Brief Insight Ira Terrorist Or Freedom Fighters Essay, Research Paper

Brief Insight:

IRA Terrorist or freedomfighters

The IRA (Irish Republican Army) is an unofficial, paramilitary nationalist organisation whose purpose is to make British rule in Ireland ineffective by the use of armed force and to assist achieving an independent republic (the entire island) by the unification of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This objective is pursued on a military level by the IRA and on the political level by the nationalist party, Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone). These two organisations function independently. However their members overlap each other, so that membership in the former does not exclude membership in the other and vice versa.

Throughout this essay terrorism will be defined as a systematic use of or threat of physical or mental violence against government, publics or individuals to obtain political objectives, without foundation in legally accepted and publicly known courts of law.

The definition of freedom fighters used will be a group or person fighting for independence and freedom, with a supportive majority of the people it is fighting for. The purpose of this essay is to try to give a possible interpretation of the IRA and what it is.

The history of republican violence reaches back as far as the 18th century, and in the late 19th century republic groups killed the secretary of state for Ireland, and began to dynamite army barracks and public offices in England. The IRA evolved in 1919 as a successor to Irish Volunteers (founded in 1913).

In the 70s IRA was divided into the official+ wing, working for a united Ireland in a revolutionary, socialist republic, and the provisional+ wing (the Provos)(PIRA) consisting of younger, overtly sectarian Catholic members committing to the use of terror tactics to force British troops out of Northern Ireland to form a unified Ireland.

Their enthusiasm is drawn from a number of historical rebellions, most importantly the Easter Rising in 1916. The Republicans have always had a strong sense of legacy and historical symbolism. That might be why they still use military tactics. They have recognised that it has resulted in their alienation, but they feel that if they give up now it would mean that those who died in the violent struggles throughout the past would have died for nothing. A compromise is equivalent to surrender. The PIRA illustrated this in 1978 by saying We can’t give up now and admit that men and women were sent to their graves for nothing+.

This attitude show their eagerness of fighting, at any cost, including terrorist acts such as the recent bombings in Manchester and London.

The problem of Northern Ireland is that it has a Protestant, unionist majority while Ireland and the island as a whole has a Catholic, republican majority. So if a hypotethical referendum concerning separation from Great Britain was to be held who is to be included as voters? The Catholics say that the whole island should be included, while the Protestants, on the other hand, naturally disagrees.

British soldiers and British administrators have never brought anything but death, suffering, starvation, and untold misery to this country. They will never bring anything else until they get out+.

This ethos from Sinn Fein in the 70s sums up how they feel that Britain has no moral right to rule over their country, and that they exploit the Irish and divide and distract the people.

The IRA seems to have no qualms about the use of terrorist tactics, and destruction in their cause. A well-known Republican, Danny Morrison stated in 1989 …when it is politically costly for the British to remain in Ireland, they’ll go…it wont be triggered until a large number of British soldiers are killed and that’s what going to happen+.

Another reason for using terrorism is that today terrorism’s public impact has been magnified by the use of modern means of communications. Death, blood, violence and destruction sell, not only as a news report, but today people are attracted to such as mentioned. So any act of terrorism is guaranteed to attract media coverage , which brings the event into millions of people and exposes the public to the terrorists’ demands, grievances and political goals. Such acts are used as a mean of pressure towards the British Government, but at the same time it will make it harder to get sympathy from ordinary people. It is these common people the IRA depend upon for fundraising, especially from the Irish community in the U.S.. The use of violence also tends to strengthen the resistence from the victims and their authorities. So it can be said that the use of terrorist tactics is a double-edgedsword.

In addition to this the IRA uses public attacks, especially in England, to stress the British economy by disrupting daily life, claiming England is the belly of the beast and that is where it hurts most+. They might feel that England is so strong and resourceful in comparison to themselves, that they have to use the strongest mean available: violence in the form of guerilla warfare.

In an attempt to gain support from both Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland the IRA play down sectarian violence and play up the Irish freedom Vs British tyranni motif.

This year the U.S. has released terrorist list, consisting of 30 groups, which are not allowed to raise funds in the States. This list omits the IRA. One reason why the IRA is not included is because of the many Irishmen in the U.S.A., and the administration is afraid to suffer a loss of support from this group.

Another obvious reason is that it is difficult to make a clear-cut statement whether the IRA are terrorists of freedom fighters. President Clinton has, however, on several occasions condamned the IRA’s use of violence. But considering the U.S.A. has a very strict policy towards terrorism, this list shows, if not support, then at least not a final, judgemental standpoint towards the IRA.

The Sinn Fein has only about 15 % of the votes in Northern Ireland,and the rest of the remaining Catholic minority votes (about 40 % of the population) goes mainly to SDLP, which has a much less violent politic than the Sinn Fein has. Thus, only a minority of the minority supports the IRA. Therefore since not having the support of the majority upon whose behalf it claims to fight, neither from the Northern Irish population as a whole or the Catholic minority it weakens the claims from the IRA that they are freedom fighters.

The most common opinions around the world today are regarding the IRA to be terrorists, but the main reason for this is that the world is given a very monotonous view of the conflict from a Protestant, British point of view.

British media is being watched and read by most of the English speaking part of the world. Consequently this leads many to have a Pro-British sympathic view in this conflict. To illustrate this one-sided view one can look at the death rates the respectively side are responsible for. The republican groups are responsible for about 50 % of the killings in Northern Ireland, but, the loyalists and the British Army, even though responsible for less killings than the former, has a far bigger proportion of civilians among their victims than the republican groups have. This is a fact the BBC, The Times and other British newsgroups easily ignore.

It is not only the IRA who is using terrorism in this conflict. To some extent does the British Government as well, in that sense that they do not follow their own law. Many people have been arrested and imprisoned, without charges or probable cause of suspicion. So it is easy to understand the IRA’s feelings that when Britain does not follow the law, why on earth should they?

There are many examples throughout the history of Ireland that Britain has given the IRA excuses to escalate their threats of violence. The latest example is this summer, when the Government allowed Orange Order marches through die-hard Catholic areas. Actions such as this is of course incredibly provocative for the Catholic population. The British Authorities hereby makes a stand of supporting the Protestants instead of letting the marches go through Protestant and mixed neighborhoods and make a point of some sort of neutrality. Another example is the division of elctoral constituencies in Northern Ireland to secure a Protestant majority as far as possible and as a result to a large extent securing Protestant control of the public offices. The plantation policy and “Bloody Sunday” in January, 1972 are other examples.

Instead of perhaps having an one-sided Protestant policy, the Parliament could have been slightly more neutral and gainined some hard-needed goodwill.

It is difficult, in which booth to place the IRA, terrorists or freedom fighters? They are not such clear-cut terrorists such as Baader-Meinhof or Black September, which only have (or had) a diminutive support in their respectively countries, but neither are they freedom fighters on the same level as for instance, the resistance force in the German-occupied Norway during World War 2, which clearly had a majority of the population supporting them.

But the conclusion will be that the IRA will not have, even if Ireland is included, a majority supporting their “war” against Great Britain, and therefore the IRA can not justify the use of terrorist tactics.

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