

---

## 5 Adapting to a Changing Environment—The Irish Republican Army as an Armed Group

Timothy D. Hoyt

### INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this chapter, a working definition for armed groups includes but is not limited to classic insurgents, terrorists, guerrillas, militias, police agencies, criminal organizations, warlords, privatized military organizations, mercenaries, contracted security firms, pirates, drug cartels, apocalyptic religious extremists, orchestrated rioters and mobs, or tribal factions.

Each of the types of armed groups discussed here is an organization capable of perpetrating organized violence. They are distinguishable by their different forms and functions. Form refers here to their physical and organizational structures. Are they a small cell, for instance, or a large bureaucratic institution? How is authority conveyed and asserted? Function, on the other hand, refers to the role that they play in society and their operational and tactical methods. How do armed groups operate? How are they commanded? What types of violent acts do they commit, and at whose behest?

Some types of armed groups are usually associated with a central government and the maintenance of public order—police agencies and militias. Others are associated with the maintenance of local autonomy within an established political order—some militias, tribal factions, and warlords, for example, but also criminal organizations and drug cartels. Others are dedicated to opposing or overthrowing the existing political order—classic insurgents, terrorists, and guerrillas, and perhaps even orchestrated rioters and

---

Dr. Timothy D. Hoyt is a professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College, where he has taught since 2002. He lectures on strategy, terrorism, counterinsurgency, totalitarian regimes, military transformation, and contemporary conflict, and also teaches an elective course on South Asian security. He received his undergraduate degrees from Swarthmore College, and his PhD in international relations and strategic studies from the Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in 1997. Professor Hoyt taught graduate courses on security in the developing world, South Asian security, technology and international security, and military strategy at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service from 1998 to 2002. In October 2003, he testified before two subcommittees of the House Committee on International Relations regarding terrorism in South and Southwest Asia. Dr. Hoyt is the author of *Military Industries and Regional Defense Policy* (Routledge, 2007), examining the role of military industry in the national security policies of India, Israel, and Iraq, and is beginning work on several book-length projects, including an analysis of American military strategy in the 21st century (London: Polity Press, forthcoming 2008–09) and a study of the strategy of the Irish Republican Army from 1913 to 2005. He is also the assistant editor of the *Journal of Strategic Studies*.

mobs. Finally, some exist primarily for profit—criminal organizations, privatized military organizations, mercenaries, contracted security firms, and pirates.

Some armed groups, particularly criminal groups, have no real higher aims. They are armed because violence is part of their occupation, and form and function are closely related for purely occupational reasons. Other armed groups defend society, communities, local elites, or a political class. In this case, their aims are relatively clear, and their forms and functions reflect the political systems or groups they are defending, the human and geographic terrains in which they operate, and traditional or professional standards inherited or acquired from similar groups and/or past experience.

This is not necessarily the case, however, with revolutionary political movements. These movements may find some or all of the different forms and functions of the various types of armed groups amenable to the pursuit of their broader political aims. Organizations taking one form—say, an insurgent or terrorist group—may still assume the functions of another (robbing banks, defending minority populations at risk). Revolutionary and political movements are using violence in the pursuit of political objectives—a type of war—and the various types of armed groups represent informal quasi-military structures or practice functions that can help achieve those aims. As a result, it is not surprising that they may demonstrate the characteristics of more than one type of armed group—sometimes sequentially, and sometimes simultaneously.

The year 2008 will be the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)—a transnational movement dedicated to the establishment of a united Irish republic through violence, and the antecedent of today's Irish Republican Army (IRA).<sup>1</sup> The Irish Republican Movement from its inception has been intensely political, deeply conspiratorial, and committed to the violent overthrow of British rule in Ireland. Its supporters, recruited by appeals to ideology, tradition, and even family links, co-opt and cooperate with a wide variety of social and political organizations, in addition to supporting violent activity in many forms. The overriding factor is the objective—the removal of official British presence in Ireland, and the unification of the island under local rule. The revolutionary movement the IRA represents has evolved and adapted itself to a wide range of forms and functions and has at various times looked and acted like many of the types of armed groups discussed in this volume. As a result, the IRA is a useful case study examining how and when armed groups shift their forms and/or their functions and how one kind of group can evolve into another.

This chapter is laid out in three sections. The first section is a (very) brief discussion of the history of the Irish Republican Movement and its evolution during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The second, and longest, section will look at the IRA's activities using the armed-groups methodology, highlighting the wide range of forms and functions the IRA has utilized during its long history. The final section will discuss the relevance of the IRA case to the future study of armed groups, emphasizing the importance of understanding underlying objectives. Revolutionary political movements may emerge and reemerge, exhibiting the characteristics of more than one type of armed group depending on their circumstances. In these cases, the armed-group methodology may confuse more than clarify, and the analyst must focus more on the objective than on the form or function of the organization.

## IRELAND'S REPUBLICAN TRADITION

The Irish Republican Brotherhood was created as a secret, revolutionary movement to violently overthrow British rule in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> The president of the IRB, according to its by-laws, was the provisional leader of Ireland and all Irishmen until that day when a republic could be established.<sup>3</sup> IRB figures played key roles in Irish political and social life in the late nineteenth century, participating in legitimate politics (the Home Rule movement); clandestine and illegal violence (the Land League); and the flourishing of Irish culture, sports, and language in the late 1890s. In essence, the IRB attempted to secretly infiltrate and influence any activity that symbolically or actively opposed British rule. The one key unifying factor, however, was an understanding that legitimate politics could not and would not establish a republic. Revolutionary ideals were synonymous with violence, and the republic could not be established by the ballot box.<sup>4</sup>

The two organizations most closely associated with the Irish Republican Movement were formed, with considerable IRB participation, in the early 1900s. The Sinn Fein movement, later a political party, was intended to usurp British government authority through a policy of principled rejection of Britain's right to rule from Westminster. Sinn Fein later became an umbrella political movement for rejection of British rule from 1916 to 1921, and more recently has been the official political voice of the Irish Republican Army since 1948.<sup>5</sup> Today, Sinn Fein is the largest political party representing the nationalist (Catholic) community in Northern Ireland, and the only political party that runs in elections on both sides of the Irish/Northern Irish border.

The Irish Volunteers were organized as a nationalist militia in 1913, comprising over 180,000 members at the beginning of the First World War.<sup>6</sup> A small group of about 1,500 extremists, under the command of IRB leaders, seized central Dublin in 1916 (the "Easter Rising").<sup>7</sup> Survivors of the Rising provided the core of a larger organization that later called itself the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA opposed British rule in the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–1921, relying on violent tactics, including assassination and insurgency, but also creating a shadow government acting as a police force and judiciary in many rural areas of Ireland. IRA and Sinn Fein leadership negotiated a cease-fire and later a treaty with the British government, establishing the Irish Free State (now the Irish Republic) and the province of Northern Ireland (which remains a part of the United Kingdom).<sup>8</sup> Extremists in the IRA rejected the treaty, fought and lost a civil war in 1922–1923, and then became an underground movement still committed to the establishment of a 32-county Irish Republic.<sup>9</sup>

The IRA's rejection of partition and (until recently) the legitimacy of both the northern and southern political entities transformed the Irish Republican Movement. The IRA became, in the words of J. Bowyer Bell, "The Secret Army."<sup>10</sup> The dominating features of the organization were threefold. First, its commitment to violence as the only means of achieving the republic reversed, for all practical purposes, the traditional relationship of strategy subordinating itself to policy. The military leadership (embodied in the IRA General Executive and Army Council) effectively made all policy decisions, while the political leadership (Sinn Fein) docilely followed tradition and rejected participation at the national level on either side of the Irish border (a policy that changed in the 1960s in the case of the "Official" IRA and in the 1980s in the case of the "Provisional" IRA but that

continues in effect with other splinter groups, including both the “Continuity” IRA and the “Real” IRA).<sup>11</sup> Second, the movement became quasi-clandestine and, because of its continuing efforts to procure arms and resources, frequently resorted to criminal activities. Third, because of the overtly discriminatory nature of the Protestant-dominated Northern Irish government, the IRA maintained legitimacy as both a defender of the Catholic minority and as a political symbol of national unity and resistance.<sup>12</sup> These features help explain the range of forms and functions that the IRA took from 1923–1969, and also shaped the IRA’s revival and evolution in the Northern Irish Troubles (1969–1997).

## **TYPES OF ARMED GROUPS: THE IRA AS AN “ARMED-GROUP CHAMELEON”**

### **Classic Insurgencies and Guerrilla Units**

The IRA is often used as an archetype of a classic insurgent group, particularly when referencing the rural guerrilla operations of 1920–1921. The IRA in this period was organized on a territorial basis. Each county organized one or more “brigades,” and each brigade was encouraged to organize a “flying column”—a small group of full-time guerrillas. To coordinate operations in multiple counties, provincial “divisions” were organized. None of these formations were of uniform strength, and their effectiveness varied widely based on local leadership and access to weapons—a constant problem for the IRA throughout its existence.<sup>13</sup>

During the Anglo-Irish War, the IRA benefited from broad political support and the availability of large numbers of part- and full-time volunteers, which made a territorial presence viable.<sup>14</sup> From 1923 to 1969, the IRA changed form several times, and during the 1956–1962 border campaign attempted to spark a *foco*-like rural insurgency in Northern Ireland.<sup>15</sup> “Flying columns” of volunteers based in the Irish Republic launched cross-border raids into the north. This campaign failed abysmally—not only did the Northern Irish population fail to rise (the IRA failed to appreciate both the coercive apparatus of the northern state and the determination of its Protestant majority) but security crackdowns in both the north and the south devastated the IRA’s leadership and arms stores, and the campaign withered into incoherence. The IRA considered reviving the “flying column” in the mid-1980s, to take advantage of Libyan arms shipments, but rejected the idea as impractical.<sup>16</sup> The territorial structure of the IRA was maintained in the north, however, and was revitalized in the political crisis of 1969–1970.

### **Terrorist Cells**

The IRA has pursued classic terrorist practices throughout its existence, including assassination, kidnapping, sectarian violence, and attacks on noncombatants—even while, in apparent contradiction, maintaining relatively strict discrimination in its targeting efforts.<sup>17</sup> As early as 1919, leaders of the IRA were demanding attacks on civilian crowds and British political targets, as well as considering the use of biological agents against British livestock.<sup>18</sup> The port of Liverpool was wrecked by firebombing in a 1920 attack.<sup>19</sup> Michael Collins’s handpicked assassins devastated the intelligence capabilities of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and, to a lesser extent, British military intelligence.<sup>20</sup>

The IRA continued its traditional use of terrorist tactics after the civil war. Political assassination remained part of the Irish political scene throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>21</sup> The IRA's 1939 campaign in England was based on urban terror, relying on small bombs in civilian areas to coerce Britain into withdrawing from Northern Ireland.<sup>22</sup> The 1956–1962 campaign made an effort to be more discriminating in both targets and tactics—the IRA's General Order Eight banned attacks on officials in the Irish Republic, and the campaign deliberately avoided urban and civilian targets.<sup>23</sup>

The IRA's reputation for terror, however, was demonstrated most dramatically during the Troubles. The IRA popularized the use of the car bomb in the early 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Under the crude justification of “economic targeting,” bombing campaigns regularly devastated the downtown areas of major cities—Derry and Belfast, starting in 1972, and episodic campaigns attacking cities in the British mainland (the mid-1970s and early 1990s being particularly lethal). Bombs in crowded civic venues—Enniskillen in 1987 and the Real IRA's bombing of Omagh in 1998—had profoundly negative strategic and political effects. The IRA briefly resorted to “human bombing”—holding family members hostage and forcing an adult to drive a car bomb to its destination without providing the individual an opportunity to flee—in October 1990, which discredited it enormously and led to a significant loss of local support.<sup>25</sup>

The IRA also pursued deliberate policies of assassination and murder against a wide range of targets. Political leaders were frequent targets—the splinter group Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) killed member of Parliament Airey Neave in 1979, and the IRA attacks on Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and 10 Downing Street failed in 1984 and 1991, respectively. Lord Mountbatten was killed by an IRA bomb in 1979 along with several innocents.<sup>26</sup> Members of the British Army and security forces were always targets—even when off duty, performing in noncombatant roles, or stationed overseas.<sup>27</sup> Members of the judiciary were selectively targeted.<sup>28</sup> On occasion, new targets were publicly identified (sometimes *ex post facto*) as “legitimate” due to their cooperation with the authorities—construction workers building police stations, for example.<sup>29</sup>

Organizationally, the IRA adopted a classic terrorist cell structure beginning in 1977.<sup>30</sup> This adaptation was part of the new “Long War” strategy, which intended to maintain significant resistance and political violence until attrition forced a British withdrawal.<sup>31</sup> Cell structures are less amenable to intelligence penetration—a significant weakness of the IRA's old territorial organization—and facilitated greater specialization and professionalism in the new “Active Service Units.” The cell structure dramatically decreased the number of active fighters in the IRA organization—although the organization never suffered from an absence of potential recruits to replace operational losses. The cell system also allowed the gradual buildup of capacity to strike against British targets on foreign soil, including strikes in Germany and the Netherlands, and a spectacularly failed attack in Gibraltar in 1988.<sup>32</sup>

The IRA has benefited from transnational links. The American diaspora has always been a crucial supporter for Irish violence.<sup>33</sup> The IRA sought assistance from the Communist bloc in the 1970s (including Czech arms manufacturers), and formed fraternal alliances with other violent revolutionary movements, including Palestinian groups, the Basque ETA, and the Sandinistas.<sup>34</sup> The most important source of arms in the 1980s was

Libya, which provided roughly 150 tons of equipment between 1985 and 1987.<sup>35</sup> The IRA has also provided volunteers, advice, and expertise to other movements, including both sides in the Spanish civil war and, more recently, Colombia's FARC.<sup>36</sup>

### **Militias**

The IRA acted as a community defense force of sorts in response to sectarian violence in the north—particularly in Belfast—in the 1930s.<sup>37</sup> The IRA reemerged as the defender of Catholic neighborhoods in 1969 and particularly in 1970.<sup>38</sup> The Northern Irish regime proved incapable of either managing political reform (including modest pressure from a nonviolent civil rights movement) or maintaining political order. Communal violence created significant urban destruction and mass population transfers, and the security vacuum was filled by the British Army and the IRA.<sup>39</sup>

Through 1977, the IRA remained organized on a territorial basis, the units of which functioned at times as an independent militia. The Belfast Brigade, for example, was organized in three battalions, each responsible for certain sectors of the city. The Belfast Brigade alone numbered 1,200 members in late 1971.<sup>40</sup> The IRA and local populations created “no-go zones” that briefly provided political autonomy and freedom from security force surveillance (until eliminated in “Operation Motorman”). Throughout the Troubles, the IRA staged operations intended to demonstrate its presence in both urban and rural areas, including the establishment of temporary checkpoints, roadblocks, and other methods of surveillance and traffic control. Although the IRA moved away from a territorial structure after 1977, it never completely abandoned its local roots. Some areas remained virtual “no-go” zones for the security forces until very late in the Troubles—particularly the remote and contested border region of South Armagh.<sup>41</sup>

### **Police Agencies**

Because the IRA is an inherently political organization, it has attempted to set up shadow institutions that usurp legitimate functions in local communities. This is a useful means of not only demonstrating its political competence but also delegitimizing British rule. In the Anglo-Irish War, IRA supporters dominated town and county councils and guerrilla action gradually reduced police presence in the countryside. As a result, it was relatively easy for the IRA to take over local policing functions and even to set up competing judicial processes for handling routine legal matters.<sup>42</sup> In Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary was considered an illegitimate sectarian force by much of the minority Catholic population.<sup>43</sup> As a result, particularly in urban areas, the IRA took on local policing functions and often resolved local criminal complaints—a process including such punishments as beatings, deportation, “kneecapping,” and execution.<sup>44</sup> At times, the IRA and its supporters dealt particularly harshly with drug dealers—a major political issue in Dublin during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>45</sup>

### **Criminal Organizations and Drug Cartels**

Underground revolutionary movements always need money and arms, and it is hardly surprising that the IRA has been heavily involved in a wide range of criminal activity during armed campaigns and in periods of peace. Arms raids were a regular event in the 1950s as the IRA geared up for the border campaign.<sup>46</sup> The IRA benefited from arms

thefts and illegal transfers in the United States during the Troubles.<sup>47</sup> Money is always in short supply—robbing post offices in the Irish Republic has been an important source of funds for the IRA and its splinter groups. Major heists are more rare but still melodramatic and lucrative—the Great Train Robbery of 1976 or the Northern Bank raid of 2004 are prominent examples.<sup>48</sup>

The IRA and/or its followers have occasionally stooped to baser felonious behavior as well. Kidnapping has filled IRA coffers from time to time.<sup>49</sup> Although the Irish Republican Movement in general has been strongly antinarcotics, individual members have been engaged in drug trafficking, and cooperation with the FARC in 2001 did little to distance the IRA from claims of drug dealing.<sup>50</sup> Like the Mafia and other criminal organizations, the IRA is ruthless in pursuing informers. Unlike most criminal organizations, however, the IRA set up a dedicated counterintelligence organization known as the “Nutting Squad” that tortured and executed dozens of victims on both sides of the Irish border.<sup>51</sup>

Last but not least, the IRA became largely self-sustaining through a wide range of criminal and quasi-legitimate activities in Northern Ireland and on the border.<sup>52</sup> Smuggling goods, particularly fuel, was a lucrative means of taking advantage of subsidies and differences in currency exchange rates. The IRA owns many businesses and front companies in Belfast and elsewhere. Local drinking clubs add a small tax to the price of each drink, which helps fill IRA coffers.<sup>53</sup> The Falls Road Black Taxi service created employment for ex-prisoners and significant contributions for the IRA war effort. Insurance schemes, extortion, and coercion in the construction business also provided important income streams.<sup>54</sup>

### Warlords

Ireland is too small for warlords of any significant scale, but the combination of difficult terrain and frequent political factionalism within the Irish Republican Movement has occasionally created unique autonomous actors. The splinter group Saor Uladh was an important faction in the 1950s, based in the border region and carrying out arms raids and attacks on the Northern Irish authorities.<sup>55</sup> Various IRA splinter groups have carved out small territorial niches for themselves—the INLA was very active in the Divis Flats multistory housing project in West Belfast, for instance.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the most pronounced autonomous region, however, was the operations area of the IRA’s South Armagh brigade, headed by Thomas “Slab” Murphy.<sup>57</sup> This section of the Irish border is known as “Bandit Country,” and the Murphy farm straddles the border (allowing de facto sanctuary by simply fleeing across the house or farm complex and crossing the border). The Murphy farm complex was the base for a massive smuggling effort that operated for over 20 years. This smuggling effort made the South Armagh brigade functionally self-sustaining, and politically irreplaceable—it not only funded its own operations and weapons research and development, but its resources were vital to IRA HQ and operations throughout the province.<sup>58</sup>

The South Armagh brigade also benefited from a benign operating environment. The local population was either actively supportive or relatively passive. Security forces received little assistance and few tips from the local population. Unusual activity of any kind was quickly reported to the local IRA. The core of the brigade leadership, and its

active service units, were locals who had lived in the area most of their lives and were completely loyal. Unlike other IRA commands, which had relatively high turnover rates due to death and capture, and which were increasingly penetrated through electronic surveillance and informers, the South Armagh brigade remained a stable and secure organization. As a result, it was increasingly given more latitude for independent operations and greater responsibility.<sup>59</sup> Slab Murphy—one of the quintessential IRA “hard men”—was brought into the IRA Army Council and eventually reportedly was made the chief of staff of the IRA.<sup>60</sup> The brigade was given responsibility for running the bombing campaign in England in the 1990s, bypassing existing organizations that would normally have been in charge of creating the bombs and the “sleeper cells” in England.<sup>61</sup> By 1996–1997, when the IRA briefly renewed the conflict, the South Armagh brigade was the only element of the IRA still capable of sustained and effective operations.<sup>62</sup> In 2006, a combined operation by Irish and Northern Irish security forces finally simultaneously raided the Murphy compound on both sides of the border, seizing vast amounts of cash, computer and paper records, and other valuable intelligence materials. Since that time, British investigations have shut down a number of other front companies and investments reportedly owned by the Murphy family.<sup>63</sup>

### **Mercenaries**

Although the mercenary IRA man is now a mythic figure in airport fiction, thanks to the writings of Jack Higgins and Tom Clancy, actual mercenary involvement by the IRA has been rare. As mentioned above, IRA volunteers served with both sides in the Spanish civil war. More recently, Colombian authorities arrested three members of the IRA in 2001—two longtime experts from South Armagh and a Sinn Fein spokesman representing the party’s interests in Cuba. They were reportedly engaged in training FARC in the creation of mortars and other advanced munitions.<sup>64</sup>

### **Orchestrated Rioters and Mobs**

At various times, when the IRA has been particularly weak or in the midst of a dormant period, IRA activists have emerged as the core of organized rioters or mobsters. The IRA was active in opposing the neofascist Blueshirt movement (headed by a former IRA chief of staff) in the 1930s.<sup>65</sup> It played a leading role in the civil rights protests of the 1960s in Northern Ireland (where it provided both active membership and security during marches and demonstrations—many of which unfortunately degenerated into communal violence).<sup>66</sup> The IRA was active in organizing riots and mobs during the Troubles, often using them as cover for other activities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Armed-groups methodology is a valuable analytical contribution to the study of nonstate violence, particularly at the intersection between law enforcement and military activities. Using a narrow definition that focuses on form and function, this methodology is particularly good at making distinctions between groups with different, but not necessarily political, motives.

Groups that do have political motives, and particularly revolutionary ones, may actually take on a wide range of the functions associated with armed groups. FARC, for

example, has demonstrated criminal behavior, including an intimate association with the narcotics trade. At the same time, however, it takes the form of a terrorist group and, in “liberated areas,” both a militia and a classic insurgency.

The IRA is perhaps the best example of a multifunction armed group that also, occasionally, changes form. This is at least partly the result of its history of successes and failures, which contribute to its multigenerational nature and deep political roots. The IRA actually “won” the Anglo-Irish War, but a substantial minority felt that a more complete and total success was not only possible but that accepting any compromise was actually an act of treason. This provided the base for continued campaigns, some obvious failures (1939–1945, 1956–1962) and others more protracted and complicated in nature and outcome (1969–1997).

Throughout its existence, the IRA has engaged in certain functions associated with more narrowly defined groups—criminal activity (bank robbing, kidnapping, gun smuggling), terrorism (assassination), and militia-type behavior (defense of the minority community in Northern Ireland). Other activities have been adapted as the organization’s strength and influence increased—police activity, for example, is only possible with substantial community support and the relative absence or weakness of local security forces. In short, trying to assess the capacity or threat of an armed group purely by its function can be misleading, unless the analyst takes a broad view to see if the same group is engaged—simultaneously or episodically—in multiple functions. A group carrying out multiple functions may be fundamentally more robust, more dangerous, and possess far greater capacity than a single-function group.

Overfocusing on form holds an even greater opportunity for misunderstanding. The IRA has changed form at various times during its existence, generally mirroring its relative strength and popular support. This has not meant, however, that the IRA was not pursuing greater ambitions. Any perfunctory analysis of the IRA in 1945 or in the mid-1960s would have dismissed it as a defunct organization, gradually deteriorating into either a debating society or a drinking club, with only a minor ability to carry out mischievous criminal or demonstrative acts. In each case, however, the IRA reshaped itself, taking on different forms and functions as it gained power, authority, and legitimacy. The IRA of the 1940s became a tightly organized criminal group focusing on arms raids, and gradually built itself into a more formidable (but ultimately unsuccessful) guerrilla structure. The IRA in the late 1960s reemerged in response to civic violence and took advantage of political unrest and British intervention to re-create itself both as one of the most successful terrorist networks in history and, more recently, as a powerful and influential political movement.<sup>67</sup>

Change in form can also reflect weakness, of course. The IRA’s activities today consist primarily of local coercion and intimidation (for economic or political purposes) and the occasional spectacular bank robbery. It has, in essence, taken the form once again of a criminal enterprise—albeit a powerful and politically connected one. Splinter groups—the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA—continue occasional acts of terrorism, but lack the capacity and multiplicity of functions that the IRA demonstrated for almost 30 years. Still, if the history of the Irish Republican Movement demonstrates anything, it is that a small group with only modest functional capacity still possesses the possibility to rise, in

the Provisional IRA's metaphor, "like a phoenix from the ashes"—drawing on the legitimacy and historical tradition of the republican ideal to once again become a more significant problem, if the proper circumstances arise. For this reason, if for no other, we should hope that Sinn Féin's reemergence as a political party can redirect the republican ideal into more peaceful, democratic pursuits.

## NOTES

1. For the purposes of this chapter, the term *Irish Republican Army (IRA)* will be used to refer to the organization of that name up through 1969, and specifically to refer to the Provisional IRA from 1970 onwards. The Northern Irish conflict has sparked many divisions and splinter groups—when necessary, they will be referred to by their own names (Official IRA, Real IRA, Continuity IRA), while the generic form will be reserved for the most powerful and influential faction (the Provisionals).
2. A recent, comprehensive examination of the Irish Republican Brotherhood is Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005).
3. Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965).
4. Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2005), 3–6.
5. Brian Feeney, *Sinn Féin: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 186–95.
6. David Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland" in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), gives a figure of 191,000 (386); Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism* (London: Penguin, 1972), gives a figure of 188,000 (520).
7. Townshend, *Easter 1916*; Tim Pat Coogan, *1916: The Easter Rising* (London: Phoenix, 2001); and Max Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion: Dublin 1916* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995).
8. Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal and Kingston: MacGill-Queen's Press, 2002); Francis Costello, *The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1916–1923: Years of Revolt* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003); Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916–1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War, 1916–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
9. Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1988); Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1982).
10. The classic works on the IRA, begun in the 1960s and updated regularly, are J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997); and Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA*, rev. ed. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
11. Recent works on the IRA that discuss the strategy of the Irish Republican Movement include M. L. R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Militant Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (London: Routledge, 1995); Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002). The Clausewitzian interpretation is my own.
12. For IRA actions and preparedness early in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, see Bell, *The Secret Army*, 357, 365–66; Coogan, *The IRA*, 334–35. For an inflammatory but informative description of the evolution of Northern Ireland's political crisis, see Michael O'Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State* (London: Pluto Press, 1976). Other works on the origins of the Troubles include Richard Rose, *Governing without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Eamonn McCann, *War and an Irish Town* (London: Pluto Press, 1980); Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal and the Search for Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 1996); and J. Bowyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence, 1967–1992* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993).
13. A romantic depiction by the commandant of West Cork's flying column is Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1949). A more scholarly analysis of the IRA volunteers in this period is Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare* (London: Irish Academic Press, 1996).

14. Feeney, *Sinn Fein*; Bell, *The Secret Army*, 16–28; Macardle, *The Irish Republic*. A detailed examination of the evolution of the IRA in county Cork, the most militant of Ireland’s rural provinces, is Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. & Its Enemies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
15. For a history of the border campaign, see Coogan, *The IRA*, 297–329; Bell, *The Secret Army*, 255–336; Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* 66–72; English, *Armed Struggle*, 71–78. An IRA tactical handbook from the period has been republished as General Headquarters, Irish Republican Army, *Handbook for Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army: Notes on Guerrilla Warfare* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 1985).
16. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 312–13, 333–34.
17. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* 31–35.
18. Michael T. Foy, *Michael Collins’s Intelligence War: The Struggle between the British and the IRA, 1919–1921* (Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 127–28. Plans drawn up by IRA chief of staff Richard Mulcahy examined the possibility of infecting British troops with typhoid and British horses with glanders.
19. For a detailed analysis of IRA operations in Britain in 1920–1921, see Hart, *The I.R.A. at War, 1916–1923*, 141–77.
20. See Foy, *Michael Collins’s Intelligence War*; T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad and the Intelligence Operations of Michael Collins* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2005); and James Gleeson, *Bloody Sunday* (London: Peter Davies, 1962).
21. Conor Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard: The IRA and the Modern Irish State* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), is an excellent history of the IRA in this period.
22. On IRA efforts from 1939–1945, see Coogan, *The IRA*, 113–217; Bell, *The Secret Army*, 145–236.
23. See Brendan O’Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein, 1985 to Today* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 355–57 (Appendix 2: IRA General Army Orders [As Amended by the Army Council] October 1973); Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 187.
24. Sean MacStiofain, *Revolutionary in Ireland* (Edinburgh: R&R Clark, 1975), 243–44.
25. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 347–49.
26. According to at least one informer account, an attack was also planned against Prince Charles and Princess Diana in the early 1980s. See Sean O’Callaghan, *The Informer* (London: Bantam Press, 1998), 144, 151, 156. On the Mountbatten assassination, see Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallic, *The Provisional IRA* (London: Heinemann, 1987), 248–49; and Toby Harnden, “Bandit Country”: *The IRA & South Armagh* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 201–205. On IRA targets more generally, see J. Bowyer Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets: An Analysis of Tactical Aspects of the Armed Struggle 1969–1989* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1990).
27. Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets*, 30, 41–44.
28. Lord Justice Sir Maurice Gibson was specifically targeted because of his hard anti-IRA stance, dying with his wife in an ambush in 1987. An attempt to kill Justice Ian Higgins in the same region failed shortly thereafter. Harnden, “Bandit Country,” 224–28.
29. Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets*, 31.
30. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* 153, 160, 188; Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 148–62, 332–34. The cell structure was, in fact, unevenly applied. An excellent analysis of IRA organization in the Troubles is J. Bowyer Bell, *The IRA, 1968–2000: Analysis of a Secret Army* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 126–47.
31. Peter Taylor, *Behind the Mask: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (New York: TV Books, 1999), 245–64; Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* 143–68.
32. Bell, *The IRA, 1968–2000*, 35; English, *Armed Struggle*, 256.
33. On the U.S. connection in more recent years, see Jack Holland, *The American Connection: U.S. Guns, Money & Influence in Northern Ireland* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988); and James Adams, *The Financing of Terror* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 131–55. The importance of U.S. financing and weapons faded over time, due in no small part to the committed efforts of U.S. law-enforcement and intelligence communities.

34. See Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 359. On the Czech arms fiasco, see Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms: A Year in the Provisional IRA* (London: MacMillan, 1973). The prisons acted as centers of leftist thought and philosophy, which influenced both IRA and Sinn Fein leadership. See English, *Armed Struggle*, 233–37; and Laurence McKeown, *Out of Time: Irish Republican Prisoners; Long Kesh, 1972–2000* (Belfast: BTP Publications, 2001).
35. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 8–33; O'Brien, *The Long War*, 131–53. Another 150-ton shipment from Libya was intercepted.
36. On the Spanish civil war, see Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard*, 164–72; Bell, *The Secret Army*, 130–35. On the FARC connection, see Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 489–91; Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 424.
37. Coogan, *The IRA*, 160–65.
38. English, *Armed Struggle*, 120–37; Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?* 91–95; Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 253–67.
39. Bell, *The Secret Army*, 373–79; McCann, *War and an Irish Town*.
40. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 103. This was impressive growth, as the IRA could only muster 50 fighters in Belfast in 1969.
41. Harnden, “*Bandit Country*,” is an excellent description of the British government’s ongoing difficulties in this region.
42. Arthur Mitchell, “Alternative Government: ‘Exit Britannia’—The Formation of the Irish National State 1918–21,” in *The Irish Revolution, 1913–1923*, ed. Joost Augusteijn (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 70–86; Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 347–53.
43. Reflections on the RUC can be found in a wide literature, including Raymond Murray, *State Violence: Northern Ireland, 1969–1997* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1998), 33–36; Kevin Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA* (London: Zed Press, 1982); McCann, *War and an Irish Town*; and O’Farrell, *Northern Ireland*.
44. Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, 318–23; Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 153.
45. Antinarcotics activity carried out under a false name (Direct Action against Drugs) is discussed in Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 437, 400.
46. Bell, *The Secret Army*, 255–71.
47. Holland, *The American Connection*.
48. On the Great Train Robbery, see Bell, *IRA Tactics and Targets*, 92–98. A bank robbery in Newry, on 10 November 1994, netted 131,000 pounds sterling (and resulted in the death of a postal worker), even though the IRA was technically in a cease-fire at the time. Bell, *The Secret Army*, 655. The Northern Bank raid netted over 25 million pounds sterling. BBC News, “Police Say IRA behind Bank Raid,” January 2005, [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/4154657.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4154657.stm) (accessed 11 October 2007).
49. See, for example, Coogan, *The IRA*, 521–24; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, 349.
50. On the FARC connection, see English, *Armed Struggle*, 331–32.
51. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 154–55. According to recent reports, the “Nutting Squad” was penetrated at the highest levels by British agents. See Martin Ingram and Greg Harkin, *Stakeknife: Britain’s Secret Agents in Ireland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
52. Adams, *The Financing of Terror*, 156–84; Harnden, “*Bandit Country*,” 11–47.
53. Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, 312.
54. Adams, *The Financing of Terror*, 156–84; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, 312–13; Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 459–61.
55. Coogan, *The IRA*, 283–89; Bell, *The Secret Army*, 255, 275–80, 316–18.
56. Bell, *The Secret Army*, 413–14, 421–22, 443–44; Coogan, *The IRA*, 534–43; O’Brien, *The Long War*, 333–35.
57. Murphy is a key figure in Moloney’s *A Secret History of the IRA*, as well as in Harnden’s “*Bandit Country*.” One of the first major mentions of him by name is in Adams, *The Financing of Terror*.

58. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 459–60; Adams, *The Financing of Terror*, 156–60; Harnden, “Bandit Country,” 5–47, 348–51.
59. See Harnden, “Bandit Country”; and Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 160–61, 262, 459.
60. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, 478–79, 513.
61. *Ibid.*, 441–43.
62. Harnden, “Bandit Country.”
63. A brief synopsis of Murphy’s recent career, including reports of a major cross-border raid staged by both Irish and Northern Irish security services, can be found at [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Murphy\\_\(Irish\\_republican\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Murphy_(Irish_republican)) (accessed on 11 October 2007).
64. Martin Hodgson, Henry McDonald, and Peter Beaumont, “IRA Blunder in the Jungle Sparks US Rage,” *Observer*, 19 August 2001, available at [observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,4241717-110236,00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,4241717-110236,00.html) (accessed 12 October 2007); Rosie Cowan, “IRA ‘Approved Weapons Tests in Colombia,’” *Guardian*, 14 June 2002, available at [www.guardian.co.uk/colombia/story/0,11502,737240,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/colombia/story/0,11502,737240,00.html) (accessed 12 October 2007).
65. Bell, *The Secret Army*, 105–17.
66. Tony Geraghty, *The Irish War: The Hidden Conflict between the IRA and British Intelligence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3–28.
67. A useful short study of British errors early in the Northern Ireland Troubles is Rod Thornton, “Getting It Wrong: The Crucial Mistakes Made in the Early Stages of the British Army’s Deployment to Northern Ireland (August 1969 to March 1972),” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 1 (February 2007): 73–107.