

Explaining Violent Dissident Republican breakaway through deviant cohesion

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Abstract: The accepted knowledge concerning dissident splits from the Provisional IRA is that different groups or individuals broke away because of their disagreement with the political progresses made during the peace process. This paper will argue that other factors were at play. Primarily, that ‘deviant’ cohesion played a significant role. While the question of politicalisation offers significant insight into the political dimension of this split, this article will adopt a more sociological approach. Answers provided through this sociological perspective are not intended to undermine the political explanation, rather to build upon them and provide a more holistic understanding of the issue.

Keywords: Northern Ireland; Group Fragmentation; Republicanism

Introduction

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the eventual decommissioning of the Provisional Irish Republican Army's (PIRA) weapons in 2005, Northern Ireland has ostensibly been at peace. The word 'ostensibly' has been chosen specifically as the area is not completely free from violence. ⁱWhile there have been periods of sporadic violence over the intervening years, stability in Northern Ireland has not been significantly threatened by any non-state group since PIRA surrendered its weapons. Certain events may soon change this assessment, however. Firstly, in 2012 several small Violent Dissident Republican (VDR) groups and individuals coalesced around what had been the 'Real' Irish Republican Army (RIRA) to form a new group called 'the IRA'. Although media outlets soon dubbed the group the 'New' IRA (NIRA). As with all other Irish republican organisations, their objective is to assert the Irish population's right to self-determination without British influence. In their own words:

'Following extensive consultations, Irish republicans and a number of organisations involved in armed actions against the armed forces of the British crown have come together within a unified structure, under a single leadership, subservient to the constitution of the Irish Republican Army. The leadership of the Irish Republican Army remains committed to the full realisation of the ideals and principles enshrined in the Proclamation of 1916...The IRA's mandate for armed struggle derives from Britain's denial of the fundamental right of the Irish people to national self-determination and sovereignty – so long as Britain persists in its denial of national and democratic rights in Ireland the IRA will have to continue to assert those rights' ⁱⁱ(Melaugh, 2012).

While NIRA have continued to wage a low-level campaign against the security forces, principally the military and the police as have other VDRs including the Continuity IRA (CIRA), the risk posed by these groups has been limited. Indeed, the threat posed by Northern Irish related terrorism has been largely dismissed by external observers in favour of focusing on the higher profile terrorism of ISIS and its affiliates. Although others, such as Edwards, have consistently highlighted the threat posed by these groups. ⁱⁱⁱ

In other cases, VDRs themselves have made clear the role they intend to fill in Northern Irish society and politics. One of these warnings came about after RIRA acknowledged their part in the killing of one time senior Sinn Féin member-turned informer, Denis Donaldson:

Let us remind our former comrade [then Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness] of the nature and the actions of a traitor. Treachery is collaborating with the enemy, treachery is betraying your country. Let us give our one-time comrade an example. Denis Donaldson was a traitor and the leadership of the Provisional movement, under guidance from the British government, made provision for Donaldson to escape republican justice in the same manner as Freddie Scappaticci. It fell to the volunteers of Óglaigh na hÉireann¹ [RIRA] to carry out the sentence and punishment demanded in our Army Orders and by the wider republican family. No traitor will escape justice regardless of time, rank or past actions. The republican movement has a long memory. (Melaugh, 2009)

The wider opinion concerning VDRs and the threat they pose has begun to change following a second development: Brexit and the potential return to a hard border on the island of Ireland. ^{iv}While the likelihood of or estimating the scale of a renewed violent campaign in Northern Ireland is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be foolish to suggest that the risk of renewed violence in the face of any infrastructure on the border would not be substantial. Challenging embodiments, physical as well as symbolic, of British rule on the island of Ireland is the *raison d'etre* of violent republicans.

What this paper is concerned with instead is explaining where this threat has originated from, specifically what drove the future members of RIRA, and now NIRA, to defect from the Provisional branch of republicanism in the first place to continue their armed campaign. This split took the form of a splinter, rather than as a complete schism. The difference between these two forms of fragmentation is explained by Mahoney: ‘Splinters occur when a small faction within a larger core organization breaks away to form a new group. By contrast, schisms take place when an insurgent group divides into two new organizations of similar size’. ^vWhile the most common answer to this question rests on the increased politicalisation of PIRA and its commitment to the peace process, this paper would argue that there was another, equally important, factor. This is the role played by ‘deviant cohesion’. This is not to argue that politicalisation did not matter, it did. Rather, this paper provides an additional explanation, not a competing one. To achieve this goal, the paper will be constructed as follows: firstly, the sociological phenomenon of ‘deviant cohesion’ will be defined. Through this definition the appropriateness of applying generally state-based cohesion studies to non-state forces will be demonstrated. Finally, the existence of deviant cohesion within PIRA will be examined to highlight how it led to the formation of RIRA in 1997.

¹ Óglaigh na hÉireann is the name used by the majority of militant groups within Irish republicanism, including the Irish Defence Forces. It translates to ‘soldiers of Ireland’.

Paying heed to the warnings of other scholars such as Sophie Whiting that ‘The republican movement’s propensity to split and the subsequent array of groups claiming lineage to the same tradition demands that any research into dissident republicanism requires clear parameters’,^{vi} this work will focus solely on the split which resulted in the creation of RIRA in 1997, not on republican splits in general. This focus is due to the belief that RIRA, now NIRA, are the most threatening VDR group at the moment, as Horgan and Morrison state ‘RIRA has been consistently the most active of all the groups’^{vii} This paper will speak to three distinct bodies of literature: military sociology, Northern Irish studies and research into non-state actors, particularly their fragmentation. This work will also draw from the recent upsurge in material dedicated to cohesion studies within non-state groups. Importantly, in the view of the author, it straddles the boundary between the past and the present and avoids one of the problematic binaries highlighted by English^{viii} Building upon this observed fault within terrorism studies broadly, Hansen states ‘Studies of cohesion in terrorist groups have tended to focus on the type of small groups that implemented terror attacks in the 1970s and the dynamics of the smaller cells of Al Qaeda in Europe or United States’.^{ix} This work is set within the context of an organisation which effectively began in the 70s but it is also focused on their relevance to the present day, beyond the events of 9/11.

Before progressing further, a clarification of terms is required. The concept of deviant cohesion will be expanded upon below but before progressing it is important to identify what is meant by ‘dissident’. There are several definitions one might use to explain groups such as RIRA, NIRA or CIRA, and each will have its own issues. Whiting, agreeing with Frampton, states that ‘Dissident’ has become a term to collectivise all forms of opposition to arrangements under the Good Friday Agreement and the Sinn Féin agenda’.^x This is a similar definition posited by other academics such as Horgan,^{xi} However, Horgan does not see the same problems with using the term dissident as it is clear that they are ‘dissenting’ from Sinn Féin, VDRs are effectively dissenting from mainstream republicanism embodied as it is in Sinn Féin. However, VDRs themselves often argue that it is mainstream republicans who have dissented and deviated from fundamental republican principles. Indeed, this is why the ‘Continuity’ IRA chose their name, they claim to continue the legacy of traditional Irish republicanism stretching back to the origins of the original IRA^{xii} Others such as Tonge argue that VDRs are actually republican ‘ultras’, the most committed of the various republican groups in Ireland to a perceived set of fundamental beliefs.^{xiii} However, for the purposes of this paper, ‘dissident’ is

used to describe those who broke away from PIRA to wage their own campaigns, in this sense they are defined by their dissent from ‘mainstream republicanism’.

Again building upon the work of Whiting, this paper seeks to address a disadvantaged area of inquiry. Whiting states that:

“Throughout history Irish republicanism has by no means been immune to dissent. Yet, the lack of academic enquiry into the current phase of factionalism has left ideological and empirical aspects untouched. Despite valuable research beginning to emerge, further exploration of dissent as a phenomenon within Irish republicanism can provide an outline to “some of its contours...and put an end to the taboos that too often exist in relation to what “mysteries” it holds”^{xiv}

However, rather than attempting to understand dissident as a phenomenon as Whiting does or attempt to describe who becomes/is a VDR as Horgan has done, this work seeks to explain why those who left to form RIRA did so and why others, perhaps, did not. It was a distinct body of individuals who left PIRA in 1997. This splintering was not made up of random individuals, this departure can be explained through understanding and applying deviant cohesion to PIRA.

What is deviant cohesion?

The central premise of this paper is that certain splits within non-state actors can be explained through the existence of deviant cohesion in their ranks. Before examining this process in greater detail, first a definition of deviant cohesion must be provided. At its most basic level ‘deviant’ cohesion is the process where in-groups diverge from wider organisational goals, at times this divergence can be violent at other times it will be peaceful. However, a deeper explanation is warranted. This is best completed through reference to Charles Moskos and his work on the American military during and following the Vietnam war. Through studying American forces in Vietnam, Moskos highlighted the development of what became known as ‘deviant’ cohesion.^{xv} Some scholars such as Siebold (2007) and Wong et al. (2003) suggest that military effectiveness depends on the maintenance of primary group relations within small units.^{xvi} Moskos though showed that dedication to the primary group could and did become counterproductive if the group became self-directing or valued its own goals above those of the larger organisation. He also makes clear the benefits of intense personal relations within these primary groups, stating that ‘In ground warfare an individual’s survival is directly related to the support-moral, physical, and technical he can expect from his fellow soldiers. He gets such support largely to the degree that he reciprocates it to the others in his group in general and to his buddy in particular’^{xvii} It is where these relationships become problematic

that Moskos' work is applicable to this research. Particularly of relevance is when distinct elements of an organisation cease to function in line with the wider organisation.

For Moskos, this took two main forms. Firstly, he identified the challenges faced by African-American soldiers serving in Vietnam:

'Engendered by real and perceived discrimination, near mutinous actions of groups of black servicemen in the early 1970s reached such proportion as to undermine the very fighting capability of America's armed forces...Although close living and common danger mitigated racial conflict in combat units in the fields, self-imposed informal segregation in the noncombat environment became almost de rigeur on the part of the lower-ranking black and white servicemen' .^{xviii}

Secondly, and at times developing from the first issue, Moskos identified the link between deviant cohesion and the 'fragging' of officers. He states:

'Outbreaks of fraggings reached epidemic proportions toward the latter years of the war—three to four hundred by official Army records and undoubtedly several times that number in reality...These fraggings occurred in response to soldiers' groups believing their integrity had been violated in some way. Three variants of such group engendered fragging can be specified in probably declining order of frequency: (a) racially inspired fraggings, typically by blacks against what is regarded as a racist white superior; (b) "dope hassle" fraggings arising from informal groups of drug users seeking reprisal against enforcers of antidrug regulations; and (c) fraggings in combat groups against a noncom or officer who is seen as too gung-ho in risking the lives of his subordinates' .^{xix}

While fragging is an extreme form of deviant cohesion it was understandable when we take into account the self-preservational motivations behind it. Moskos argued that because collective action became a rational choice contract between drafted soldiers, they were more interested in completing their tours safely than the success of the campaign as a whole. He goes on to state:

One can view primary-group processes in the combat situation as a kind of rudimentary social contract which is entered into because of advantages to individual self-interest. Rather than viewing soldiers' primary groups as some kind of semimystical bond of comradeship, they can be better understood as pragmatic and situational responses... This is not to deny the existence of strong interpersonal ties within combat squads, but rather to reinterpret them as derivative from the very private war each individual was fighting for his own survival.
^{xx}

This deviance developed both from the need for individual and collective survival but also from the fact that group members may not have supported the war in Vietnam itself but were forced to take part through conscription. This personal disbelief was compounded by the anti-war movement, which exemplified a lack of civilian support at best but more often demonstrated outright opposition to soldiers' actions from their nominal support group. These problems were further reinforced by the rotational system of service in Vietnam. In this system, individual soldiers were introduced to the conflict as replacements and each had their own

departure date, twelve-months in the future, ‘which set a private terminal date for each soldier’s participation in the war.’^{xxi} Moskos made the influence of these factors, including that of deviant cohesion, clear when he directly challenged the ‘national character’ arguments presented at the time, wherein ‘the deterioration in military discipline was often ascribed to diffuse social phenomena such as “youth culture” or “generation gap”’^{xxii}.

Contrary to the idealistic understanding of primary group relations within combat troops Moskos succinctly highlighted how intense social bonds can act as a double-edged sword: ‘It is an irony of sorts that the primary-group processes which appeared to sustain combat soldiers in World War II are close cousins to the social processes which underlay the vast bulk of fraggings in Vietnam’.^{xxiii} Fundamentally, individuals would support and protect each other to the point that their tour was over or until something brought their own safety into question but they no longer consciously contributed to the successful completion of the campaign. They fought to preserve their own lives and, counted the days until they could leave. They were not committed to an organisational ethos or even to their comrades beyond their contribution to the collective security of the unit. As will be demonstrated below, the same commitment was evident in PIRA but the purpose was different. Rather than seeking to protect each other and themselves, those who broke away did so to continue fighting in the face of a movement embracing non-violent, or at least less violent, methods.

Moskos has not been alone in finding deviant groups within military forces. Others have highlighted the existence of ethnic conflict within the armed forces^{xxiv}, hyper-masculinity related crimes/practices detrimental to military force and units that effectively fought their own private campaigns (Schneider, Banholzer, and Albarracin, 2015; Winslow, 1997).^{xxv} These deviant primary groups highlight the weaknesses of social cohesion in explaining consistently effective military action. However, in the case of Moskos’ deviant squads, their actions also highlight that the attainment of a goal, in this case survival, could be motivation enough to ensure collective action from a small unit. Although they deviated from one set of goals, these soldiers consciously sought to achieve another and in doing so committed themselves and focused their effort collectively to the point of each individual’s departure. King has also investigated this issue. In his work, *The Combat Soldier* (2013), King provides a short and effective summation of other works which have examined what we now understand as deviant cohesion. Through this review, King makes it clear that, within these deviant groups ‘Interpersonal bonds can undermine combat performance just as well as encourage it...There is no necessary connection between successful performance and high levels of interpersonal

solidarity'.^{xxvi} Indeed, he claims that this deviance within primary groups can ultimately manifest itself as “resistance to organisational goals”.^{xxvii} Others have gone as far to examine the consequences of these intense bonds within societies as a whole.

In their work on the *Wehrmacht*, Neitzel and Welzer highlight the following: ‘This penetration [of Nazi ideals] allowed moral standards to be reformatted, bringing about an obvious change in what people considered normal and deviant, good and bad, appropriate and outrageous’.^{xxviii} Wider German society aside, it is the influence of intense social bonds and expectations within the *Wehrmacht* that is particularly interesting. While Shils and Janowitz^{xxix} demonstrated how communal expectations maintained the fighting ability of units, Neitzel and Welzer have shown how these expectations and understandings of ‘duty’ could result in militarily undesirable activity, including surrender. In relation to how Germany units acted in the face of inevitable defeat, the authors state:

‘regulations governed nearly everything in soldiers’ lives, from the cut of their uniforms to the use of weapons and conduct in battle. But there were no regulations governing capitulation. No rules stated when and how one was allowed to surrender. The ideas of military leadership remained largely abstract to low-ranking soldiers in the heat of battle. Defeat on the battlefield was a moment of disorientation, in which group behaviour became especially important. Soldiers fought as one, and mostly they were captured in groups...Soldiers’ will to survive and the group dynamic of combat situations explain why, even during the early victorious phase of World War II, units of up to two hundred men sometimes surrendered, refusing, much to the dismay of the Nazi leadership, to fight to the last’^{xxx}

The above extract demonstrates that even within a force often described as the most effective of World War II, social links and group dynamics could result in significant deviance from organisational goals. As stated in the introduction, the same processes are evident in non-state forces.

Most recently, however, Burke has applied understandings of deviant cohesion to Scottish regiments in the British Army during the Northern Irish Troubles. In his study of the Scots Guards and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Burke demonstrates how an intensification of primary group solidarity resulted in aggression towards outgroups, drops in discipline, and at times murder. The central aim of Burke’s work is as follows:

‘It is this book’s objective to study the behaviour and motivations of soldiers during the early and most violent period of this static and social war within the UK...By recalling the soldier’s capacity for individual autonomy, intense emotion such as hatred and balancing it against the rationalised interests of policy, the weight of power of hierarchical political structures and military institutions, we can come to a better understanding of how wars are fought’^{xxxi}

Through this process, Burke highlights a number of issues which signal the existence of deviant cohesion within military units active during the Troubles. While the ‘Pitchfork murders’

discussed in chapter 4 of *An Army of Tribes* are perhaps the most significant, there are others. The majority of these cases would share the same motivation: ‘Revenge became an increasingly powerful and occasionally dangerous motivation’^{xxxii} Burke’s work. has demonstrated the lessons which can be learned through a deep qualitative assessment of cohesion within particular organisations. Also beneficial to this paper is that his study was based within the Troubles. As such this piece will contribute to an emerging field of study examining cohesion within that conflict.

The constructive connection between military sociology and non-state groups, including terrorists has been made clear in recent work, such as Finnegan through an examination of professional ethos creation in PIRA.^{xxxiii} Staniland has also examined how the social links between individuals and their supporters could determine the form, success and failure of organizational structures.^{xxxiv} More broadly Malešević has also examined the dynamics of small unit violence and activity.^{xxxv} That said, more work is required to fully demonstrate the lessons that can be gleaned from expanding the study of cohesion and military sociology beyond state forces. The following paragraphs will demonstrate this connection further in the case of RIRA and its split from PIRA, ultimately demonstrating that significant levels of deviant cohesion were present within PIRA and that this in many ways determined the nature of RIRA’s formation and break away,

Dissident republicanism and the split the created RIRA

Much work has already be directed towards understanding the causation and results of splits within Irish republicanism. Particularly noteworthy within this body of knowledge is Morrison’s *The Origins and Rise of Dissident Irish Republicanism*. Morrison clearly demonstrates the relationship between the various splits suffered by PIRA and subsequently by CIRA and RIRA, describing them as follows:

‘Splits in human organizations are the result of internal debate, disagreement and/or conflict which ultimately results in one faction deeming it necessary to move away from the parent organization to establish a new group more in line with the viewpoints and expectations of that section of the membership. With this basic understanding splits are therefore the result of specific intra-organizational dynamics’^{xxxvi}

It is this final point concerning intra-organisational dynamics which allows for the application of military sociology. Morrison also makes it clear that each of the different splits should be viewed at a variety of levels. He states: ‘the three “Provisional” splits should be looked upon as three separate stages of Provisional evolution and ultimately politicalisation...One can gain a greater understanding of the causes, results and consequences of the cases by simultaneously

analysing each individual split as a micro-process within the macro-process of Irish Republican evolution'.^{xxxvii}

Morrison is not alone in explaining splits within Irish republicanism, nor is he alone in prioritising the role of increased political activity. Concerning RIRA, the role of politicalization has been repeatedly highlighted as the reason for their break away from PIRA. Most, if not all, accounts of the birth of RIRA demonstrate the role of politicalisation resulting in a legitimisation of Northern Irish political institutions and the state as a whole. Moloney states: 'An IRA split had been a virtual certainty from the moment that Adams embarked on the peace process, such was the scale of the departure from traditional IRA ideology that the enterprise entailed'.^{xxxviii} Others have followed these sentiments include Edwards, Horgan and John F. Morrison and Tonge.^{xxxix} Whiting also argues that 'The emergence of the Real IRA and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM) was predicated more on the centrality of armed struggle and rejection of the six county state' than of political activity per se.^{xl} Similarly, Frampton states that RIRA emerged in 1997, formed 'by those unhappy with Sinn Féin's acceptance of the Mitchell Principles on non-violence'.^{xli} Indeed, even before the RIRA split there had been significant levels of internal conflict concerning the balance of power between politics and military force. There were cases where intense personal bonds or disregard for wider concerns resulted in action counter-productive to the organisation's goals. One example of this is units in Tyrone who 'would not stop fighting for any reason'.^{xlii} As Sinn Féin gained in strength at the expense of PIRA some units decided to act even before RIRA broke away: 'The Belfast Brigade...was intent on causing trouble for Sinn Féin. Angered by the amounts of money channelled to Sinn Féin from IRA coffers to finance election campaigns, the IRA leadership in the city carried out a number of killings and other actions intended to embarrass and damage Adams.'^{xliii} One study put it thus:

military action often became an end in itself, so ingrained had it become in the republican psyche. While political goals – independence, or the ending of partition – were the ultimate aims, these were often overwhelmed by a compulsion to go on waging a guerrilla war...The need to go on fighting was self-perpetuating and served to maintain the ideology of the movement and keep the foot-soldiers on board and occupied. This would be the driving force behind many future campaigns.^{xliv}

It was these and subsequent events that have resulted in many describing VDR's as mindless militants or 'conflict junkies'. Individuals and groups dedicated to violence for violence sake. This labeling presents a strawman depiction of non-mainstream republicans which unfairly disparages serious voices within the 'dissident' community.

Others have suggested that different reasons may be behind the splits, Dnes and Brownlow argued that there may be tactical motivations rather than political concerns.^{xlv} Rather than VDRs being mindless combatants, they are instead those who were most aware of the combat capabilities at their disposal. Even the works of Morrison and others mention these tactical considerations but they play a secondary role to the larger discussion of politics. While Dnes and Brownlow prioritise the tactical over the political they do not make use of deviant cohesion in their argument. This paper would argue that this is a missed opportunity, that these tactical considerations deserve more credit than they currently receive as they ultimately played a major role in the creation of RIRA. This role was that of the catalyst or spark. It may not have been the underlying cause of the split, that was political disagreement, but conflict regarding the maintenance and use of military power was the issue around which ‘deviant’ members of PIRA gathered.

The prime example of this tactical difference can be seen in the perspectives held by distinct groups within PIRA. This paper argues that those who broke away to form RIRA, did so based upon these tactical considerations but also because they were more committed to their own in-group than to the higher levels of leadership within the republican movement. This came about through an intensification of localised leadership within the ‘Quartermaster’ and ‘Engineering’ departments within PIRA. These were the elements within PIRA who created, transported and maintained the forces’ military equipment, essentially the logistical side of the organisation. While PIRA’s operating rules and regulations forbade interaction between units and different departments below the leadership level, due to the nature of their tasks these groups were closely connected but just as importantly they were aware of the organisation’s potential military strength. An awareness which was not shared by those on the ‘frontline’ as they operated under a ‘need to know’ basis. In other words, this split was caused through a combination of tactical and political concerns but those who broke away did so because their primary-group allegiances had become deviant in relation to the overall leadership and majority membership of the organisation.

Local leaders have always held sway in republicanism, however this was further enhanced as PIRA reformed itself under pressure from the security forces. The organization became simultaneously more hierarchical in its command chain but also more self-reliant at the unit level. With the increased levels of independence that was granted to each department on security grounds this raised the level of importance of each departmental leader to those under their command. Loyalty could become extremely local as interactions occurred between

fewer and fewer individuals. Indeed, the picture painted by Hansen about the traditional clandestine network is useful in describing the processes a republican recruit would go through and what relationships this would form:

Personal relationships become important, and there is a lack of bureaucratization in general, as a bureaucracy is easy for the security apparatus to dismantle. Defections can have serious ramifications, so there are important incentives to control group membership...it takes an effort to join the organization, and new recruits will face potential legal consequences by the local police and security apparatus...One also has to gain contact and respect from these networks in order to join...They are selective, and recruits need to volunteer...Recruits also have to be seen as useful, genuine, and dedicated to avoid the risk of defections.^{xlvi}

This localised loyalty was particularly the case when the overall command structure became more remote under the policy of ‘permanent leadership’. This was the idea that a ‘management caste’ should take root within PIRA to prevent rapid turnover of personnel at the higher levels, thus resulting in inconsistent strategic thinking. This increased continuity in turn resulted in increased affiliation with local commanders amongst the grass roots of the organisation. As Moloney states, this leadership moved away from the ‘self-perpetuating elite at top- and middle-level ranks whose composition was often the result as much of loyalty to the political strategy of the Army Council...as of battle skills’.^{xlvii} The loyalties of these mid-ranking commanders would later signal to their subordinates how much support should be granted to the overall command. While this allowed for the development of consistent political spokespersons as ‘hitherto secretive senior figures’ could emerge as party officials and community representatives, it also allowed particular individuals to build their own powerbase within the ranks^{xlviii}

This concentration of grassroots loyalty, what would be called ‘social cohesion’ elsewhere, acted as a double-edged sword. It provided groups like CIRA and RIRA with the resources and numbers they needed to break away and form rival organizations, with different levels of success, but it also provided PIRA with increased resistance where local figureheads sided with the leadership. Morrison again makes this clear through his interview material as well as his own arguments: ‘It was similarly important for them [the PIRA leadership] to acquire the support not only of influential individuals but also influential regional divisions of the movement’. Indeed, the problems of localised leadership within PIRA were expanded within the smaller VDR groups. As Frampton states:

“One feature of dissident republican groups is a tendency for things sometimes to be personality-driven or dependant on family or local allegiances, rather than on ideology”. The consequences of this phenomenon were at first sight somewhat incongruous: a tendency towards both ever “more fragmentation”, with the erosion of formal hierarchies of command and control; and, at the same time, a greater capacity for co-operation and group-overlap at the local level’.^{xlix}

While splits have always occurred in Republicanism, this work argues that the birth of RIRA originated through the development of deviant cohesion and the activities of a self-interested sub-group whose interests conflicted with the larger collective. Horgan and Gill have shown that throughout the Troubles, distinct sections of PIRA, usually those maintaining a distance from the ‘front’ such as bomb makers, developed high levels of skill through lengthy careers.^l When this was combined with the ‘permanent leadership’ discussed by Moloney above, there was space for the development of deviant cohesion. An increased distancing between the command authority and those conducting operations resulted in increased self-identification among some of those at the lower- to mid-levels. This self-identification became increasingly important when the conflict over the development of the peace process was underway and the question of disarmament became more pressing. Fundamentally, these ‘specialisms’ within each department formed their own primary groups and began to diverge from the path of the general organisation. This in a way mirrors the concerns raised by Hansen when discussing how localised conflicts can destabilise wider organisations. Although not on the same scale as discussed by Hansen, the fact that VDR groups tend to be extremely geographically and socially localised suggests that local conflict plays a real role in who and what areas are prone to splits. If the effective creation of cohesion depends on successful task completion (the ‘task cohesion’ school) or on the everyday interactions and reliance on those immediately associated with each other, particularly between leaders and subordinates (the ‘social cohesion’ school), then this separation of highly proficient sections of an organisation presents a risk to the maintenance of healthy cohesion.

While the accepted knowledge, discussed above, is that the RIRA breakaway was caused due to conflict over politics and its relation to armed violence, Morrison has provided evidence that it was due to the Engineering Department, along with the Quartermaster Department’s, view that the campaign was ending at a point when the organisation was militarily strong. He states ‘They were keenly aware of the organization’s paramilitary strength at the time. However, this compulsion to maintain paramilitary strength was significantly distant from the desire of the majority of the Republican community.’^{li} The argument states that significant stockpiles of weapons and devices existed and that they should be used, rather than

hidden or decommissioned. As with Dnes and Brownlow, Morrison also does not relate this to deviant cohesion. True, these works are not placed within the frame of cohesion studies, but this is a clear example of their application and the chance to understand these events holistically.

While Morrison highlights that a relatively small number of people left the organisation, the position of these people is perhaps more important. Morrison states that ‘Only a small minority of individuals left either the IRA or Sinn Fein. The majority of these left from the Army Executive, with very few political members exiting’.^{lii} Morrison then quotes Martin McGuinness as saying ‘with probably only less than five percent of people deciding that this was not the way to go’.^{liii} This presents the case where a very limited number of people left, which is not disputed here. However, if Moloney’s reporting is to be believed then those who joined RIRA included: five different heads of department, the Belfast Quartermaster, all of the quartermasters in Southern Command (equivalent to the Republic of Ireland minus the counties which border Northern Ireland), a number of quartermasters from border areas and ‘much of the vital engineering department’^{liv} Frampton states that ‘Opposition to the Adams-McGuinness line crystallised around the Provisional IRA’s “Quartermaster General”, Michael McKevitt...as well as John Mooney and Michael O’Toole, McKevitt and allies such as Seamus McGrane and Liam Campbell resigned from the Provisionals, resolving to create a new organization that would continue the “war”’.^{lv} Tonge also states that ‘McKevitt was instrumental in forming the new IRA, being joined soon afterwards by nearly 40 serving or former PIRA members. Although few others followed, the RIRA’s expertise in the supply and construction of weapons made it a bigger threat than the CIRA’.^{lvi}

These individuals were all significant members of PIRA. Their importance is evident in the difference in time it took before RIRA began their campaign of violence. While CIRA required a period of years to launch an organised effort, it took RIRA four months to attempt its first operation, eventually demonstrating their abilities with the Omagh bombing that killed and injured many. Although it should also be pointed out that the aftermath of this attack almost destroyed the organisation, robbing it of whatever public support it may have had.^{lvii} The groupings that comprised RIRA were those that had become the most inward looking and determined to carry on the campaign despite the wishes of the wider organisation and the community it claimed to represent. In other words, their priorities diverged from those of the organisation; a classic definition of deviant cohesion.

While normally the development of deviant cohesion occurs on a small scale, such as a single squad, in the case of the Engineering and Quartermaster Departments, this represented a significant section, qualitatively, of the total organisation even if the actual numbers of people who left was relatively small. If the peace process had not already begun by the time this split occurred, it is questionable how effective PIRA's operations would have been going forwards. However, at this stage of the conflict political discourse had displaced armed violence as the primary tool of choice for the organisation as well as the nationalist population.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the existence and influence of deviant cohesion within a non-state armed force, in this case the Provisional IRA and the split which birthed the Real IRA. This group in turn has gone on to form the nucleus of the New IRA, currently the largest terror threat within modern day Ireland, north and south of the border. While this split has been traditionally explained within the frame of political development and internal disagreement, this paper argued that there was a material element to the split. Politics mattered, that is undeniable, but it was not all that mattered. It cannot be overlooked that the Engineering and Quartermaster's Departments of PIRA provided the majority of those who left to form RIRA. Given the changes which PIRA had undergone previously in order to resist pressure from the security forces these two distinct bodies worked more closely than any other. This allowed them to develop connections unavailable to others, thus providing them with the social links necessary for the emergence of deviant cohesion. The rejection of violence as a means to achieving Irish unity provided the catalyst for their split. These groups were not only the most densely connected but also those with the greatest knowledge of PIRA's military resources and potential equipment. The decision to surrender weapons taken by the PIRA leadership flew in the face of those with an understand of what *might* be possible if the stored arms were used. These social connections and this catalyst provided all that was needed for a split based on deviant cohesion to occur.

Burke has recently shown the benefits which can be derived from studying cohesion, and deviant cohesion in particular, within Troubles-era military organisations. This piece sought to further that discussion and examine the non-state side of the conflict. While the current format of this argument limits the amount of detail which can be provided, further, lengthier, discussion of terror organisations facing military bodies will show that the same practices occur outside of the state context. Other cases worthy of study are not difficult to find. The emergence of ISIS following a split from Al-Qaida is just one such example: a localised

group which diverges from a larger organisation once their concerns no longer align with one another. Military sociology provides researchers with the opportunity to learn a number of lessons from non-state actors once we are willing to study them within the same frames of reference as state-based military forces. Continued work in this vein will further demonstrate this.

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