Dilemmas of fundamentalist non-state actors in international relations

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The introductory chapter to this volume canvases a range of dilemmas, problems, and puzzles surrounding non-state actors (NSAs). It convincingly argues that they should be considered as an integral part of IR's ontology and as a result it presents a robust, power-based typology which seeks to locate four ideal type of NSAs. This chapter addresses what the introductory typology calls fundamentalist groups defined as broadly as possible as holding diverse prioritises, goals, and aims, but identified through discursive and operational extremism and modus. In this chapter, we unpack the dilemmas presented by such NSAs. In short, our departing assumption is that few stereotypes are more frequently associated with non-state actors, of any kind, than that of the fundamentalist - matched perhaps only with the equally problematic idea that poverty alone drives conflict (for example see, Jackson et al, 2011, p. 205; Kreuger, 2008, p. 1). Combinations of these two themes can also be seen in elements of the failure of 'New Wars' debates (Kaldor, 2013), with material interests replacing politics as the primary cause of violence. Indeed, this surface level description of terrorists, insurgents, or militia members as the most desperate or the most irrational has sparked countless works from scholars to highlight how problematic the term can be. As Kreuger (2008, p. 4) made clear previously: 'Most terrorists are not so desperately poor that they have nothing to live for. Instead they are people who care so deeply and fervently about a cause that they are willing to die for it'. This chapter does not set out to finally prove the (in)validity of the term. Rather it sets out to illustrate how fundamentalism has influenced the campaigns of a variety of actors with an emphasis on two case studies. Ultimately, this chapter will highlight how adopting, maintaining, or abandoning a fundamentalist approach can have strategic ramifications, some intentional others not. If fundamentalism was a binary distinction, with universal traits, then there would be no variation in groups we might label as such. As Wilson (2020, p. 8) has made clear 'even the most hardcore ideologues have to navigate specific social contexts that will modify their room for manoeuvre significantly'. In this way, our understanding builds on the introductory classification by strengthening the claim that such groups' orientation varies, but by expanding the extension of the qualifier of 'extremism'.

Conceptual properties and definitional limits

We begin by setting the conceptual and definitional baseline for our analysis given that conceptual clarification stands "to correct theoretical and methodological ambivalences"

(Rauta, 2018, p. 449). Central to this chapter is the belief that fundamentalism is not a static concept or state of mind, nor is it solely related to religion: in short, it exists within a complex semantic field and what falls under its defining properties is not just time and context variable, but also intellectually contingent to theoretical and empirical choices (Rauta, 2021a). This seemingly automatic association can be seen through the definitions in leading dictionaries. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides three definitions of the term with the first two focusing on Christianity and Islam respectively, which the third stating: 'strict adherence to the basic principles of any specified doctrine, subject, or discipline; a movement or approach associated with this'. In the case of Merriam-Webster the immediate connection is again with elements of Christianity before proving a broader definition, 'a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles', the first subset of which is Islamic fundamentalism. Tied up with these religious connotations is that the rise of fundamentalism is related to the rise and expansion of globalisation. Emerson and Hartman (2006) provide a useful insight into the difficulties of defining the term clearly. They present the viewpoint from modernists, 'fundamentalists are reactionaries, radicals attempting to grab power and throw societies back into the dark ages of oppression, patriarchy, and intolerance' (2006, p. 131), as well as from the viewpoint of religious fundamentalists themselves. The important point though, is that rather than being a clear cut, readily identifiable status, fundamentalism depends on perspective and must be historically informed.

We must also be careful in misapplying the term (Jackson et al, 2011, pp. 158-159). While we agree that fundamentalism is a strict dedication to certain beliefs, to the point of excluding other options, we do not think it should be automatically associated with religion. To make this point this chapter has taken two ethno-nationalist organisations who held binary views of the world and relied exclusively on force, at least initially, as its subject matter to show how fundamentalist can exist beyond religion. Although, this is not to say that religion cannot play a role, rather it is one of many potential foci. For our purposes, fundamentalism will be defined *as a maintenance of clearly defined practices and beliefs, regardless of religiosity, often in combination with a view able how the world should be or change brought about*. While there is not space to discuss it here, we could look to recent western interventions for examples of political and ideological fundamentalism. A Patrick Porter (2018, p. 2), in quoting Tony Blair, has written: 'Joining Washington's war was not an act of geopolitical cynicism. It was more dangerous, a real ideological crusade. As Blair said privately and publicly, "It's worse than you think. I actually believe in doing this".

The second definitional parameter concerns our understanding that this dedication can change over time. If it were not possible to move closer or further from a fundamentalist viewpoint, polices such as the United Kingdom's *Prevent* strategy would be pointless. Nor would those who research deradicalization and fighter disengagement find the evidence they need (See Horgan 2009 and subsequent work). As such, and in relation to non-state actors, we argue that fundamentalism is a strategic choice made by groups for the benefits it brings to them. It may sound strange that adopting an 'irrational' position would be a rational choice, but this chapter will show that groups which present themselves as fundamentalist do reap certain rewards, while simultaneously closing off other strategic avenues. Indeed, we also challenge the assertion that terrorism, and political violence more broadly, is the preserve of the mad or the psychotic (Jackson et al., 2011, pp. 207-208). As Townsend (2002, p. 20) has stated in terms of terrorists, 'Like many of the most durable prejudices, the stereotype of the terrorist as a psychopathic monster has survived a lot of academic efforts to dilute it. Most academic studies point to the view that terrorists are generally remarkable for their sheer ordinariness'. Indeed, it is a failure of diplomacy and conflict resolution to disregard completely those we deem to be fundamentalists, especially if that label has only been applied for political purposes. As Jenkins et al (2011, p. 113) make clear 'if our labels appear valid (or even inevitable) in a particular situation…they can actually foreclose the possibility of alternative understandings even emerging; different labels and understandings simply may not surface as legitimate options for us to consider'. While very many of today's most violent non-state actors, such as ISIS or Al-Qaeda, might genuinely be incorrigible. Their focus on religion may not be the reason why. For instance, the ending of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's campaign presents an example of how an avowedly Islamic organisation can be integrated within a wider political context. A warning against a knee jerk, simplistic understanding of fundamentalism fuels our hope that that this chapter will help to deepen our understanding of the concept in question but more importantly how groups which could be labelled as fundamentalists fit within the broader political mosaic.

A more robust account of strategic rationales

Why does this conceptual delimitation matter? Understanding whether a group can deepen or lessen its level of fundamentalism provides several benefits. The most important of these is whether there is possible room for negotiation and compromise, even if this means a protracted period of bringing them in from the cold. Although adopting a fundamentalist stance might initially rule out any kind of negotiation, our case studies will show how groups

can grow out of early fundamentalist positions as they become more 'mature' or conscious about achieving their strategic goals (see Whiting, 2016 for a discussion of 'normalising' extremist political parties). Similarly, those who stick to their beliefs may be abandoned by external sponsors once their fundamentalism becomes a block to future progress. The strategic environment is dynamic and groups which do not adapt to the changing situation will be left behind. In short, 'the strategic lens does not assume behavior and choice ex ante, but allows for strategic intent to be constructed through interactions: with ones' goals and means, with ones' targets, with the targets' goals and means, as well as with the context and operational environment' (Rauta, 2021b, p. 121). As such, understanding fundamentalism and how it influences non-state actors allows us to position them within the broader political landscape and design strategies allowing for their incorporation or destruction.

Fundamentalism provides an organization with advantages and disadvantages, whether that is in terms of motivating members, or outbidding potential rivals, while at the same time limiting the range of strategies and potential members available to it. In a recent study of desertion during the Spanish and Syrian Civil Wars, Theodore McLauchlin (2020) highlighted the key roles played by both pre-recruitment ideology and post-recruitment physical commitment. In both conflicts the groups which presented themselves as the most dedicated to their respective beliefs, Jihad or left-wing politics for instance, while also warning of the high standards expected upon entry attracted the best recruits and functioned most effectively on the battlefield. In his words 'the most cohesive groups, the ones best able to limit desertion, were those that imposed the costliest signals' (2020, p. 195). This is important as research into outbidding tends to focus on escalating violence, rather than pre-combat demands (for examples of either side of this debate see: Biderman and Zahid, 2016; Findley and Young, 2012). Drawing on Mironova (2019) and Walter's (2017) work, McLauchlin makes clear that even at the cost of limiting their own recruitment pools and in the most serious cases preventing otherwise useful alliances or strategies, presenting yourself as the most dedicated and most demanding option for potential recruits has real long-term benefits. When groups maintain, at least outwardly, a fundamentalist stance they attract only the most committed recruits who are willing to sacrifice the most. Though this should be caveated with the point that fundamentalists groups do not always insist on pre-existing 'fit' and can instead pursue socialisation following recruitment. Likewise, recruits may feign commitment to avoid persecution from the same group or to respond to external threats This process can then result in what Kilcullen (2011) called the accidental guerrilla syndrome:

‘Even within seemingly fundamentalist groups, such as Al Qaeda, numerous members may be responding to more local concerns or might have decided that membership of a group is safer than not being a member’.

History provides several examples of fundamentalism in action, often providing real world benefits or at least psychological comfort to those concerned. When speaking about conflict within the colonial context, Fanon (2001, p. 31) clearly presents a Manichean view of the world. To him, violence was the only answer to truly free colonised people from their subordinate status: ‘The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists’ (Fanon, 2001, p. 28). Fanon’s world was that of good or evil, and violence was the only language worth speaking – a truly fundamentalist view of the world. But even within this simplistic view we see the supposed benefits which a commitment to violence (and violence alone) brings to individuals and groups. While most oft cited for the supposed benefits to the individual, ‘violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect’ (2001, p. 74), the role of violence in building the community is perhaps more important for our needs:

> But it so happens that for the colonized people this violence, because it constitutes that only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning. The groups recognize each other and the future nation is already divisible. The struggle mobilizes the people; that is to say, throws them in one way and in one direction (2001, p. 73).

Fundamentalism is not new, nor is it irrational and solely the preserve of the insane. Fundamentalism offers organisations opportunities and limits their choices, in a manner like other strategic choices.

The preceding is not to say that fundamentalism within armed forces, of any type, cannot be extremely problematic, it can be. Arming people who hold fundamentalist beliefs is a serious concern, especially in organisations which lack the ability to fully control their members (Shapiro, 2013). Other consequences of excessive commitment can be more material: ‘Although some actions such as suicide attacks may be a way for groups to signal their commitment and continued resistance, it may also be a serious drain on the most committed fighters’ (Wilson. 2020, p. 90).

Even state-based militaries struggle with this issue. Indeed, military organizations often go to lengths to prevent potentially problematic recruits from joining their ranks or to remove them if they do. Although 'extremist' and 'fundamentalist' are not synonyms, recent events such as the disbandment of a company of the German *Bundeswehr*'s *Kommando Spezialkräfte* for promoting far-right ideologies (Deutsche Welle, 2020) show how militaries can react to members who are seen to hold problematic view. Although the German military may be particularly sensitive to extreme right-wing views, they are not the only ones worried about who is wearing their uniform or taking advantage of their training. Contemporary concerns may focus on the institutionalization of fundamentalist belief within nascent bodies such as the Afghan National Army or the Iraqi military, but these problems are not new. For instance, at the same time as Provisional Irish Republican Army were establishing their fundamentalist principles, discussed below, the British army was conducting investigations into the infiltration of the Ulster Defence Regiment by Loyalists (members of the Unionist population with the most extreme views). While the numbers involved were never concretely assessed, the problem was seen as worth monitoring. Initial assessments claimed that 'a significant proportion (perhaps 5% - in some areas as high as 15%) of UDR soldiers will also be members of the UDA [Ulster Defence Association], Vanguard Service Corps, Orange Volunteers or UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force]'.[1] More seriously, and more relevant for our purposes, was the likelihood that if these individuals were made to choose between their uniform and their cause they would likely choose the latter:

> The first loyalties of many of its members are to a concept of Ulster rather than to HMG [Her Majesty's Government], and that where a perceived conflict in these loyalties occurs, HMG will come off second best…by the nature of its being, and the circumstances in which it operates, the regiment is wide open to subversion and potential subversion. Any effort to remove men who in foreseeable political circumstances might well operate against the interests of the UDR could well result in a very small regiment indeed.[2]

This extract is important as it shows that not only are military organizations often aware of the problems of fundamentalism within their ranks (when they are pursuing broader goals), but also that the problem can be unavoidable. If a body is organised for a particular purpose, communal defence or engaging in ethnic conflict, for example, it might require the admittance of less than desirable members to ensure organisational mass. Thus, even in a more 'normal' organisation, fundamentalism can play a role. While this episode provides an

[1] 'Subversion in the UDR', p. 5.
[2] 'Subversion in the UDR', pp. 12-14.

interesting example of how non-state actors can potentially subvert formal military forces, further elaboration is beyond the current scope of this chapter.

The below case studies will demonstrate the points raised thus far and more. Specifically, we will look at how organisations can adjust their level of fundamentalism, experiencing costs and benefits as it does so, as well as how fundamentalists groups can be both used and abandoned by external sponsors where relevant. Our case studies will highlight the role of fundamentalism within and across different types of non-state actors: terrorist group, militia, and paramilitary. Specifically, our cases are taken from Northern Ireland and the Balkans. Although these cases are illustrative, it is out hope that they demonstrate the benefits of taking the question of fundamentalism within non-state actors in a more holistic fashion. What we seek to observe is how their strategic rationales map onto different logics of fundamentalist discursive justifications.

Case Study 1: The Provisional IRA: A forty-year road from fundamentalism to compromise

There are a variety of reasons why we might look at Northern Irish republicanism when considering the role of fundamentalism within non-state actors and how it relates to the broader strategic context. As one other author has stated in justification of their own focus on the group 'One cannot explain the durability of the Provo's brutal campaign without acknowledging that there was, behind it, a serious and recognizably important contest over political legitimacy' (English, 2010, p. 75). This legitimacy came from a variety of sources. Some of it practical, some of it more ideational. Taking the latter first, dogmatic republicans believed that taking up arms during the Troubles was their duty because they 'regarded themselves as the rightful heirs to republican historical tradition and ardently maintained the idea of the incomplete national revolution' (Smith, 2002, p. 94). Physically, and particularly during the period before 1976, communal violence in Northern Ireland demanded an organised response: 'The violence of one's opponents, in this Northern Irish case, seemed both to validate and to necessitate an aggressive response which in turn stimulated counter-response, and so on' (English, 2010, p. 72). This response began with local defence committees which were subordinated and absorbed by PIRA's expanding organisation, to the point that they would claim to be the sole defenders of the Catholic population. The resulted in 'genuine popular kudos from fulfilling such a practical function…PIRA's popularity, in the main, was not forced but rested on the legitimacy acquired from its protective role'

(Smith, 2002, pp. 91-93). The extent to which this activity was fuelled by sectarianism will not be discussed in this chapter due to limited space (For those who are interested see: White; 1997; White, 1998; White, 2007, White 2011; Bruce, 2007; Dingley, 1998; Kowalski, 2016; Patterson, 2010; and McCleary 2021).

Beyond the above rationale there are other reasons to choose PIRA. The first is familiarity. PIRA presents a rich case study for those seeking to understand non-state actors under a variety of lenses (See Finnegan, 2019; Malešević and Ó Dochartaigh, 2018; Shapiro; 2013 for some examples). The second reason is that the story of PIRA is essentially one in which an organisation that began as a tiny, incredible doctrinaire, group of social outcasts managed to declare position themselves as the only ones able to stand for their community. This was then combined with an outbidding of its rivals in terms of both violence and ideology before eventually transitioning to a mass movement militia structure and waging an open insurrection against one of the strongest states in Western Europe. This was then followed by a slimmed down terrorist organisation and eventual decommissioning of its arms. Part of transition would be an eventual reorientation away from its fundamentalist roots, particularly with its relationship to violence. What began as an organisation entirely resistant to political negotiation and compromise ended up as a partner in a power sharing regime. Whatever other lessons PIRA can teach us, understanding how a non-state actor can transition between a variety of organisational forms and politically, from totally incorrigible to a major stakeholder in a democratic government, is a key one. The third reason is that PIRA also provides a useful example of what can happen to a group as it moves away from fundamentalist beginnings during its campaign. These changes were not without consequence, over the course of its existence PIRA, and the wider republican movement, suffered two major splits over its core political and one military principles (Morrison, 2013). These periods of fragmentation are directly related to questions around core doctrinal and philosophical beliefs and again provide useful lessons about what happens to non-state actors who seek to move away from fundamentalist positions. At times they will suffer fragmentation and threats from within.

What matters for our analysis is that these decisions were part of a deliberate attempt to garner the largest amount of support possible during each phase of the conflict. A perfect balance between popular support, military activity, political activity, and counterintelligence could not always be maintained over more than forty years and throughout the conflict PIRA's leadership made calculated decisions to prioritise different support networks at

different times and adapted their relationship to fundamental principles based on the situation at hand. Although potentially questionable from an external viewpoint, the gradual and purposeful changes enacted over PIRA's lifespan are rational and show how fundamentalism supports and hinders organisational goals, particularly in terms of adjusting to the strategic context.

Although we are not necessarily concerned with the success or failure of the organisations discussed here, PIRA's ability to achieve even intermediate goals in the face of one of the world's leading military powers is important. While we can challenge the view that PIRA succeeded in the face of their eventual decommissioning and disbandment, never mind the continued partition of Ireland, this is a distinction between strategic and tactical success. Richard English (2016) clarifies the importance of this distinction. highlighting how terror organisations often secure their secondary objectives. In the case of PIRA, this included revenge, spreading socialist ideology and Gaelic cultural celebrations. Specifically, English (2010, p. 89) stated: 'In a straightforward military sense, the IRA did not lose: it had the capacity to continue with its campaign, and it could ensure that the British did not impose things without its own endorsement'. Republicans in the form of Sinn Féin were granted seats at the negotiating table because of PIRA's campaign, not in spite of it (English, 2016, p. 108-131). If further support is needed, we can turn to the British military's own analysis: 'It should be recognised that the Army did not 'win' in any recognisable way; rather it achieved its desired end-state, which allowed a political process to be established' (OP Banner, 2006, para. 855). The Army and PIRA fought each other to a standstill with the Army unable to completely stamp out political violence while PIRA reached the limits of gains delivered by military force alone.

PIRA's eventual development and role within the Troubles was not preordained, nor was their development straight forward. McKearney (2011, p. 107), a former PIRA Volunteer, makes this clear:

> There was no master plan for insurrection prior to the situation in Northern Ireland deteriorating and descending into violent chaos. Under the prevailing circumstances, there was a demand, first for defence, then for reprisals as a deterrent, and finally all-out assault to overthrown the state. Given the circumstances, almost any organised group could have assumed the role, but history and the absence of alternatives meant that it was the Provisional IRA which emerged to fill the vacuum.

Although the IRA had existed in skeletal form before the 1970s, it was in no position to lead a challenge against the British state. They had 'been taken by surprise' (OP Banner, 2006,

para. 302) and struggled to respond to the local population's demands for protection against Loyalist forces and the police.

Smith (2002) provides perhaps the best description of PIRA during its early phase when he defines them as 'mono-military', completely opposed to political discourse. Although he presents the organisation as essentially a-strategic at this point, this is only partly true. It is true that PIRA was immature in its belief that it could drive the British out with force alone and was extremely ill-prepared for early negotiations, making utterly unrealistic demands which related more to doctrinal republicanism than to the strategic reality (English, 2012, p. 157-158). However, this and other episodes of talks allowed them to demonstrate their position as the preeminent republican group and the only ones able to bring the British to the table. This in combination with the greater military strength allowed PIRA to draw in the most recruits, prestige, and external support. The most notable material support would later come from Gadhafi's Libya, but other financial contributions were significant, including sums such as 'about £100,000 in 1974' with a peak 'during the hunger strikes in the early 1980s, with $250,000 being raised in six months' (OP Banner, 2006, para. 316).

PIRA's early expansion did not come without problems. While it managed to outbid its rivals, it did not place enough emphasis on vetting new recruits which formed its organisational mass. This resulted in both many shirkers (McKearney, 2011) and intelligence agents gaining entry. This infiltration nearly ended the organisation and resulted in a major structural reorganisation. The core aims of this reorganisation was greater discipline, downsizing of personnel, more focused operations, and much tighter security. Shapiro (2013, p. 183) provides a useful summary of this reorganisation: 'The reorganization plan was worked out by Ivor Bell while he was in prison, was approved by the PIRA Army Council in late 1976, and was largely implemented by Gerry Adams, who was appointed to the PIRA Army Council on his release from Long Kesh prison in February 1977'. Due to these changes, PIRA's own enemies (OP Banner, 2006, para 106c) described them as 'one of the most effective terrorist organisations in history. Professional, dedicated, highly skilled and resilient'. What mattered here was that PIRA had also begun its eventual shift away from its doctrinaire stance. This reorganisation, which was ultimately the beginnings of its professionalisation and the formation of its 'Volunteer' ethos (Finnegan, 2019), was undertaken by a new generation of leaders who were able to bridge the gap between its fundamentalist roots and its eventual politicialisation. While maintaining its outward political fundamentalism, insisting on the continued role of violence, British perfidy and its own

historical legitimacy, it managed to implement the stricter recruitment measures like those mentioned by McLauchlin (2020). Rather than relying on willingness alone, PIRA began to outline the potential dangers to its members, explicitly outlining to recruits that they would need to sacrifice as part of their membership and were unlikely to benefit personally:

> Before any potential volunteer decides to join the Irish Republican Army he should understand fully and clearly the issues involved. He should not join the Army because of emotionalism, sensationalism, or adventurism. He should examine fully his own motives, knowing the dangers involved and knowing that he will find no romance within the Movement. Again he should examine his political motives bearing in mind that the Army are intent on creating a Socialist Republic (Green Book).

The highpoint of this commitment would be seen in the 1981 Hunger Strikes, which were a combination of the republican martyrdom tradition (Spencer, 2015, p. 20) and its emerging steps into electoral politics. These strikes were a direct response to the British policy of criminalisation, which sought to directly challenge the legitimacy of republican violence and their claims to be a liberation movement. However, this played into republican dogma of British oppression, with force being the only legitimate response. While the Hunger Strikes were a watershed moment in moving the republican movement into a political direction, it is worth remembering that the candidates ran under an 'Anti H-Block' ticket, rather than as official Sinn Féin candidates. Taking inspiration from the earlier Irish Revolutionary period the republican response to which was to put prisoners striving for political status up for election. This campaign was epitomised by Thatcher's statement that 'There is no such thing as political bombing or political violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status. Crime is crime is crime. It is not political. It is crime and there can be no question of granting political status'. Despite Thatcher's rhetoric, the elections of figures like Bobby Sands, demonstrated the scale of PIRA's popular support and challenge its criminal designation (Wilson, 1994, p. 44; Spencer, 2015, p. 22). Although Margaret Thatcher stood firm in her opposition to the Hunger Strike, the deaths of those involved 'were used not only to oppose prison conditions but to exacerbate suffering in an attempt to intensify republican resistance and entrench anger against the repressions of the British regime' (Spencer, 2015, p. 113; Smith, 2002).

While the success of the hunger striking candidates demonstrates the popular appeal of republicanism in Northern Ireland it also struck at the core of PIRA's fundamental principles and laid the ground for two eventual splits, one over the position of politics within republican dogma and the other over military concerns (Finnegan, 2021). The central paradox here was 'The need to maintain hearts and minds within the organization motivated violence

that the rank and file wanted, but that leaders felt motivated would be counterproductive' (Shapiro, 2013, p. 190). However, as has been well discussed in the Troubles literature (Spencer, 2015; Whiting, 2015; McGlinchey, 2019; Finnegan, 2021), this rise of politics within republicanism increased the internal tensions between pragmatic strategists and those adopting a mono-militant approach. The argument was well summed up by Spencer (2015, p. 118) when he wrote: 'Armed struggle provided instant, irrefutable evidence of victory and resistance against the British, whereas politics was ambiguous, lacking in the same irrefutable impact and likely to become absorbed into a process of institutionalization which would gradually squeeze energy and motivation from the militant ethos'.

In 1986 and 1994, the 'Continuity' (CIRA) and 'Real' (RIRA) IRAs would respectively break away from PIRA as it sought to move beyond its established philosophical and practical concerns. Those who would form CIRA objected to the dropping of the republican policy of abstention following any electoral success, while those who formed RIRA objected to the move away from violence as part of the Mitchell Principles as the peace process gained speed. CIRA chose their name to demonstrate their continued adherence to republican fundamentals, as abstentionism was second only to the right to bear arms against British rule within republican dogma. This belief derived from the understanding that the IRA represented the legitimate government of Ireland, based on the first and second *Dálaí* (Irish Parliaments) of the early twentieth century. Indeed, CIRA went as far as to seek formal recognition as the 'true' inheritors of the republican tradition by seeking the blessing of the last surviving member of the second *Dáil*, General Tom Maguire (Morrison, 2013, p. 140; Smith, 1995, p. 63; Moloney, 2007, p. 56). This was a move previously used by PIRA to set itself up as the true IRA when it split from the 'Official' IRA (English, 2012, p. 113). This political split would see the disengagement of most of the doctrinaire ideologues from PIRA, including its support organisations such as the women's and children's branches, *Cumman na mBan* and *Fianna Éireann*. Their limited military capacity and continued refusal to engage in electoral politics essentially removed them from the contest over popular support though. RIRA on the other hand were what remained of the 'mono-militarists'. This group comprised mainly those who had the greatest access to PIRA weaponry and were disaffected by the shift in focus from violence to politics. They would go on to carry out the Omagh bombing shortly after breaking away. This was their attempt to outbid PIRA as the leading force in Republicanism, however 1998 was far removed from 1970 and the group was largely rejected by the republican community. This final step was what allowed those leaders who had risen

during the reorganisation of PIRA to take the remainder of the organisation into the political process as a coherent force and eventually call an end to the campaign in 2005, having successfully, albeit very slowly, transitioned PIRA from a dogmatic, violence first (and only) movement to one of the key stakeholders in the new peace settlement which required compromise with those they opposed on a fundamental basis. The Northern Ireland Peace Process has not been easy, nor has it been free from upset, but the gradual lessening of PIRA's fundamentalism as it adapted to the strategic context allowed the process to take root and mature.

Case Study 2: The Bosnian Serb Army and the strategic consequences of fundamentalism

There are two main reasons for selecting the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) for our second case study. The first is that in terms of ethnic fundamentalism, the Wars in Yugoslavia provide some of the richest material with the BSA as one of the most significant participants. The second reason is that the BSA also provides a great example of an organisation which adopted an extreme stance within the conflict and stuck to this position throughout. Contrary to the change over time seen in the last case study, the BSA provide an example of a group unwilling to change with the strategic context and whose fundamentalist ultimately provided to be its downfall. Relatedly they also provide an example of a 'deniability' proxy for the Serbian state (Moghadam, and Wyss, 2020; Rauta, 2020).

Although not seeking to rehash the arguments about the soundness of distinctions between 'New' and 'Old' wars, it would be remiss to speak of the powerful paramilitary forces which fought during the collapse of Yugoslavia and its attendant wars without mentioning the inspiration they provided for this way of thinking around war and political violence. In the central work on this topic, *New and Old Wars,* Mary Kaldor (2013, p. 4) claimed that 'there has been a revolution in military affairs, but it is a revolution in the social relations of warfare'. This revolution was contextualised by heightening levels of globalisation, within which we see 'the erosion of the monopoly of legitimate organized violence', which is 'eroded from above and below' (2013, p. 5). Without focusing on what was either new or old about conflict, we can agree that increasing prevalence of 'identity politics…the claim to power on the basis of a particular identity' (2013, p. 7) within conflict both in the former Yugoslavia and more contemporary conflicts. As has been seen in conflict areas before and since, when state legitimacy breaks down and violence becomes democratized, groups such as the BSA who are able to establish themselves as protectors or those best placed to enact revenge, can become significant actors. The BSA presents a useful case of such as actor as they were not trying to emulate the success of other identity-based actors, such as Hamas, to gain popular support. Rather they were using their power to harness, as stated by Kaldor (2013, p. 9), 'fear and hatred' rather than 'hearts and minds'. In a clearly binary view of the world, the BSA were fighting for what they say as *their* community and for their own interests, rather than trying to bring about some eventual compromise. In contrast to PIRA's eventual decommissioning, the BSA understood itself solely in a military

sense and that military force was the means to secure a clearly fundamentalist end: an ethnic reorganisation of the former Yugoslavia. They wanted to rapidly rebuild the world in their image and that was best achieved via extreme violence. Another factor which distinguishes the BSA from PIRA was its reliance on support from Serbia proper. This reliance would become telling as the conflict wore on and the aims of Serbia and its proxy in Bosnia diverged further. This would ultimately result in the abandonment of the BSA by Serbia.

Without retelling the story of the Bosnian wars, the BSA emerged out of Serbia's need to aggressively engage with its neighbours while avoiding international censure, and the Bosnian Serb need for military and political support. The BSA was the result of the central conundrum faced by the Serbian regime, which was also pursuing a goal of ethnic remapping (Ron, 2000, p. 292): 'If they abandoned the Bosnian Serbs entirely, they would face censure at home for leaving brother Serbs in the lurch. If they openly sent Serbian state forces to fight for Bosnian Serbs, however, they would face stiff international pressure'. As the international community attempted to sanction Serbia if it continued its own military activity, in what was now internationally recognised, independent Bosnia, Serbia simultaneously bowed to international pressure while also redirecting resources towards its affiliated non-state and quasi-state forces.

Addressing the question of how to ensure Bosnian Serbs were armed had begun prior to open conflict, with Operation RAM being put in place as early as 1990 (Ramet, 2018, p. 58). As Ron (2000, p. 291; see also UN CoE, 1992, p. 30) puts it:

> Serbia outwardly seemed to comply with these restrictions on extraterritorial military action, promising international observers it would respect Bosnia's territorial integrity. A key part of this effort was Serbia's order to withdraw from Bosnia the remnants of the Yugoslav People's Army…some 80 percent of the Yugoslav People's Army remained in Bosnia, since these men were local Bosnian Serbs.

This partial withdrawal provided significant support for the ethnically Serbian forces, including the territorial defence forces which would form the basis of the BSA: 'The BSA was much better equipped than the other regular forces…it had a considerable advantage in heavy weapons…It inherited the JNA's equipment and, more importantly, it controlled most of the JNA's weapons stores' (Kaldor, 2013, p. 48; See also Glaurdić, 2009, p 102). Indeed, certain units active within the BSA could trace their 'lineage' directly back to disbanded units of the Yugoslav army, especially in areas of static warfare such as around Sarajevo. The Un Committee of Experts (1992, p. 44) stated that 'The Sarajevo Romanija Corps is the Bosnian-Serb force of the Bosnian Serbian Army. The Corps has surrounded the city since the

beginning of the siege. It is the successor of the unit of JNA that occupied the same positions until May 1992'. Although this is not to say that the JNA was a complete and total ally of the BSA from the beginning, support increased as its command structure was increasingly taken over by the Serbian Regime: 'Although Serbia increasingly influenced the army's senior command, it could not rely on the federal army in the early stages of the conflict to fully back the Serbian cause' (Ron, 2000, p. 290). In other words, in the chaos of the earliest period of the Bosnian war, Serbia fell back on ethnic stereotyping (McLauchlin, 2020) to achieve its goals, trusting non-state armed forces of Serbian heritage to pursue its military aims rather than the declining Yugoslav forces at its command. This would have significant consequences for those caught up in the fighting.

The BSA's capacity was initially maintained by the Yugoslav army's withdrawal and the transfer of troops and supplies between command structures, again on ethnic lines. These transfers would allow Bosnian Serb forces to control 70% of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the end of 1992 (Ramet, 2018, p. 207). This external support for the BSA was further enhanced by an arms embargo on the Bosnian forces. This resulted in a distinct imbalance in the forces arrayed against each other. Although the BSA was much smaller than the Bosnia military, it was much better equipped. By mid-1993 'The Bosnian (Muslim) army had 120,000 active troops and an additional 80,000 reserves, 40 tanks, and 1 aircraft. The Bosnian Serb army, by contrast, had only 60,000 troops, supplemented by up to 20,000 Yugoslav army troops, 350 tanks, and 35 aircraft' (2018, p. 213). This is not to mention the equipment supplied by Russian supporters (2018, p. 215). It should be noted that cooperation between regular and irregular (of any kind) units was not an innovation within Balkan military thought during this time, rather it had been central to Yugoslav military doctrine (Patrick, 1994). In a way the partnership between the Serbian military, formerly the rump Yugoslav military, was a logical extension of pre-war doctrine which might explain the ease at which Serbian and BSA forces cooperated with one another, even when they attempted to portray distinctiveness from one another to external observers. As Malešević and Ó Dochartaigh (2018, p. 300) make clear the BSA was fundamentally the Bosnian Serb section of the former Yugoslav army allowed enough operational distance to claim independence: 'The General Staff was composed entirely of former professional JNA high ranking officers: four generals, seven colonels, and one captain. The new armed force also adopted the military doctrine of the JNA including its tactical, operational, and strategic dimensions'. However, this did not account for all their active forces:

> Following several waves of mass mobilization starting in May 1992, out of the total number of VRS [BSA] soldiers 98% were conscripted recruits. In most important respects throughout the war, the VRS tended to rely extensively on its professional cadre who were not only responsible for the command, tactics, strategy, and organization but also bore the brunt of action on the frontlines (Malešević and Ó Dochartaigh, 2018, p. 302).

This social composition would have significant consequences in terms of capability.

This supporting relationship was mirrored in other the paramilitary forces who shared the views and goals of the BSA but formed around different pre-war structures, such as Arkan's Tigers or the White Eagles. These groups presented themselves as independent organisations which were choosing to 'step up' to protect their fellow Serbians. Initially, at least, they were reliant on the same support as the BSA (Ron, 2000, p. 296; UN CoE, 1992, p. 76). As time progressed, however, these paramilitary forces were perhaps more closely aligned with the Serbian security rather than military forces (Glaurdić, 2009). These organisational connections and transfers served a purpose and gave the collective Serbian forces a wide range of options in the earlier stages of the conflict. Strategically, it was all part of an attempt to take, control and reforge territory (Toal and Dahlman, 2011, p. 307), to remake the space around them as they saw fit and for some to return it to what it 'used to be'. As one intercept from 1991 stated: 'Bosnia is ours...as long as you are there and I am here...and it will be lengthened and widened' (Glaurdić, 2009, p. 91). At a tactical and operational level, the support offered by the Serbian regime was aimed at ensuring the technical dominance of the BSA over its foes as quickly as possible. To achieve these aims, blurring the lines between formal Serbian forces and their irregular allies was essential and deliberate. The UN Commission of Experts (1992, p. 72) concluded that 'The confusion may be intended to permit senior military and political leaders to argue lack of knowledge of what was happening and inability to control such unlawful conduct'. This relationship has been described as 'a subcontracting relationship with semiprivate groups' (Ron, 2000, 287), with the recent expansion of work on militias (for some examples see Carey, 2015; Mumford, 2013; Rauta, 2016) we might rephrase this terminology, but the relationship was clearly that of a proxy or auxiliary at different times.

To an extent this worked, as the International Court of Justice ruled that crimes committed by the BSA were not attributable to the Former Yugoslavia government or to the Serbian regime, rejecting the ICTY finding ruling that they could (Spinedi, 2077, p. 827). However, this flexibility and early success came at a cost: 'The chain of command was significantly blurred, even to insiders. Consequently, the organizations' "command and control" structures were seriously eroded, which resulted in much confusion. The confusion

was more pronounced in Bosnia among Serb combatants, but seems to have been purposely kept that way for essentially political reasons' (UN CoE, 1992, p. 30). The BSA started strong but it could not maintain its advantage when Bosnian and particularly Croatian forces received external support and had the time to train. Although the BSA had helped secure the establishment of the Republika Srpska within the boundaries of Bosnia, time was against them and rather than adapting to the changes occurring around them they stuck to their stated aims and sought to push further and further. This would seal their fate. Although the forces of the fledgling Republika Srpska were capable and motivated, when they pushed too far, they began to run counter to the strategic interests of their sponsor. Although pursuing goals of Greater Serbia and regional power, the Serbian regime did not need to see Bosnia or Croatia destroyed and was more concerned with maintaining its local rather than regional advantages. This would come at the expense of their more fundamentalists proxies. When the BSA pushed too far their sponsor could no longer or was no longer willing to provide them with the strategic depth, in terms of space or resources, needed to resist the resurgent Croatians and Bosniaks and their power declined (Kaldor, 2013, p. 51). Even though they were 'the aggressors in this war, and it was they who initiated and applied most systematically and extensively the policy of ethnic cleansing', their power was clearly limited by the extent of their external support, which could be reduced voluntarily or because of NATO action (Kaldor, 2013, p. 44). Voluntary reductions from the Serbian point of view were seen most clearly when Bosnian Serbs rejected diplomatic efforts to bring the conflict to a close, first during the Vance-Owen Plan but also throughout the rest of the conflict when Serbia needed to apply pressure to their allies (Ramet, 2018, p. 211). This was one of the BSA core weaknesses, it was not willing to operate in a bounded system and saw complete success as its only option. It assumed others acted similarly and were not prepared to have their support withdrawn by a sponsor with more immediate concerns.

The BSA also suffered from another core weakness, its outward strength aside. They never overcame their initial composition and command and control problems and indeed seem to have suffered more and more cohesion related tension as the conflict progressed. No amount of technological or material advantages could make up for these. The central problem was conflict within and between units with greater or lesser commitments to the Serbian Ethnic ideal and how it should be achieved. It was 'riddled with a pronounced tension between (the former JNA) professional officers and conscripts who generally did not trust the high-ranking officers and tended to be much more loyal to their local (non-professional)

commanders' (Malešević and Ó Dochartaigh, 2018 p. 302). If we borrow briefly from Shapiro (2013) and highlight the importance of internal discipline, bureaucracy, and the ability for leaders to communicate their preferences and punish subordinates, we can see the problems inherent with the force structure adopted by the Serbian forces. A force made up of semi-autonomous units with localised loyalties combined with a lack of innovation due to early 'victory disease', either could not or would not adapt or innovate in the ways needed to maintain their power: 'many units there was a chronic lack of discipline. Some platoons were composed of soldiers who did not undergo even the basic military training and the new recruits had to learn how to use weapons on the frontline. Others emphasize the lack of enforcement of discipline' (Malešević and Ó Dochartaigh, 2018, p. 303). Again, we can see similarities to the findings made by McLauchlin (2020) and how different militia groups can attract different members based on the signals they demand from potential recruits and the longer term consequences derived from these. This was in almost complete contrast to the Croatian military which went from initial failure to success (Malešević, 2018, p. 736).

Seemingly true for all BSA capabilities, as the war progressed these problems became more and more pronounced and a failure to move away from its core motivations or beliefs doomed it in a changing world. At the beginning of the conflict, the BSA lacked the more advanced skills to press their military advantage especially in urban areas, meaning that most of gains were in rural areas or lightly urbanised locations (Ramet, 2018). When the tides of battle swung in the favour of the Croatian forces, this earlier inability to wage urban warfare provided the framework for the final straw of the flawed BSA strategic level thinking. When BSA forces had been unable to seize urban areas consistently, they instead surrounded them and laid siege with their own artillery and later the guns seized from UN compounds. These areas were then held hostage to success in negotiation or targeted for larger attacks, such as in Srebrenica. This would have been more than punishment enough but the BSA's lack of command and control would eventually see aggravated units and fronts take out their frustrations on the populations within these towns and cities. These attacks would eventually be the catalyst needed for NATO to properly punish Serbian forces and bring them to the negotiating table, which would eventually lead to the Dayton accords (Ramet, 2018, p. 236-7).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the two case studies of PIRA and BSA to highlight how groups which initially pursued (ethnically) fundamentalist policies either adapted or failed to do so in a changing strategic context. Although these case studies were primarily illustrative, they do present cases where adaptation led to continued survival and eventual partial success as well as another case where an actor can be abandoned by its less extreme sponsor as it overstretched. This has been to highlight the role of fundamentalism in a strategic sense. In both cases, establishing themselves as the most committed or the most capable organisation provided benefits to the organisation. It was the following decision to adapt or not which was perhaps the most telling and consequential. PIRA was able to move from a small conspiratorial group to one half of the Northern Ireland administration. The BSA benefitted early from Serbian military support and saw major successes within the early strategic context, when this changed they failed to adapt and suffered two major reversals, militarily at the hands of western backed forces and politically when Serbia no longer had a use for its inflexible proxy.

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