who are able to benefit from information technology and those who are not, is a precondition for resolving terrorism.²⁶⁵ The cyberoptimist model implies that terrorists may be able to use their websites to generate soft power, to persuade "others to want the same outcomes" (Nye, 2004: 5). As Weinmann (2004) suggests, terrorists might use the Web to counter their violent image, to claim they seek a "diplomatic settlement rather than the slaughter of innocent civilians" (p.6). This would presumably reduce the need for terrorists to perpetrate atrocities in order to generate publicity for their cause. In effect, these actors may cease to be terrorists, particularly if their military campaigns were designed to gain publicity. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that Loyalist and Republican terror groups use their websites to establish their political fronts as the driving force of their organisation. For example, pro-Agreement political fronts use

their websites to suggest they are 'cultural' democrats, committed to using exclusively democratic means to achieve their objectives. Hence, themes such as 'shared responsibility' and 'equality' permeate the websites of parties such as Sinn Fein, while there are no references to their respective terrorist organisations.

Nye (2004) asserts that soft power depends more than hard power upon the existence of "willing entrepreneurs and receivers" (p: 16). The cyberoptimist model works on the assumption that terrorists will be able to attract an audience to their websites, thus reducing their need to perpetrate political violence in order to secure publicity. The diversity of the online audience available to terrorists reflects their ability to generate soft power. This was illustrated by the analysis of Loyalist and Republican political fronts in this study. Due to its central role in the peace process, Sinn Fein has increased its ability to attract support from audiences at both home and abroad (see chapter 3). Soft power has become integral to the current strategy of the Republican movement, as the Provisional IRA ceasefire has remained intact during this period. A transfer of power within the Republican movement has accompanied this process, with leadership transferring from the IRA Army Council to Sinn Fein in 2001. Due to its unprecedented electoral success in recent years, the Sinn Fein website is likely to attract a large, diverse audience online, which is familiar with the Republican movement in the offline world. While this could be interpreted as evidence of Sinn Fein's transition from political front to constitutional political party, this does not necessarily mean that the Provisional IRA have become irrelevant to the Republican campaign for a 32 county Irish Republic. Indeed, one interpretation of the Republican movement's reluctance to announce a permanent cessation to hostilities during the late nineties might be that they were keeping their options open as to how they would pursue a united Ireland. Nevertheless, Sinn Fein appears to have gained soft power because of the Provisional IRA ceasefire.

In contrast, dissident Republican parties have little or no political representation in local bodies, and limited appeal to international audiences due to their support for armed

struggle. As discussed in chapter 4, the online audience for these groups is likely to consist of Internet users who use the Web for political research and their supporters in the offline world. Therefore, these groups are likely to view political violence as the only effective vehicle for their propaganda. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that Northern Irish terrorists may have to abandon political violence in order to gain soft power beyond their own narrow constituencies. This may apply to all ethno-nationalist terrorist organisations that operate in a democratic political system, in which they possess the right to express their political opinions.

Yet, terrorists are differentiated from members of civil society by their use of ‘non-permissible’ violence, or the threat of such violence. Terrorists perpetrate violence to subject a target audience to their ideologies, rather than to gain their approval. This violence may be inspired by grievances that lack popular support outside the terrorist’s own constituency, as was the case with the Unabomber campaign in the United States (see chapter 5). Alternatively, the terrorist may not wish to gain publicity in order to influence the opinion of audiences. As discussed in chapter 2, not all terrorists perpetrate violence to generate the ‘oxygen’ of publicity. Publicity is less important to state sponsors, as they use ‘hired guns’ to covertly bring pressure to bear upon their enemies. These actors will continue to perpetrate atrocities, irrespective of whether they receive coverage in the mass media. Soft power is probably of little use to these terrorist actors, as their violence is not intended to attract new converts to their cause. Therefore, the availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs) will not lead to a change in strategy for some terrorist actors.

The analysis presented in this thesis suggests that websites present the ‘public face’ of a terrorist organisation. Terrorists choose their own frames on their websites, often depicting themselves as ‘freedom fighters’ and their opponents as ‘the real terrorists’ (Weinmann, 2004: 6). In post-conflict Northern Ireland, Loyalists and Republicans only maintain websites under the guise of their political fronts. The online framing of these

groups suggests they have no links to Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries, despite compelling evidence to the contrary in the mass media. While these political fronts frame themselves as legitimate political parties on their websites, their respective terrorist groups remain involved in low-level paramilitarism. This form of political violence is directed primarily against their own communities, in the form of so-called ‘punishment beatings.’ For example, between 1 March 2003 and 31 August 2005, there were 17 murders committed by paramilitary organisations within Northern Ireland.²⁶⁶ It is perhaps no surprise that political fronts omit references to this form of paramilitarism from their websites. Revelations about ongoing terrorist activity might further damage relations between dissident Republicans and Irish-American diasporas, many of whom remain staunch supporters of the peace process. In addition, it is inconceivable that a political front would reveal its support for terrorism online, for fear of compromising the security of its members. Thus, all Northern Irish terrorists appear to use their websites as a soft power resource, while continuing to use traditional forms of hard power, albeit that this violence is not directed towards the ‘other’ community. ICTs are an additional mode of communication, to be added to traditional forms of terrorist manipulation of the conventional mass media. In any particular situation, terrorist organisations may choose their strategies from this range of options according to the expected utility of each in that context. Terrorists will only abandon their military campaigns if they perceive can achieve their political objectives through the political process, as demonstrated by Sinn Fein’s integration into the political establishment in Northern Ireland.

The Internet and Ethnic communities: narrowcasting?

Cyberoptimists suggest the Internet will allow sub-state groups to broadcast their ideologies to a potential global audience. However, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the Internet is more likely to facilitate the “targeting of specific niche audiences,” otherwise known as narrowcasting (Smith-Shomade, 2004: 70). This was particularly evident in the analysis of Northern Irish residents’ groups online. The Internet

appears to further the competition of victimhoods between Loyalist and Republican interface communities. Loyalist and Republican residents' groups use their websites to highlight the social and economic deprivation that blights their communities, invariably suggesting that the community situated at the other side of the 'peaceline' is trying to ethnically cleanse their areas. As such, the audience for these websites is likely to consist of people who have similar experiences of living in interface communities, or those who are sympathetic to their plight. These groups use their websites to generate bonding social capital amongst their membership, as opposed to bridging social capital between ethnic communities situated at sectarian interfaces.

The narrowcasting model can be applied to all sub-state political actors who maintain a website. Previous studies of the Internet, such as the Gibson and Ward (2003) analysis of Australian political parties, suggest that sub-state groups use their websites for intra-group communication, as opposed to reaching out to other societal groups online. Moreover, the analysis of online audiences presented in this thesis suggests that both civil and 'uncivil' actors cannot assume that their websites will find an audience beyond their own constituencies. In this respect, the new world information order appears strikingly similar to the old one (p.79). Yet, if residents' groups only use their websites to communicate with sympathisers, it is perhaps no surprise that these websites have a limited capacity to generate dialogue across sectarian interfaces. Ethnic conflict regulation necessitates the creation of an independent arena, in which rival communities can discuss contentious issues. The Northern Ireland Civic Forum, established under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (1998), constituted an arena in which 'positive' communication could be encouraged between interface communities. However, it struggled with its remit as a 'consultative' body alongside the newly constituted Stormont executive. In 2002, the Civic Forum was suspended after the collapse of the power-sharing institutions, and at the time of writing, there are no plans for it to reform in the near future (Bell, 2004: 566). The prospects for dialogic democracy in Northern Ireland appear slim given the lack of dialogue between communities situated across sectarian

interfaces. The websites of residents' groups are a manifestation of the 'benign apartheid' that has developed in the province since the mid-nineties.

Electronic bulletin boards might provide a more viable alternative to the Civic Forum, enabling Northern Ireland's two communities to discuss political issues in a neutral arena. The BBC Radio Ulster *Talkback* programme, hosted by David Dunseith, has arguably enabled this stream of positive communication in the Province over the past decade. This radio show provides a space in which Loyalist and Republican interface communities can frame stories from their own perspectives, while the *Talkback* website provides a bulletin board in which listeners can post comments on a wide variety of issues.²⁶⁷ For example, people freely exchanged views on these bulletin boards about the Drumcree crisis during the mid-nineties.²⁶⁸ Yet, this dialogue is facilitated at the discretion of the *Talkback* production team, who are responsible for moderating these bulletin boards. Less public forms of computer-mediated communication may have a greater impact in moderating tensions between rival ethnic communities. As discussed in this thesis, mobile telephone networks have proved particularly successful in helping rival ethnic communities reduce tensions at sectarian interfaces. This communication channel could be extended through the exchange of emails between representatives of interface communities. Future research into ethnic conflict should consider to what extent ICTs construct social capital in other political contexts, whether it be bonding or bridging social capital. An analysis of how Israeli and Palestinian groups use the Web would provide further evidence as to whether new media technologies can facilitate ethnic conflict regulation in divided societies. This research would also determine whether contextual factors are critical to the efficacy of the dialogic democracy model proposed by Giddens. As Wright (2006) suggests, institutional design may be one of many factors that determine "whether people will participate and the form in which they choose to do so" (p.94).

Do the Cyber paradigms have limitations as analytical tools?

In a recent article in the *Sunday Times*, Brian Appleyard argued that information technology should not be seen as autonomous as it is “utterly background dependent.”²⁶⁹ This resonates with the analysis of Northern Irish political actors presented in this thesis. This research highlights the need for the continuous development of theoretical and analytical tools for researching the Internet usage of sub-state groups, which will have the capacity to evolve in parallel with technological and contextual developments. For example, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that social netwar is merely a description of the extraordinary political mobilisation in favour of the EZLN insurgents in Chiapas, as opposed to a durable conceptual tool for characterising online political activism. Furthermore, the cyber paradigms appear too static to provide a theoretical tool for the analysis of web activism without significant modification. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that contextual factors, rather than the traditional focus upon the ‘digital divide,’ determine how ICTs impact upon the reality of “politics as usual” (Norris, 2001:13). The digital divide itself describes the differential between those who can benefit from ICTs and those are unable to do so, as opposed to who has access to the Internet. Therefore, analytical tools need to incorporate factors that may explain why ICTs generate different outcomes for similar actors.

There are three components that need to be added to the cyber paradigms, namely the purpose of the web activity, the media environment and the online audience. Firstly, researchers should consider what the actor hopes to achieve through their utility of ICTs. If the webmaster lacks influence in the ‘offline’ world, or wishes to remain anonymous online to avoid detection, their website is likely to make little or no immediate impact on ‘politics as usual.’ Thus, individual and group objectives are critical to understanding how new media technologies influence power relations within nation-states. The Internet is used by some political actors as a means of generating soft power, enabling them to attract support from a potential global audience. These actors will use the Web to publish

their ideologies free from the ideological refraction of the conventional mass media. However, the three cyber paradigms presuppose that all political actors will use new media technologies for the same purpose, namely to gain political influence. Conversely, not all political actors will use information technology to alter power relations within their respective polities. For example, the Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group does not refer to its political objectives on its website, focusing instead upon community events such as a children's disco.²⁷⁰ Residents' groups may also use their websites to strengthen relationships within their own communities, as opposed to influence government policy. In a similar vein to residents' groups, political parties use their websites primarily for intra-group communication. Only a few political parties are likely to be in a position to influence decision-making within nation-states. The cyber paradigms must consider the objectives of sub-state actors if they are to capture how politics has evolved in the digital age.

The media environment is also critical to understanding how ICTs affects politics within nation-states. Political parallelism, or the extent to which media systems reflect political context, is also relevant to Internet usage within nation-states. As discussed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), the media should be relatively unrestricted in the United States due to the freedom of expression enshrined in the US First Amendment. These rights can also be applied to computer-mediated communication in the same polities. Webmasters and Internet Hosting companies often cite 'First Amendment Rights' when justifying the continued presence of websites that project controversial views, such as 'pro-terrorist' websites. In contrast, semi-authoritarian nation-states, such as China, will attempt to limit dissent, whether it be transmitted via traditional media forms or on the Internet. This suggests that the potential of the Internet as a mobilising agent and means of generating soft power may be dependent upon the limits placed on the use of these technologies by nation-states. As discussed in this thesis, political fronts such as Sinn Fein have received routine media coverage courtesy of their electoral success post 1998, in sharp contrast to the censorship they faced in the wake of the UK Broadcasting Ban in 1988. Sinn Fein

uses its website to provide further evidence of its democratic credentials, to reflect the normalisation of its relations with both the conventional mass media and civil society itself. Evidently, Sinn Fein would be unable to project this ‘peace frame’ if the nation-state in which the website was registered defined it as an ‘uncivil’ organisation. Yet, nation-states may be unable to limit the soft power of sub-state groups online through restrictions on their ability to use the Internet. Diasporas may generate soft power on behalf of a sub-state actor that has restricted access to their local mass media, as demonstrated by the Zapatista social network. Future research should consider the extent to which media environment – both domestic and international – determines where a webmaster registers his or her website.

The online audience should also be added as a component to the cyber paradigms. After all, ICTs will only influence power relations within nation-states if sub-state groups find an audience for their websites that is unavailable to them in the conventional mass media. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests the online audience is highly fragmented, as people use the Internet as a private viewing box. As people use the Internet to pursue private interests, only the politically engaged will use the Web for political research. Yet, this illustrates another limitation of research into how sub-state actors use the Internet. It is virtually impossible to estimate the size and composition of an online audience for a particular website. While tools such as Google Zeitgeist provide data about the search queries that are “gaining the most growth,” they do not list the most popular queries. In addition, these tools tend to be heavily filtered to remove harmful content.²⁷¹ In addition, there is no publicly available information about the number of unique visitors to a particular website. An online survey was rejected in this thesis, as the representative sampling of the audience was impossible to achieve for similar reasons. Nevertheless, this thesis demonstrates that the potential audience for a website may be modelled using data already in the public domain, such as Internet surveys conducted by the Oxford Internet Institute. This model will enable researchers to assess whether sub-state groups are likely to reach a large audience online using their websites.

A Thematic approach to content analysis?

The analysis of website function only tells us part of the story when it comes to the Web strategy of political actors. In particular, this research illustrates how the coding scheme developed by Gibson and Ward (2000, 2004) has limited utility in the analysis of online frames. It suggests that a thematic approach towards content analysis is more flexible in terms of the requirement to adapt to change. For example, analysis of website function may tell us very little about Web 2.0, the section of the Internet that provides a platform for user-generated content.²⁷² Research conducted using qualitative frames is able to chart how online discourse evolves in line with political developments in the ‘offline’ world. For example, this thesis provides a snapshot of Loyalist and Republican online discourse during a period of conflict transformation, as terrorist-linked groups move into mainstream politics and the number of violent terrorist incidents decrease. This was reflected in the themes of equality and shared responsibility that permeated the websites of Loyalist and Republican parties. The ‘benign apartheid’ that has developed across the province was also highlighted by the thematic approach used in this thesis. The Gibson and Ward coding scheme, in its current formulation, was also unable to capture the ‘competition of victimhoods’ that was evident on the websites of rival residents’ groups. Overall, the research design provides a model for future research into how the online framing of terrorist-linked groups evolves during a period of conflict transformation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further analysis of Loyalist and Republican web activism

This thesis could provide the foundations for a number of strands of future research. The study could be extended over a longer period, to chart how the media strategies of terrorist groups evolve alongside the normalisation of relations between political fronts

and the conventional mass media. In addition, the scope of the research could be extended to enable a comparison between the material posted on websites and the content of terrorist publications such as An Phoblacht/Republican News. Web blogs could be incorporated into this study to determine whether user generated content differs from that produced by amateur terrorists and terrorist-linked parties. The proposed study would provide evidence as to whether political fronts use local newspapers to issue threats to their own communities, while simultaneously using their websites to portray themselves as mainstream political parties to international audiences.

This research also raises questions as to the expectancy value model behind each 'pro-terrorist' website. This sociological theory, devised by Fishbein in the 1970s, provides an insight into what motivates webmasters to post material on the Internet. The model works on the assumption that people will choose behaviours that have the "largest combination of expected success and value."²⁷³ It depicts people as goal-oriented beings, who will weigh up the positive and negative consequences of each action before choosing their behaviour. While there are clearly social and psychological factors that influence all forms of decision-making, this model could be used as the basis for a series of interviews with the webmasters responsible for Loyalist and Republican websites. In order to determine what the expected value of a website was to an actor, each webmaster could be asked to provide the same information, such as the cost of maintaining the website, and any feedback they had received from Internet users. Although this evidence might be largely anecdotal, it would help identify the webmaster's target audience. This would provide further evidence as to whether the Internet facilitates a form of narrowcasting for sub-state groups, as opposed to the cyberoptimist theory that it will enable these groups to broadcast to a potential global audience.

The Internet as a tool for active terrorists in a different political context

Future research should consider how terrorist actors use the Internet in a different

political context. With the historic agreement between the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein leading to the restoration of devolution in May 2007, it is reasonable to speculate that a new era of cross-community relations may be evolving in Northern Ireland. While the 'benign apartheid' critique may detract from claims that the conflict is over, there has been a notable reduction in the level of paramilitary violence in the region. The most recent report from the Independent Monitoring Commission, published in April 2007, stated that the number of paramilitary-style assaults in the Province had fallen by 32 percent, when compared with statistics taken during the same period the year before.²⁷⁴ As Northern Ireland enters a post-conflict era, the web activism of terrorist-linked parties has become virtually indistinguishable from that of constitutional political parties (see chapter 3).

Therefore, one of the recommendations for future research would be a comparative study looking at the web activism of terrorist organisations in the Middle East. After its victory in the Palestinian Assembly elections of January 2006, Hamas may be developing a modus operandi that is congruent with the dual strategy employed by Sinn Fein throughout the 1980s, commonly referred to as 'the ballot box and the armalite.'²⁷⁵ A preliminary empirical analysis of the Hamas web presence suggests that their online framing may be evolving in a similar fashion to Republican discourse. Conway and Reilly (2006) assert that the English-language version of official Hamas website is devoted to constitutional political issues, framing the organisation as a moderate force within the region (p.10). However, in contrast to the Republican movement, Hamas continues to maintain a website under the guise of its military wing, the Qassam Brigades. This website focuses upon the movement's military activities, and can be characterised as a 'virtual monument' for the dead *shudhada* [martyrs] (Weinmann, 2006: 83). Future research into the web activism of Hamas should employ analytical tools similar to those employed in this thesis, perhaps over a longer period. A longitudinal study would chart how the online frames adopted by Hamas evolve in response to political events, such as a terrorist atrocity or another election victory. It would also

determine whether the Sinn Fein model, whereby the political front evolves into a constitutional political party, is replicable in vastly different political contexts, and what role ICTs play in this process.

The Internet as a tool for radicalisation in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, there have been a series of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists, including the London bombings in July 2007 and the foiled attack on Glasgow Airport in July 2007. Future research should examine whether the Web is a prime venue for the radicalisation of Muslims, as was suggested by FBI director Donald van Duyn in September 2006.²⁷⁶ In particular, this research should consider the role that the Internet plays in the radicalization of protest from discourse to violence. Although the scale of radicalisation online is hard to estimate, there is already some evidence that Islamic fundamentalists are using the Internet as part of their overall strategy to indoctrinate young British Muslims. For example, three men were sentenced to ten years in prison in July 2007 for running a network of extremist websites in the United Kingdom. Evidence from the trial showed that these men had uploaded guides for making suicide vests, along with videos of the murders of Nick Berg and Daniel Pearl on to the Internet. In addition, one of the men arranged travel to Iraq for would-be suicide bombers.²⁷⁷ Analysis of other 'pro-Al Qaeda' websites would provide further evidence as to how the Web is used to radicalise young Muslims.

This research would also provide evidence of how the UK Terrorism Act (2006) has changed the media environment in the United Kingdom. As discussed in this thesis, the anti-terrorist regime governing Web behaviour allowed Loyalist and Republican webmasters to proclaim their support for paramilitary organisations, provided they did not incite terrorism nor justify contemporary terrorist atrocities. Under the new UK anti-terror legislation, webmasters that express support for Islamic fundamentalists on their websites may face greater restrictions than Loyalist and Republican webmasters. A new

offence, the encouragement of terrorism, has been introduced to enable the prosecution of webmasters who use their websites to radicalise young Muslims. This bans webmasters from making statements that 'glorify the commission or preparation of terrorist offences, whether in the past, future or generally.'²⁷⁸ The proposed research would examine whether, in light of this new legislation, self-regulation is common amongst 'pro-terrorist' webmasters who reside in the United Kingdom. As was the case with Loyalist and Republicans, many of these webmasters might use legal disclaimers to avoid prosecution and the potential closure of their websites. Alternatively, 'pro-terrorist' webmasters may choose to register their websites in a sympathetic country, safe in the knowledge that they will not face prosecution for using the web as a tool for radicalisation.

SUMMARY

This thesis illustrates how Loyalist and Republican discourse has evolved since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. Terrorist-linked parties, such as the Progressive Unionist Party, use their websites to suggest they are cultural democrats, committed to using exclusively democratic means to achieve their objectives. In order to verify their democratic credentials, political fronts have adopted frames that are virtually indistinguishable from those used by constitutional political parties in the region. Thus, themes such as equality and shared responsibility permeate the websites of terrorist-linked parties, such as Sinn Fein. These websites also make little or no reference to the links between political fronts and their respective terrorist organisations. In contrast, Loyalist and Republican amateurs often use paramilitary insignias on their websites to demonstrate their opposition to the peace process. For these actors, the peace process has left them at greater risk of attack from paramilitaries in the 'other' community. However, the study found that these websites did not constitute a new dimension of terrorist threat to the peace process. Many of the webmasters who purported to be terrorists on their websites issued legal disclaimers on their websites to deny terrorist linkages. In addition,

these websites were compliant with the norms of acceptable behaviour, as they did not solicit funds on behalf of banned terrorist groups, nor incite others to perpetrate political violence.

Elsewhere, the thesis suggests that the Web has reinforced the 'benign apartheid' that has developed in Northern Ireland since the Belfast Agreement. Analysis of residents' group websites suggests that they further the competition of victimhoods between Loyalist and Republican interface communities. Both sides use their web presence to claim that they were constantly under threat of attack from the community situated at the other side of the 'peaceline.' As a result, these websites appear incapable of fostering bridging social capital between interface communities. Moreover, the thesis suggests that there will be a limited online audience for both civil and uncivil actors in Northern Ireland. The online audience for these actors is likely to consist of Internet users who use the Web for political research and Loyalist and Republican supporters in the offline world. Thus, ICTs will continue to have a limited impact upon 'politics as usual' within Northern Ireland.

This research highlights the need for the continuous development of theoretical and analytical tools for researching the Internet usage of sub-state groups which will have the capacity to evolve in parallel with technological and contextual developments. In their current formulation, the three cyber paradigms are unable to provide a theoretical tool for the analysis of web activism, particularly with the advent of Web 2.0. The dissertation proposes a thematic approach towards content analysis that is more flexible in terms of the requirement to adapt to change. In particular, this thesis identifies three components that might explain why ICTs generate different outcomes for similar actors, namely the media environment, the available audience, and purpose of the web activism. It also suggests that the online audience for a particular actor can be modelled using data already in the public domain, from sources such as the Oxford Internet Institute. Modelling the audience allow researchers to assess whether an actor is likely to generate soft power using their website. The thesis provides a model for future research into how the online

framing of terrorist-linked groups evolves during a period of conflict transformation. Future research should consider whether the Sinn Fein model, whereby the political front evolves into a constitutional political party, is replicable in vastly different political contexts, and what role ICTs play in this process.

ENDNOTES

¹ The UK Terrorism Act (2000) defines a terrorist organisation as an actor that 'commits an act of terror, prepares for terrorism, or promotes it.' Under this definition, both the support network and the perpetrator of an atrocity are defined as part of a terrorist group. It should be noted that terrorist organisations such as the Provisional IRA have also developed political fronts, many of whom are legally constituted parties that compete in local and national elections. The relationship between political fronts and terrorist actor will be discussed further in chapter 3.

² Attrition [WWW] <URL: www.attrition.org> [Accessed 24 October 2002]

³ The concept of soft power presupposes that all political actors will use non-violent methods to secure the support of target audiences. It should be noted that not all terrorist organisations seek to generate soft power via their websites, particularly if their web activism contravenes anti-terrorist legislation such as the UK Terrorism Act (2000). These actors are likely to continue to use acts of hard power, such as the use of violence, to further their psychological warfare against a target population. Conversely, terrorist organisations that abandon their violent campaigns are increasingly likely to turn to soft power as a means of mobilizing support for their objectives. The importance of soft power to pro-Agreement groups in Northern Ireland will be discussed further in chapter 3.

⁴ Euskal Herria Journal -Navarre : A Basque Journal. [WWW]
<URL:<http://www.contrast.org/mirros/ehj/>> [Accessed 20 June 2004]

⁵ The video, entitled 'The Slaughter of the Spy-Journalist, the Jew Daniel Pearl,' was also sent to FBI and Pakistani officials on February 2002. See CNN. 2002. U.S Journalist Daniel Pearl Is dead, officials confirm. [WWW]

<URL:www.archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/02/21/missing.reporter/index.html>
[Accessed 10 June 2007]

⁶ M.Ansari. 2004. Daniel Pearl 'refused to be sedated before his throat was cut,' *The Daily Telegraph* [WWW]

<URL:www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/05>
[Accessed 10 August 2007]

⁷ In 1999, a story emanating from a Hezbollah website claimed that a single coffin had been returned to Israel from Lebanon containing the body parts of several murdered Israeli marines. This caused a row between IDF officials and the families of the deceased.

⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*. 2001. New Internet Terror Fear: Loyalists are using web to pick targets' [15 March 20/01]

⁹ McCullagh, D.2003. Military worried about Web Leaks. *C/Net News* [WWW]
<URL:<http://news.com.com/2100-1023-981057.html>> [Accessed 10 June 2007]

¹⁰ Ulster Loyalist Information Service. 2003. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.ulisnet.com/main.htm>> [Accessed 02 March 2003] Please note this website is no longer available online. The organisation also asked Internet users to forward information about the Ulster Volunteer Force and Progressive Unionist Party, two paramilitary groups who were involved in a feud with the LVF during this period.

¹¹ Ulster Loyalist Information Service. 2003. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.ulisnet.com/main.htm>> [Accessed 02 March 2003] Please note this website is no longer available online. Although there is no specific information available on the reasons for its closure, it is reasonable to speculate that it was due to its contravention of anti-terrorist legislation, such as the UK Terrorism Act (2000).

¹² This website was no longer available as of November 2004. The domain name remains available for purchase. It is reasonable to speculate that this website was shut down by the Internet Service Provider for violating the norms of acceptable behaviour online, as defined under the UK Terrorism Act (2000).

¹³ Pew Internet and American Life Project. 2001. How Americans used the Internet after terror attack. 15 September, Washington DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project, [WWW] <URL:www.pewInternet.org> [Accessed 27 September 2002]

¹⁴ The full title of this Act is the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act.

¹⁵ UK Home Office. 2004. *Counter-Terrorism Powers: Reconciling Security and Liberty in an Open Society*. London: Crown Copyright, p.24.

¹⁶ UK Home Office. 2004. *Counter-Terrorism Powers: Reconciling Security and Liberty in an Open Society*. London: Crown Copyright, p.25.

¹⁷ Commission of the European Communities. 2001. Proposals for a Council Framework on Combating Terrorism. Brussels: European Union Press, p.7.

¹⁸ UK Home Office. 2000. UK Terrorism Act. [WWW] <URL:www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/00011-htm.sch2> [Accessed 10 May 2005]

¹⁹ European Union 'European Council Decision of 13 June 2002 on Combating Terrorism' 2002/475/JHA Brussels: European Union Press, p.1.

²⁰ Please note that the US State Department also provides a list of state sponsors of terrorism.

²¹ US State Department. 2002. Global War against Terrorism. <URL:www.state.gov/coalition/ff> [Accessed 10 March 2004]

²² US State Department. 2002. Global War against Terrorism. <URL:www.state.gov/coalition/ff> [Accessed 10 March 2004]

²³ US State Department. 2002. Global War against Terrorism. <URL:www.state.gov/coalition/ff> [Accessed 10 March 2004]

²⁴ US State Department. 2002. Global War against Terrorism. <URL: www.state.gov/coalition/ff> [Accessed 10 March 2004]

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- ²⁵ Klein, A. 2004. WND shuts down Hamas websites. *WorldNet Daily*. [WWW] <URL:www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.as?ARTICLE_ID=41938 > [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁶ Farah, j. 2001. Islamist terror still promoted on web. *WorldNetDaily* [WWW] <URL:www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=25485> [Accessed 10 February 2007]
- ²⁷ The 14 terrorist groups currently proscribed in the United Kingdom are listed in Appendix 1. For further information see Statewatch (2007). Comparative analysis of the US, UKM UN and EU terrorist lists, [WWW] <URL:www.statewatch.org/terrorlists/listsbground.html > [Accessed 10 May 2007]
- ²⁸ The Continuity IRA and Real IRA feature on the US FTO list, although they do not feature on the list of banned terrorist groups in the UK. See US State Department. 2007. Current List of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations. [WWW] <URL:www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm > [Accessed 10 July 2007]
- ²⁹ Council of Europe. 1950. European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. [URL:http://www.hri.org/docs/ECHR50.html#C.Art10](http://www.hri.org/docs/ECHR50.html#C.Art10) [Accessed 10 March 2004]
- ³⁰ Klein, A. 2004. WND shuts down Hamas websites. *WorldNet Daily*. [WWW] <URL:www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.as?ARTICLE_ID=41938 > [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ³¹ This is also referred to as the rational choice perspective. See Lusoli,W, Ward,S. J, and Gibson. R.K. 2002. Political Organisations and Online Mobilisation: Different Media-Same Outcomes? [WWW] <URL:www.esri.salford.ac.uk/ESRCResearchproject/papers/UK_online_org_participation.pdf> [Accessed 10 August 2004]
- ³² See Corrado, A and Firestone, C.M. 1996. *Elections in cyberspace: towards a new era in American politics*, Washington D.C: Aspen Institute. There have been fluctuating levels of participation at UK general elections in the post-war period. However, there has been a notable downward trend in terms of turnout over the past two decades, culminating in 61.4 percent turnout in the 2005 UK General Election.
- ³³ See Budge, I. *The New Challenges of Direct Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press. This system of push-button democracy was based on the assumption that there would be universal distribution of Internet devices e.g. computers enabling all eligible citizens to participate in decision-making.

³⁴ See Make Poverty History, 2007. [WWW] <URL: www.makepovertyhistory.org > [Accessed 10 June 2007] The self-style ‘UK alliance of charities, trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities’ calls for the G8 to wipe out the debts of the world’s poorest countries, and G8 leaders to agree to give 0.7 percent national income in foreign aid to alleviate poverty in the developing world. The campaign received support from a number of influential politicians, including former South African President Nelson Mandela.

³⁵ G8 leader agreed in principle to multilateral debt cancellation and recognized right of developing nation-states to choose their own economic policies. Making Poverty History responded, stating that the principles agreed by the G8 leaders “did not yet live up to the scale of the challenge set by its campaigners” [www.makepovertyhistory.org]

³⁶ The Zapatista netwar will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

³⁷ See Radio B92. 2007. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.b92.net/doc/aboutus.phtml>> [Accessed 10 July 2007] B92 came to prominence during the NATO air-raids on Belgrade in April 1999. In an effort to limit dissent, Milosevic ordered that the station be closed and its premises occupied by government troops. The Association of Independent Media (ANEM) was a federation of independent media organisation operating in Yugoslavia during this period.

³⁸ Council of Europe. 1997. *Cultural Rights, Media and Minorities*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, p.39.

³⁹ The Minnesota E-Democracy project was created in 1994 to promote the use of the Internet to improve citizen participation in politics through information and knowledge exchange. The initial project saw 1,834 people subscribe to the four specially create email lists.

⁴⁰ Internet audiences will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

⁴¹ Geoghegan, T. 2007. The petition, the ‘prat,’ and a political idea. [WWW] <URL: <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/hi/magazine/635>> [Accessed 17/07/2007] The UK government provided a facility for visitors to create online petitions on the Downing Street website in November 2006. The anti-road pricing petition was the first to generate such a response from Internet users.

⁴² Webcameron 2007. [WWW] <URL: www.webcameron.org> [Accessed 10 February 2007] Conservative leader David Cameron uses his personal website to discuss political issues, the

website was aimed at young people who spend their free time accessing sites such as *www.myspace.com* and *www.youtube.com*

⁴³ GreenNet. 2003. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.gn.apc.org/> > [Accessed 02 March 2003]

⁴⁴ Lunt, S.J. 2005. Comparing Media Systems. [WWW]
<URL:www.cougarresearch.com/papers/comaring_media_systems.pdf> [Accessed 10 March 2007]

⁴⁵ Siebert's Theory. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2152/siebert.htm#> [Accessed 07 September 2005]

⁴⁶ *The Guardian* 2002. Full Text: Lockerbie Appeal Judgement 14th March 2002. [WWW]
<URL:<http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2002/03/14/lockerbieappealjudgement.pdf> > [Accessed 01 October 2005]

Abdel Basset Al-Megrahi was exposed as a member of the Libyan Intelligence Services and linked to the purchase of the MST timers, used to trigger the explosives.

⁴⁷ *New York Times*. 2003. Libya accepts responsibility for Lockerbie bombing. April 30, [WWW]
<URL:<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/sanction/libya/2003/0430res.htm>> [Accessed 03 October 2005]

⁴⁸ Rotten. 2005. The Turner Diaries. [WWW]
<URL:<http://www.rotten.com/library/culture/turner-diaries/>> [Accessed 01 October 2005]

⁴⁹ Rotten. 2005. The Turner Diaries. [WWW] <URL:
<http://www.rotten.com/library/culture/turner-diaries/>> [Accessed 01 October 2005] Note: McVeigh was a member of a Christian militia movement that believed that secretive elite was planning world domination through institutions such as the United Nations. The Alfred P Murrah building was targeted as McVeigh believed that it was to be a processing centre for detention camps to be set up west of the Mississippi.

⁵⁰ *The Guardian*. 2000. ETA: a chronology. [WWW]
<URL:www.guardian.co.uk/theissues/article/0,6512,780872,00.html> [Accessed 07 October 2005]

⁵¹ Indymedia. 2005. Basque Election Day. [WWW] <URL:
www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=69431&time_posted_upper_limit=111396800&time_posted_lower_limit=1113710400> [accessed 07 October 2005] Please note that Batasuna were proscribed by the Spanish government in March 2004 because of their links to ETA.

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- ⁵² Terrorism: Questions and Answers. 2005. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.
<URL:<http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/tamiltigers2.html#Q9>> [Accessed 01 October 2005]
- ⁵³ Terrorism: Questions and Answers. 2005. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [WWW]
<URL:<http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/tamiltigers2.html#Q9>> [Accessed 01 October 2005]
- ⁵⁴ CNN.com. 2001. September 11: Chronology of Terror. [WWW]
<URL:<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/us/09/11/chronology.attacks>> [Accessed 08 October 2005]
- ⁵⁵ CNN.com. 2001. September 11: Chronology of Terror. [WWW]
<URL:<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/us/09/11/chronology.attacks>> [Accessed 08 October 2005]
- ⁵⁶ BBC. 2007. Timeline: Alan Johnston abduction. [WWW] <URL:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6518873.stm> [Accessed 10 August 2007]
- ⁵⁷ Perl, R.F. 1997. Terrorism, the Media, and the Government: Perspectives, Trends and Options for Policymakers [WWW] <URL:www.fas.org/irp/crs/crs-terror.htm> [accessed 18 April 2002]
- ⁵⁸ Reporters sans frontières (2005) Annual Report [WWW] <URL: www.rsf.org/rubrique.php?id-rubrique=509> [Accessed 11 October 2005]
- ⁵⁹ The US State Department has identified Libya as a 'State Sponsor' of International Terrorism since 1979. This classification is updated annually in the US State Department's annual *Patterns of Global Terrorism*.
- ⁶⁰ Conflict Archive on the Internet. 2005. Abstracts of Organisations. [WWW] <URL:
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/iorgan.htm#noraid>> [Accessed 16 October 2005]
- ⁶¹ Wikipedia. 2005. Dawson's Field Hijackings [WWW]
<URL:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dawson's_Field_hijackings> [Accessed 15 October 2005]
- ⁶² Greenslade, R. 1998. Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture [WWW]
<URL:<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/greenslade.htm>> [Accessed 20 April 2001]
- ⁶³ Greenslade, R. 1998. Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture [WWW]
<URL:<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/greenslade.htm>> [Accessed 20 April 2001]
- ⁶⁴ Greenslade, R. 1998. Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture [WWW]
<URL:<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/greenslade.htm>> [Accessed 20 April 2001]
- ⁶⁵ Greenslade, R. 1998. Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture [WWW]
<URL:<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/greenslade.htm>> [Accessed 20 April 2001]
- ⁶⁶ The Unabomber will be discussed in the analysis of amateur terrorism presented in chapter 6.
- ⁶⁷ See O'Connor, F. 1993. *In Search of a State: Catholic in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Blackstaff. Catholics are still underrepresented in many high-status jobs within business and commercial life.

⁶⁸ The government White Paper, Northern Ireland: A Framework for Devolution, proposed that powers be devolved to a local Assembly one department at a time. This scheme, commonly referred to as rolling devolution, was opposed by a wide spectrum of political parties, from the Ulster Unionists to the Social Democratic and Labour Party. For more information, see Bew and Gillespie, 1993: 162

⁶⁹ This was later attributed to the Ulster Volunteer Force.

⁷⁰ Political fronts will be analysed further in chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁷¹ Maloney, E. 1991 Closing down the Airwaves: The Story of the Broadcasting Ban. In Rolston, B. *The Media and Northern Ireland: Covering the Troubles*, London: Macmillan, p.28. The relationship between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

⁷² Megaphone diplomacy will be discussed further in chapter four.

⁷³ Belfast Linen Hall Library. *Troubled Images: Poster and Images of the Northern Ireland Conflict from the Linen Hall Library*, CD-ROM.

⁷⁴ See Independent Monitoring Commission. 2004. *Independent Monitoring Commission Report*. [WWW] <URL:http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/20_04_04_imcreport.pdf [Accessed 22 April 2004]. The IMC was set up to monitor the activities of Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries.

⁷⁵ The Good Friday Agreement. 1998. See www.hsmo.gov.uk for electronic version.

⁷⁶ The Belfast Telegraph has traditionally been considered a 'pro-Union' newspaper, but has been read by both communities since the 1980s.

⁷⁷ Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) The 1998 Referendums, [WWW] <URL: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk> 9Accessed 10 May 2007]

⁷⁸ See Introduction for a definition of megaphone diplomacy.

⁷⁹ Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) Joint Declaration on Peace: The Downing Street Declaration, [WWW] <URL:<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/dsd151293.htm>> [Accessed 19 January 2006]

⁸⁰ Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) 'Elections: Assembly Election (NI) Thursday 25 June 1998' <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/ra1998.htm> Online.Available. Accessed 19/01/06.

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- ⁸¹ BBC. 1998. The People Decide. [WWW] <URL:http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/northern_ireland/latest_news/78618.stm> [Accessed 10 April 2007]
- ⁸² Conflict Archive on the Internet (2005) 'Violence- Loyalist and Republican Groups.' <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/violence/paramilitary.htm> Online. Available (accessed 10/03/06). Please note that specification did not mean that the UK government publicly declared that the ceasefire of these organisations was over.
- ⁸³ The 32CSM was hosted by Netfirms, while the Tullycarnet UPRG was hosted by Hyperspace communications.
- ⁸⁴ A telephone number and the postal address of the Green Party headquarters were provided on Whois.net.
- ⁸⁵ An email was sent to each webmaster informing them that their website was to be analysed in this thesis (See Appendix 1). Only two responses were received from the webmasters responsible for the websites in this chapter.
- ⁸⁶ For screenshots of websites, please see Appendix 2. Screenshots of each website are also available on a compact disc. This disk can be obtained from the author.
- ⁸⁷ Social Democratic Labour Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sdlp.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁸⁸ Sinn Fein 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sinnfein.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁸⁹ Progressive Unionist Party, 2004. [WWW] <URL www.pup-ni.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁰ Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. 2004. <URL:www.allianceparty.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹¹ Democratic Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.dup.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹² United Kingdom Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL:www.ukup.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹³ Irish Republican Socialist Movement. 2004. Thirty Years of Struggle. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org/general/history/irsm20yr.htm> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁴ Ó Brádaigh, R. 2004. What is Republicanism? Republican Sinn Fein, [WWW] <URL www.rsf.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]

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- ⁹⁵ 32 County Sovereignty Movement. 2004. [WWW] <URL <http://32csm.netfirms.com/code/home.html>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁶ Ulster Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.uup.org> Available [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁷ Progressive Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL, www.pup-ni.org.uk> ([Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁸ Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research Group.2004. [WWW] <URL www.tullycarnetuprg.ionichost.com> ([Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ⁹⁹ Republican Sinn Fein. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.rsfi.ie> Available [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁰ Sinn Fein. 2004. History of the conflict 1968-1992. [WWW] <URL www.sinnfein.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰¹ Sinn Fein. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sinnfein.ie/fosf/usa> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰² Irish Republican Socialist Party. 2004. Action Taken against Ardoyne Thug Necessary- INLA [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004] Eamonn Clarke, an alleged PSNI informer was attacked by the INLA in January 2004. The IRSP website carried a statement in which the INLA justified their 'punitive' sanctions.
- ¹⁰³ Irish Republican Socialist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁴ 32 County Sovereignty Movement,.2004. [WWW] <URL:<http://32csm.netfirms.com/code/home.html> > [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁵ Irish Republican Socialist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁶ Green Party of Northern Ireland. 2004.[WWW] <URL www.greens-in.org/tiki-index.php> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁷ Social Democratic Labour Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sdlp.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹⁰⁸ Irish Republican Socialist Movement. 2004. Links in Solidarity. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org/general/links> [Accessed 16 May 2004]Note: Tupac Amaru linked to Peruvian terrorist organisation MRTA. Jaleo are a group of Andalusian Socialists.
- ¹⁰⁹ Progressive Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.pup-ni.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]

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- ¹¹⁰ Green Party of Northern Ireland. 2004. [WWW] <URL <http://www.greens-in.org/tiki-index.php>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹¹ Social Democratic Labour Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sdlp.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹² 32 County Sovereignty Movement. 2004. [WWW] <URL <http://32csm.netfirms.com/code/home.html>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹³ Sinn Fein. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sinnfein.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁴ 32 County Sovereignty Movement. 2004. [WWW] <URL <http://32csm.netfirms.com/code/home/html>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁵ Progressive Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.pup-ni.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁶ Tullycarnet UPRG. 2004. [WWW] <URL [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁷ United Kingdom Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.ukup.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁸ Workers Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.workers-party.org/wphome.htm> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹¹⁹ Democratic Unionist Party. 2004.[WWW] <URL www.dup.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁰ Democratic Unionist Party. 2004. <URL:<http://www.dup.org.uk/>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²¹ Tullycarnet UPRG. 2004. [WWW] <URL [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²² Irish Republican Socialist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²³ Sinn Fein. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.sinnfein.ie/fosf/usa> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁴ Republican Sinn Fein. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.rsf.ie> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁵ Democratic Unionist Party. 2004. <URL:<http://www.dup.org.uk/>> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁶ Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. 2004. <URL:www.niwc.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁷ Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. 2004. <URL:www.allianceparty.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁸ Sinn Fein. 2004. <URL:www.sinnfein.ie/news/av/34> [Accessed 16 May 2004]
- ¹²⁹ Irish Republican Socialist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL www.irsm.org> [Accessed 16 May 2004]

¹³⁰ Progressive Unionist Party. 2004. [WWW] <URL:www.pup-ni.org.uk> [Accessed 16 May 2004]

¹³¹ Tullycarnet UPRG. 2004. [WWW] <URL [Accessed 16 May 2004]

¹³² An estimated £22 million was stolen from a Northern Bank in Belfast city centre in December 2004. The robbery has been linked to the Provisional IRA.

¹³³ The Democratic Unionist Party became the largest political party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, polling 177470 votes (25.6 percent total vote). See www.ark.ac.uk/elections for more details.

¹³⁴ 32 County Sovereignty Movement, <http://32csm.netfirms.com/code/home/html> (accessed 16/05/04)

¹³⁵ See Siebert, F.S, Peterson T and Schramm, W. 1963. *Four theories of the Press*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

¹³⁶ Falun Gong, a movement dedicated to a series of meditation exercises, was banned in July 1999 in the People's Republic of China. An estimated 70 million people in the country are thought to engage in these exercises. The censorship of the movement has been criticised by Western NGOs such as Amnesty International.

¹³⁷ In February 2007, searches were conducted for information about Falun Gong using Google portals.

¹³⁸ Sullivan, D. 2005. Share of Searches: July 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.searchenginewatch.com/reports/article.php/2156451> [Accessed 20 October 2005].

¹³⁹ The concept of amateur terrorism will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

¹⁴⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*. 2001. .New Internet Terror Fear: Loyalists are Using Web to Pick Targets. [15 March 2001]

¹⁴¹ Laqueur, W. 1999*The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*. London: Phoenix: 206. The Unabomber manifesto was printed in the Washington Post and New York Times in accordance with Kaczynski's demands.

¹⁴² Rotten. 2005. The Turner Diaries. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.rotten.com/library/culture/turner-diaries/>> [Accessed 01 October 2005]

¹⁴³ The Unabomber manifesto was published in the Washington Post and New York Times in June 1995. This was after Kaczynski promised to restrict his campaign if his political views were placed in the public domain.

¹⁴⁴ Please note that www.google.co.uk and www.yahoo.co.uk were used in the study.

¹⁴⁵ Please note that the total number of links generated by search engines can be viewed in chapter five.

¹⁴⁶ Whois.net. 2005 [WWW] www.whois.net > [Accessed 10 June 2005]

¹⁴⁷ Whois.net. 2005 [WWW] www.whois.net > [Accessed 10 June 2005]

¹⁴⁸ ULISNET was shut down in late 2004. As discussed in the introduction, it is reasonable to speculate that this was due to its contravention of anti-terrorist legislation. The website solicited resources and information on behalf of the Loyalist Volunteer Force, a proscribed Northern Irish terrorist organisation.

¹⁴⁹ An email was sent to each webmaster informing them that their website was to be analysed in this thesis (See Appendix 1). Only two responses were received from the webmasters responsible for the websites in this chapter.

¹⁵⁰ See Appendix 2 for examples of solidarity websites. Screenshots of each website used in the study are also available on a compact disc. These can be obtained from the author.

¹⁵¹ Cairde Sinn Fein. 2005. [WWW] www.cairde.com > [Accessed 10 April 2005]

¹⁵² Red Hand Land. 2005. [WWW] <http://mysite.freemove.com/Redhandland> > [Accessed 10 April 2005]

¹⁵³ Liverpool UDA. 2005. [WWW] www.liverpooluda.co.uk > [Accessed 10 April 2005].

¹⁵⁴ New Republican Forum. 2005. [WWW] www.newrepublicanforum.ie > [Accessed 10 April 2005]

¹⁵⁵ The term 'Fenian' refers to the Fenian Brotherhood, an Irish Republican organisation active in the nineteenth century. It has been used as a term of sectarian abuse in Northern Ireland in recent times, to depict a member of the Catholic community.

¹⁵⁶ New Republican Forum. 2005. [WWW] www.newrepublicanforum.ie > [Accessed 10 April 2005]

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- ¹⁵⁷ Hardline IRA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/hardline_ira/enter.html [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁵⁸ United Loyalist Movement. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.unitedloyalistmovement.bravepages.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁵⁹ British Ulster Alliance. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.britishulsteralliance.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁰ Loyalist Network. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.houstonpk.freerve.co.uk/2ndindex.htm> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶¹ Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.upmj.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶² West of Scotland Ratpack. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.westofscotlandratpack.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005].
- ¹⁶³ Irelands Own. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.irelandsown.net. [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁴ Eire Saor. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.morrigan.net/eireshaor> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁵ Hardline IRA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/hardline_ira/enter.html [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁶ Birches Guerrilla Movement. 2005. [WWW] <http://bgm.vze.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁷ The Volunteer. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.thevolunteer.8m.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁸ Loyalistvoice.co.uk. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.loyalistvoice.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁶⁹ Friends of Irish Freedom. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/foif_usa> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷⁰ Irish Freedom Committee. 2005. [WWW] <http://members.freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3//>> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷¹ West of Scotland Ratpack. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.westofscotlandratpack.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005].
- ¹⁷² Eire Saor. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.morrigan.net/eireshaor> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷³ Ulster Defence Association. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.freewebs.com/ulsterdefenceassociation> [Accessed 10 April 2005]

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- ¹⁷⁴ Ulster Volunteer Force. 2005. [WWW] <URL:<http://www.theuvf.2ya.com>> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷⁵ Fife Loyalists <URL:www.fifeloyalists.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷⁶ Liverpool UDA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.liverpooluda.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷⁷ Cairde Sinn Fein. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.cairde.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁷⁸ Irish Freedom Committee. 2005. [WWW] <URL:
<http://members.freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3/>> [Accessed 10 April 2005] The term punishment beating refers to attacks by Republican paramilitaries upon members of their local communities. Republican paramilitaries often cite anti-social behaviour as the justification for these attacks, or local opposition the police.
- ¹⁷⁹ Hardline IRA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/hardline_ira/enter.html> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁰ Ireland for the Irish 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.ireland4theirish.yk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸¹ Hungerstrike Commemorative Web Project. 2005. [WWW]
<URL:<http://larkspirit.com/hungerstrikes/>> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸² West of Scotland Ratpack. 2005. [WWW]
<URL:www.westofscotlandratpack.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸³ Liverpool UDA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.liverpooluda.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]. John McMichael was a leader of the UDA during the late 1980s. In December 1987, he was killed in Lisburn by an Provisional IRA booby trap bomb that had been placed under his car.
- ¹⁸⁴ Scottish Loyalists. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.scottishloyalists.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁵ Loyalistvoice.co.uk. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.loyalistvoice.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁶ Greenock Loyalists. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.greenockloyalists.cjb.net> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁷ Irish Anti-Partition League. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.ia-pl.org> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁸ Coiste na n-Irchimi. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.coiste.ie> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁸⁹ Scottish Loyalists. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.scottishloyalists.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]

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- ¹⁹⁰ Loyalist Network. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.houstonpk.freemove.co.uk/2ndindex.htm> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹¹ Irish-American Unity Conference. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.iauc.org/index3.htm> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹² Irish-American Unity Conference. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.iauc.org/index3.htm> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹³ Fourthwrite. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.fourthwrite.ie> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹⁴ Cairde Sinn Fein. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.cairde.com> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹⁵ Irish Republican Political Prisoners. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.larkspirit.com/psn> [Accessed 10 April 2005].
- ¹⁹⁶ Irish Northern Aid Committee. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.inac.org> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹⁷ Birches Guerrilla Movement. 2005. [WWW] ,URL: <http://bgm.vze.com>> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ¹⁹⁸ West of Scotland Ratpack. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.westofscotlandratpack.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005].
- ¹⁹⁹ Fife Loyalists <URL:www.fifeloyalists.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰⁰ British Ulster Alliance. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.britishulsteralliance.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005] The merchandise could only be purchased via the sending of a cheque to a registered postal address.
- ²⁰¹ Loyalistvoice.co.uk. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.loyalistvoice.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰² Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.upmj.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰³ Loyalist View. 2005. [WWW] <http://clix.to/loyalistview>, [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰⁴ Liverpool UDA. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.liverpooluda.co.uk> [Accessed 10 April 2005]. Please note a paramilitary “show of strength” refers to the phenomenon of masked gunmen assembling in their local neighbourhoods and firing their weapons into the air. These events typically have members of the conventional mass media present, usually with the consent of the respective terrorist organisation, in order that these images be transmitted to a larger audience.
- ²⁰⁵ Irish Anti-Partition League. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.ia-pl.org> [Accessed 10 April 2005]

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- ²⁰⁶ Irish Northern Aid Committee. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.inac.org](http://www.inac.org)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰⁷ Irish Freedom Committee. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:http://members/freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3//](http://members/freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3//)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰⁸ Irish Freedom Committee. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:http://members/freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3//](http://members/freespeech.org/irishpows/bb3//)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²⁰⁹ National Irish Freedom Committee. 2005 [WWW] <[URL:www.irishfreedom.net](http://www.irishfreedom.net)> [Accessed 10 April 2005] On 30 January 1972, 13 unarmed men were shot dead by the Parachute Regiment during unrest that followed a civil rights rally. These events became known as Bloody Sunday.
- ²¹⁰ Australian Aid for Ireland. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.aai.org.au](http://www.aai.org.au)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²¹¹ Ireland for the Irish 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.ireland4theirish.yk](http://www.ireland4theirish.yk)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²¹² United Loyalist Movement. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.unitedloyalistmovement.bravepages.com](http://www.unitedloyalistmovement.bravepages.com)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²¹³ Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice. 2005. [WWW], <[URL:www.upmj.co.uk](http://www.upmj.co.uk)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²¹⁴ Ulster Defence Association. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.freewebs.com/ulsterdefenceassociation](http://www.freewebs.com/ulsterdefenceassociation)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]
- ²¹⁵ Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN). 2007 Abstract of Organisations-O. [WWW] <[URL;www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelen.oorgan.htm](http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelen.oorgan.htm)> [Accessed 10 September 2007]
- ²¹⁶ BBC. 2005. Orange Order severs links to UUP. [WWW] <[URL:www.news.bbc.co.uk/mpapps http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern_ireland/4342429.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern_ireland/4342429.stm)> [Accessed 25 October 2007]
- ²¹⁷ Please note that the EZLN now maintain a website <[URL:www.ezln.org](http://www.ezln.org)>
- Irish-American Unity Conference. 2005. [WWW] <[URL:www.iauc.org/index3.htm](http://www.iauc.org/index3.htm)> [Accessed 10 April 2005]²¹⁸ The Omagh bombing in August 1998 drew international condemnation for its perpetrators, the Real IRA. The atrocity saw 29 people lose their lives, one of the most lethal attacks perpetrated in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s.
- ²¹⁹ Farry, S. (2004) A Return to the Centre. [WWW] <[URL:www.allianceparty.org/news.asp?id=259](http://www.allianceparty.org/news.asp?id=259)> [Accessed 10th February 2005]

²²⁰ These districts are divided by a number of peacelines. The Ardoyne is an area predominantly populated by the Catholic community, while Glenbryn is predominantly a Protestant area.

²²¹ See Appendix 3 for example of Loyalist murals. Additional pictures of Loyalist and Republican murals are available on a disc. This can be obtained directly from the author.

²²² On 20 June 1968, a number of squatters, including MP Austin Currie, were evicted from a house in Caledon, County Tyrone. The protest was designed to highlight the discrimination against the Catholic community in public housing provision. The house had been allocated to the secretary of a unionist politician. (See Bew & Gillespie, 1993: 2).

²²³ An email was sent to each webmaster informing them that their website was to be analysed in this thesis (See Appendix 1). No responses were received from the webmasters responsible for the websites of residents' groups.

²²⁴ For screenshots of some of these websites, please see Appendix 2. Screenshots of each website are also available on a compact disc. This disk can be obtained from the author.

²²⁵ Gerard Rice spent four years in prison after being found guilty of PIRA membership and possession of an illegal firearm in 1986 (See Sunday Life, 14th May 1995 [WWW] <URL: www.sundaylife.co.uk> [Accessed 10 March 2005]). His presence in the LOCC has led to accusations from the orange Order that the Republican movement are behind residents' objections to Loyalist parades in their area.

²²⁶ Sinn Fein and so-called residents groups in Northern Ireland, [WWW] <URL:<http://www.residentgroups.fsnet.co.uk/index%20two.htm>> [Accessed 10 March 2005] This website was maintained by an anonymous webmaster who was supportive of Loyalist paramilitaries. This was evident in a message on the homepage, which stated "In 1796, Our cry was No Surrender. In 2004 Our cry is still NO SURRENDER."

²²⁷ Short Strand under Siege, [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/shortstrandsiege/home.html> [Accessed 12 February 2005]

²²⁸ Short Strand under Siege, [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/shortstrandsiege/home.html> [Accessed 12 February 2005] Taig is a derogatory term used by Loyalists to describe members of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. For further information see CAIN- Glossary of Terms on Northern Irish Conflict, 2007. [WWW] <URL: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/glossary.htm#T>> [Accessed 10 August 2007]

²²⁹ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition. 2005. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 13 February 2005]

²³⁰ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, [WWW] <URL: www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³¹ Cluan Place. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³² Cluan Place. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³³ White City under Attack. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.wcua.2ya.com> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³⁴ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative, [WWW] <URL: www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³⁵ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 15 February 2005]

²³⁶ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition. 2005. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 13 February 2005]

Glasgow Celtic FC is a Scottish football club with a strong Irish heritage, who enjoy widespread patronage amongst Northern Ireland's Catholic community.

²³⁷ Short Strand under Siege. 2005. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.geocities.com/shortstrandsiege/home.html>> [Accessed 12 February 2005]

²³⁸ White City under Attack. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.wcua.2ya.com> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²³⁹ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative, [WWW] <URL: www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁴⁰ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative. 2005. [WWW] <URL: www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁴¹ Cluan Place, [WWW] <URL: www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005].

²⁴² Cluan Place, [WWW] <URL: www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005].

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- ²⁴³ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁴⁴ White City under Attack, [WWW] <URL:www.wcua.2ya.com> [Accessed 10 February 2005].
- ²⁴⁵ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, [WWW] <URL:<http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 10 February 2005].
- ²⁴⁶ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, [WWW] <URL:www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁴⁷ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative, [WWW] <URL:www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁴⁸ Cluan Place, [WWW] <URL:www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁴⁹ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, [WWW] <URL:<http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 13 February 2005]
- ²⁵⁰ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, [WWW] <URL:www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁵¹ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, [WWW] <URL:www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 10 February 2005]
- ²⁵² Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, [WWW] <URL:<http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 10 February 2005].
- ²⁵³ Short Strand under Siege, [WWW] <URL:www.geocities.com/shortstrandsiege/home.html> [Accessed 12 February 2005]
- ²⁵⁴ White City under Attack, [WWW] <URL:www.wcua.2ya.com> [Accessed 10 February 2005].
Please note that at time of survey the bulletin Board was suspended.
- ²⁵⁵ Cluan Place, [WWW] <URL:www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005].

²⁵⁶ White City under Attack, [WWW] <URL:www.wcuu.2ya.com> [Accessed 10 February 2005]. The murder of Thomas McDonald was highlighted in this poster. The poster highlighted the lenient sentence given to the perpetrator.

²⁵⁷ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, [WWW] <URL:<http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 13 February 2005]

²⁵⁸ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative, [WWW] <URL:www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁵⁹ Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition. 2005. [WWW] <URL: <http://www.garvaghyroad.org/>> [Accessed 13 February 2005].

²⁶⁰ Lower Ormeau Concerned Community, [WWW] <URL:www.saqnet.co.uk/users/locc> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁶¹ Short Strand Under Siege. 2005. [WWW] <URL:<http://www.geocities.com/shortstrandsiege/home.html>> [Accessed 12 February 2005]

²⁶² Cluan Place, [WWW] <URL:www.cluanplace.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁶³ Greater Glenbryn Community Initiative. 2005. [WWW] <URL:www.ggci.co.uk> [Accessed 10 February 2005]

²⁶⁴ According to Mueller, Mathiason and McKnight (2004), there are six principles that govern behaviour on the Internet, including the global commons principle, the end to end principle, and the principle of moral neutrality.

²⁶⁵ International Telecommunications Union. 2007. [www] <URL:www.itu.org> [Accessed 10 March 2007]

²⁶⁶ Independent Monitoring Commission (2005) *Seventh Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, London: Crown Copyright., p.22

²⁶⁷ BBC Talkback. 2007. [WWW] <URL: www.bbc.co.uk/talkback> [Accessed 10 February 2007]

²⁶⁸ Coleman, S. 1999. Cutting out the middle man: from virtual representation to direct deliberation. In Haue, B.N and Loader, B.N. *Digital Democracy: Discourse and Decision Making in the Information Age*, London: Routledge, p.1999. The standoff between the Portadown Orangemen and the nationalist residents' of Garvaghy Road caused several periods of civil unrest between 1994 and 1996.

²⁶⁹ Appleyard, B. 2007. Listen to the Luddites, you digital disciples. *The Sunday Times*, [11 March 2007]

²⁷⁰ Tullycarnet Ulster Political Research. 2004. [WWW] <URL: Group www.tullycarnetuprg.ionichost.com > [Accessed 16 May 2004]

²⁷¹ Sullivan, D. 2006. Just how accurate id the Google Zeitgesit? [WWW] <URL:blog.searchenginewatch.com/blog/060403-125957> [Accessed 10 June 2007] Google filters navigational terms and sexual terms from the Zeitgeist list. Google has also launched Google Trends to provide data about the 100 fastest –rising Google search queries in the United States.

²⁷² Dowling, T. 2007. I don't think Bloggers read. *The Guardian*, 20 July 2007.

²⁷³ University of Twente. 2007. The Expectancy Value Model. [WWW] <URL:www.tcw.utwente.nl/theroieenoverzicht/Theory%clusters/Interpersonal%20Communicatio n%20and%Relations/Expectancy_Value_Theory.doc/ > [Accessed 10 June 2007]

²⁷⁴ Independent Monitoring Commission. 2007. Fifteen Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission, [25 April 2007] [WWW] <URL:www.independentmonitoringcommission.org/documents/uploads/ACFAAAB.pdf> [Accessed 10 July 2007]

²⁷⁵ In a speech delivered to Sinn Fein's annual conference [ard heis] in October 1981, Danny Morrison declared that the Republican movement would take power in Ireland "with a ballot paper in one hand and the Armalite in the other" (Bew and Gillespie, 1993: 157).

²⁷⁶ Statement of Donald Van Duyn, Deputy Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation before the U.S. House of Representative Homeland Security Committee Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment, September 20, 2006. His full comments can be viewed at:[WWW] <URL: <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress06/vanduynd092006.htm>> [Accessed 10 June 2007]

²⁷⁷ The Associated Press. 2007. 3 men imprisoned in Britain over terrorist Web site network.. [WWW] <URL:www.iht.com/bin/print.php?id=6508635> [Accessed 10 July 2007]. The three men, Younis TSOULI, Tariq al-Daour and Waseem Mughai ran these websires from their London homes. Tsou.li was linked to then leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

²⁷⁸ UK Terrorism Act. 2006. [WWW] <URL:[URL:www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/077/2006077.pdf](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmbills/077/2006077.pdf)> [Accessed 14 July 2007]

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Appendix 1: Email sent to webmasters responsible for websites used in thesis.

Dear Webmaster,

I am a PhD candidate based at the University of Glasgow. My research focuses upon the use of the Internet by Northern Irish political actors. I would like to reference your site in my dissertation. My supervisor, Dr Sarah Oates is available for consultation if required. A summary of the research findings will be sent to you upon completion of the project.

In anticipation of your cooperation

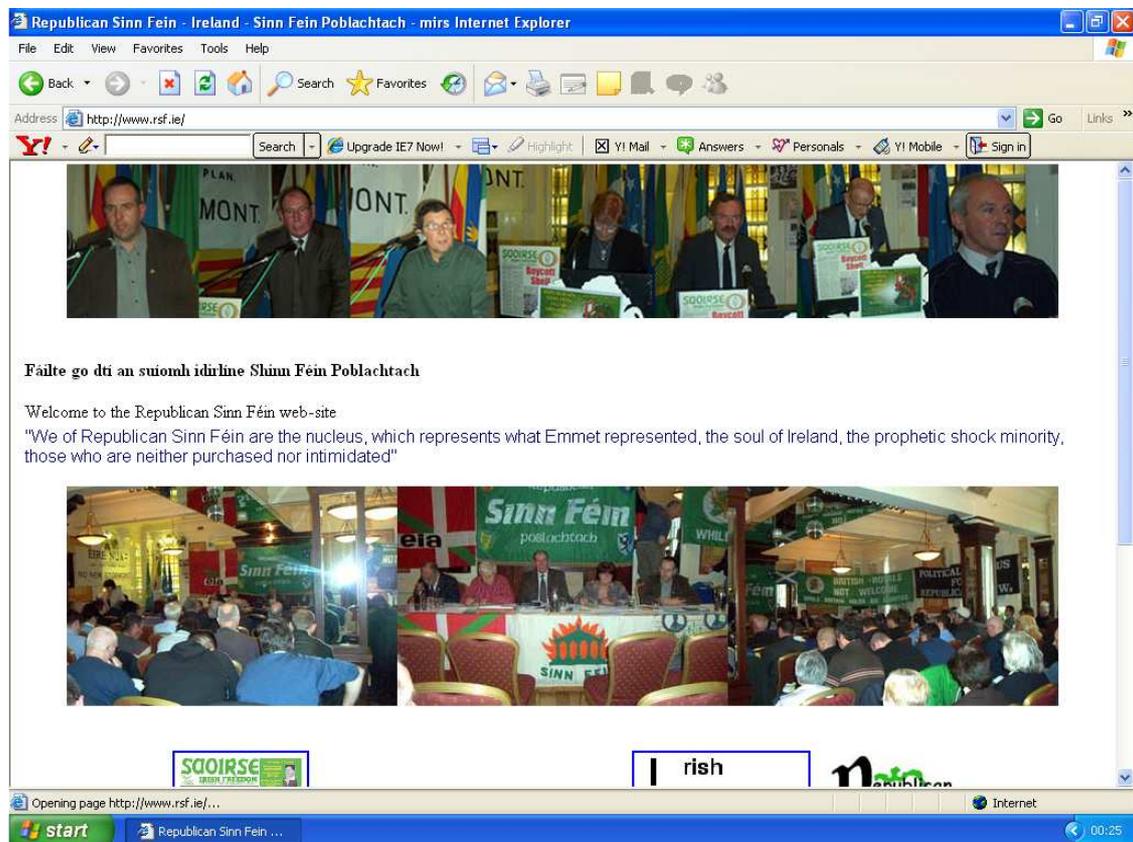
Paul Reilly

University of Glasgow
Adam Smith Building
40 Bute Gardens
Glasgow
G12 8RT

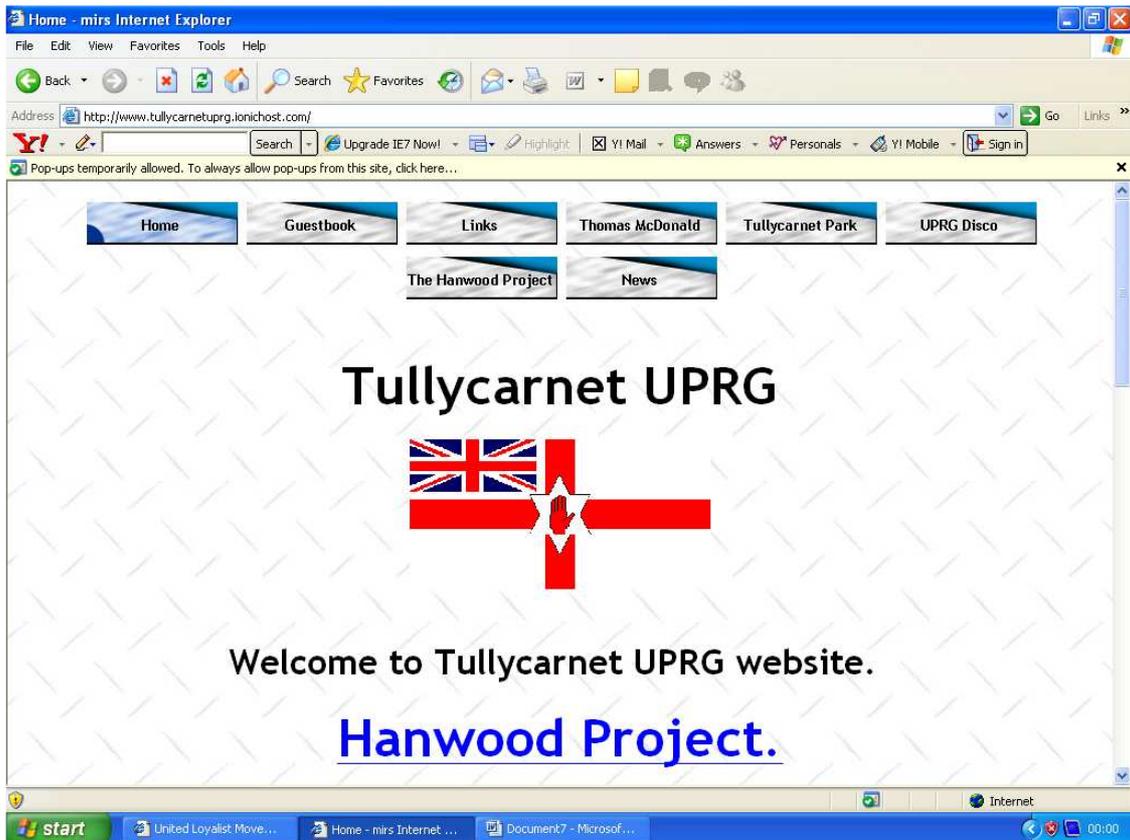
APPENDIX 2: SCREENSHOTS OF WEBSITES USED IN THESIS.

NORTHERN IRISH POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICAL FRONTS

1. Republican Sinn Fein



2.Tullycarnet UPRG



3. Democratic Unionist Party



4.Social Democratic and Labour Party



LOYALIST SOLIDARITY WEBSITES

1. Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice 2004 - mirs Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.upmj.co.uk/". The page features a banner with a quote: "The beauty of a Scots-Irishman is that he not only thinks he's right, he KNOWS he's right." attributed to Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States. Below the quote is a red tractor and a group of people in traditional dress. The banner also includes the text "500 years for God, Country, Family and Liberty".

The main content area has a navigation menu with "SinnFein-IRA" selected. Below the menu is a heading: "Sinn Fein IRA Deserve NO Credit For Not Killing People". The text on the page reads:

Welcome to the Ulster Protestant Movement for Justice

The UPMJ are a human rights and anti terrorist group formed in late 2000 to dispel the lies and propaganda created by violent Irish terrorists Sinn Fein/IRA and Noraid especially in the USA. From humble beginning's in Ulster we now have a network of members spanning the entire globe. **Justice before forgiveness.**

People in Northern Ireland feel no obligation to cheer the words of Sinn Fein IRA TERRORISTS

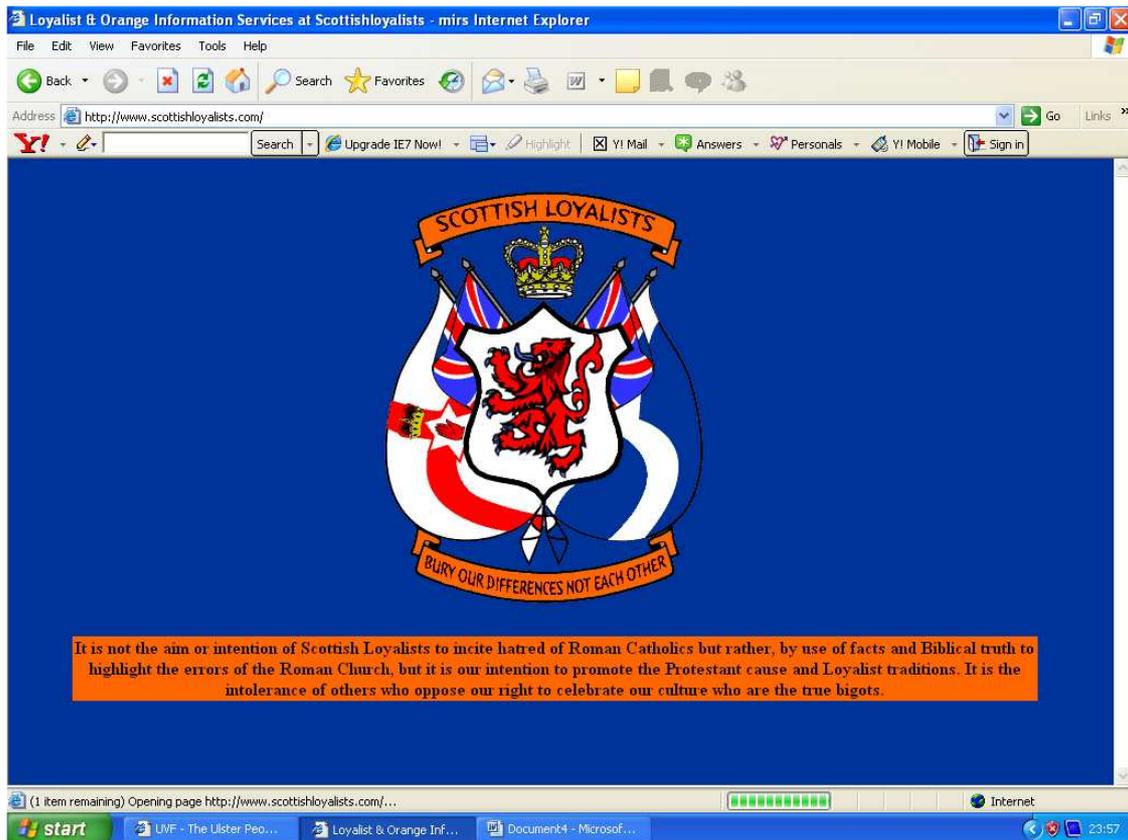
We will judge the IRA's bona fides over the next months and years based on its behaviour and activity.

Even on the face of the statement, they have failed to explicitly declare an end to their multi-million pound criminal activity and have failed to provide the level of transparency that would be necessary to truly build confidence that the guns had gone in their entirety. This lack of transparency will prolong the period the community will need to make its assessment. It also did not offer photographs of decommissioning and it left a sour taste in the mouth when declaring the 30 years of violence were "entirely legitimate".

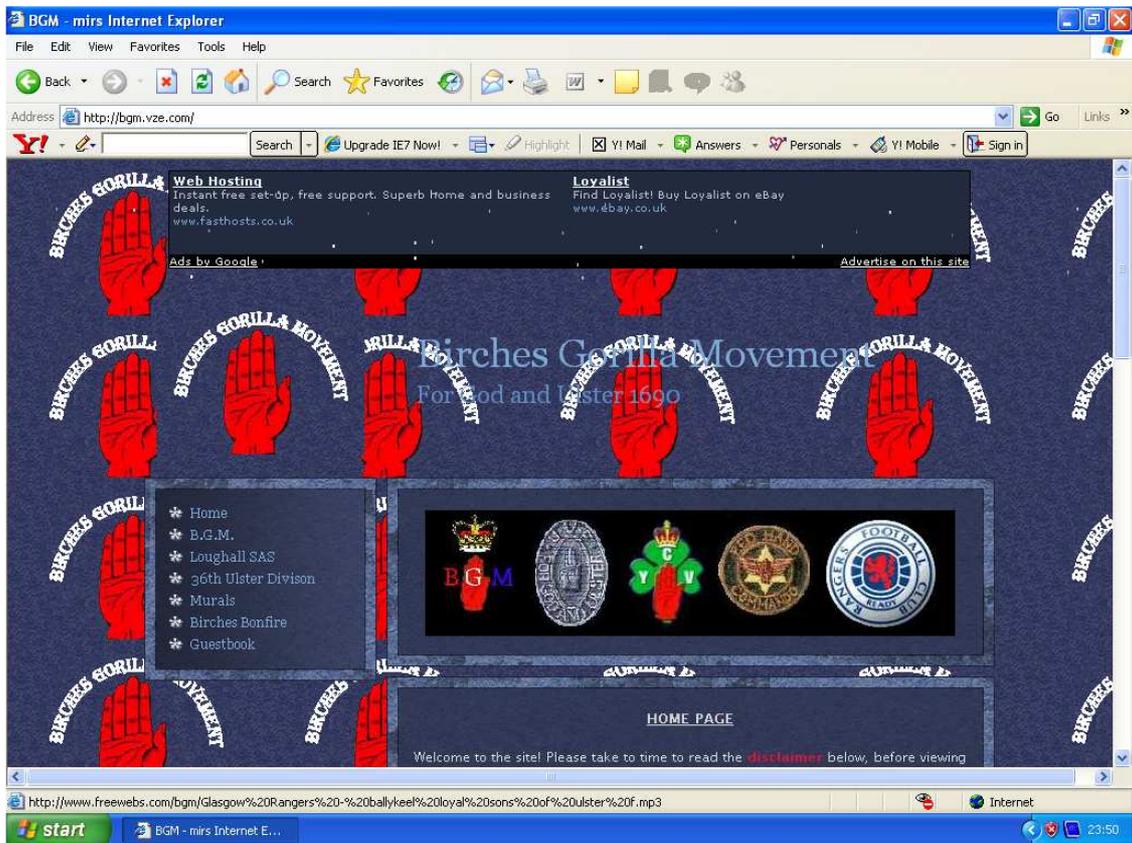
The IRA statement has left many questions unanswered and requirements unfulfilled. In particular, it did not say "the war is over" or that the IRA would disband. Relatives of those who died in the Troubles or were affected by the bloodshed have

The browser's taskbar shows several open windows: "Ulster Protestant Mo...", "Welcome to The Loya...", and "Document3 - Microsof...". The system tray shows the time as 23:55.

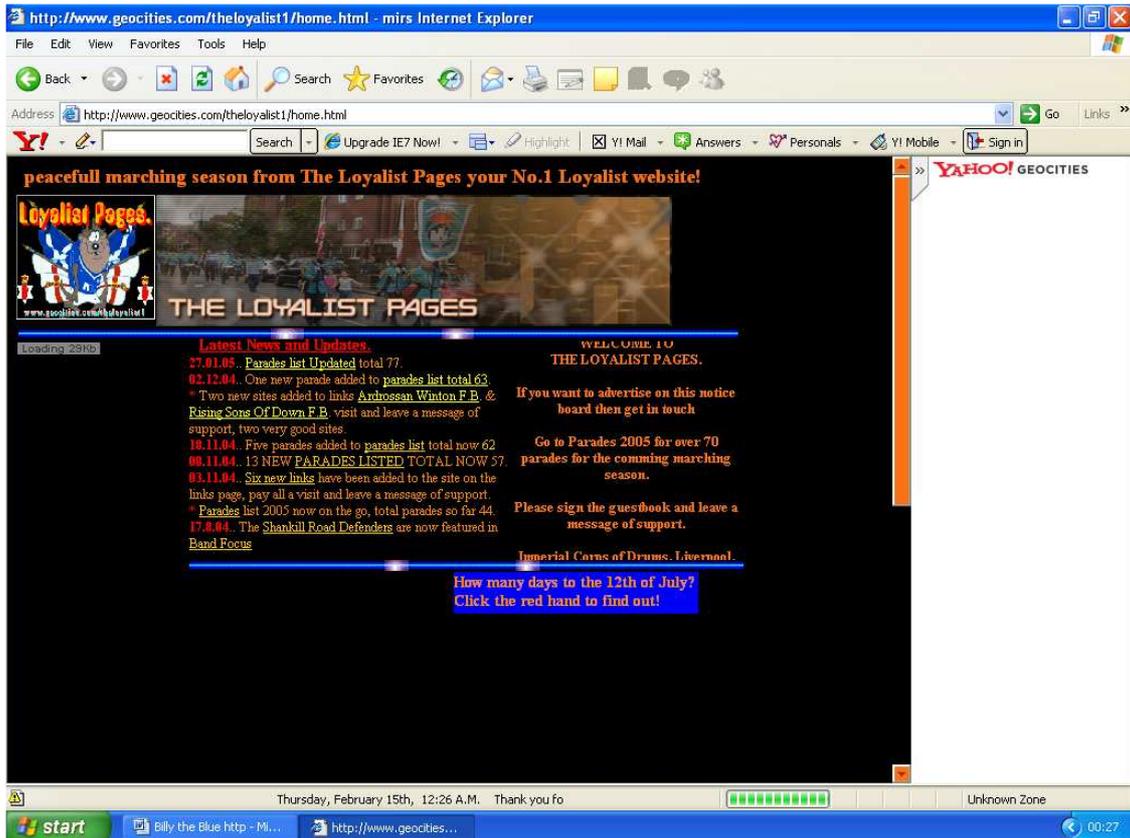
2.Scottish Loyalists



3. Birches Guerrilla Movement

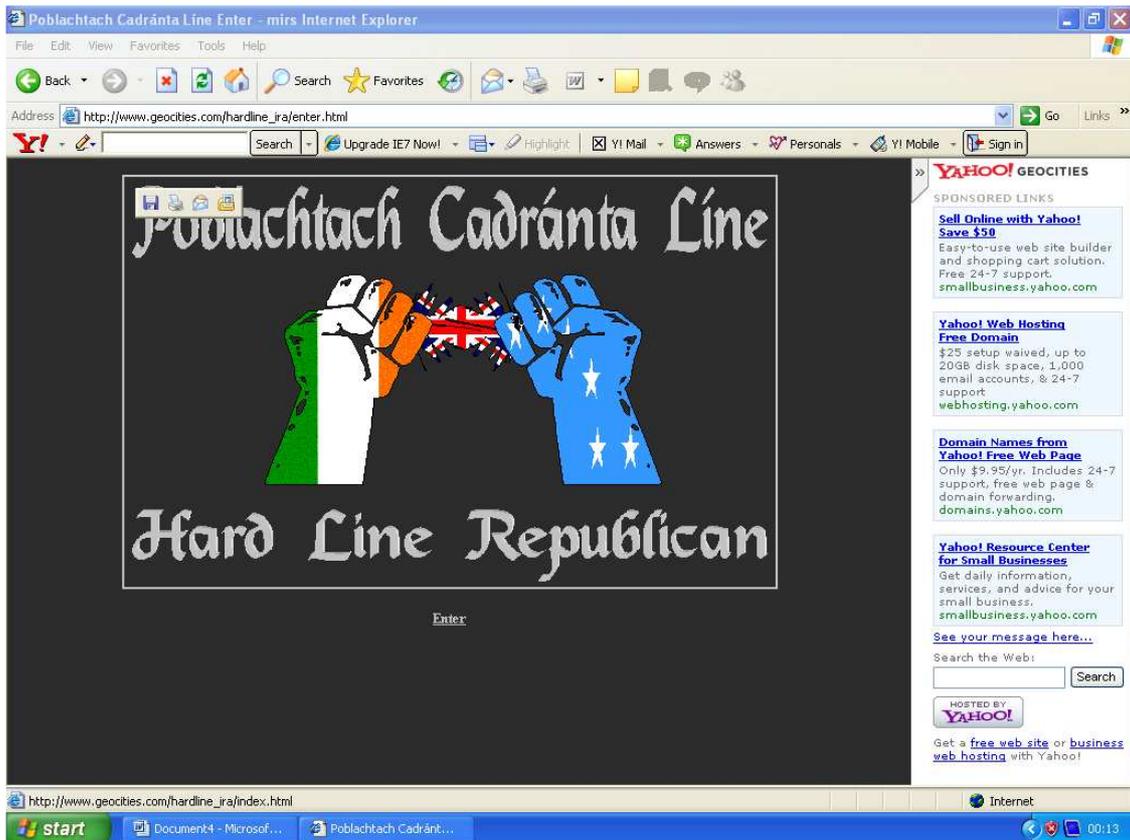


4.The Loyalist



REPUBLICAN SOLIDARITY WEBSITES

1. Hardline IRA



2.Irish American Unity Conference



The screenshot shows the website for the Irish American Unity Conference (IAUC) as viewed in Internet Explorer. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.iauc.org/index3.htm>. The website features a banner with the Statue of Liberty and the text "Irish American Unity Conference" and "Working for justice and peace in a re-united Ireland". Below the banner is a navigation menu with links: ABOUT IAUC, JOIN IAUC, NEWS SOURCES, ACTION ALERTS, MEDIA ALERT, LINKS, and SITE MAP.

Indiana Chapter Sponsors Paul Harkin, Terry Kirby and Bobby Lavery to Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana ([click for more](#))

Captain Kelly Justice Campaign:

The Irish American Unity Conference adopts a resolution calling for

IAUC Introduction

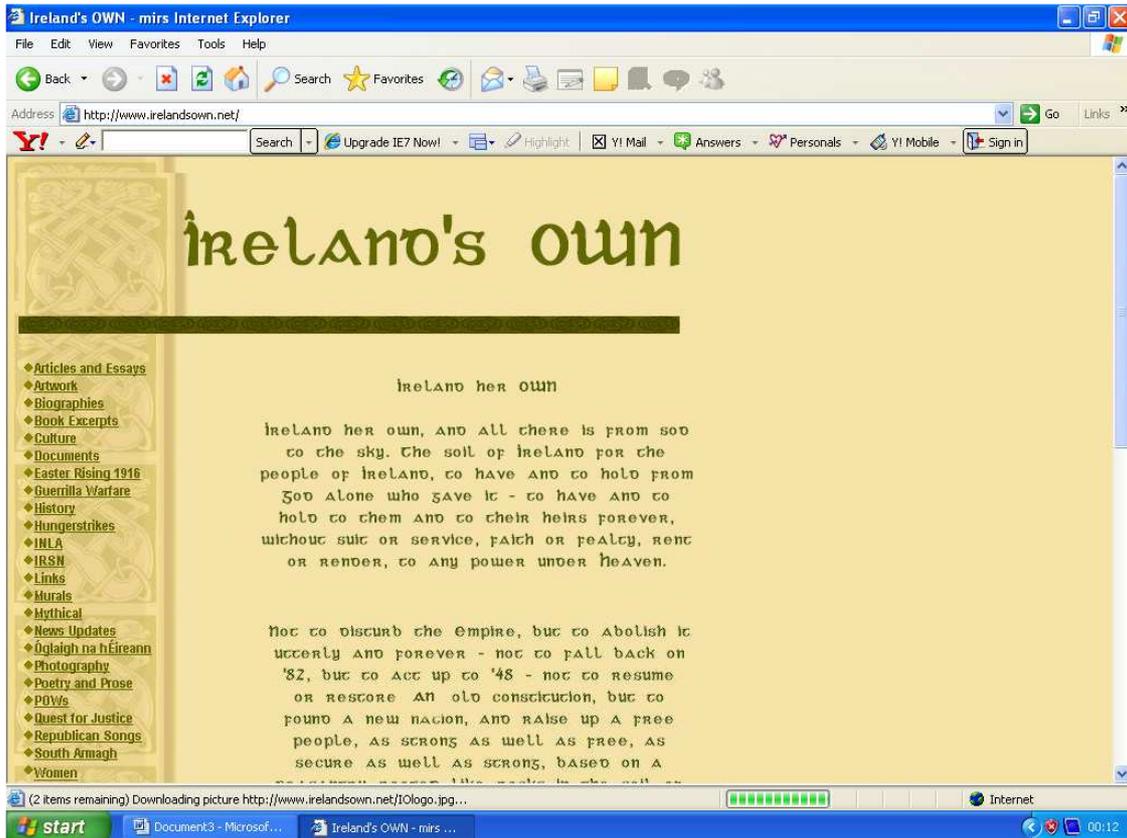
The IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONFERENCE is a nationwide, nonpartisan, nonsectarian, chapter-based human rights organization working for justice and peace in Ireland. We are a wholly American 501c(4) organization which advocates the end of British colonial occupation and the peaceful reunification of Ireland. We endeavor to achieve these goals by working through the American democratic process. Individually, our members represent every occupational and educational stratum in the United States. Membership is open to anyone who shares our views.

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN THE IAUC!!!](#)

We work to educate the American public in general and decision makers in particular about human and civil rights abuses in Northern Ireland. We sponsor forums, seminars, video presentations and nationwide speaking tours by internationally recognized individuals. We disseminate information and foster involvement in the political process via the Internet. We sponsor trips by Members of Congress to Ireland to investigate first-hand the causes of

The browser's taskbar shows the Start button, a document titled "Document2 - Microsof...", and the active window "Irish American Unity ...". The system tray shows the Internet icon and the time "00:10".

3.Irelands Own



4. New Republican Forum



APPENDIX 3: IMAGES OF SECTARIAN INTERFACES IN BELFAST (JUNE 2005).

Picture of Short Strand/Cluan Place interface, taken from Short Strand perspective.



Picture of Cluan Place/Short Strand interface take from Cluan Place perspective.



Image of Lanark Way security gates, dividing Springfield Road and Shankill Road.



Image of peaceline taken at Cupar Way, West Belfast.



Image of peaceline in Glenbryn district, North Belfast.



Image of Holy Cross school, North Belfast.



Anti-Orange Order mural, Lower Ormeau Road.



Image of New Barnsley PSNI station, Highfield estate, West Belfast.

