**Disengagement and De-Radicalisation in the Irish Republican Movement**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis explains how terrorism campaigns end, using social movement theory to analyse the Provisional IRA’s disengagement from armed violence and how this led others in the Irish Republican movement to move away from violence and remain so. The thesis argues that successful disengagement is dependent on how it is framed and the extent to which it resonates within the movement. Frame resonance is shaped by the extent it is consistent with the group’s goals, the presence of linkages in order to diffuse the frame, and the perceived credibility of those advocating it. This process ensured that most of the Provisional IRA supported disengagement, which then began to organisationally disengage as part of the peace process. Subsequently, linkages were built up with the Irish Republican movement, leading to the disengagement frame to become de-radicalised, thus providing stronger barriers against violence. The disengagement frame’s resonance in the Irish Republican movement, underpinned by political/structural change, has led to a durable decline in terrorism and political violence.

The thesis’ original contribution has five dimensions: 1) the thesis draws on interviews with a broader range of actors typically found in terrorism studies; 2) the re-conceptualisation of de-radicalisation provides nuanced explanations of why attitudinal change is important for ending terrorism; 3) the thesis provides the first multi-level analysis of how terrorism ends by using a social movement approach, thus providing a more comprehensive explanation; 4) while many have recognised the ‘next generation’ as a crucial factor, the thesis is the first to analyse the interaction between generations and how the break in inter-generational support for violence emerges; and 5) the thesis challenges many assumptions on organisational disengagement by outlining how informal networks of combatants continue to exist, but shows how this can actually prevent terrorism rather than just pose a risk to recidivism.

## Glossary of Terms

32 CSM 32 County Sovereignty Movement

ANC African National Congress

DDR Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

DUP Democratic Unionist Party

EU European Union

GFA Good Friday Agreement

IRA Irish Republican Army

INLA Irish National Liberation Army

MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly

OFMDFM Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

PLO Palestine Liberation Organisation

PSNI Police Service Northern Ireland

PUL Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist

RUC Royal Ulster Constabulary

SDLP Social Democratic Labour Party

TPV Terrorism and Political Violence

TUAS Tactical Use of Armed Struggle

UVF Ulster Volunteer Force

UDA Ulster Defence Association

UK United Kingdom

## Contents

Acknowledgements 1

Abstract 2

Glossary of Terms 3

Contents 4

**CHAPTER ONE** 7

Ending Terrorism and Reducing Recidivism 11

Individual Explanations: Disengagement or De-Radicalisation 12

Organisational Explanations: Group Disengagement 20

*Repression* 22

*Popular Support and Negotiations* 24

*Problems in the Group Level Analysis: Explaining the Process* 26

Structural Explanations: Root Causes and Waves of Terrorism 28

*Root Causes and Preventing Terrorism* 29

*Waves of Terrorism Theory* 31

Disengagement and De-Radicalisation of the Irish Republican Movement 35

Research Questions 36

Originality and Contribution 38

*Empirical Originality* 39

*Conceptual Originality: De-Radicalisation* 39

*Theoretical Contribution: a Social Movement Approach* 40

*Analytical Contribution: the Next Generation* 41

*Analytical Contribution: Networks of Former Combatants* 42

Thesis Outline 43

**CHAPTER TWO** 47

Terminology: Terrorism and the Problem with the Ex’s 52

A Social Movement Approach 55

Attitudinal Change and Frames Analysis 61

Organisational Disengagement and Networks 72

Structural Change and the Next Generation 75

Methodology 79

Case Selection 80

Sampling 83

Methods 88

**CHAPTER THREE** 94

The Rise of the Irish Republican Movement and Partition 95

Partition and Disengagement: 1920s to the 1960s 98

Emergence of the Troubles 103

Failed Disengagement in 1975 and Generational Transition 110

The Provisional IRA’s Disengagement: an Overview 113

Conclusions 115

**CHAPTER FOUR** 118

Disengagement Frames and De-Radicalisation 122

Narrative Fidelity: from Armed Violence to Politics 129

Credibility and Internal Interaction 138

*Internal Dialogue Outside of Prison* 140

*The Role of Prisons* 146

Selling Disengagement after the Good Friday Agreement 153

Re-Evaluating the Disengagement Process 156

*Negotiations and Popular Support* 157

*The Role of Repression, De-Capitation and Prisons* 159

*De-Radicalisation: Nuanced Frames* 161

Conclusion 163

**CHAPTER FIVE** 166

Social Movement Disengagement 168

Organisational Disengagement: the Mobile Phones Network 172

*Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-Integration* 173

*Mobile Phone Networks and Interface Violence* 177

*Interaction and the ‘Domino-Effect’* 186

The Political System: Consociationalism and Conflict 191

De-Radicalisation and the Limits of Frame Diffusion 204

Conclusion 211

**CHAPTER SIX** 214

Disengagement Frames and the Next Generation 217

Lost in Translation: mixed signals and the glamourisation of violence 221

Frame Diffusion and Networks: Sinn Fein Youth 226

*Frames, Stories and Networks* 228

In*tergenerational Dialogue and Glamourising Violence* 230

*Frame Resonance: Credibility and De-Legitimising (Current) Violence* 233

Former Combatants in Schools 240

*Prisoner to Peace Project in Schools* 243

*Credibility, Linkages and De-Glamourising Violence* 246

*Frame Resonance and Unconditional De-Radicalisation* 252

Conclusion 256

**CONCLUSION** 259

How Terrorism Ends 261

*What makes a disengagement process successful?* 261

*How do social movement terrorism campaigns end and reduce the risk of recidivism?* 264

De-Radicalisation 268

*What is de-radicalisation?* 268

*What role does de-radicalisation play in the ending of terrorism?* 269

Implications 272

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** 275

## CHAPTER ONE

**The End of Terrorism: Disengagement and**

**De-Radicalisation**

Given the vast amount of research on terrorism, it may seem odd that there has been little written about how terrorism campaigns end.[[1]](#footnote-2) In response to this gap being highlighted, new research has emerged over the last few years that has sought to identify the range of factors that bring a terrorism campaign to a conclusion, from military repression, policing and intelligence to internal disintegration and participation in peace processes.[[2]](#footnote-3) In the studies that emerged, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) was presented as a prime example of how terrorism campaigns end voluntarily through engagement in a peace process. While claims that it represents a success story may be merited, the continued existence of militant groups, albeit far smaller, such as the New IRA, and the recruitment of young people to continue the campaign for another generation poses a problem. This problem is not new: after their defeat in the 1920s Irish civil war, the original IRA continued to exist in some form and attract young people, meaning that when circumstances changed in the 1960s, a more powerful IRA could begin a new campaign. Thus, when seeking to explain how terrorism campaigns end, the question arises of how do they end in such a way that reduces the risk of a slip-back into violence within society?

With regard to the definition of terrorism, Chapter Two expands on how the thesis contextualises terrorism within the wider spectrum of political violence, defined as: ‘a violent means aimed at triggering political change by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target’,[[3]](#footnote-4) or which is perceived to be political, and its legitimacy is contested. The thesis sees an end to terrorism as an objective decline in political violence more generally and a change in how political violence is constructed as a legitimate behaviour. This definition emerges from the thesis’ critical realist ontological underpinnings – discussed in Chapter Two - meaning the thesis separates the role of structure and agency to analyse the interaction of the two. Broadly speaking, a critical realist approach to how terrorism ends would emphasise the transformation of social networks and ideas, which then lead to structural change, meaning the next generation are unlikely to engage in terrorism as a result.

The thesis focuses on the Irish Republican movement as a social movement because by broadening the analysis to include sympathisers and many of the Republican groups, the thesis can offer a more holistic explanation of how terrorism campaigns end. However, as the Provisional IRA was a substantial part of this movement, the thesis focuses on how the Provisional IRA’s campaign ended and how its interaction with the rest of the Republican movement has had a domino-effect, thereby encouraging others to leave violence behind. In addition to using social movements as the object of analysis, the thesis utilises social movement theories to explain a social movement’s reduction in the use of violence. By using a frames analysis approach, the thesis explains how leaders in the Provisional IRA convinced its rank-and-file members to support an end to their decades-long armed conflict. By using a frames analysis, the thesis engages in debates on to what extent attitudinal change is necessary for terrorism campaigns to be brought to a conclusion, providing an original contribution that challenges a number of key assumptions on the subject. The thesis also provides the first attempt to explain the decline of social movement terrorism campaigns, utilising original interview data to account for how the Provisional IRA have managed to encourage other militants, Republican and Loyalist, to move away from violence, thereby reducing the risk of a slip-back into Republican violence (whether as a response to Loyalist violence or a loss of faith in the political system).

Finally, the thesis explores the interaction between former combatants, including Provisional IRA members, and the younger generation. It assesses the extent to which the arguments that convinced Provisional IRA members to end their campaign resonate with young people, thus marking a generational shift away from the cycles of violence that has permeated the Irish Republican movement. By analysing these three dimensions together – interaction within and between the group, the social movement, and the next generation - the thesis provides a broader and more holistic explanation of how terrorism campaigns end, identifying the importance of attitudinal change which other, narrower studies have underplayed.

The thesis argues that campaigns of terrorism and political violence end through a combination of attitudinal change, organisational change, and structural change, but shows that the salience of these factors change over time and through interaction with the movement. Attitudinal change – often referred to as de-radicalisation – only refers to a change in attitudes toward terrorism and political violence rather than a change in ideology. The extent to which attitudinal change will be successful in ensuring violence stops is dependent on how credible the arguments are behind the change, therefore ensuring resonance is far more important in ending terrorism than it is for former militants to denounce terrorism and apologise for past actions – at least in the short-term. In the long-term, an interaction between structural and organisational change provides scope for a transformation of attitudes which will involve greater de-legitimisation of violence, thus discouraging the next generation from engaging in terrorism and ‘passing on the torch’. In terms of structural change, the thesis argues that the Northern Irish political system provides medium-term stability that incentivises disengagement and limits the opportunities for those wishing to engage in violence. Organisational change has manifested in community activism, which has functioned as a mechanism that prevents violence and has helped to diffuse the Provisional IRA’s arguments for disengagement to most of the Irish Republican movement, which in turn has softened the attitudes in support of terrorism and political violence in the Irish Republican movement and among the next generation.

As will be discussed in greater detail at the end of Chapter One, the thesis’ contribution has five aspects. First, the thesis draws on original data from interviews conducted in Belfast, differentiating itself from similar projects by contextualising interviews with former Provisional IRA members with interviews with community workers, security officials and Loyalist paramilitaries who now work alongside Republicans. Second, the thesis reconceptualises de-radicalisation by unpacking the concept in terms of the attitude-behaviour debate, thus providing a more nuanced understanding which re-focuses the salience of attitudinal change. Third, by acknowledging how a multi-level analysis is necessary to provide a more holistic explanation of how terrorism campaigns end, the thesis provides the first social movement approach to disengagement, analysing how the different levels that make up a movement interact with one another. Fourth, the thesis discusses the interaction between militants and the next generation in order to explain how the latter may be dissuaded from ‘carrying the torch’, which has not been explored despite the recognition that breaking the link between generations is crucial to ending terrorism campaigns. Crucially, the thesis is the first to highlight the emerging counter-terrorism strategies in schools. Fifth, the thesis provides the first analysis of the role that networks of former combatants can play in preventing terrorism through community work, which challenges the perceived typical role of former combatants in disengagement processes. In order to contextualise the thesis’ contribution, Chapter One will highlight the gaps and problems in previous research on the question of how terrorism campaigns end and remain so.

Research in terrorism studies that touches upon this question offers three types of explanation, which Chapter One will outline separately. The first type of explanation emphasises attitudinal change – referred to as de-radicalisation. The second type of explanation emphasises behavioural change and the process in which a group declines – referred to as disengagement. The third type of explanation emphasises the role of structures: social and political maintenance or change at the state and international level. Although the chapter outlines these explanations separately, all three factors interact with each other but they have thus far been insufficiently integrated together.[[4]](#footnote-5) Each of these perspectives seeks to explain how terrorism campaigns ends and how, in the process, the risk of a return to violence – known as recidivism – can be reduced, which will be discussed next.

### Ending Terrorism and Reducing Recidivism

Despite the repeated use of the phrase ‘ending terrorism’,[[5]](#footnote-6) there has been insufficient explanation of what is meant by ‘end’. Clearly, terrorism per se will most likely never end and none of the studies claim this is a realistic expectation.[[6]](#footnote-7) It firstly depends on whether we are referring to the tactic of terrorism, or whether to different levels of analysis - the ‘terrorists’ individually, terrorist groups, or international waves of terrorism and broader campaigns of terrorism. Gvineria states that a consequence of ‘a near-exclusive preoccupation with terrorist [groups] as the unit of analysis’ is that the literature ‘often equates decline of an organisation with the end of terrorism’.[[7]](#footnote-8) Crenshaw highlights the difficulties in assessing when terrorism has declined: some groups continue to exist despite apparent passivity and it is unknown when terrorism is likely to be reactivated.[[8]](#footnote-9) The end of terrorism cannot be described as an end of the tactic given how much terrorism is embedded within political violence more broadly.[[9]](#footnote-10) Thus, accounting for the end of terrorism firstly requires a multi-level analysis, whereby the intent (individual), capacity (organisation), and societal support (structure) are changed substantially to indicate that terrorism has ended. However, there is a substantial gap in research that actually combines the three levels of analysis which can provide a more detailed explanation of how terrorism ends,[[10]](#footnote-11) with Schmid highlighting the absence of such an approach and Della Porta and LaFree laying down the challenge to combine them.[[11]](#footnote-12) Changes at these levels of analysis can also reduce the likelihood of a return to violence, a continuation of violence by other groups, or a re-emergence of violence, too. On this topic, research has focused on recidivism reduction strategies and how terrorism can be prevented or how views supportive of terrorism in society can be challenged.[[12]](#footnote-13) Thus, in terms of addressing how terrorism ends and how the risk of recidivism is reduced, there is a significant push toward multi-level analyses to resolve the problem that has been presented by overly focusing on one aspect. One such aspect of research on how terrorism ends is the individual level of analysis, which debates the extent a change in attitudes or a change in behaviour is sufficient at ending terrorism and recidivism reduction. The next section will evaluate the extent the literature on the individual level can account for how terrorism ends within society, as well as at the individual level.

### Individual Explanations: Disengagement or De-Radicalisation

The term disengagement refers to an individual leaving a militant group or moving away from the use of terrorism and political violence. Bjorgo explains individual disengagement in terms of push and pull factors: push factors are negative circumstances or social forces that make continuing membership unattractive whereas pull factors are opportunities or social forces that attract an individual to a more promising alternative.[[13]](#footnote-14) Push and pull factors work in conjunction with group, state and societal pressures, which leads an individual to change their attitudes or behaviour with regard to using or being involved in a terrorism campaign.[[14]](#footnote-15) An individual may disengage due to disillusionment with and a dislike of: a) life in the group; b) the people in the group; c) the tactics used; d) moral concerns; or even, e) eventually, the strategy and ideology of the group. In this sense, disengagement is a process of interaction and experience, which can affect the individual’s commitment. Whether they choose to leave is dependent on group and peer pressure or loyalty, and the extent there are available exit routes, one of which can be prison. Individual disengagement may also be involuntary, including their exclusion by the group, incarceration or killing by the state, or the disbandment of the group.[[15]](#footnote-16)

However, this literature does not provide an adequate explanation of the extent of recidivism reduction for two reasons. Firstly, the maintenance of disengagement – i.e. reducing the risk of recidivism – falls to the state to ensure the individual does not return to violence, whether this means returning to the original militant group or, in the case it has disbanded, forming a new group perhaps further down the line when state pressure has been lifted. Secondly, as the focus is on behavioural change, an individual can move to another ancillary role within the movement,[[16]](#footnote-17) or they can encourage others to become involved in terrorism and political violence through incitement, glorifying violence or more overtly campaigning and recruiting, thus becoming part of a ‘radical milieu’ or ‘complicit surround’.[[17]](#footnote-18) The radical milieu refers to a community which sympathises with a militant group morally or logistically, and just as Waldmann recognises that this subject is underexplored, the thesis will discuss this in greater detail below. Recognising this gap further, Horgan states that we still know little about ‘the process whereby virtually defunct movements revitalise and re-emerge’.[[18]](#footnote-19) Thus, while research on disengagement can explain individual changes in behaviour, it is limited insofar as it can explain how this impacts upon terrorism and political violence at a social level, and therefore the risk of recidivism more broadly. Silke would argue that individuals who have disengaged are still unlikely to return to violence even if they uphold the support for violence – a trend which he notes is common with state soldiers[[19]](#footnote-20) – but while this argument may account for recidivism reduction individually, it still does not account for how they can encourage others to become involved and keep the armed campaign going.

Consequently, research has emerged which has argued that identifying the causes of attitudinal change can lead to de-radicalisation, thus reducing the risk of recidivism individually and socially. The initial problem with de-radicalisation is, conceptually, it is unclear what it means[[20]](#footnote-21) and there has not been any attempt to debate whether it should have a broad definition or a narrow definition. A broad definition of de-radicalisation involves a change in a wide-range of attitudes. De-radicalisation implies a cognitive shift, a fundamental change in understanding.[[21]](#footnote-22) It has been taken to refer to ‘a complete shift in the [individual’s] mindset, sympathies and attitudes,[[22]](#footnote-23) with some scholars specifically stating that de-radicalisation is ‘the transformation of ideology’.[[23]](#footnote-24) A narrow definition of de-radicalisation refers to a change in attitudes toward the use of terrorism and political violence. Horgan refers to it as a softening of views whereby an individual accepts the pursuit of his/her objectives using terrorism were illegitimate, immoral and unjustified,[[24]](#footnote-25) and Ashour argues that de-radicalisation is separate from a change in ideology and instead refers to the de-legitimisation of violence, although ideology may be used to strengthen its de-legitimisation.[[25]](#footnote-26) Even the narrow definition of de-radicalisation has problems identifying whether this de-legitimisation should be against the use of terrorism and political violence past, present and future. For example, the failure of former Provisional IRA members to de-legitimise past violence prior to the 1994 ceasefire, despite de-legitimising the use of violence today, leads some scholars to argue that they are not de-radicalised.[[26]](#footnote-27) Thus, the thesis finds substantial problems in terms of defining de-radicalisation and will, in Chapter Two, propose an alternative approach to provide conceptual clarity as part of its original contribution to the field.

Putting these conceptual problems aside, the chapter will now turn its attention to what, according to the literature, causes de-radicalisation and to what extent it reduces the risk of recidivism individually and socially? Once again, the causes of de-radicalisation can be a result of a cognitive process where the individual’s attitudes change through social stimuli, or a counter-terrorism programme which overtly seeks to change attitudes, and of course there are many causes that operate somewhere in between. As a process, it is unclear whether de-radicalisation precedes disengagement or whether de-radicalisation is a process that is initially piecemeal and can only fully manifest after disengagement has occurred.[[27]](#footnote-28) The cause of de-radicalisation is similar to the causes of disengagement, but the push and pull factors that cause disengagement do not often lead to de-radicalisation.[[28]](#footnote-29) The literature on de-radicalisation has two, at times overlapping aspects. The first aspect looks at the de-radicalisation of individuals within a group and the knock-on effect that has, using either a broad or narrow definition of de-radicalisation. The second aspect focuses on the extent to which the state can de-radicalise militants, therefore reducing the risk of them re-engaging, which can then defeat a terrorism campaign from the bottom-up. The former tends to be primarily driven by the militant group whilst the latter is primarily an initiative of governments, [[29]](#footnote-30) both of which tend to be associated with Islamist groups.

Rabasa et al argues that de-radicalisation of a leader can have a substantial impact on the group[[30]](#footnote-31) and Ashour explains the process of how the de-radicalised leader prompts other members within the group to de-radicalise.[[31]](#footnote-32) Looking at the Islamic Group (IG) in Egypt in 1997, Ashour outlines the process of de-radicalisation that was initiated by its leadership who had begun to de-legitimise the use of violence. After two decades in prison and after intense debate with al-Azhar scholars – the most prestigious Islamic scholarly institution – the leadership decided to renounce violence.[[32]](#footnote-33) In order to organise a common stance among the membership, the IG leadership held a ten-month tour of discussions and meetings with their followers in 2002, thus leading to the disengagement of 15,000 militants.[[33]](#footnote-34) However, non-senior members who de-radicalise may stay silent, and if they disengage their de-radicalisation may not have a substantial effect on the movement, or if their de-radicalisation is out of sync with the mood in the group, they may be co-opted by state intelligence forces to bring down the group.[[34]](#footnote-35) Furthermore, Rabasa et al highlight the pitfalls of de-radicalisation at a societal level, whereby a de-radicalised individual may return to a community which continues to support terrorism and political violence.[[35]](#footnote-36)

Thus, de-radicalisation is still dependent on social change and group dynamics, and although de-radicalised individuals can play an important role, there remains a gap in the literature on how this manifests itself.[[36]](#footnote-37) Ashour and Rabasa et al highlight the social aspect of individual de-radicalisation and how it can diffuse throughout the group, yet there is still no study that analyses how it diffuses throughout society or the social movement, as Ashour points out. With regard to the Provisional IRA, there are clearly similarities between the processes undertaken by Egyptian Islamist groups, for example the experience in prison and the extensive internal dialogue that preceded the ceasefire. Yet the Provisional IRA’s disengagement is not referred to as de-radicalisation – thus marginalising the significance of attitudinal change – because there is no denunciation of past violence.[[37]](#footnote-38) Yet even the arguments used by Egyptian Islamists who are de-radicalised, as outlined by Gunaratna and Bin Ali,[[38]](#footnote-39) does still consist of support for using violence in some *conditions*.[[39]](#footnote-40) Thus, there is a lack of conceptual clarity on what de-radicalisation is and how the *process* of de-radicalisation differs, and how this process extends beyond the group to society.

The second aspect the de-radicalisation literature focuses on is the extent de-radicalisation reduces the risk of recidivism. Thus, a number of states have intervened through prisoner programmes to try incentivising and facilitating de-radicalisation in the hope that this provides a more durable end to terrorism once the prisoners are released. The prisoner programmes have been concerned with ensuring that released terrorist prisoners: do not re-engage in terrorist activities (whether directly or by providing material support); disassociate themselves from radical movements; provide intelligence; meet victims as part of a reconciliation initiative; distance themselves publicly from terrorism; and take part in activities aimed at reducing recruitment.[[40]](#footnote-41) On one of the most famous state initiatives - the Saudi Arabian programme – Islamist prisoners are given a six-week course and at the end are given an exam and a psychological evaluation, where the expectation is they will renounce terrorism. If they pass, they proceed to the program’s aftercare phase, where upon release they are provided help to secure employment, transportation, funds and a place to live.[[41]](#footnote-42) Other programmes, however, do not have an ideological or attitudinal component, such as Northern Ireland’s Early Release Scheme. In this scheme, prisoners were released but could be re-imprisoned should they violate the conditions of their release, or if the affiliated group was to break the ceasefire – therefore there was no demand to denounce violence but to simply remain disengaged. Furthermore, there was little effort to integrate former prisoners back into society as there was in the Saudi programme.[[42]](#footnote-43)

Yet the dominant view in the literature is there is little difference in both programmes on the rate of recidivism. On average, the risk of recidivism is generally low for ex-prisoners convicted of terrorism in comparison to ‘ordinary criminals’: the Saudi case claims their programme has a 3 per cent recidivism rate whilst in Northern Ireland this figure is about 4 per cent.[[43]](#footnote-44) Thus, the difference in terms of quality between programmes that have focused on changing attitudes and those solely concerned with behavioural change remains unclear. Furthermore, the literature tends to suggest that recidivism reduction is dependent upon a mix of incentives and coercive tools applied by the state to the individual rather than any change in attitudes, and this may explain high recidivism of 20 per cent amongst ex-Guantanamo Bay prisoners for example, where the US government cannot monitor them.[[44]](#footnote-45) For many scholars, the limited success of the prisoner programmes suggests that de-radicalisation ‘is a misleading term to encompass what are context-specific and culturally determined efforts to reduce the risk of involvement or re-engagement in terrorism’.[[45]](#footnote-46) The increased recognition that it is the context which shapes the risk of recidivism – for example, the extent a state monitors former prisoners or the emergence of conflicts further afield (e.g. Syria)[[46]](#footnote-47) – has meant there has been a shift away from the de-radicalisation of individuals to identifying risk factors more broadly.[[47]](#footnote-48)

However, while accepting the argument that assessing the risk of recidivism requires a broader more contextualised approach, this has led attitudes and de-radicalisation to become the proverbial baby which has been thrown out with the bath water. As argued above, there has been little analysis of what the concept of de-radicalisation means. One source of the lack of conceptual clarity is the lack of a distinction between de-radicalisation programme and de-radicalisation process. Silke states that Martin McGuinness, a senior figure in the Provisional IRA, did not go through a de-radicalisation programme but still supports the peace process.[[48]](#footnote-49) Yet this argument does not preclude that McGuinness underwent de-radicalisation himself, therefore Silke is too quick to dismiss the importance of attitudinal change. Furthermore, the little conceptual engagement with de-radicalisation that has occurred has tended to focuse on observing the distinction between behaviour and attitudes without expanding on how the two interact.[[49]](#footnote-50) Finally, while assessing the rates of recidivism is a useful means of identifying the success of specific programmes, it does not capture the reasons for low rates of recidivism – for example, are they low because former prisoners are ‘red flags’ who militant groups keep at the fringes of activity?[[50]](#footnote-51) Also, recidivism rates do not say anything about recruitment rates and whether former prisoners could encourage young people to join a militant group. Therefore, there is a substantial gap in the literature for a study which analyses the risk of recidivism qualitatively.

To conclude, there has been a gradual acceptance that the individual level of analysis is not sufficient to address wider questions on how terrorism campaigns end and what reduces the risk of recidivism. And while Chapter One has argued for a multi-level analysis, the thesis also contends that the concept of de-radicalisation should not be discarded entirely. In addition to the problem of clarifying what de-radicalisation actually is, both narrow and broad definitions are founded on false notions of how attitudes and behaviour correspond. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, terrorism studies has based de-radicalisation on an out-dated conceptualisation of the attitudes-behaviour debate which has advanced far more in the field of psychology. Subsequently, a move away from a focus on recidivism rates to an analysis of the narratives that underpin the de-radicalisation process could help to enrich this reconceptualisation, thus providing a deeper understanding of how terrorism ends. The thesis proposes that by addressing conceptual problems with de-radicalisation, it can explain the significance of attitudinal change on the decline of terrorism campaigns and the reduction of recidivism. However, as the literature gradually recognises the need for a multi-level analysis,[[51]](#footnote-52) the thesis will link this reconceptualisation of de-radicalisation to the group level of analysis, discussed next.

### Organisational Explanations: Group Disengagement

While individuals may disengage or become de-radicalised, group dynamics can often ensure the terrorism campaign continues, and even in cases of a ceasefire the group can choose to return to violence with the resources available to it. Thus, ending a terrorism campaign and reducing the risk of recidivism is largely contingent on disengagement at the group level, hence why much of the literature has placed emphasis on it. While Gvineria is correct to say that there has been an overemphasis on group dynamics, any holistic analysis would have to incorporate the factors that lead to group disengagement.

Ross and Gurr argue that the loss of (military) coercive or political capabilities will lead to the decline of terrorist campaigns. Coercive capabilities are their ability to use force and credible threats of force whereas political capabilities include organisational factors such as members’ commitment and the extent to which a group has popular support. Pre-emption and deterrence are counterterrorist polices that reduce or eliminate a group’s coercive capabilities. Burnout and backlash are conditions which reduce the political capabilities of groups using terrorism.[[52]](#footnote-53) One possible way to frame these factors is through internal and external factors.[[53]](#footnote-54) Ross and Gurr argue that internal factors - burnout and backlash - are more significant factors of group decline in democratic societies than actions taken by governments (external factors). Backlash refers to declining political support for terrorist acts and goals from people the group aims to represent, facilitated through propaganda campaigns by public officials and the media. ‘Backlash makes it more difficult for terrorist groups to acquire resources and recruits, carry out attacks, find refuge, and avoid informants’.[[54]](#footnote-55) Backlash (in addition to external factors) can prompt burnout by contributing to subsequent factional disputes, defections, and shifts in tactics within the group.[[55]](#footnote-56) Crenshaw follows an almost similar argument, but with stressing the role a group’s strategic choices can play alongside other factors, such as the government’s response and its organisational resources.[[56]](#footnote-57) Thus, terrorism can end through the physical defeat of the group (e.g. Narodnaya Volya), the group’s decision to abandon the terrorist strategy (e.g. Palestine Liberation Organisation), and internal implosion and organisational disintegration (e.g. Red Army Faction).[[57]](#footnote-58)

Gvineria identifies eight inter-related modes of decline in his review of the ‘how terrorism ends’ literature: substantial or partial success; direct state action; loss of a terrorist leader; disintegration through burnout; unsuccessful generational transition; loss of popular support; and emergence of new alternatives.[[58]](#footnote-59) Some studies attempt to ascertain the most common factor in the demise of terrorist groups. In their study, Jones and Libicki argue the effectiveness of military means (7 per cent) seem limited whereas policing (40 per cent) and entering a political process (43 per cent) seem to be a more common route out of terrorist activity for groups.[[59]](#footnote-60) Conversely, Weinberg and Perliger argue that decapitation led to 30.6 per cent of groups ending and repression by the authorities accounting for 21.9 per cent of modes of decline, whereas loss of public support (4.3 per cent), loss of state support (3.4 per cent) and a failure to attract a new generation (2.5 per cent) were largely insignificant.[[60]](#footnote-61) However, the modes are not distinct: sometimes a combination of processes results in the decline or demise of a group.[[61]](#footnote-62) For example, a loss of support could be connected to factors such as implosion, policing, military action, failure to pass to another generation, movement to other forms of activism and even partial success. Weinberg and Perliger’s study doesn’t take into account cases where a loss of support is a secondary factor in decline, perhaps acting as a precipitant of repression. It is also unclear where they drew the line in terms of ‘ending’: for example, Gama’a Islamiyya could be categorised under repression, loss of state support, or movement to non-violent tactics depending on when you define their terrorist campaign as having ‘ended’. Ultimately, there is no single cause of failure for most terrorist groups and research into how terrorist groups end should acknowledge this.[[62]](#footnote-63) For the sake of brevity, the chapter will focus on explanations in the literature that focus on nationalist groups who voluntarily disengage through a peace process: repression, supporters and negotiations.

#### Repression

The extent to which repression can end terrorism is perhaps one of the more contentious parts of the literature. In the bigger picture, terrorism will always remain a utilised tactic ‘unless you declare a state of totalitarian regime and you take every measure to repress opposition’,[[63]](#footnote-64) including society in general. However, such control over society by the state to limit any terroristic activity seems to be rare: in most cases it may be temporary, counter-productive or it may only push terrorism elsewhere.[[64]](#footnote-65) The extent to which the significance is disputed depends on the type of repression used. For example, Weinberg and Perliger argue that repression accounts for a significant number of cases where terrorism ends, including policing and military methods as repression,[[65]](#footnote-66) whereas Jones and Libicki show that policing (and intelligence) is more significant than military measures as they look at them separately.[[66]](#footnote-67) In most cases, terrorist groups tend to be small (and covert) which makes it difficult to engage them with large, conventional forces. Groups that operate overtly are vulnerable to the overwhelming application of military force, for example, al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Lebanon,[[67]](#footnote-68) but even in these cases the groups moved to other arenas. Conversely, the ability to penetrate and disrupt terrorist groups through policing, intelligence and anti-terrorism legislation is more effective at eliminating the group.[[68]](#footnote-69) Alterman states that repressive measures are often insufficient when a large population supports the terrorists’ cause.[[69]](#footnote-70) Punitive actions can erode support for groups in some respects but cannot fully do so without policies aimed at addressing popular grievances and splitting moderates from radicals. There is a consensus in the literature that diminishing public support for the terrorist group and denying them a strong base from which to operate is essential to defeating larger groups.[[70]](#footnote-71)

Another tactic that states may use to bring about the decline and demise of terrorist groups is decapitation, which involves catching or killing terrorist group leaders. The effects of decapitation vary according to whether a group is hierarchically organised and oriented towards a charismatic leader.[[71]](#footnote-72) To be effective, the loss of a leader must be disruptive by producing a break in ideology, strategy, command and control, or competence, but most importantly, good leaders must be a scarce resource.[[72]](#footnote-73) The size of the group and its support base are also obviously significant factors but longevity may also be important: even in hierarchical groups, the longer a group operates the more certain duties are institutionalised and delegated.[[73]](#footnote-74) Decapitation through arrest is seen as more preferable than decapitation through killing.[[74]](#footnote-75) Cronin cites the Shining Path, the Real IRA, the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) and Aum Shinrikyo as cases where groups were badly damaged by the capture of their leader.[[75]](#footnote-76) However, even in these cases the decline may be associated with other factors such as the role of the police in mass arrests.[[76]](#footnote-77) Therefore it is uncertain whether decapitation alone would have had the same affect. Finally, the incarceration of leaders may not be effective if the leaders are allowed/able to communicate with followers from prison, or when group members still on the outside attempt to free them (whether through violence, hostage exchange or negotiation).[[77]](#footnote-78) With regard to the membership as a whole, prison can have an effect in contradictory ways. Prisons can act to mobilise the militant group and act as a means to radicalise and recruit new members or to educate current ones. In the case of the Red Army Faction’s disengagement, prisons helped the state to split the movement in two and facilitate the winding down of their terrorism campaign.[[78]](#footnote-79) While the literature on how terrorism ends remains silent on the role of prisons as a means of disengagement, a few studies (discussed in Chapter Two) demonstrate the positive role that prisoners can play in bringing a campaign to an end.[[79]](#footnote-80)

#### Popular Support and Negotiations

If the means in which a group generates support is undermined or lost, it can lead to the aforementioned form of demise or it can affect the group’s ability to recruit new activists. Groups can end because they aren’t able to attract new members and subsequently the group fades at the end of its lifecycle. Cronin states that the inability to pass the cause to the next generation (a key feature of waves) is a common explanation for a group’s decline or end. The ‘nature of the group’s ideology seems to have relevance to the cross-generational staying power of a group’.[[80]](#footnote-81) The leftist groups of the 1970s are examples of groups who were unable to clearly articulate their vision, had unrealistic demands, and usually alienated the little support they had by their violent acts.[[81]](#footnote-82) Gvineria also mentions how ‘large-scale socioeconomic and political [change can diminish] the attractiveness of the terrorist ideology’.[[82]](#footnote-83) Conversely, gaining popular support can open up political opportunities, and the cultivation of these new constituencies may encourage the group to abandon the use of terrorism, with entry to a political system acting as an incentive for remaining disengaged.

In response to repression and other external factors as outlined above, groups may modify their goals and the use of terrorism and be offered concessions, providing them with partial success through a transition to a legitimate political process.[[83]](#footnote-84) The narrower the policy goals that a group has (or adopts in concessions), such as policy, territorial or regime change, the more likely it is to end through negotiation and/or politics.[[84]](#footnote-85) The factors that prompt such a change may be: the loss of outside (state) support; through external diplomacy;[[85]](#footnote-86) when both sides reach a stalemate;[[86]](#footnote-87) or that after achieving public recognition for its cause the use of violence may alienate supporters;[[87]](#footnote-88) and a government may finally offer to negotiate with a group in the hope of ending long-standing disputes.[[88]](#footnote-89) As a result, a group may enter a peace process which will stipulate a cessation of violence, but whether this leads to a more permanent arrangement is another matter. Such an engagement in a peace process may lead to a splintering of the terrorist group into usually more violent groups.[[89]](#footnote-90)

Cronin states that a number of variables can determine the outcome of negotiations to end terrorism. The nature of the organisation of the group (with hierarchical groups having an advantage over groups that cannot control their members’ actions), the nature of the leadership of the group (whether leadership is centralised or decentralised), and the nature of public support for the cause (where groups with ambivalent constituencies may be more likely to compromise).[[90]](#footnote-91) However, according to Alterman, negotiations with those perpetrating violence are not the solution to every problem just as law enforcement actions cannot resolve every terrorism threat. Alterman concludes that if negotiations are pursued, two conditions should be present: 1) the government should have a strong popular mandate to enter negotiations from a position of strength; and 2), the terrorist group should be going through a period of self-evaluation. In such circumstances, the government could possibly split moderates from more radical elements, taking popular support along with the moderates.[[91]](#footnote-92)

#### Problems in the Group Level Analysis: Explaining the Process

There are, however, a series of limitations in the terrorism literature presented above which derive from their conceptualisation of group disengagement as an event rather than a process. Cronin rightly criticises quantitative approaches because it is not possible to identify one single factor in how terrorism ends, and the thesis proposes that by analysing disengagement as a process it will be possible to identify when certain factors are salient. One key part in the disengagement process that the group level of analysis in terrorism studies neglects is the internal process; there seems to be an assumption that a combination of factors such as repression and loss of supporters have an equal effect across the group internally, and even if they do not, then splintering can be beneficial to the process. Yet, a substantial number of members in the Provisional IRA in the early 1990s were still committed to armed violence despite experiencing the same level of repression and they were willing to continue regardless of what supporters thought.[[92]](#footnote-93) Furthermore, if terrorism is continuing in one form, albeit under the name of a splinter group, questions ought to be raised about how successful disengagement was. Therefore, the thesis contends that how the process of disengagement is carried out internally is of equal if not more importance to the broadly external factors which the terrorism literature focuses on.

There are three main exceptions in the literature. Ashour looks specifically at the internal process of disengagement in Islamist movements,[[93]](#footnote-94) hence his approach will be adopted and developed in Chapter Two. Gupta claims to take a social movement approach to explain the disengagement of the Provisional IRA, but there is little that separates it from the group level approach and while his utilisation of a modified rational choice theory accounts for the connection between attitudes and behaviour, this does not explain the process of convincing other members in a group that terrorism is no longer ‘rational’.[[94]](#footnote-95) Moghadam explores internal factors such as individual disengagement within group disengagement as a process; however, the analysis tends to focus on dual processes rather than an intertwined process.[[95]](#footnote-96) In other words, there is little explanation of how, once leaders support disengagement, how they spread this change throughout the organisation and in what way does this relate to debates on de-radicalisation as outlined above. For example, by trying to encourage others in the group to disengage to avoid splits, thus helping to reduce the risk of recidivism, does a compromise between de-radicalisation and disengagement take place which limits the extent the group de-legitimises violence? In such a case, disengagement that is not accompanied with de-radicalisation might actually be better at reducing the risk of recidivism than disengagement that is accompanied with de-radicalisation (whether it is defined broadly or narrowly). In other words, if disengagement is guided by reasons that members do not agree with, they might re-engage in violence in the near future. Thus, a reappraisal of the group level of analysis could reinvigorate the attitudes-behaviour debate that has been moribund at the individual level of analysis (discussed above).

In addition to taking a more in-depth group analysis to explore the interplay between attitudinal and behavioural change, the thesis will engage with the literature on the role of repression, organisational structure, and prisons to explain the disengagement of the Provisional IRA, with the issue of prisons being under-addressed in terrorism studies. In conclusion, terrorism research at the group level of analysis has been insufficient at explaining the internal process of disengagement and how this is important for reducing the risk of recidivism, whether within the group itself, in society, or between generations. On the last two points, a group level analysis is by its own definition not necessarily set up to explain societal change and between generations, but even when it does implicitly touch upon these issues,[[96]](#footnote-97) it is used to frame the analysis rather than explaining, for example, the relationship between the group and the next generation. The next section explores a level of analysis which, while not connecting group disengagement to the next generation, does attempt to explain it through a structural analysis.

### Structural Explanations: Root Causes and Waves of Terrorism

Structural explanations for how terrorism ends are important in accounting for the factors: a) that cause a number of groups within a campaign to decline; and b) reducing the capacity for terrorism campaigns to re-emerge, whether with the same groups a few years when the opportunity presents itself, or a few decades later through the next generation. Thus, structural change can limit the opportunities to engage in terrorism and they can remove the motivations to engage in terrorism. In terrorism studies, there are two areas of literature which pertain to these issues: waves of terrorism theory literature and the ‘root causes’ and preventing terrorism literature. The chapter will detail the extent to which they provide an answer to how terrorism campaigns end and reduce the risk of recidivism within society.

#### Root Causes and Preventing Terrorism

At the group level, it is understandable why the connection between root causes and organisational decline have been dismissed.[[97]](#footnote-98) Whereas such ‘root causes’ could be (amongst others) a lack of democracy, a lack of social justice or rising distributive inequality,[[98]](#footnote-99) many of the individual cases of terrorist group decline were caused by state action or internal implosion, not because the ‘root causes’ were addressed. However, this argument conflates structural causes with agency, and it is overly deterministic too. ‘Root causes’ can facilitate the mobilisation of terrorism groups which can then take a life of their own partly independent of the initial causes. The literature also underplays how significant the perception of the ‘root causes’ are in either identifying their existence or constructing them in the first place, therefore there is an interaction between structure and agency over time which shapes the likelihood of people within a society being supportive of a terrorism campaign. However, by acknowledging the significance of interpretation, structural change can have a real effect on behaviour regardless of their interpretation.[[99]](#footnote-100) Furthermore, there are multiple types of causes which can maintain terrorism in different ways and these are: the grievances that drive terrorism; structural factors that enable or constrain terrorism, from deeper structures such as the internet to shallower structures like a political system which can address grievances; and trigger causes, which are events which can spark mobilisation or disengagement,[[100]](#footnote-101) for example the September 11th attacks were credited with speeding up the Provisional IRA destroying its weapons. Crucially, trigger causes can also be structurally embedded: in Belfast, inter-communal violence can emerge in geographical areas where both communities meet, and the low-level violence that occurs here can escalate into more serious forms of violence. Thus, from a structural perspective, addressing these different causes could end terrorism campaigns and reduce the risk of recidivism, yet the thesis argues that it does not sufficiently take into account the interpretation of structures too.

Another area of literature which has implicitly sought to link the causes of terrorism to the decline of terrorism has been research on countering radicalisation and preventing terrorism. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force defines counter-radicalisation as:

*Policies and programmes aimed at addressing some of the conditions that may propel some individuals down the path to terrorism. It is used broadly to refer to a package of social, political, legal, educational and economic programmes specifically designed to deter disaffected (and possibly already radicalised) individuals from crossing the line and becoming terrorists.[[101]](#footnote-102)*

Most counter-radicalisation strategies and the subsequent research have been aimed at Islamist groups, with less emphasis on groups such as those which operate on the island of Ireland. Nevertheless, counter-radicalisation identifies three key factors for success: countering the grievances – real or perceived - that a militant group seeks to exploit; countering the ideology that militant groups use by challenging their narratives by educating communities and empowering counter-narratives; and counter mobilisation, which aims to help communities build networks, knowledge and ‘tools’ that can be used to challenge attempts by militant groups to form cells and recruit followers.[[102]](#footnote-103) Schmid argues that there is a gap in the literature in explaining effective counter-narratives, and the thesis contends that exposition of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement process, given how much it has progressed in comparison to Islamist groups, may provide useful insights.

One weakness with the literature on counter-radicalisation is it tends to be overly prescriptive, thus it underplays the role that militants can play. As credibility and legitimacy are essential for a successful counter-narrative,[[103]](#footnote-104) the thesis argues that there is much to be learnt by looking at the Provisional IRA’s role at preventing terrorism in society. Furthermore, the focus on Islamists combined with the prescriptive approach tends to blur two state interests in countering radicalisation: the perception that Islamist ideology challenges aspects of British values – such as on gender - can lead governments to prioritise combatting this challenge over combating terrorism.[[104]](#footnote-105) As this is not the same in Northern Ireland – at least, since the fall of Unionist hegemony – there is greater scope to look at counter-radicalisation attempts that are specific to preventing terrorism. The chapter now considers waves of terrorism theory, which takes the structural level of analysis to an international dimension: this approach is useful in terms of considering inter-generational change as a factor in ending terrorism campaigns.

#### Waves of Terrorism Theory

Since analysis of how terrorism ends is limited at the group level, Rapoport’s analysis of terrorism activity as an international phenomenon provides a structural perspective of how terrorism campaigns rise and fall. A wave is a cycle of activity characterised by expansion and contraction phases in a given time, which have an international character with similar activities (and tactics) occurring in several countries. Rapoport identifies four waves of modern terrorism that can be traced back to Russia in the 1880s: the Anarchist wave, the anti-colonial wave, the New Left wave, and the religious wave, all of which have ran concurrently with nationalism.[[105]](#footnote-106) The name of the wave reflects its dominant feature but nationalist organisations were present throughout and they were shaped by the waves in different ways: for example, the Anarchists gave the nationalist groups tactics and training and in the fourth wave nationalism serves or reacts to religious purposes.[[106]](#footnote-107) However, contrary to the implicit assumption that nationalist terrorism constantly runs alongside the waves, Rasler and Thompson argue that it experienced a decline alongside the New Left wave in the 1980s.[[107]](#footnote-108)

Waves are driven by a ‘common predominant energy that shapes the participating groups’ characteristics and mutual relationships’.[[108]](#footnote-109) ‘[W]aves and organisations have very different life rhythms’ and normally ‘organisations disappear before the initial wave associated with them does’. Once ‘a wave’s energy cannot inspire new organisations, the wave disappears’ and critical factors explaining this disappearance are: resistance, political concessions, and changes in the perceptions of generations. But occasionally ‘an organisation survives its original wave’ and ‘reflects the new wave’s influence – a change that may pose special problems for the group and its constituencies’.[[109]](#footnote-110) Perhaps the most significant contribution from this approach is the emphasis on generations. Waves seemingly correspond to the duration of a human life cycle: they tend to last a generation and tend to have less resonance with newer generations.[[110]](#footnote-111) Weinberg and Eubank argue that waves of terrorist violence dissipated after approximately a generation, a period of roughly 20 to 30 years, rather than 30-40 years as Rapoport suggested.[[111]](#footnote-112) Conversely, the fact that some groups such as al-Qaeda have passed through several generations[[112]](#footnote-113) suggests problems with 1) how we understand a generation and 2) how we link the group, the wave and generations. One interesting suggestion is that there are ripples within the waves and each of these ripples has different traits in terms of terrorist strategy.[[113]](#footnote-114) Thus, while the definition of generations may be arbitrary, the thesis argues that there is much to be gained by analysing how terrorism ends in terms of the differences between generations, and how they interact with and perceive each other.

Rapoport suggests three causes for how waves of terrorism end: resistance, political concessions and changes in the perception of generations. In regard to the anarchist wave, Rapoport suggests that World War I ‘dampened enthusiasm for the strategy of assassination’ that was the key motif of the wave. [[114]](#footnote-115) The second anti-colonial wave ended as the grievances with the colonial system were, to varying degrees, settled with the dissolution of the empires.[[115]](#footnote-116) Those grievances that weren’t settled or that produced new grievances would lead to other terrorist groups being formed. The three causes of waves ending, as mentioned at the start, seem to have had little bearing in the decline of the first two waves. Rather, they ended as a result of ‘exogenous precipitating events or large-scale social change’ that Gvineria claims are often the causes of waves.[[116]](#footnote-117) However, in contrast to Gvineria’s argument that these changes have little bearing on the decline of specific groups, the decline of the second wave through these major changes was arguably driven by the individual groups. The third wave was in part much more reliant on an (esoteric) ideology to mobilise the population, the provision of state support, and inter-group solidarity within the wave: this made them weak in terms of surviving beyond their initial membership and as international government co-operation increased and state support declined, these groups found themselves defeated one-by-one.[[117]](#footnote-118) The decline of this wave seems best served by focusing on the group level, as many of the causes of decline have been mentioned above. It also suggests that the decline of waves needs to be clarified in terms of how it is distinct merely from a collection of groups: thus, should the focus be upon the ideology, the zeitgeist, or the window of opportunity created by (e.g.) technological changes. In such a case, the interplay between the attitudes and behaviours of agents need to be assessed within their structural context – this would allow us to analyse how waves end.

The groups that survived the third wave shifted towards their support constituencies and tended to be primarily ethno-nationalist. The third wave is described as the New Left by Rapoport, although it was certainly as much a nationalist wave that continued from the anti-colonial movement and took on leftist characteristics.[[118]](#footnote-119) Although the decline of this wave seemingly corresponds with the fallout from the collapse of the Soviet Union,[[119]](#footnote-120) there were a few notable ‘stragglers’.[[120]](#footnote-121) However, even these stragglers (the Provisional IRA, the Basque group ETA, and the PLO) have officially ended their campaigns, and thus ethno-national terrorism (specifically in Europe) has declined significantly. The literature doesn’t address the issue of stragglers possibly because they are seen as simply exceptions to the ‘rule’ that are best explained at the group level. However, the thesis argues that the logic of waves of terrorism can be equally applied to the Irish Republican movement – demonstrating the problem of how waves are defined.

Therefore, studying the Irish Republican movement in relation to international events, changes in (global) structures and the perception of the movement throughout generations could help to explain how terrorism campaigns rise and decline beyond just group explanations. Sageman suggests that ideas sustaining a specific wave of terrorism may no longer be considered ‘cool’ to a new generation,[[121]](#footnote-122) but needless to say this is an oversimplification as the radical ideas might remain in some form but they are translated in non-violent ways (e.g. post-cold war Socialist and Communist groups in Europe or to an extent contemporary Anarchist groups). Subsequently, the thesis’ focus of analysis on the interaction between generations will not be on the ‘coolness’ of the movement or ideology, but on the perception (or ‘coolness’) of political violence. The waves on terrorism literature has been criticised for being interesting but having little relevance, and the thesis argues that this is because the focus of analysis is a self-defined ideology, rather than an actual movement with connections and linkages.[[122]](#footnote-123) The thesis argues that analysing the interaction between generations involved in political violence can help to account for how generational transformation takes place, in the context of broader structural change which removes or contains the grievances that inspired the previous generation. The combination of attitudinal change among the next generation and durable structural change may decrease the likelihood of a return to violence.

### Disengagement and De-Radicalisation of the Irish Republican Movement

The chapter took the question of how terrorism ends and remains ‘ended’ as a driving question, looking at three areas of literature in terrorism studies. It began by highlighting the continuity of terrorism and political violence in the Irish context, and despite substantial disengagement at an individual and group level, there are indications that the armed campaign is being passed on to a new generation. While this continuity has failed to manifest in anyway near to the level of the Provisional IRA, the historical legacy of Irish Republicanism serves as a warning against complacency: following its defeat in the 1920s, the IRA were still able to launch the 1950s Border Campaign despite the lack of any substantial support, and their continued existence provided the organisational framework for extensive mobilisation when the opportunity presented itself in the 1960s. Throughout one hundred years of the Irish Republican movement, there has been a history of mobilisation and disengagement, with a small cadre acting as standard bearers to pass the torch to the next generation. In explaining how terrorism ends in this context, a multi-level analysis is needed to encapsulate the different elements that account for the longevity of Irish Republicanism.

Three key inter-related factors have been highlighted: attitudinal change; organisational disengagement; and structural change. In terms of attitudinal change, there needs to be a re-conceptualisation of what is being changed as de-radicalisation has been shown to be insufficient, but the thesis argues this is because of a lack of conceptual clarity more than anything. Research on organisational disengagement has tended to underplay the internal dynamics that shape whether or not disengagement is successful, and it has not sufficiently accounted for the impact of organisational disengagement on the movement and society. Structural explanations, such as counter-radicalisation, do provide a potentially beneficial approach but they do not sufficiently link to the group level of disengagement by being overly prescriptive and therefore marginalising the role of other actors. The over-emphasis on Islamist groups has exaggerated the role of ideology in a similar way that the de-radicalisation literature has. Approaches that account for inter-generational change, such as waves of terrorism, need to be linked in to the individual and group level of analysis to ground them and demonstrate the changes that occur, which thus far they have failed to do. Thus, moving beyond the levels of analysis outlined above, the thesis argues that it must focus on the links between attitudinal change, organisational disengagement and structural change in order to explain how terrorism ends and the risk of recidivism and a return to violence is reduced.

#### Research Questions

The thesis is driven by one primary question which is used to segue into two specific questions. The three research question will be addressed in multiple chapters and then directly in the conclusion, as the structure of the chapter takes into account different time periods, with Chapter Four focusing on the 1994-2005 period and Chapter Five and Six focusing on the period from 1996 up to 2014.

1. **How does terrorism and political violence end?**

The question driving the thesis is ‘how does terrorism and political violence end’ but it is approached differently from the many other studies that have used an iteration of the same question. Firstly, the thesis builds upon the observations by Crenshaw, Cronin and Gvineria that the conceptualisation of terrorism ending is difficult to pin-point because of the risk of recidivism and that other actors in a society can continue from where the previous group ended. A number of studies have implied that a solution is a multi-level analysis, and while the thesis adopts this approach, the thesis will seek to evaluate the extent to which this analysis can explain how terrorism ends. Secondly, the invocation of this question draws it into the debates on the role of factors such as repression, negotiations and popular support in bringing about an end to terrorism campaigns. While the thesis will address the significance of these factors, it is more concerned with how internal factors have been underplayed, therefore the question also refers to the *process* by which the group’s members came to accept and work toward an end to the campaign. *Chapter Two* will demonstrate how a multi-level analysis would work to account for how terrorism campaigns end and it will provide a framework on this very process. *Chapter Three* illustrates the fundamental problem in explaining how terrorism ends in Northern Ireland, which can be found in the history of the Irish Republican movement. There have been a number of cases where an iteration of the IRA has ended their campaign only for a new group under the same name to emerge in the future – it is this continuity which leads the thesis to challenge how we conceptualise how terrorism ends.

1. **What is de-radicalisation and what role does it play in the end of terrorism campaigns?**

One of the debates in how terrorism campaigns end revolves around what type of attitudinal change among militants leads them to disengage, ensures that they remain disengaged, and encourages others to either disengage or not become involved in terrorism. De-radicalisation has been used to describe a change in attitudes that is most effective in ending terrorism as outlined above. Yet, the thesis finds that there is little agreement of what this concept means and the definitions that do exist are insufficient. At the very heart of de-radicalisation as a concept is ascertaining the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, and as this has not been substantially explored, the thesis provides greater depth of conceptual understanding by exploring what de-radicalisation means. Once clarity is provided with regard to de-radicalisation in Chapter Two, the thesis then explores the implications it has in the following ways: firstly, what causes de-radicalisation to occur and develop as a process is explored in *Chapter Four*; and secondly, how does the de-radicalisation process manifest over time as it expands to the wider community is discussed in *Chapter Five*, and how it transfers to the next generation is discussed in *Chapter Six*.

1. **How do social movement terrorism campaigns end and reduce the risk of recidivism?**

Once a group disengages, there still remains a risk that it or a splinter group will return to violence, thus rendering the claim that terrorism has ended to be irrelevant. Furthermore, a re-emergence in terrorism may not come from former militants but a new generation of recruits, which directs the question to consider how terrorism at the social movement level comes to an end. There are three factors which can explain disengagement in a social movement: attitudinal change (de-radicalisation); organisational disengagement; and political/structural change, which combine and interact to reduce the risk of recidivism within the social movement. The first approach focuses on attitudinal change among the militants who have just disengaged, and this brings the thesis to participate in debates on whether de-radicalisation can provide stronger barriers against a return to violence than supposedly more superficial motivations for ending the campaign. The second approach is with regard to organisational disengagement, whereby the assumption is that the disarmament, de-mobilisation and re-integration of militants into society can reduce the likelihood of them returning to violence but also in preventing others in society from engaging in violence. The third approach looks at structural factors and changes in the political system which incentivises actors to remain disengaged and limit opportunities for engagement in violence. The thesis engages with these three approaches and how they interact to provide a more holistic understanding of recidivism reduction, which is a key part of explaining how terrorism ends. Chapter Five specifically focuses on this research question more broadly while Chapter Six focuses on the younger generation. Having outlined the main questions driving the thesis, the chapter will now discuss the five original contributions it will make to the literature on terrorism and more broadly.

### Originality and Contribution

The thesis provides an original contribution to the terrorism literature in five areas: empirical data; the re-conceptualisation of de-radicalisation; a multi-level analysis of disengagement through a social movement approach; the study of inter-generational interaction; and the counter-terrorism role of former combatants in the community and schools.

#### Empirical Originality

The thesis presents original data from interviews with former combatants, community workers and security officials. This data provides in-depth information on how former combatants perceive the legitimacy of using political violence and their explanations of how this change in attitudes occurred, especially in the context of politics today. Therefore, the data contributes to build a picture of how attitudes among Republicans, and former Provisional IRA members specifically, has evolved through the years. Furthermore, while there has been much data collected on the role of prisoners in community work, there has been little in-depth interviews collected from interface workers and none of this has been in the context of terrorism and political violence. Also, the focus group with Sinn Fein Youth members, discussed in Chapter Two, provided original insights which contribute to much of the contemporary debates on Republican commemorations as a glorification of violence. This debate has been largely based on little evidence and the interview data presented in the thesis offers one of the first attempts to provide such evidence. Finally, previous research that has provided data from interviews with former Provisional IRA members[[123]](#footnote-124) can be problematic because many of them are ‘on-message’ and will be concerned to adhere to a party political line, particularly for those studies who have used prisoner groups to gain entry to interviews. The thesis recognised this problem and sought to interview community workers and security officials to help corroborate the arguments made by former combatants and to provide a broader perspective. For example, one community worker attended a meeting of senior paramilitary figures in Belfast in 2013, and the data provided here would not have been available from the former combatants themselves.

#### Conceptual Originality: De-Radicalisation

The concept of de-radicalisation has been widely noted to be unclear in terms of what it means and the thesis provides the first attempt to unpack it in depth. By engaging in the attitudes-behaviour debate in psychology, it breaks down the distinction between disengagement and (broad and narrow) de-radicalisation. As an alternative, it provides an original solution in terms of using frames analysis, typically used to explain mobilisation. No study has applied frames analysis to this area of terrorism studies despite the increasing focus on counter-narratives; subsequently, the thesis demonstrates how this developed approach can inform the relatively new and conceptually under-developed area of research on counter-narratives.

Disengagement frames analysis shows the nuances in arguments that are presented by a group and why the de-legitimisation of violence differs. This allows the thesis to identify different types of de-radicalisation, each of which has a different capacity to reduce the risk of recidivism by resonating with its audience. Whilst the original applications of de-radicalisation have suggested that it provides a greater or equal reduction in the risk of recidivism, the thesis’ use of frames analysis shows that this is not always the case. If the Provisional IRA utilised a disengagement frame that was underpinned by unconditional de-radicalisation – de-legitimising all Republican violence - it would have failed to resonate and would have provided an opportunity for terrorism and political violence in the Irish Republican movement to continue. Thus, the thesis shows that de-radicalisation can be conditional but that this is significantly different to tactical motivations behind disengagement and that the process of de-radicalisation can deepen to become more durable and unconditional. A senior counter-terrorism policy-maker at the Home Office highlighted the problems with the concept of de-radicalisation as previously understood, instead emphasising counter-radicalisation, but the thesis demonstrates how both of these concepts overlap and makes de-radicalisation a workable concept that can inform counter-terrorism strategies.

#### Theoretical Contribution: a Social Movement Approach

It has been widely noted that there is a need for a multi-level analysis to explain how terrorism campaigns end.[[124]](#footnote-125) Research on the group level of analysis strangely take splintering to be an explanation for how terrorism ends, yet quite clearly this only means that it has been shifted in society. Approaches that occur at a societal or structural level are not sufficiently linked to the group level to ground the analysis which has meant they cannot explain attitudinal change between generations. By combining these three levels into a social movement approach, the thesis contributes a framework which can provide explanations for social change and how this affects terrorism, thus overcoming many of the criticisms against previous attempts to combine social movement theory and terrorism studies.[[125]](#footnote-126) This multi-level analysis overcomes the arbitrary distinction between the phenomenon of radicalisation, de-radicalisation, and counter-radicalisation, thus overcoming many of the obstacles that the lack of clarity on these concepts, and how they relate to each other, poses to terrorism studies.[[126]](#footnote-127)

#### Analytical Contribution: the Next Generation

The next generation has been highlighted as a significant factor in the decline in terrorism campaigns, but there has been no substantial analysis of the interaction between generations, specifically in the context of disengagement and de-radicalisation. Firstly, the thesis proposes the idea of generational hegemony as a contributing factor to the Provisional IRA’s disengagement: the concentration of members of a similar age and experience helped foster a shared understanding of the conflict and disengagement, and it meant there was greater control in the group to successfully bring along unconvinced members. Secondly, the thesis demonstrates the significance of de-radicalisation – in contrast to most arguments in the literature – insofar as it can challenge and shape the attitudes of the next generation. Whereas the IRA had managed to continue for decades from one generation to another prior to the 1960s, the Provisional IRA’s interaction with young people is helping to break this inter-generational link that supports the use of violence when the opportunity arises.

Furthermore, there has been very little to no research on schools as sites of disengagement, de-radicalisation and prevention. Schools provide a captive audience to reach young people from a wide range of backgrounds who may otherwise be difficult to reach, some of whom may be susceptible to engaging in armed violence. Therefore, the thesis highlights an emerging trend in counter-terrorism strategy engaging in schools, inviting further research into the Home Office’s use of schools in its Prevent strategy. The bigger contribution the thesis makes in this regard is in its analysis of the Prison to Peace programme in Northern Ireland. It demonstrates how the involvement of former combatants in the project led to further de-radicalisation, firstly through the structure of the programme which amplified appropriate messages, and secondly through facilitating the former combatants to de-glamourise past violence. Former combatants have a role to play because they have credibility among young people most likely to become involved in violence. The intervention in schools by former combatants helps to prevent young people from participating in terrorism and political violence, and it boosts their understanding and confidence in the peace process which underpins the end of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the thesis shows that former combatants do not have to be entirely ‘repentant’ to have a role in schools, and in fact this may be counter-productive; although conditional de-radicalisation is necessary. The implications of this contribution are that actors who have previously been labelled as terrorists for their role in armed violence, in a structured intervention in schools, can prevent the most vulnerable young people from becoming involved in terrorism.

#### Analytical Contribution: Networks of Former Combatants

The thesis contributes data that demonstrates that actors considered as terrorists and ex-terrorists can actually have a role in countering terrorism at the community level and in schools. Militant groups played an active role in policing communities in order to discourage violence from emerging which could lead to terrorism, and through this role, a number of the groups transformed to completely move away from violence themselves. A limited amount of research focuses on the role of the community in counter-terrorism,[[127]](#footnote-128) even less on the role that so-called terrorists play. The thesis’ contribution demonstrates how the organisational disengagement of militants into social routes can help counter and prevent terrorism where the state and other actors may not have the legitimacy, and how such organisational disengagement can prepare the groundwork for the state’s role in the future. In addition, the thesis argues that when militant groups organisationally disengage - or they are ‘re-integrated’ into society - the group level of analysis neglects that informal networks of former combatants may continue to exist which can function similarly to a militant group. Therefore, the assumptions underpinning the concept of organisational disengagement – namely, that the process is crucial to reduce the risk of recidivism – is shown to not be strong, meaning that the organisational disengagement process needs to adopt a network focus too. The thesis demonstrates how a network organically developed to play a role in preventing violence, thus potentially having implications for many other programmes which have neglected this lesson from the Northern Ireland experience.

### Thesis Outline

Having outlined the existing gaps in the literature and demonstrated the need for a multi-level analysis, *Chapter Two* sets out the thesis’ analytical framework. The analytical framework is grounded in a social movement approaches. Frames analysis is used to explain attitudinal change, thus showing how disengagement frames are constructed, diffused and successfully resonate among Provisional IRA members. In terms of organisational disengagement, the thesis identifies different stages in the disengagement process which can have implications for reducing the risk of a slip-back into violence: disarmament; de-mobilisation; and re-integration. Structural change is examined in terms of how the consociational political system – which is a specific type of structure - can address the grievances that have driven the conflict and how it can constrain and enable opportunities for those who wish to use terrorism and political violence. These three factors are combined in a framework that shows how they interact to form a process that can be used to explain the ebbs and flows of the Irish Republican movement.

The Irish Republican movement is nuanced and contains multiple actors, therefore the aim of *Chapter Three* is to firstly provide an historical context for the movement, specifically focusing on the emergence of the Provisional IRA. The chapter also provides a foundation for the rest of the thesis by outlining the different cases of disengagement that have been attempted by different iterations of the IRA. Furthermore, Chapter Three sets out the structural causes of the conflict and signposts the differences between the two generations of Republicans that existed in the Provisional IRA prior to disengagement. Specific focus is placed on the failed attempt at disengagement in 1975 to enable a comparative analysis with the 1994 disengagement in the preceding chapters.

The aim of *Chapter Four* is to explain the Provisional IRA’s disengagement by using frames analysis to account for how it managed to convince most of its membership to support the strategy. The successful resonance of the disengagement frame helped to reduce the risk of recidivism and provided a solid foundation for diffusing the process throughout the movement later on. Over time, the Provisional IRA constructed a disengagement frame which maintained narrative fidelity by building on the legitimacy of armed struggle. The messengers of the frame had linkages throughout the movement because of organisational restructuring that had previously taken place, and because of the relative freedom to interact with other members, particularly in prisons. The messengers had credibility within the group through their experience in the conflict, prisons functioned to bestow credibility too, and external actors were utilised to provide further legitimacy. Through these linkages, the disengagement frame was diffused throughout the group in a series of meetings and discussions, which had a relative degree of openness to be judged fair but a degree of control to push the advantage to those advocating the disengagement frame. The Provisional IRA, broadly accepting disengagement, then began the process of organisational disengagement and the diffusion of the disengagement frame throughout the movement.

*Chapter Five* outlines how the risk of recidivism has been reduced in three dimensions: organisational disengagement; changes in the political system; and changes in attitudes toward violence. Recidivism is understood to refer to the Provisional IRA, other Republican groups, and, as a result of their ability to increase Republican violence, the Loyalist paramilitary groups. The Provisional IRA primarily disengaged into two routes: into political institutions and into community activism. The thesis focuses on the mobile phone networks that emerged to contain violence at interface areas where Republican and Loyalist communities meet. In addition to providing incentives to remain disengaged, community activism worked to contain structural causes of violence which could escalate and provoke a wider return to violence. Community activism through the mobile phones network fostered co-operation between the Irish Republican and Loyalist movements, which led other militant groups to disengage. While community activism has meant that the Provisional IRA has continued as an informal social network, meetings between the local leaders of militant groups have helped to contain violence at crucial flashpoints. However, tensions in the consociational political system can disrupt mechanisms such as the network and may in the long term provide more opportunities for groups who oppose disengagement, as the disengagement frame has maintained narrative fidelity on the condition of the utility of a political approach. Since the commitment to disengagement is perceived to be contingent on success at the political level, there have been calls for the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein to adopt a ‘de-radicalised’ disengagement frame. However, the chapter argues that the disengagement frame is essential to maintain credibility and that limits the opportunities for those advocating violence to mobilise. Furthermore, despite accusations that it glorifies violence, the disengagement frame has matured to the extent that Provisional IRA members cannot see any logic to violence.

While the disengagement frame is sufficient to end violence among the Provisional IRA, *Chapter Six* addresses concerns that the younger generation are susceptible to supporting violence because of it. The aim of the chapter is to analyse how successfully the disengagement frame resonates with the younger generation, arguing that this can play a significant role in breaking the link between generations in terms of supporting violence. The chapter argues that the more young people are exposed to the disengagement frame in political networks, the more they can distinguish between narratives that supposedly glorify violence and the narratives that oppose the use of violence. The chapter explores one specific project which brings former combatants into schools to improve the knowledge of the conflict among young people and to help de-glamourise violence. It demonstrates how the interaction between former combatants and young people acts to diffuse the justifications for disengaging but in doing so it also leads to further de-radicalisation of the disengagement frame. The resonance of this new frame provides the next generation with the rationale for not becoming involved in armed violence.

## CHAPTER TWO

**A Social Movement Approach to Disengagement**

The function of Chapter Two is to outline the approach the thesis takes to address the problem it identified in the literature: how do terrorism campaigns end and what prevents a slip-back into violence – herein referred to as recidivism. As discussed in Chapter One, explanations of how terrorism campaigns end and recidivism is reduced can be grouped into three types: de-radicalisation/attitudinal change; disengagement/behavioural change; and structural change. Crucially, while the thesis is seeking to explain disengagement of a social movement – i.e. how that social movement ceases to engage in armed violence – the disengagement processis also a cause of further disengagement and recidivism reduction: it can pull actors into other forms of disengagement, for example from ceasefires to handing in weapons, and it can encourage other actors to disengage, too, thus creating a domino-effect.[[128]](#footnote-129)

*Disengagement* refers to a behavioural change away from using armed violence, motivated by a change in priorities in response to changing circumstances, but this change in behaviour can be accompanied by the maintenance of attitudes that drove involvement.[[129]](#footnote-130) The *process of disengagement* – or organisational disengagement - itself can act to encourage other groups to disengage and reduce the risk of recidivism through disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration.[[130]](#footnote-131) *De-radicalisation* refers to the motivations, ideology and attitudes to armed violence changing genuinely, meaning the individual or group no longer wish to engage in armed violence, thus reducing the risk of recidivism.[[131]](#footnote-132) *Structural change*, such as changes in technology, changes in the international arena such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and changes in political systems, can affect the group’s ability to mobilise resources and limit opportunities.[[132]](#footnote-133) One epiphenomenon of structural change is the changing attitudes of the next generation, whereby a militant group is unable to pass on the struggle to the next generation,[[133]](#footnote-134) or passing the struggle to the next generation leads to its degradation into an isolated, apolitical gang.[[134]](#footnote-135) While the previous chapter demonstrated how each of these approaches was insufficient, the function of Chapter Two is to bring these three strands together within a social movement approach. Before explaining the rationale for utilising a social movement approach, the thesis will address definitional problems that emerge from studying terrorism and Northern Ireland.

### Ontological Position in Terrorism Studies: a Critical Realist Approach

The definitional problem in terrorism studies is in part a result of a lack of ontological exposition, which is often implicit. The terrorism literature exhibits broadly two types of definition: the objective approach attempts to identify durable traits that constitute the act of terrorism and ‘the terrorist’;[[135]](#footnote-136) the subjective approach highlights the contested nature of legitimacy, seeking to set out when terrorism is legitimate[[136]](#footnote-137) or analysing how states and elites use the term to de-legitimise others and maintain power.[[137]](#footnote-138) Thus, the ‘minimal foundationalist’ definition of terrorism, as discussed by Toros and Gunning,[[138]](#footnote-139) will be adopted, not only for defining terrorism, but as the ontological underpinning of the thesis.

While Toros and Gunning do not explicitly make reference to it, their approach situates them within the critical realism ontological approach. The thesis’ ontology is influenced by Margaret Archer’s critical realism and critical realism in general. Critical realism challenges both positivism and postmodernism/social constructionism[[139]](#footnote-140) and offers a ‘middle ground’ based on ontological exposition.[[140]](#footnote-141) It aims to do this by combining and reconciling ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationalism.[[141]](#footnote-142) Unsurprisingly, critical realism holds that there is an objective reality and not only is the world real it is differentiated, structured, layered and possesses causal powers.[[142]](#footnote-143) The basic building blocks of a critical realism approach are objects as opposed to variables: objects can be people, organisations, structures, resources, ideas and attitudes. Critical realism is concerned with the fundamental nature and capabilities of things rather than their measurable properties.[[143]](#footnote-144) Crucially, in contrast to positivists, critical realism argues that we *can* study unobservable phenomenon.[[144]](#footnote-145)

To briefly sum up, the nature of the social world is defined by different strata of reality, meaning there are social objects that have relative durability in terms of how they can be explained objectively. Yet even this is bounded by the institutional setting of academia which, as a setting of (greater) ideal speech allows more durable and logical agreements on what is objective. The ontology recognises that ideal speech situations are very rare and therefore the world is also subjectively created. In terms of causality, the ontological approach informs an epistemological approach which can explain causality, but by recognising complexity and that causality, through structures, only enables and constrains agency, rather than determining it. In order to identify causality, structure and agency is analytically separated over different period of conditioning, interaction, and change/reproduction.

The issue of time is fundamental to the approach: agents are born into a world that is not of their making. In other words, they are born into a stratified world which constrains and enables their behaviour by providing costs/benefits, but it does not determine it. Due to where agents are placed upon birth, they have vested interests in either maintaining or changing structures/culture. In order to understand social change Archer analyses the interaction between structure/culture and agency over time in three stages. Archer identifies three stages in the morphogenetic cycle. In each of these stages, she studies the relationship between structure and agency, culture and agency, and intersection points between these two analytically separated worlds. Stage one (T1) is characterised by a period of conditioning: agents are born into a stratified world not of their making and, although this does not determine their behaviour, it does place them in situational logics which incentivises and penalises certain types of actions and imbues agents with interests. Stage two (T2-3) is characterised by the interaction between structure/culture and agency. Stage three (T4) is the often unintended outcome of the interaction at stage two: this can produce morphogenesis (change) or morphostasis (reproduction). Morphogenesis can occur at the structural or cultural level which in the process can lead to morphogenesis of agency.[[145]](#footnote-146)

Thus, a critical realist methodology includes direct observation and logic applied to both observable and unobservable structures, and the interpretation of social texts.[[146]](#footnote-147) The difficulty in identifying these structures is a problem more broadly, and critical realism can provide a more grounded take on this. In relation to the broader ontological and epistemological debates within politics and IR, the thesis locates itself closer to the critical realism of Wight than, for example, Patomaki, whose work has moved toward emphasising ontology rather than its epistemology and methodology.[[147]](#footnote-148) As such, the application of Archer’s critical realism provides a framework for analysing social change insofar as structures both have a conditioning dynamic and their interpretation can shape behaviour in a certain direction without focusing too much on ontology. Critical realism’s emphasis on different strata of structure provides more ‘real’ analytical objects that can avoid epiphenomenon being grouped together by the observer. In International Relations and Terrorism Studies we see this occurring. David Rapoport’s waves of terrorism theory[[148]](#footnote-149) groups together movements by ideology and temporality, but his overemphasis on structure (material and ideational) is at the expense of relations and networks. Consequently, he is unable to account for how different types of movements may be different – e.g. those which may be tied ideationally to a broader movement and those which may be tied relationally and structurally to a broader movement. In other words, Rapoport’s ontology and epistemology leads him to analyse the decline of movements which do not really exist or are only loosely connected with one another. Buzan’s concept of security complexes is far more effective insofar as it focuses on regional interactions and systems[[149]](#footnote-150), which could help explain the structural dynamics that would influence the Provisional IRA[[150]](#footnote-151) better than analysing them as part of a nationalist wave of terrorism. However, where critical realism contributes to security complexes is it can take into account movements within these structures but, more importantly, analyse how they shape behaviour, how actors within them respond, and how security complexes change. For example, the Catholic civil rights movement interpreted the American civil rights movement as part of a broader security complex (if only briefly), which Buzan’s approach would not allow and which Rapoport’s approach would overemphasise.

In terrorism studies, a number of scholars have sought to create a debate between critical theory approaches to terrorism and what they label as ‘traditional terrorism studies’.[[151]](#footnote-152) The thesis does not seek to engage in this debate in great depth for the following reasons. Firstly, ‘critical terrorism studies’ creates a straw-man of ‘traditional terrorism studies’ which only partly exists – the research (e.g. Martha Crenshaw) which does provide context, avoids normative claims and is not positivist (critical theory’s main claims), is co-opted into the critical school to avoid the false dichotomy it tries to create. Secondly, critical theory does have a lot to offer to terrorism studies, such as a greater focus on ideas, culture, norms and subjectivity, which can be reconciled with a material analysis.[[152]](#footnote-153) Indeed, terrorism research has adopted many of these insights without needing to label itself ‘critical’,[[153]](#footnote-154) and if the ‘critical approach’s’ defining feature is emancipation,[[154]](#footnote-155) then it is unclear how it is different from the worst excesses of ‘traditional terrorism studies’ which is biased toward state interests. Therefore, while the thesis is underpinned by critical realism, the main strength of this approach is it bypasses the critiques of ‘critical terrorism studies’ by co-opting its reflexive analytical approach while not engaging in the normative agenda that underpins emancipation or normative pro-state ‘traditional terrorism studies’.

### Definitions: Terrorism and the Problem with the Ex’s

Having situated the thesis’ ontological and epistemological position within the terrorism literature, it can now move to deal with the definition of terrorism. Terrorism is defined by Toros and Gunning as: ‘a violent means aimed at triggering political change by affecting a larger audience than its immediate target, and which is broadly deemed illegitimate’.[[155]](#footnote-156) Thus, both the objective and subjective approach to defining and studying terrorism are compatible. However, the specific definition of terrorism is not necessarily important, as it is the process of defining which can enrich the analysis of terrorism, as a tactic and a discourse.

In terms of the objective approach, there is a set of behaviours and acts that, for analytical purposes, can be identified as terrorism, such as the targeting of the ‘other’ to create fear, diffuse a particular message and mobilise support. While terrorism is just one tactic among a broader spectrum of political violence,[[156]](#footnote-157) it does have a unique difference that merits its maintenance as a special category of violence. Therefore, the thesis focuses on political violence but, when relevant, will refer to campaigns of terrorism specifically when salient. The identification of an act of political violence as terrorism in the thesis is to not make claims on its legitimacy, and even militant groups and states in private will acknowledge they have used terrorism tactics.[[157]](#footnote-158) However, there is little benefit in describing these actors as ‘terrorists’ or ‘state terrorists’ because it has more analytical purchase to avoid labelling actors in this way, firstly because it marginalises other identities,[[158]](#footnote-159) secondly, it more overtly leads to engaging in public discourse of who is legitimate and who is not, and thirdly, there are ethical and practical issues with referring to people as ‘terrorists’ or ‘ex-terrorists’ after conducting interviews with them. But while the thesis argues that it is most appropriate to try detaching itself from making subjective claims on legitimacy, it does not abandon the subjective approach entirely. The subjective approach to terrorism involves recognising that, in the public sphere, it is a contested concept and that it is used by actors to delegitimise the claims of others. However, a far more interesting outcome of using a subjective approach is it is possible to identify the different processes of labelling and how, through language, actors attempt to build or deny legitimacy.

In Republicanism and Northern Ireland there is quite a unique range of terminology that exists which also serves a similar pejorative function as ‘terrorist’, which is further complicated by the problem of the ex’s. The term dissident Republican, historically, has been used to de-legitimise groups who have strayed from the path of ‘true Republicanism’. Currently, the term is used to identify groups such as the Real IRA, Continuity IRA and the New IRA who oppose the peace process and continue to engage in political violence. The thesis uses the term *militant Republican* (or militant Loyalist) to identify the groups who engage in physical force. However, even this term is not entirely clear-cut, as a number of groups, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force – a Loyalist paramilitary group - can be defined as militant despite officially having ended their armed campaign, and this represents a broader problem of the ex’s.

A number of scholars have argued the label ex-prisoner, ex-terrorist, former-paramilitary or former-combatant can restrict their ability to ‘move on’, but there is a more practical problem in the case of Northern Ireland. [[159]](#footnote-160) Firstly, many members of the paramilitary groups still refer to each other in the present tense: figures representing the Provisional IRA, and the other Republican and Loyalist groups still meet; and they still refer to each other in such terms. Secondly, these paramilitary groups still exist either as formal command structures, or as informal social networks that are mediated through the structures of political parties, or former prisoner groups, thus maintaining a degree of command, discipline and loyalty between (ex) members.[[160]](#footnote-161) Of course, this may be a wider issue that challenges previous notions of how terrorism ends and disengagement processes: the organisations may be disbanded but a network of members may still exist, thus posing the same risk of recidivism that would be assumed with an organisational structure being maintained. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, the thesis refers to groups such as the Provisional IRA in the present tense, but this not to deny that the IRA ‘have gone away, you know’,[[161]](#footnote-162) but merely to acknowledge that the informal continuity exists and it is difficult to identify when the paramilitary group should be referred to as ‘former’ or not. Thus to summarise, the term *paramilitary group* is used to refer to all the groups which to different degrees over the last few decades have been *militant groups* – thus using political violence and terrorism. The conglomeration of militant groups that exist throughout the island of Ireland will be contextualised within a social movement, which will be discussed next.

### A Social Movement Approach

The lack of a multi-level analysis – as shown in Chapter One - has meant that explanations of how terrorism campaigns end have faced a number of problems. Gvineria states that a consequence of ‘a near-exclusive preoccupation with terrorist [groups] as the unit of analysis’ is that the literature ‘often equates decline of an organisation with the end of terrorism’.[[162]](#footnote-163) Crenshaw highlights the difficulties in assessing when terrorism has declined: some groups continue to exist despite apparent passivity and it is unknown when terrorism is likely to be reactivated.[[163]](#footnote-164) Thus, disengagement and de-radicalisation processes are staircases that can be climbed up and down at any stage[[164]](#footnote-165) – former militants can become militants again[[165]](#footnote-166) - but these metaphorical staircases to and from using armed violence can also be utilised by the next generation if the push and pull factors which cause of terrorism[[166]](#footnote-167) still remain within a society. The closest approach in terrorism studies to a multi-level analysis that would take into account these factors has been waves of terrorism theory. Yet, a problem with the waves of terrorism theory is the object of analysis was too broad, conflating groups such as ETA, the Provisional IRA, the PLO and many other nationalist movements together – in other words, the theory is not grounded. While it groups together militant groups, it does not necessarily take into account the context each of these groups operate within, namely sympathisers, potential sympathisers and competitor groups who don’t necessarily fit into the ‘nationalist wave’– such as Hamas (Islamist-Nationalist), the Irish National Liberation Army (Marxist-Nationalist), or the Ulster Volunteer Force (Loyalist-Nationalism).

Thus, Della Porta and LaFree argue that de-radicalisation needs to be scrutinised on micro, meso and macro levels, and most importantly the interplay between these dimensions, which a social movement approach does.[[167]](#footnote-168) Schmid argues for concepts of radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation to be brought under one conceptual framework which also moves the focus of analysis away from the individual level to encompass the meso and macro levels of analysis.[[168]](#footnote-169) For Schmid, disengagement and de-radicalisation has focused too much on those actively engaged in terrorism, yet it has neglected the radical milieu – sympathisers who can continue the struggle without being engaged in terrorism. Furthermore, Schmid highlights the link between the different causes of terrorism and how terrorism campaigns decline. Subsequently, there is a clear recognition of a gap in the literature where attitudinal, behavioural and structural changes are analysed together, within a framework which can be applied beyond a militant or militant group. Social movement theory provides a grounded and contextualised framework of analysis that can incorporate individual, group and structural explanations, enabling an analysis of the interaction between each level. [[169]](#footnote-170)

Social movements, defined by Della Porta and Diani, are informal networks, based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise around conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of protest.[[170]](#footnote-171) However, recent studies have moved beyond seeing social movements as only informal networks. Social movements consist of groups and organisations with various levels of formalisation, ‘linked in patterns of interaction which run from the fairly centralised to the totally decentralised, from the cooperative to the explicitly hostile’. [[171]](#footnote-172) They can be networks of individuals or networks of organisations, or they can consist of a mix of multiple networks of organisations and networks of individuals.[[172]](#footnote-173) As discussed above, most terrorism research focuses on militant groups, however militant groups such as the Provisional IRA and Hamas are typically part of larger social movements. A social movement approach not only helps to put terrorism and political violence in a broader context, it also contextualises the militant group and how it emerged.[[173]](#footnote-174)

Applied to the Irish context, an Irish Republican social movement can be identified as: 1) consisting of a mix of formal (militant and non-militant organisations) and informal (e.g. friendships) networks; 2) based on a desire to establish a united Irish socialist republic; 3) mobilised against partition, the British presence and Unionist hegemony; 4) through the use of civil rights protests, insurgency, terrorism and political participation. The Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein have been the most influential formal networks within the Irish Republican social movement, but both of these groups do not always overlap – for example, one interviewee was a member of the Provisional IRA but not Sinn Fein. The Irish Republican movement consists of a number of other groups, such as the INLA, the Real IRA, the New IRA, and non-militant activist groups such as Eirigi and the Republican Network for Unity. Furthermore, using a social movement approach takes into account the changes that occur in a social movement over time. Just as the Provisional IRA emerged from non-militant social networks in the shape of the 1960s Civil Rights movement,[[174]](#footnote-175) the disbandment of the Provisional IRA has led to the constitution of a variety of networks, from the former prisoner groups, the conflict resolution networks and networks of taxi drivers and tour guides. The transition into multiple networks provides these actors with greater agency but they are still a part of the broader movement, in terms of links with former Provisional IRA members and Sinn Fein, but also with other Republican activists and sympathisers. In effect, since 2005 the Provisional IRA has split up to spawn a more diffuse network however it still retains a degree of coherence and a command structure[[175]](#footnote-176) – hence why the thesis, and actors in the field, still describe these different groups and networks as the Provisional IRA. Therefore to reiterate, the Provisional IRA, consisting of various networks but which are relatively homogenous, is a key actor within a wider Irish Republican social movement.

The definition set above would include a vast number of actors, especially if it is situated within the Nationalist, Catholic community which Irish Republicanism primarily seeks to mobilise. While the Irish Republican social movement could be analysed collectively, this would limit the extent to which individual and group disengagement could be included. As such, while an expansive application of the social movement approach would be out of the scope of the study, the thesis will focus on the Provisional IRA, who were (and still are to an extent) the main actor within the social movement, and then analyse how the Provisional IRA interacts with and impacts upon the rest of the Irish Republican movement. One final aspect of social movements which has tended to be neglected is the role of the next generation within it. The younger generation are firstly socialised within a social network from birth, where they eventually may become an active part of it. So the thesis’ application of the social movement approach is three-fold: firstly, it analyses interaction within the Provisional IRA; secondly, it analyses the interaction between the Provisional IRA and the wider Irish Republican movement; and thirdly, it analyses the interaction between the younger generation born in Republican areas and the Irish Republican movement (which the Provisional IRA is a part of).

However, while the thesis places the Provisional IRA within the context of the Irish Republican movement, analysing the interaction between the two, this still neglects one key element: the Loyalists paramilitary groups. The thesis does not focus on the Loyalist movement nor does it offer a comparison between the movements, hence why the historical overview (Chapter Three) will not discuss Loyalism in great depth. However, Loyalism and fieldwork data from Loyalists will deepen the analysis of the Republican movement in three ways. Firstly, Loyalist paramilitary groups perceived themselves as a reactive appendage of the British security forces, and as social movements develop and operate in interaction with the existing political system, state practices towards opposition, and elite alliances – otherwise known as the political opportunity structure[[176]](#footnote-177) - Loyalist groups also constitute this political opportunity structure. Therefore, the thesis utilises interview data from Loyalist paramilitary figures to contextualise the environment in which the Irish Republican movement operates within. Secondly, interaction between the Republican movement and Loyalists has had a significant influence on the Republican movement, with Ashour arguing that interaction with the ‘other’ is a factor in de-radicalisation.[[177]](#footnote-178) Thirdly, Republican interaction with the next generation is often done along with Loyalists, therefore the thesis presents data from Loyalist youngsters but this is in the context of limiting the opportunities that could facilitate Republican violence. Thus, the thesis focuses on the interaction between the Provisional IRA and the rest of the Republican movement (including the next generation), and the interaction of the Republican movement with political opportunity structures, which includes the state and Loyalist paramilitaries.

Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to analyse changes at the group level (or formal network) that led to their disengagement, and how this has impacted upon the Irish Republican movement, thus creating a domino-effect of disengagement and acting to reduce the risk of recidivism in the social movement. The domino-effect is a term coined by Ashour, who observes that the disengagement of Islamist groups diffuses to other groups within the movement, bringing him to conclude that its dynamics ought to be a subject of future research.[[178]](#footnote-179) The thesis would add that this domino-effect not only diffuses to other groups; it diffuses throughout the movement, thus affecting the radical milieu and the next generation, and even Loyalist paramilitary groups. Thus, by situating the Provisional IRA’s disengagement within a broader context, the thesis can analyse the link between group disengagement and social movement disengagement, which can provide indicators of not only how terrorism ends but how the risk of recidivism is reduced. Whereas recidivism – or a slip-back into violence - has referred to individual disengagement, its application to a social movement requires a broader definition. Recidivism at a societal level can be expanded to have a number of dimensions which involve: a) the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein officially returning to violence; b) some of its members returning to violence; c) or emerging opportunities that strengthen dissident Republicans or maintain the existence of Republican militant groups; and d) passing on the armed struggle to the next generation.

Having outlined the benefits of a social movement approach and what this consists of, the chapter will now outline the theories that underpin this approach, which will inform the thesis’ framework. ‘Social movement theory is neither homogenous, nor a theory in the strictest sense of the word. It contains a broad set of analytical frameworks for exploring social movement dynamics’.[[179]](#footnote-180) This broad set of analytical frameworks overlap and have therefore tended to be synthesised,[[180]](#footnote-181) as each social movement theory explains different social movement dynamics. In order to explain attitudinal change – or de-radicalisation – the thesis utilises a frames analysis approach, which will be used to explain how the Provisional IRA re-framed its conceptualisation of armed struggle and convinced its members and the rest of the social movement of the need for disengagement. A frames analysis enables the thesis to demonstrate how these frames have changed over time and the extent to which they resonate with the Irish Republican social movement and the next generation. However, the thesis also recognises the significance of group dynamics and structural dynamics, and therefore the framework emphasises: a) the organisational structure and shape of networks;[[181]](#footnote-182) b) the stages and cycles a movement undergoes, and how each of these differ;[[182]](#footnote-183) c) how the structural environment and the political system can provide opportunities for those wishing to use (or not use) terrorism and political violence.[[183]](#footnote-184) Each of these aspects helps to explain how terrorism ends in a social movement.

### Attitudinal Change and Frames Analysis

Chapter One demonstrated that much of the literature on de-radicalisation is damning on the extent it actually reduces recidivism. Those who underplay de-radicalisation instead emphasise disengagement, which they argue is a combination of structural factors (state monitoring, political incentives, repression etc.) and tactical attitudinal change (deciding to disengage because of a change in opportunities). However, the thesis criticises this false dichotomisation of the debate and argues that this has emerged through a lack of engagement with the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, a lack of clarity on which type of attitudes are a part of de-radicalisation and which type are a part of disengagement, and an over-emphasis on the individual level of analysis. As a result, the thesis argues that the literature has underplayed the significance and nuance of attitudinal change and conflated agency with structure, which the thesis will separate to analyse the interaction between the two.

At the core of the de-radicalisation versus disengagement debate is the assumption that certain attitudes lead to certain behaviour. With regard to the behaviour, it generally refers to involvement in or support for groups who use political violence and terrorism, or in the use of political violence and terrorism itself. The thesis highlights a lack of agreement on what the attitudes encompass, with one perspective emphasising radical ideology, beliefs, goals and tactics, while another perspective emphasises tactics. The distinction is important: in the first perspective (the broad approach), an actor believing in Republicanism, the removal of British influence from Ireland, and the validity of armed struggle makes it likely for them to engage in or support armed struggle; in the second perspective (the narrow approach), an actor believing in the validity of armed struggle alone makes it likely for them to engage in or support armed violence. The narrow approach would lead one to argue that de-legitimising such violence is sufficient to reduce the risk of recidivism and spread disengagement to others, whilst still being ideologically committed to the cause.[[184]](#footnote-185) There is a lack of consensus on whether the narrow approach should even be considered de-radicalisation in academia and in policy circles. Silke refers to the public de-legitimisation of armed violence by European leftist militants as disengagement and not de-radicalisation, despite this surely being the core aspect of de-radicalisation rather than ideological change.[[185]](#footnote-186) Schmid argues that continuing to hold a radical ideology can be a factor in radicalising others, hence why the broad approach to de-radicalisation is important.[[186]](#footnote-187) One senior British counter-terrorism policy-maker referred to the de-legitimisation of armed violence as disengagement[[187]](#footnote-188) rather than de-radicalisation.[[188]](#footnote-189) The desire of states to combat (Islamist) ideologies that contradict the values which the state wishes to promote[[189]](#footnote-190) has led to an unhelpful over-emphasis of the broad approach in academic research. However, given that research on attitudes-behaviour in the discipline of psychology have widely criticised broad approaches,[[190]](#footnote-191) it should not come as a surprise that the broad approach to de-radicalisation has been found to have little bearing on participation in violence.

Building on a range of theories that seek to explain the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, Fishbein and Ajzen identify three ‘attitudinal objects’ that need to be ascertained in order to identify a correlation with behaviour.[[191]](#footnote-192) Applied to political violence, the following attitudes would be important: the perceived (strategic) benefit of political violence; the perceived control over being able to use political violence; and the perceived norms surrounding the use of political violence. Therefore, ideological beliefs, which the broad approach emphasises, are not necessarily a substantial factor in shaping behaviour: one’s ideology may shape all of these factors but they are not contingent upon ideology. Fishbein and Ajzen’s approach provides a better framework for ascertaining the connection between attitudes and behaviour than has been offered in the terrorism literature. There are some clear problems in applying it as a method to the field of terrorism, namely that people are unlikely to identify what they feel about terrorism, when they plan to engage in terrorism, how easy they think it would be to use terrorism, and what their loved-ones think about them using terrorism.

Furthermore, the approach does not transfer well from the individual level analysis to the group or social movement level. The thesis will make reference to the three types of attitudes that Fishbein and Ajzen discuss, but it is not possible to apply this model consistently. However, by building on Fishbein and Ajzen’s approach, the thesis comes to the following conclusion: de-radicalisation and disengagement is much more nuanced than presented and their current dichotomisation does not capture the relevant types of attitudes that actually correspond to behaviour. If all that is left from the de-radicalisation versus disengagement debate is a narrow definition of de-radicalisation – i.e. the public de-legitimisation of armed violence – and if social norms are more significant than ideological change, then de-radicalisation is a social process as much as an individual one. As it is difficult to apply Fishbein and Ajzen’s approach to the social level, and as this approach has shown existing conceptualisations of attitudinal change to be weak, the thesis utilises social movement theory to overcome this problem.

Subsequently, the thesis applies frames analysis to explain attitudinal change and the impact it has on disengagement. The frames analysis approach is derived from Goffman’s research: a frame denotes a schema of interpretation which functions to organise experience and guide action, whether individual or collective.[[192]](#footnote-193) Frames are often constructed by political entrepreneurs – actors who take the initiative in mobilising resources – and the frame is promoted by them and others who act as messengers. According to framing theory, social movements seek to create linkages with unmobilised ‘aggregates of individuals’ who have common grievances. They create such linkages by diffusing information through interpersonal and intergroup networks, mass media, the internet etc.[[193]](#footnote-194) There are three main components in a group’s frame which they use to mobilise their target population and generate support: firstly, frames diagnose a problem and who this problem is attributed to; secondly, they state how such problems are to be solved; and thirdly, they seek to provide motivation by incentivising action.[[194]](#footnote-195) In addition, the gap between attribution framing within society and amongst social movement organisations should be explored - known as *resonance*. The credibility of framing is dependent on frame consistency, empirical credibility and credibility of the articulators.[[195]](#footnote-196) The resonance of framing also depends on factors pertaining to the targets for mobilisation: 1) *centrality* refers to how essential the beliefs and goals of the organisation are to the lives of the targets of mobilisation (typically hierarchical); 2) *experiential commensurability* asks to what extent does the frame resonate with the personal, everyday experiences or is framing too abstract and distant; and 3) *narrative fidelity* refers to the extent a frame resonates with the targets’ cultural narration, or ‘myths’ and ‘domain assumptions’.[[196]](#footnote-197)

The use of a frames analysis is aimed to provide a better indication of likely behaviour, but this is contingent on a frame accurately reflecting attitudes. The only way to ascertain an actor’s attitudes is through behaviour, which can include the verbalisation of attitudes toward a type of behaviour. However, this gives way for actors behaving in contradictory ways to different audiences, which leads to the issue of whether de-radicalisation reflects a genuine change on the part of former militants. Subsequently, the frame an actor espouses that is taken to indicate de-radicalisation may be different from their ‘genuine’ attitudes in other contexts. However, there is still a link between frames and attitudes that mean a frames approach can shed light on attitudinal change. Firstly, the act of repeating a frame to an audience, while perhaps not initially reflecting genuine attitudes entirely, can lead to a change in attitudes itself in order to avoid cognitive dissonance – that is, when there is a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour. Secondly, attitudes are expressed in social settings which can incentivise or discourage certain attitudes being expressed or being held, and this is where the issue of discrepancy or disingenuousness can emerge. However, a frames analysis can better reflect the attitudes of actors because it recognises that frame audiences can shape the message and therefore attitudes: by analysing frames within social networks, it can better reflect attitudes and how they change. Therefore, a frames approach can better reflect the attitudes of actors to explain behaviour, and while this may not be as accurate as the methods used in the aforementioned Reasoned Action Theory, it provides a greater reflection than studies on de-radicalisation precisely because it puts attitudinal change in a social context.

While frames analysis is primarily used to explain mobilisation, the thesis is the first to use it in the context of disengagement and de-radicalisation, therefore the approach needs to be adapted to reflect the different dynamics in disengagement. Prior to a militant group voluntarily disengaging, political entrepreneurs, typically the leadership, will begin the process of constructing a *disengagement frame*. The political entrepreneurs bring together the different types of attitudinal change that are occurring to inform a coherent disengagement frame. In cases where there is little leadership or the organisational upper echelons are divided in creating a disengagement frame, the different attitudes within an organisation can coalesce around different political entrepreneurs within a movement, resulting in multiple frames existing which can undermine the case for disengagement. A disengagement frame makes the case for demobilising, and while this frame may not be overtly calling for disengagement in the initial stages of the process, as the process develops it becomes more refined. Crucially, a disengagement frame will need to build on the mobilising frame (narrative fidelity). The components of a disengagement frame are as follows: it diagnoses a problem with the mobilising frame, which may be ideological, strategic or tactical, or recognising a change with whom the problem is attributed to; a new approach that does not involve the use of armed violence will be identified; new or previously dormant components to the frame will be developed (frame extension and frame amplification respectively) to motivate current members or mobilise new constituencies.

Fundamental to the success of a disengagement frame is the extent it resonates with the movement (frame alignment), and the thesis focuses on three factors that affect the resonance of a frame. Firstly, there must be sufficient linkages between the network attempting to diffuse the frame and those they are targeting. Given the illicit nature of militant organisations, the ability to develop linkages can be influenced by the amount of repression and the organisational structure. Another key factor is the medium of linkages and dialogue, which builds on Ashour’s argument that successful disengagement is partly contingent on internal discussion.[[197]](#footnote-198) Dialogue and debate can be sufficient to produce attitudinal change or adjust their attitudes to align it with imposed behaviour to avoid cognitive dissonance,[[198]](#footnote-199) but crucially, the unique aspect of a disengagement frame is that it has a normative function, which through personal networks and influence, can mean people will adhere to frames and use them as scripts when in dialogue even if they do not fully believe in it at first. Secondly, the ‘messengers’ of the frame must be perceived to have credibility – not charismatic leadership as Ashour emphasises.[[199]](#footnote-200) Therefore the thesis’ framework highlights the significance of analysing what provides the messengers with credibility, how this affects resonance, and how credible messengers are utilised in diffusing the frame. Thirdly, the disengagement frame must maintain narrative fidelity; that is, it cannot deviate substantially from the mobilising frame and attitudes within society (thus leading to the term ‘rubber-band diplomacy’ being coined by Provisional IRA members). Finally, while the diffusion of the disengagement frame will be primarily targeted internally, the frame will also be influenced by external actors who seek to define its parameters and the militant group will also diffuse the frame externally to its sympathisers and target community.

The development of a disengagement frame can occur over a long period of time, transforming substantially. Each stage in the disengagement frame is connected because of the need to maintain narrative fidelity. Therefore, if a disengagement frame has three identifiable stages over a ten-year period, for example, the frame used in the first stage will shape and constrain frames in the second and third stage. As an example, the Provisional IRA’s frame in the first stage legitimised past violence, therefore in the third stage when members realised this was counter-productive with talking to young people, they were not able to de-legitimise past violence as their credibility had been built on the frame at the first stage. Instead, in the third stage, some Provisional IRA members sought to de-glamourise past violence to overcome this problem. As well as frames being causally bound, they can also have an escalatory mechanism, whereby the adoption of the frame at one stage will push it to develop into another stage where more disengagement is expected, and frames have to adapt to reflect this. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, the very acceptance of disengagement to gain political benefits by the Provisional IRA drew them in further, where they then had to disarm and de-legitimise violence, which a disengagement frame had to justify while also being bounded to previous arguments. Therefore, the successful resonance of a disengagement frame can act to push groups toward greater disengagement, which leads to a new stage in the frame emerging that is constrained and shaped by the old stage, therefore the frames build on each other.

The concept of de-radicalisation is not lost, as frames can be underpinned by a range of attitudes which may constitute de-radicalisation. However, a frames analysis provides scope to analyse the nuances, which leads the thesis to expand the disengagement or (narrow) de-radicalisation dichotomy. One problem of both narrow and broad approaches to de-radicalisation is the inability to recognise it as a conditional process. In this context, conditionality refers to when violence is de-legitimised in certain conditions over time, place or actor/movement[[200]](#footnote-201) and the thesis expands this to take into account three forms of conditionality: 1) *temporal conditionality* - a militant group may de-legitimise violence occurring today but legitimise the past use of violence by the same movement (as with the Provisional IRA); 2) *spatial conditionality* - a militant may de-legitimise violence in Saudi Arabia or the UK but legitimise it in Syria or Palestine;[[201]](#footnote-202) 3) *intersectional conditionality* - a shift in the type of movement’s violence being legitimised (e.g. from Post-Colonial Wave to Leftist Wave), the actor may still legitimise violence that is distant (e.g. glorifying historical battles) or the actor may shift to legitimising state violence (e.g. from Irgun/Stern Gang to Israel). Rabasa et al reject conditionality as not being ‘genuine de-radicalisation’[[202]](#footnote-203) and others, including policy-makers, dismiss it as being a part of disengagement (behavioural change).[[203]](#footnote-204) However, the thesis contends that by using frames analysis, a broader typology of attitudinal change can be accounted for which can help explain how terrorism ends and the risk of recidivism is reduced.

While recognising there will be more categories and at times they will overlap, three broad categories are used to identify disengagement frame types: tactical disengagement (behavioural change with no de-legitimisation of violence); conditional de-radicalisation (delegitimises violence with temporal and/or spatial conditions, or bases disengagement on conditions); unconditional de-radicalisation (de-glamourises and/or de-legitimises all violence, perhaps with the exception of intersectional conditionality). Crucially, the thesis argues that de-legitimisation of violence should be seen separately as the de-glamourisation of violence. Furthermore, depending on the nuance of the frame, each frame type can contain escalatory mechanisms which bridge one frame to another – therefore the adoption of a certain tactical disengagement frame can cause an actor’s frame to develop into unconditional de-radicalisation. These three typologies manifest in the Irish Republican movement and help explain the different outcomes of disengagement, thus challenging the literature’s assumptions on whether attitudinal change is necessary to reduce the risk of recidivism. Given how there is much contestation over what attitudes are shaped by tactical considerations and what attitudes constitute de-legitimisation, the thesis will now explore this issue in greater detail. This debate is crucial to the thesis as the majority of studies and policy-makers accept that the Provisional IRA’s disengagement only constituted the first type of frame (below).

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| **Types of Disengagement Frames** | |
| **Tactical Disengagement** | Violence is stopped because of tactical considerations – there is no de-legitimisation of violence |
| **Conditional De-Radicalisation** | Violence by a movement will be de-legitimised because of the conditions in one time and place, but violence by the movement may still be legitimised in other conditions. |
| **Unconditional De-Radicalisation** | Violence perpetrated by the movement is rejected and is de-legitimised, or de-glamourised. Some historical cases of violence may still be legitimised, but this will function as commemorations that justify disengagement. |

Tactical disengagement consists of attitudes which oppose the use of violence because of its tactical efficacy. In this case, the capacity to use violence is diminished and, in relation to other tactics, violence is not effective or preferable for achieving certain goals. When disengagement is underpinned by these attitudes – as the mainstream argument suggests – then there is a higher risk of a return to violence when the opportunity arises because the tactic is still perceived as legitimate but just not effective. In the fieldwork conducted (discussed below), both a former Provisional IRA member and a 32CSM/Real IRA member used similar arguments on the tactical efficacy of violence in the current situation but quite clearly there are differences, and these differences are not because of institutional setting but because the opposition to violence is qualitatively different. The thesis argues that arguments against violence on the basis of tactical efficacy are not exclusive from the de-legitimisation of violence: tactical disengagement can become based on conditions, which then adds a de-legitimising aspect to the argument. Depending on the conditions that underpin tactical disengagement, the door can be opened for a group to begin to de-legitimise violence. For example, the PLO’s ceasefire was conditional on the peace process, which when achieved, incentivised them to de-legitimise violence as long as the peace process conditions were maintained. Thus, the logic of tactical efficacy over time can lead to the logic of appropriateness, whereby actors make normative claims against the use of violence in conditions, but while also still critiquing its tactical efficacy.

This argument leads to a) what is legitimacy and b) why is de-legitimisation significant? Actors are ‘engaged in endless strategies of legitimation’ whereby they seek to set out what is appropriate conduct.[[204]](#footnote-205) According to Clark, the practice of legitimacy draws upon the norms of legality, morality, and constitutionality (and spirituality could also be added to this). In analysing the arguments used by Provisional IRA members since the 1998 GFA, arguments against violence have become based more on legality, morality and constitutionality. With regard to legality, when one former Provisional IRA member discussed dissident Republican prisoners, she stated that she ‘would not legitimise criminality’.[[205]](#footnote-206) In terms of morality, the same interviewee stated: ‘To me, the armed struggle, we fought it when it was the only option to defend ourselves and then to progress our struggle we did that, but if the conditions no longer existed, we were morally compelled to examine other possibilities’.[[206]](#footnote-207) All four former Provisional IRA interviewees seek to de-legitimise dissident Republican violence based on the institutions of the peace process and the constitutional opportunities that these provide. Arguments against current violence underpinned by tactical efficacy are still certainly used, for example: [with regard to the deaths of the two soldiers in 2011], ‘waste of a life, two soldiers, they are taking lives and getting them nowhere, is it making them relevant, it’s not. Why would you want to take someone’s life unless you firmly believe 100% that it is going to get you closer to your goals, or making change? These killings in isolation will never do it’.[[207]](#footnote-208) However, these arguments are made in conjunction with de-legitimisation[[208]](#footnote-209)and the nested nature of de-radicalisation, whereby tactical disengagement can co-exist with conditional de-radicalisation, provides a plurality of arguments that can resonate with multiple audiences.

Frames that de-legitimise violence have a tangible outcome when they resonate with a target audience because it can challenge attitudes that lead to violent behaviour. As noted with regard to Fishbein and Ajzen’s theory, actors behave in a certain way when they perceive the behaviour to have a positive role in achieving an objective, that it is possible for the actor to ‘perform the behaviour’ (i.e. engage in violence), and *that it is normatively permissive*. Therefore, when Actor A is persuading Actor B to disengage by using the arguments in the frame (frame diffusion), and if the frame resonates with Actor B, then Actor A is setting out what is normatively acceptable behaviour. Thus, disengagement frames which de-legitimise violence seek to challenge the ‘attitude-objects’ that correspond with behaviour, thus theoretically reducing the likelihood of that behaviour occurring. Furthermore, the process of de-glamourising violence – seeking to make a certain type of behaviour seem unappealing – affects the attitudes that assume the behaviour in question is positive. To conclude, disengagement frames can have a tangible effect on behaviour, and each type of disengagement frame that has been identified affects the attitudes that lead certain behaviour to occur. This approach overcomes the inability to analyse attitude-change specifically as the main objective is to ascertain whether the frame has resonated, or even, that the frame exists and is being diffused, which will then reduce the risk of actors engaging in terrorism and political violence. While this makes the thesis contingent on Fishbein and Ajzen’s model of attitudes-behaviour being accurate, this approach is a substantial improvement on the assumptions hitherto made with regard to de-radicalisation.

A benefit of this approach is instead of assuming that a change in ideology or a de-legitimisation of armed violence (both broad and narrow definitions of de-radicalisation) are indicative of a successful reduction in the risk of recidivism, it will take the successful resonance of the disengagement frame, and which type of frame, as an indication of this. A reasonable assumption to make would be that frames that promote unconditional de-radicalisation may offer a greater reduction in the risk of recidivism; however, a frame that is built around conditional de-radicalisation may resonate more even if some violence is still legitimised. This unique application of frames analysis will provide an in-depth explanation of how disengagement emerges within a group – compensating for the emphasis on external factors and providing a richer understanding of attitudinal change than offered by the literature’s false dichotomy of disengagement or de-radicalisation. It will also provide a means of assessing the extent to which it is likely that the group will slip back into violence. The thesis will apply a frames analysis in Chapter Four to analyse how the leadership in the Provisional IRA constructed the disengagement frame and the manner in which this successfully resonated with most of the group. Chapter Five will analyse how the disengagement frame was diffused throughout the social movement and the impact this had. Chapter Six will analyse the extent the disengagement frame resonates with the younger generation. Crucially, just as the development and successful resonance of the disengagement frame can motivate a militant group to leave violence behind, the actual implementation of disengagement can facilitate its diffusion.

### Organisational Disengagement and Networks

The majority of studies that look at how terrorism ends and disengagement identify a mix of factors that are internal and external to the militant group that causes them to voluntarily or involuntarily end their campaign. As discussed in Chapter One, these factors include burnout and disillusionment of members, a loss or lack of support, military repression, de-capitation of senior figures in the militant group, intelligence and policing, and negotiations as part of a political settlement.[[209]](#footnote-210) However, the thesis argues that these studies overlook the internal dynamics at play that make disengagement successful and they neglect how the process of disengagement manifests itself, by only identifying a number of routes without any explanation of how these are significant. As discussed with regard to disengagement frames, the process itself is constructed and there are many possible routes it can take which can have an effect on the risk of recidivism: a weak disengagement frame that does not resonate is more likely to lead to a slip-back into violence.

In addition, group disengagement also manifests in social networks which actually contain similar attributes of an organisational structure (thereby including the same risk of recidivism), yet no study has analysed organisational disengagement from a network perspective (discussed below). While the thesis takes the terrorism literature as its starting point, there are two areas of literature which have broadly not been incorporated into debates on how terrorism ends and disengagement. Thus, the thesis adopts insights from Ashour’s study on the de-radicalisation of Islamist groups in Egypt and Algeria and research on disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) to inform the framework which will underpin the thesis.

Ashour identifies four factors that he argues are essential for successful disengagement (or de-radicalisation in his use of the term). Firstly, *state repression* can prompt members of a group to reconsider its strategy. Secondly, *charismatic leadership* is essential to convince members of the new strategy of disengagement, which they seek to do through dialogue and the use of their credibility as, in the case of Islamist groups, religious figures. Thirdly, *inducements* will be provided, such as prisoner releases and inclusion in politics, which provide incentives for disengagement and strengthen the position of the leadership against hardliners. Fourthly, *social interaction* can change the perspectives of the leadership and interaction with the ‘other’ can break down some of the motivations that facilitate the use of armed violence. Furthermore, Ashour demonstrates how the disengagement of Islamist groups can have a *domino-effect* on other groups within the social movement, inspiring others to disengage, although Ashour makes this point as an area for future research and does not explain its dynamics in depth.[[210]](#footnote-211) The use of frames analysis improves upon the imprecise nature of charismatic leadership as a factor, and social interaction should be more explicitly divided into interaction within and outside the movement, and inducements are understood as conditions. However, broadly speaking, the thesis’ framework will incorporate Ashour’s approach into the social movement approach to explain the disengagement process. This approach will help explain at which periods in the disengagement process each of these factors matter and it will contribute to the limited knowledge of the domino-effect.

In post-conflict situations, programmes of disarmament; de-mobilisation; and re-integration (DDR) have prompted an expansion of academic research. The thesis subordinates DDR to the broader process of *organisational disengagement*. The thesis’ framework builds on Shirlow et al’s approach to DDR given its focus on the role of former prisoners in the Northern Ireland peace process and conflict transformation. DDR is ‘a process introduced following a conflict and directed primarily at ensuring the transition of combatants to civilian life’.[[211]](#footnote-212) The aim of DDR programmes is to ensure ‘that peace is permanent and that previous fighters become peaceful assets for the communities to which they return’.[[212]](#footnote-213) The success of DDR is dependent on political will and planning,[[213]](#footnote-214) and as Ozerdem argues, the integration of militants into new roles can help leaders sell a peace agreement to members because there are tangible benefits for them.[[214]](#footnote-215) Former combatants can use weapons to reignite conflict, therefore disarmament can be seen as important to reducing the risk of recidivism, although this depends on the mechanisms for managing disarmament and at which point in the process it is demanded. Demobilisation also aims to have the same effect of reducing recidivism by dismantling the command structure of the militant group and re-integrating combatants into military, political, community and civilian roles. Linking DDR to social movement theory, DDR firstly requires that the disengagement frame to have successfully resonated to begin with, and that DDR itself provides inducements and the linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame further, reducing the risk of recidivism among former combatants and potentially having a domino-effect.

Finally, organisational disengagement creates the linkages which the disengagement frame can diffuse through, and it is these linkages which necessitates the use of social movement theory as opposed to the group level analysis used in previous studies on disengagement. Social movements are a mixture of formal and informal social networks, and these social networks consist of linkages between actors.[[215]](#footnote-216) The development, utilisation and expansion of these networks act as a means to diffuse the disengagement frame and create attitudinal change within the social movement. Another benefit of analysing organisational disengagement through the perspective of social networks is it can look at how the process manifests after the militant group has officially disbanded but an informal command structure is exercised or a network of militants still exist. The disengagement literature overlooks what happens after militants are reintegrated, and the thesis contends this is the most crucial period for disengagement. By analysing organisational disengagement as networks, the thesis can link attitudinal change and organisational disengagement with structures, which constitutes the final element in the thesis’ multi-level analytical framework.

### Structural Change and the Next Generation

As discussed in Chapter One, much of the disengagement versus de-radicalisation debate revolves around not only attitudinal change, or organisational processes of disengagement, but the interaction of both of these with structure. Many scholars commenting on disengagement, in effect, refer to the significance in a changing environment for the decline of terrorism campaigns. For example, Rapoport’s theory of waves of terrorism discusses how changes in the international system, states adapting to technological and social innovation, and a decline in the spirit of the times can lead to terrorism campaigns declining.[[216]](#footnote-217) It would emphasise resistance, political concessions and changing attitudes of the younger generation. Studies on counter-radicalisation look specifically at state policy but this can be expanded more broadly, and would include three elements: countering grievances; countering narratives; and countering mobilisation.[[217]](#footnote-218) In social movement theory, one approach argues that political opportunity structures can provide conditions which movements can exploit to mobilise resources or they can function to limit the scope for mobilisation,[[218]](#footnote-219) for example, by incorporating movements into the political system. Scholars note the significance of state surveillance to ensure former militants do not return to combat and the impact of different political systems on disengagement.[[219]](#footnote-220) One of the few structural approaches on disengagement and de-radicalisation in the Irish Republican movement looks at elections as a mechanism of de-radicalisation in the 1920-1930s, for example.[[220]](#footnote-221)

The three approaches outlined above all touch upon similar themes, but given the overlap with the literature on counter-radicalisation, the thesis utilises its terminology. The thesis’ framework contests that the given political system, nested in international structures, can be a force for disengagement of violent social movements, large and small, local and global. The political system can counter the real and imagined grievances that have driven the conflict and motivate groups still engaging in terrorism and political violence. Furthermore, opportunities to mobilise resources (finance, weaponry, recruits, intelligence) and conduct attacks can be limited and eroded by the political system.[[221]](#footnote-222) Finally, the disengagement frame is constructed in a competitive arena and therefore it, as well as state counter-narratives, has to undermine militant narratives and maintain an appeal over them. As a result of the contemporary disengagement process in Northern Ireland from the 1990s onwards, a specific type of political system has emerged, a consociational system, and the thesis builds on research on this type of political system to explain the extent it counters grievances, narratives and mobilisation.

The new political dispensation that emerged as part of the Good Friday Agreement was a consociational system, which enshrined political identities institutionally. Political parties, including Sinn Fein, were designated as ‘Unionist’, ‘Nationalist’ or ‘Other’, and it provided government power-sharing by proportional inclusion of parties, thus ensuring both identity groups had a stake in governance at Stormont. It also provided for a certain amount of cultural autonomy and, specifically, ‘group vetoes to assure Catholic and Protestant communities that important decisions will only be made with the broad consent of representatives of the relevant community’.[[222]](#footnote-223) Critics argue that the consociational system encourages a zero-sum outlook, freezes and perpetuates the status quo, marginalises moderate voices and new identities, and that the political process can be held to ransom by one side.[[223]](#footnote-224) Proponents of consociationalism, for example O’Leary and McGarry, retort that consociationalism is a reflection of the divisions in society and is a pragmatic solution. There are three layers of the political opportunity structure – Stormont (including Westminster and Dublin); local government; and communities – and consociationalism has been institutionalised at each layer to a different degree. In Stormont it has been institutionalised more, with more veto powers in the area of culture than local government, and at the community level there is no formal consociationalism but ethnic division is perpetuated by social practices, including physical barriers such as the ‘peace walls’ between Republican and Loyalist communities. Therefore, while one layer of politics may be stable, decisions at one level can have a serious impact at different layers where there is less protection for political identities, and political actors have varying influence and pressures in each layer.

A consociational analysis of the political system is applied to explain disengagement and recidivism-reduction in three ways: 1) the political system shapes and informs the grievances that lead to mobilisation (in the 1960s for the Provisional IRA), therefore it informs how narrative fidelity will be later maintained; 2) changes in the political system instigate disengagement frames and they become closely intertwined, making disengagement contingent (or conditional) on the political system, therefore political systems function to reduce the risk of recidivism and the durability of the former informs the durability of the latter; 3) the political system shapes and informs the grievances for a new generation, thus enabling or constraining the opportunities for militant groups to pass on the struggle, mobilise resources or by removing the motivation for young people to begin the campaign anew.

A significant part of the study is the analysis of the interaction between the generation of disengaging militants and the younger generation: the next generation. The thesis focuses on the younger generation for the reason that militant campaigns end when the next generation no longer support them. Young people may no longer support the use of armed violence because social transformation has removed the drivers of violence for the previous generation; in such a scenario, a durable change of social structures would indicate a decreased likelihood of violence returning. Conversely, there may have been inadequate social transformation so that young people are supportive of using violence; in this scenario, a change in opportunities may increase the likelihood of violence returning.[[224]](#footnote-225) As stated in the previous chapter, the literature has been quiet on how the link between generations is broken and especially how this fits into debates on de-radicalisation. The thesis argues that analysing the interaction between generations (potentially) involved in political violence can help to account for how generational transformation takes place, in the context of broader structural change which removes or contains the grievances that inspired the previous generation. The combination of attitudinal change among the next generation and durable structural change may decrease the likelihood of a return to violence. Thus, the thesis will analyse what frames the next generation are exposed to, the extent to which they interact with disengagement militants, and how this helps to frame their understanding of structural change. Just as the diffusion of a disengagement frame within a group can help it to successfully disengage, the thesis argues that the process of diffusion to the next generation is crucial if terrorism is to end by breaking the continuity between generations for the support of terrorism and political violence.

To conclude this section, Chapter Two has outlined the three factors which it deems are important for disengagement and recidivism reduction among armed social movements. However, each of these factors impinge on the disengagement process at different stages, therefore the framework will apply them in a five-stage framework. The disengagement process manifests in five steps:

1. Changes in the political system – including repression and the emergence of political opportunities - prompt some members within a movement to consider a degree of disengagement to be favourable. These members are the political entrepreneurs who drive the disengagement frame and the process.
2. Gradually, a disengagement frame is constructed by a network within a militant group, the political entrepreneurs, and this frame is diffused throughout the group and the movement, prompting attitudinal change.
3. The successful resonance of the disengagement frame is important for reducing recidivism and facilitating organisational disengagement. The key factors for the successful resonance of the disengagement frame are: credibility; narrative fidelity; and linkages.
4. The diffusion of the disengagement frame intertwines with the actual process of disengagement, which provides inducements and new roles. These new roles provide credibility, they reduce the risk of recidivism, and they provide linkages for the disengagement frame to develop and be diffused throughout the social movement.
5. Organisational disengagement, attitudinal change and a consequent change in the political system create new conditions for the social movement: these new conditions shape the opportunities and constraints for armed violence to be used by militant groups and the likelihood of the next generation continuing the armed campaign. It is at this stage in the process where the domino-effect can take place.

Thus, the analytical framework is seeking to explain how the Provisional IRA disengagement led to the end of a terrorism campaign within the social movement, through changing the opportunities for other groups and by changing the attitudes of the next generation away from becoming involved in terrorism and political violence. The analytical framework implicitly combines the three distinct processes – radicalisation, de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation – as the decline of terrorism in a social movement requires a consideration of all three. However, the focus on the role of disengaged and de-radicalised militants anchors it closer to this field of the literature.

### Methodology

A significant criticism against terrorism studies is that the discipline is marked by limited fieldwork-driven research, which often means that the data used is second hand and with little depth or credibility.[[225]](#footnote-226) The study of former combatants offers an opportunity to engage in fieldwork to gather primary data as they are often more willing to speak,[[226]](#footnote-227) and subsequently there have been a number of recent studies which have interviewed former combatants,[[227]](#footnote-228) particularly former Provisional IRA members.[[228]](#footnote-229) However, as the thesis’ framework takes a social movement approach, as outlined above, the available data was insufficient to account for this – for example, there has been no fieldwork conducted on the interaction between former combatants and young people in Republican communities within the context of disengagement and de-radicalisation. Therefore to answer the research questions posed in Chapter One, it was important to gather data more broadly than just from former combatants. As the thesis is focusing on the interaction between the Provisional IRA and the Irish Republican social movement that it is embedded in, the broadening of this scope is built around those actual relationships in society. Thus, the thesis’ methodology began with a broad set of social movement theories and the conceptual emphasis on frame diffusion through networks emerged from the empirical data, meaning fieldwork did not simply look for evidence to support its focus. Furthermore, the methods were informed by the framework’s observation that a deeper understanding of attitudes were required in order to trace how these changed, or at least how actors perceived that these attitudes had changed and why. Therefore, as will be elaborated on below, the need for a deeper understanding meant that qualitative methods such as interviews were the most appropriate means of data collection. But before outlining how the original data was gathered and discussing which methods were used, the chapter will explain why the Irish Republican movement was selected.

### Case Selection

Research on social movements often seeks to understand the complex interactions that occur within a movement and how its members experience and interpret the society they live within.[[229]](#footnote-230) To that end, a single-site case study approach can provide the level of depth that is required to study the process of attitudinal change. A single-site study refers to research carried out in one relatively bounded setting,[[230]](#footnote-231) and in the case of this study, this bounded setting consists of three concentric circles: the Provisional IRA; the Irish Republican movement; and Northern Ireland. There are a number of benefits to a single-site study. Firstly, whereas multi-site studies lends to a priori concept formation, a single-site approach can help to ground the concepts.[[231]](#footnote-232) For example, the concept of de-radicalisation emerged from studies on Islamists - Jihadists in particular - therefore the concept of de-radicalisation has emphasised aspects of religion and ideology which, when imposed top-down in other contexts, has not been suitable to other contexts (as discussed in Chapter One). Secondly, a single-site approach provides far more depth to explore the process of disengagement and de-radicalisation, with many multi-site approaches focusing on only one period of the process. The problem with this is de-radicalisation can occur after behavioural change (e.g. the disbandment of the group).[[232]](#footnote-233) The use of a single-site approach does not preclude the transferability to other cases, especially if the point of comparison has also been grounded, as this can account for how different concepts are understood. Just as a single-site approach was utilised to provide greater depth and originality conceptually, the rationale for selecting the Provisional IRA and the Irish Republican movement was also based on how a detailed analysis could challenge the literature’s main assertions on the topic.

As discussed in Chapter One, there is a near-consensus in the literature that the Provisional IRA’s disengagement did not constitute a case of de-radicalisation, thus consequently showing that de-radicalisation is not necessary for disengagement to succeed.[[233]](#footnote-234) However, the thesis argues that this assumption has been made without taking into account recent developments such as the involvement of former Provisional IRA members in community activism. Thus, a deeper analysis of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, contextualised within the Irish Republican movement, can challenge assumptions on what de-radicalisation is and what constitutes a successful disengagement process.

There are three reasons why a deeper analysis of the Provisional IRA and the Irish Republican movement may challenge the literature’s assumptions. Firstly, twenty years have elapsed since the beginning of the disengagement process in 1994, meaning the process is much longer than the disengagement of Jihadists, which is relatively recent. Secondly, while there are cases of Islamist groups who have disengaged just as long ago, the religious dynamic that often underpins their disengagement has tended to mean that de-radicalisation has been broadened to include ideological change rather than a change in attitudes toward violence. Thirdly, other militant groups who have disengaged over a similar period, such as Fatah-PLO and the leftist groups such as the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy, may also provide a useful counter-point. However, the latter groups do not have the generational legacy of Irish Republicanism – in other words, there isn’t much of a risk of recidivism - and Fatah/PLO, while a potential wealth of information, does not have the same status in the literature as a text-book case of disengagement. For these reasons, it was preferable to study the Provisional IRA and Irish Republicanism, but this does not rule out the benefit of applying a similar social movement approach to the groups mentioned above.

While some studies provide a comparative analysis of different types of disengagement and de-radicalisation processes, these are often between groups in different contexts.[[234]](#footnote-235) While this is legitimate as the groups being analysed are connected through a social movement or an ideology,[[235]](#footnote-236) the long history of the Irish Republican movement provides a number of cases of disengagement with relatively constant factors and an extensive amount of data. Although the different periods of the IRA’s disengagement have been analysed separately, no study has taken the opportunity to analyse all of these processes together to provide a comparison. In this historical analysis, effectively the same organisation, motivated by the same ideology, and in similar political conditions, has experienced four disengagement processes which are completely different in their constitution and outcome. Furthermore, one substantial difference that marks out the Irish Republican case from other cases (although there are exceptions) is the presence of Loyalists, who acted as a pro-state paramilitary force against Republicans and Catholics. As noted above, Loyalists are analysed as an external force that can have a causal influence on Irish Republican violence, just as the state can, but Loyalists are also included in the study to provide context to the Provisional IRA’s disengagement process; the study does not claim to analyse Loyalist disengagement but it does provide the framework for such a study. Having outlined the rationale for focusing on the Provisional IRA and the Irish Republican movement, the chapter will now explain how it identified the parameters for data collection.

### Sampling

The research limited its sample to participants in Belfast because: 1) logistical reasons; 2) the concentration of the conflict in Belfast; 3) the number of community groups were broader, they were more responsive and more readily available; and 4) focusing on one city provided data that mapped out the networks and connections between the groups, which 5) helped to build up trust between the interviewer and interviewees, thus leading into more interviews. In order to identify who to interview, three sampling strategies were utilised: judgemental sampling (otherwise known as purposive sampling); snowballing sampling and theoretical sampling (grounded theory). Judgemental sampling refers to identifying an interviewee sample closely linked to the research questions.[[236]](#footnote-237) Judgemental sampling was used because it is important to select interviewees who are knowledgeable on the subject to improve the credibility of the data. [[237]](#footnote-238) This method helped to target specific knowledgeable individuals and organisations who could then act as gatekeepers to further contacts. The initial stages of sampling identified former Provisional IRA interviewees and community groups who work with or are staffed by former combatants. Former Provisional IRA members were selected because they could provide insight into the internal debates during the 1990s and they could help map out the disengagement frame and how this has been diffused into the community and among young people. The rationale for interviewing community and peace groups was because of the thesis’ attempts to analyse the Irish Republican social movement beyond the militant groups, and that such groups could provide access to former militants and young people as gatekeepers.

The initial sample led to a snowballing sample developing, which refers to when the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others.[[238]](#footnote-239) Snowballing was used because it provided access to interviewees where otherwise it would not be possible, and because it helped to pinpoint other prospective interviewees who were part of the initial contact’s network. For example, the former Provisional IRA prisoner group, Coiste arranged interviews with former combatants; Sinn Fein arranged a focus group; and the community workers introduced the researcher to other colleagues in Belfast. However, one problem with arranging interviews through Coiste is the possibility that interviewees will stick to a party political line;[[239]](#footnote-240) to overcome this problem the thesis sought to use actors not affiliated to Coiste but who worked closely with their members to help corroborate the findings, unlike a number of other studies who worked through Coiste.[[240]](#footnote-241) Furthermore, while the snowballing strategy was effective at gaining access to former combatants and young Republicans, one criticism of this approach is it limited the researcher’s ability to control the selection of participants. However, the gatekeepers took into consideration the research focus and arranged interviews that matched with this. By approaching community workers at the same time and by using a judgemental sample strategy, it was possible to also gain access to former Provisional IRA members who were not members of Sinn Fein or who were a member of neither but were former combatants who now worked with former Provisional IRA members. The main benefit of this sampling technique was to overcome the problem that the community groups being approached through judgemental sampling turned out to overlap with the former combatant groups, some of whom who were not being targeted initially. Many of the community and peace groups are associated with paramilitary groups, and as the extent of Republican-Loyalist dialogue through community work became apparent, the research more actively targeted Republican and Loyalist groups who worked on the interface areas. Another benefit of this combined snowballing and judgemental sampling strategy was it helped to corroborate details and provide a more holistic perspective, thus overcoming criticism of the interview method lacking completeness.[[241]](#footnote-242)

Overall, this mixed and flexible sampling technique that was used had many similarities with theoretical sampling (grounded theory), which is used to ‘discover categories and their properties’, to confirm their importance and achieve theoretical saturation whereby there is no need to continue data collection.[[242]](#footnote-243) In other words, the sample started with identifying former Provisional IRA members but expanded outwards to encompass a network of former combatants and community activists which functions as an entity for analysis in its own right. By utilising this approach, the theories presented in the thesis emerged from the data insofar as it shows how the disengagement of the Provisional IRA has diffused into the community to form a network that can involve Loyalist paramilitary figures and young people. Furthermore, the grounded approach strengthened the research process: the combination of a frames approach and network analysis emerged from the data, thus highlighting which social movement theories were more accurate at explaining the disengagement process.

Therefore, the benefit of these three approaches to gathering data is it provides a rich understanding of how actors work with one another and perceive their roles, and as it focuses on a specific role (i.e. community work) it has greater comprehensiveness than other studies which have interviewed former combatants but not taken into account their environment or who the interact with.[[243]](#footnote-244)

Overall, there were four types of interviewees, although there was often an overlap between the former combatants and community workers. The first were former combatants who mainly consisted of five former Provisional IRA members. One of the former Provisional IRA combatants had not been a member of Sinn Fein and did not support them, but was opposed to violence and worked at interface areas. The other four interviewees from this group were members of Sinn Fein and had come from a mix of backgrounds in the Provisional IRA, with one being an important senior figure in the group’s disengagement. They were involved in a range of community work through Coiste, working alongside Loyalists and young people. The former combatant interview group also included figures from the Irish National Liberation Army and the Ulster Defence Association, who provided useful insights on some of the community work which were more critical of the Provisional IRA. Finally, whilst it was unclear the extent to which the interviewee was a *former* combatant, a member of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement and a convicted member of the Real IRA was interviewed. While this may be seen as a limited an unrepresentative sample, some of the figures interviewed were senior within the Provisional IRA: for example, one interviewee played a public role in the disengagement process and other interviewees were influential figures in Belfast.

The second group of interviewees were community workers: some of whom were also former combatants, were overtly linked to the political groups affiliated to paramilitary organisations, or who had personal ties to former combatants as a result of being involved in the community. The term ‘community worker’ is used loosely to refer to people who work in the voluntary sector or indirectly connected with (local) government; in many cases the interviewees were directors of the organisations or project managers. The activities of these community workers include: interface work; youth work; conflict transformation, restorative justice and truth-telling; or writing, encouraging and managing funding proposals. Approximately half worked in predominantly Catholic, Nationalist, Republican areas and the other half working in Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist areas. The community workers were able to provide substantial depth of knowledge with regard to Republican areas as many have lived there all their life and the lack of an overt political affiliation for some community workers – although they would acknowledge that they are sectarian in a way - meant that they were less concerned about projecting a political agenda. As noted by one of the interviewees, there were only a dozen of people – linked to various organisations - involved directly in the Belfast interface areas[[244]](#footnote-245) therefore the fieldwork data is representative of a large part of this network, with only one out of four major interface areas – Suffolk and Lenadoon - not being included.

The third group of interviewees can be classified as state and security officials, who helped to provide a context to the study, whether this was with regard to the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy against Jihadists, institutional pressures that the police face, or the internal politics of the policing board. One of the interviewees in this category was made responsible by the Northern Ireland government for assessing the extent that the community groups set up by former combatants had legitimately moved away from violence and were adhering to criteria for accreditation. This interviewee confirmed that they had legitimately moved away from violence, and stated how the former combatants have undergone a transformation in attitudes commensurate to how the thesis understands de-radicalisation. Therefore, these interviews were crucial for corroborating findings from the other groups of interviewees – such as former combatants - and added significant weight to their credibility.

The fourth group consisted of young people, defined in the study as 17-24 years old. As there were difficulties in reaching young people, particularly those who would be from areas which would be defined as traditionally Republican, these interviews were arranged through gatekeepers. As mentioned above, Sinn Fein helped to bring together a group of young party members, all of whom who had participated in the programmes ran by former combatants for young people. The two other means of engaging with this group was through proxies, firstly through an interview with the head of a project that brought former combatants into schools to de-glamourise violence, and secondly through a community worker who relayed the questions to a group of Loyalist youth in East Belfast. As the focus has been on Republicanism in the thesis, the latter data was used to provide context rather than contribute to the analysis. Having outlined the means of gathering data, which data was selected and the rationale for doing so, the chapter now explains the methods used in the interviews.

The sample used in the thesis is sufficiently wide because: a) the interviewees were senior and/or influential within the Provisional IRA in Belfast, the community networks, or were in charge of organisations such as the Police Federation; b) the potential cohort of former combatants working at interface areas is relatively small so the interviews were highly representative; c) the interviewee findings have been corroborated through primary and secondary data. On the last point, for example, the data from young people, while only from a handful of perspectives, was corroborated when talking to former combatants, community workers and security officials who confirmed many of the points that were raised in the focus group.

### Methods

The thesis gathered empirical data by two means: interviews and focus groups. The methodology outlined above influenced the type of methods utilised. The methodology seeks to understand attitudes and how these changed through the interpretation of the environment, how people framed this politically. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, place significant emphasis on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events, hence why these approaches were suitable for the study.[[245]](#footnote-246) Given the role of identity and the perception of opportunities and grievances for mobilisation,[[246]](#footnote-247) the use of qualitative methods allows the research to understand how interviewees frame their behaviour. Finally, qualitative methods are not attempting to make generalisations to a broader population but are emphasising the distinctive nature of their sample populations, [[247]](#footnote-248) which is then contextualised within the social movement.

The primary source of data was derived from semi-structured interviews which followed a topic-guide depending on the background of the participant. The background of the participant was partly identified prior to the interview but at first it was unknown that certain community groups were divided by paramilitary links, sometimes meaning that some questions could not be asked.[[248]](#footnote-249) Therefore, at the start of interviews, participants were invited to speak about their own background with little guidance, and this was used to shape the topic-guide around areas they were knowledgeable about and comfortable discussing. Upon building a clearer picture of the participant’s background, a topic-guide was sign-posted to the participant to help guide the discussion. The topic-guide would involve issues such as the mobile phone network, European Union (EU) funding, involvement in the Provisional IRA, and prospects for the peace process. A semi-structured interview approach was used to minimise the impact of the interviewer on what the informant says and to encourage informants to talk in their own terms about matters relevant to the research topic.[[249]](#footnote-250) This approach provided emphasis on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events,[[250]](#footnote-251) while giving maximum flexibility and increasing the richness of answers.[[251]](#footnote-252) While a participant ‘going off’ on tangents is often encouraged in qualitative research,[[252]](#footnote-253) sign-posting the topic guide allowed those tangents to be more focused. The majority of interviews lasted one hour and took place in the office of the interviewees’ respective office, with the exception of the interview with the 32CSM/Real IRA member, which took place at a community centre where they had a meeting under a pseudonym organisation.

One problem with interviewing respondents about their experiences in the past is that current political considerations can lead them to misrepresent their attitudes or experiences in the past.[[253]](#footnote-254) However, for the aims of the thesis this was not problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the study aims to understand how the past is reframed to place them in relation to a presumed goal, therefore, this weakness of the interviewing approach does not challenge the purpose of the research. Secondly, interpretations of the past were compared with the relatively extensive secondary literature in order to analyse where the past has been re-framed or whether the interviewee is accurately depicting views held at the time, and if not their own views, at least views that were held by others in the group.

The second qualitative method used in the research was focus groups, which was targeted toward young Republicans who were the fourth sample group. A key feature of focus groups, and the primary reason this method was used, is they provide data from insights on how the group interacts and it seeks to replicate how participants would act with their peers outside an interview environment.[[254]](#footnote-255) The size and composition of the focus group matters and eight participants is the most common size,[[255]](#footnote-256) however smaller groups are appropriate when participants are likely to have a lot to say on the research topic.[[256]](#footnote-257) The manner in which the focus group was arranged limited the control over the number of participants and to an extent the composition. Interviews with the members of Sinn Fein Youth were organised through a Sinn Fein office in Belfast.

The benefit of the focus group approach was it made younger participants feel more comfortable, and by working through Sinn Fein, it overcame the problems associated with focus groups such as the difficulty to organise.[[257]](#footnote-258) The Sinn Fein gatekeeper was responsible for selecting participants – with the proviso being they were aged 17-24 - and the panel was attended by a party official alongside four participants from Sinn Fein Youth. As the party official fitted within the age bracket, the official was invited to participate in the focus group. The rationale for the age bracket being placed was to gather data on the views of people who could be classed as the ‘next generation’, with the majority of participants being born after the 1994 ceasefire. Sinn Fein Youth members were selected to analyse the impact of exposure to the disengagement frame and interaction with those who were members of the Provisional IRA. One negative aspect with this method is the thesis did not provide a control group, although an interview with one project leader helped to provide some insights on the attitudes of young people who are not involved in Sinn Fein and the thesis acknowledges the limitations in generalising these findings.

In addition to interviews and focus groups, other sources were utilised to corroborate the evidence. Secondary literature has provided a number of quotes and speeches by key individuals which have been incorporated. For example, extensive interview data with former Provisional IRA members in secondary sources were used to inform the analysis of internal dialogue, however, this has been limited to elite levels,[[258]](#footnote-259) dissidents who left the movement,[[259]](#footnote-260) or on how the prison experience shaped identity and allowed dialogue between groups.[[260]](#footnote-261) While they do not focus on frame diffusion and resonance, the secondary sources corroborate the thesis’ findings in small ways. For example, Guelke mentions the role of the ANC’s intervention but this was not from the perspective of Provisional IRA members in the prisons,[[261]](#footnote-262) Shirlow details the skills learnt in prison but the thesis’ primary data shows why that was significant, and Moloney corroborates the controlling aspect of the process in managing dialogue, corroborating the thesis’ claims of how prisons and organisational structure shaped the network linkages.

A range of other primary sources have been used to corroborate the empirical data used in the study. For example, the community groups interviewed provided a number of resources such as interview transcripts with former combatants and younger people, reports on the attitudes of young people, data on projects and events, and reports that summarise the findings of projects such as Prison to Peace. An analysis of Gerry Kelly’s speech at Castlederg was used because it occurred during the period of fieldwork and was influencing the perceptions of young people at the time – but a more comprehensive analysis of past speeches was not used because the focus in interviews was how former combatants and young people interpreted and framed violence now. The thesis did seek to utilise newspaper archives and this has corroborated much of the discussions on credibility – for example, the use of Seanna Walsh in announcing the end of the campaign – but this was not done extensively because secondary sources tend to be more accurate for historical examples and newspapers were limited in a contemporary setting.

The thesis considered utilising other methods to help analyse frames, such as social media and websites. For example, a possible method for analysing framing is through the internet and social media. While Sinn Fein Youth do not have a website, they have an active Twitter account with 2,811 followers (as of November 2014) and a Facebook account. On the Facebook account for example, a video was posted that was narrated by a former Hunger Striker who builds on Bobby Sands’ legacy to justify disengagement on the grounds of achieving equality and that a united Ireland can be pursued through political means, so young people never need to experience the conflict. Other postings emphasise specifically the move toward a united Ireland and removing British soldiers, and while these posts can be framed in different ways, it is in a context of the broader disengagement frame. Therefore a limited analysis of social media corroborates the thesis’ argument, but it is not deployed further because the focus groups and interviews method was far more effective at explaining how young members contextualise and interpret these individual posts into a coherent frame, and where this framing emerged from. So, while websites were corroborative and useful for gathering reports on community work, there was no analysis of websites, social media and forums as texts because: a) in some cases, there are no websites (Sinn Fein Youth); b) access to forums is limited to members; and c) while social media does reflect the disengagement frame, it was only through interviews that it was clear what the meaning was behind these disparate postings – and while this corroborated the findings, it did not provide substantial added value to merit a deeper discourse analysis.

Thus, the methods outlined above were situated within the thesis’ framework of analysis, which is applied in three empirical chapters, but first, Chapter Three will provide a background to the Irish Republican movement. While one function of this chapter is to give an historical introduction, it serves to underpin the analysis in a number of ways. The chapter applies the framework to account for the ebbs and flows of the Irish Republican movement from the early 1900s to the ceasefire in 1994. Firstly, it demonstrates how the Irish Republican movement has managed to continue from generation to generation, providing insights into how the Provisional IRA’s disengagement has been more successful. Secondly, in addition to explaining the rise of the IRA and the Provisional IRA in the 1960s, the chapter provides one of the first comparative analyses of different attempts at disengagement in one social movement. Thirdly, the chapter looks at the causes of the Provisional IRA’s campaign by providing a generational analysis, which later underpins how the 1990s disengagement process was successful.

## CHAPTER THREE

**The Irish Republican Movement**

Despite the promises of a ‘long peace’ in Northern Ireland following the Provisional IRA’s disengagement in 2005, a glance at the history of the Irish Republican movement might give the impression that history will continue to repeat itself. Organisational disengagement and a decline in violence has often preceded the revival of a new iteration of the IRA: the Irish Free State’s campaign in the 1920s and the Border Campaign in the 1960s witnessed the ‘end’ of the IRA in different ways, only to see some continuation in the case of the former and a massive resurgence following on from the latter. The emergence of the Provisional IRA in 1969 was followed by an attempt at disengagement in 1975, and although this failed, the lessons of each of these attempts at disengagement would provide guidance to the Provisional IRA leadership in the 1980s onwards.

Chapter Three provides an historical overview of the Irish Republican movement and the factors that drive it. Underpinning the chapter is the question of why the various attempts at disengagement have not succeeded and how different iterations of the IRA have continued from one generation to another, re-emerging to form the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. The chapter argues that three factors account for the continuity of the IRA and the lack of substantive disengagement of the Irish Republican movement: 1) the maintenance of political systems which produced and sustained grievances; 2) the role of family networks and Republican networks which provided inter-generational links and resources for future mobilisation; and 3) the lack of frame resonance among members when pursuing group disengagement. Therefore, Chapter Three applies the analytical framework set out in the previous chapter, yet this will be done to provide the foundations for explaining the Provisional IRA’s disengagement in the second half of the thesis.[[262]](#footnote-263) Having contextualised the chapter, the next section will outline the formative period of the Irish Republican movement.

### The Rise of the Irish Republican Movement and Partition

At the core of the Irish Republican movement is the goal of replacing British influence in Ireland with an independent socialist Republic on the entire Irish island. While Republicans would primarily see its conflict as a war of independence against British colonialism, the deep-rooted legacy of Protestant Unionist colonists in the north would later develop a life of its own, which would have a substantial impact on Irish Republican goals. The consociational political system that would emerge following the Provisional IRA’s official disengagement in 2005 was a recognition of the social divisions that existed between the Catholic, Nationalist, Republican communities and Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist communities. While these divisions were more nuanced – many Irish Republicans were Protestants – the divisions would manifest themselves in the form of conflict and the emergence of the Irish Republican movement. The political elites in Ireland in the 1700s, known as the Protestant Ascendancy, were able to exert more power in the island by exploiting external threats from France. The powerbase of the Protestant Ascendancy was found in the north-east of Ireland; decedents of Scottish and English settlers, they formed a community that was culturally and economically closer to the British state.[[263]](#footnote-264)

Within this context, Irish nationalism – in the form of the United Irishmen movement - began to emerge in the late 18th century, with the aim of attaining Catholic emancipation and weakening/breaking of constitutional ties with the British state.[[264]](#footnote-265) The make-up up this social movement was initially a mix of Protestants and Catholics, however the Catholic-Protestant cleavage began to mask onto Irish Nationalist-British Unionist cleavages over time. Neither was the social movement contiguous or monolithic throughout this period. In this context, three types of political activism developed in Ireland: republican militants; constitutional nationalists/republicans; and unionists (which will be discussed later). The year 1858 marked the formation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) a forerunner of the Irish Republican Army, whose primary grievance was the link with Britain and the monarchy, and Catholic discrimination under the Protestant Ascendancy which was used to maintain the British connection. The small group of nationalists utilised the Irish Diaspora in the US as a safe haven to assist in executing its violent activities aimed at removing the British presence in Ireland, with assassinations and a dynamiting campaign in mainland British cities concluding in 1887. Over the next few decades, Republicanism coalesced with constitutional nationalism on one hand, and the development of Irish cultural activism on the other, with Gaelic sports being a significant means of social networking, however, their significance would only become really apparent in the 1916 Easter Rising. Constitutional nationalists, such as Parnell and Redmond, sought greater Irish power and representation, or Home Rule, through the British parliament.

The advent of the First World War pushed the Home Rule bill off the agenda, however, this was not before the proposal had elicited a strong response from the north’s Protestant and Unionist community. Protestants in the north had remained opposed to any form of self-governance and wished to remain a part of the British Empire. In response, 100,000 (mainly) Protestants joined to form the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in 1912 to act as a bulwark against Home Rule. The militia was trained and it was armed through smuggling that the British army ignored. The north had a strong culture of mobilisation, although in earlier iterations the nature of this mobilisation and resistance was a religious one. As such, narratives of Loyal Ulster Protestants resisting and not surrendering to Catholicism permeated the identity. Institutions such as the Orange Order played a part in fostering the Unionist identity but it also acted as a formal social network: later, membership of the Orange Order and political power would be synonymous for the new Northern Irish state. In 1912, the mobilisation of the UVF was a clear message of defiance to Westminster, but also to the Republican movement.

The mobilisation of the Ulster Volunteers led to a similar mobilisation of Irish (nationalist) Volunteers, and in the future Loyalists and Republicans would continue to have this capacity to provoke the other. A new generation of leaders had consolidated their position in the IRB and, in conjunction with other militants, launched the 1916 Easter Rising by seizing strongpoints in the centre of Dublin. By seeking to fight the British forces in conventional warfare, the Easter Rising was crushed in a matter of days – the Irish public responded with anything but the sympathy that its leaders hoped it would inspire. However, the execution of the imprisoned leaders, coupled with opposition to prospective army conscription, eventually began to delegitimise the British presence. The Republican party, Sinn Fein, had been wrongly linked with the Easter Rising by the media, however this association had stuck and led to Sinn Fein’s overwhelming victory in the 1918 General Election.[[265]](#footnote-266) Republicans took the victory as an endorsement from the Irish people for a 32-county Republic free of British rule, with Sinn Fein setting about establishing an independent parliament in name, the Dail Eireann, while calling for continued war with Britain until it had withdrawn. Thus began the Anglo-Irish war, which saw the IRB/Irish Republican Army adopt guerrilla and assassination tactics that fought the British forces to an apparent stalemate, leading to negotiations between the two. The 1922 treaty paved the way for an Irish Free State which would remain part of the British Empire through an oath of allegiance to the King.[[266]](#footnote-267) Later, the Irish Free State would unilaterally break all linkages with Britain to form the Republic of Ireland in 1949.

Prior to the treaty, in 1921, Britain had partitioned Ireland and granted Home Rule to the north. Above all, the Northern Irish state was established to protect the interests of the Protestant Unionist community. The caveats that were attached in the 1922 treaty, such as a border commission, the establishment of north-south institutions, and the use of proportional representation in elections, were attempts to reconcile the contradictions in a Unionist state with a significant Nationalist population.[[267]](#footnote-268) The counties of Antrim and Down contained a large majority of Protestants; London/Derry,[[268]](#footnote-269) Tyrone, and Armagh had a significant Catholic population while over half of Fermanagh’s population were Catholic.[[269]](#footnote-270) For Protestants, the partition system did not guarantee their security: firstly, support of the British could not be relied upon; the Irish state to the south posed a threat to the North’s existence; and the minority Catholic population were viewed as disloyal and a potentially destabilising force. The solution for Unionists was to dominate the political landscape by abrogating the aforementioned caveats, most notably removing PR for elections, thus providing the Ulster Unionist Party a hegemonic role in the Northern Irish state.[[270]](#footnote-271) The new Protestant Ascendancy regime was perceived as necessary to guarantee security in a still-hostile political system post-partition. The new regime facilitated the total disengagement of the UVF, which was incorporated into its auxiliary police-force, the B-Specials, to accompany the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The impact of partition on the Catholic population was different; while it frustrated Nationalist aspirations, the extent of mobilisation among Republicans was limited. The contingent presence of a new, legitimate and (internally) powerful Irish state in the south, balanced by Britain, effectively squeezed the Republicans’ room for manoeuvre. What was to follow was a civil war between the IRA and the new Irish Free State, which would conclude in the first case of disengagement in the Irish Republican movement. However, this process of disengagement was not successful and re-emerged in the 1950s for another brief, failed campaign.

### Partition and Disengagement: 1920s to the 1960s

Despite representing a partial success for the IRA, the treaty did not lead to their successful disengagement. The movement split in two, with one forming the nascent Free State army, and the other continuing under the IRA. The cause of the dispute was the treaty itself, which was seen as a radical departure from the movement’s goals of an independent Irish republic. The treaty also did not provide many guarantees as to the sovereignty of the north of Ireland and the ones it did required the consent of Unionists. The subsequent outcome was a civil war between pro-treaty and anti-treaty Republican elements. The decision to accept the treaty was substantially different from the disengagement process that the Provisional IRA eventually undertook. The nature of negotiations between the IRA and the UK limited the extent there could be dialogue internally in order to convince them of the treaty. Although the Free State was not able to bring about the IRA’s disengagement completely, it was able to weaken it substantially. The cease-fire period that had accompanied the treaty negotiations had the effect of weakening the IRA prior to the civil war. Cease-fires can offer the opportunity for militants to resurface and this facilitated individual disengagement by instilling the desire to lead a normal life or start a family. In addition to how these individual factors impacted upon the organisation, the organisation became a weaker fighting force due to inactivity, exposure and penetration of intelligence services, thus facilitating forced disengagement by an opposing force. Nevertheless, cease-fires can also be opportunities to reinforce positions; therefore the extent that cease-fires may lead to deeper disengagement depends on the form it takes. The Irish Free State was able to enforce disengagement primarily because of the legitimacy it had, something which the British forces didn’t, thus allowing it to employ greater repressive action whilst constricting its potential support-base. In the face of defeat, the IRA and Sinn Fein (who had been against the treaty) experienced a split, forming the party Fianna Fail under their leader, de Valera, who persuaded most of the IRA to abandon violence. Once in power, Fianna Fail removed the objectionable aspects of the 1921 Treaty and integrated a substantial number of IRA member to join the security forces.[[271]](#footnote-272) However, the rump IRA had not completely disengaged as an organisation despite a renewed crack-down by both governments in Ireland, north and south, and a number of trained soldiers and volunteers who opposed the treaty still remained active.[[272]](#footnote-273)

Thus Irish Republicanism survived in a weaker form: it still viewed the Irish Free State as illegitimate and took advantage of the UK’s war with Nazi Germany to launch a limited terrorism campaign in Northern Ireland and Britain. However, the establishment of the Irish Republic in 1949 removed many of the grievances the IRA had toward the south, thus its focus was aimed at the north.[[273]](#footnote-274) Despite the declining support for the IRA, it was still able to recruit a new generation, with most members responsible for attacks being young.[[274]](#footnote-275) The symbols, history and excitement of the IRA allowed the old-guard to pass on the struggle to a new generation, whose strategy shifted toward a guerrilla campaign in the north in 1956. The plan involved using flying columns from the Republic of Ireland to cause paralysis in the north, hopefully setting up liberated areas. However, the IRA did not actively attempt to mobilise the population in the north. Instead, it claimed the 1916 proclamation as the ultimate source of authority and legitimacy but its use of mythical language meant its strategy was incomprehensible to the population.[[275]](#footnote-276) During this period, social changes were occurring whereby Republicanism and anti-partitionism were not resonating: the younger generation were looking to Stormont and Westminster to address grievances, even if in vain. Despite five hundred incidents in the border campaign, the IRA admitted defeat in 1962. A document drawn up by the leadership identified four reasons for failure: 1) the people saw no connection between the fight in the North and the improving of Irish social conditions; 2) a lack of resources…money and the right type of weapons; 2) the lack of an efficient publicity and propaganda machine; and 4) dwindling public support in the North and South, making it virtually impossible for men to operate on Guerrilla lines.[[276]](#footnote-277) Most academic perspectives concur with this analysis, with the failure of the border campaign being attributed to: a) the successful use of internment by the Stormont and Dublin governments, their co-operation,[[277]](#footnote-278) and the loss of a safe sanctuary in the Republic;[[278]](#footnote-279) b) the full mobilisation of the North’s forces such as the B-Specials;[[279]](#footnote-280) and c) a lack of support in the north or south, which arguably freed the hands of both governments to institute strong coercive measures.

Drawing on Cronin’s arguments on how terrorism campaigns end,[[280]](#footnote-281) the main factor in the IRA’s decision to disengage was burnout[[281]](#footnote-282) among its members as a result of failing to mobilise the population. In 1962, the IRA Army Council, recently expanded in order to strengthen the leader,[[282]](#footnote-283) met and unanimously voted to end the border campaign, blaming the defeat on: ‘the attitude of the general public whose minds have been deliberately distracted from the supreme issue facing the Irish people – the unity and freedom of Ireland’, urging the people to show greater support in its preparation for the ‘final and victorious phase of the struggle’.[[283]](#footnote-284) The IRA’s internal soul-searching that followed pointed to how the ‘fight for freedom had become an end in itself…We could never hope to succeed because we never planned to succeed’.[[284]](#footnote-285) Burnout and the strategic re-think led to a mixed form of disengagement, similar to previous campaigns.

First of all, there was no attitudinal change in terms of ideology or objectives; the attitudinal shift was primarily with regard to tactical use of political violence but this was only with regard to their *current* utility. There was no attempt to de-legitimise the use of political violence and the tactic was not framed as something to be traded for incentives as it would be in the 1990s disengagement process. Furthermore, the disengagement frame the IRA leadership had been using to move the movement in a different direction did not resonate and was often at odds with its members. The Marxist justification contained in the disengagement frame undermined the message’s credibility and broke narrative fidelity for many traditional Republicans. In terms of causing a split, the cease-fire led to a number of older leaders leaving with the intention to start up a new movement, but instead they retired out of disillusionment.[[285]](#footnote-286) One of the prominent dissenters who stayed within the IRA, Sean MacStiofain, was concerned that the neglect of the military component of the IRA risked causing it to lose its strength, cohesion and identity. To pacify such dissenting voices, the IRA leadership rhetorically quashed the notion of relinquishing the use of force as one of many tactics. Furthermore, the leadership authorised a degree of military planning to convince the traditionalists of the commitment to armed force.[[286]](#footnote-287) Thus, the leadership’s inability to successfully diffuse its new strategy, which effectively was toward disengagement, meant that to avoid a split and to maintain narrative fidelity, its implementation of disengagement was inconsistent or weak. For example, the leadership directed all IRA units to dump arms, but also proclaiming that the movement remained intact and could continue the armed struggle if it wished.[[287]](#footnote-288)

If the IRA had been beaten in the 1920s, the question of how it managed to survive throughout these decades has clear implications for the current disengagement process. Firstly, the IRA had a monopoly on Republican cultural symbols and parades, such as the Easter Rising commemorations, specifically the 50th anniversary in 1966 which had a substantial impact on improving the IRA’s strength, even if it was still officially disengaged.[[288]](#footnote-289) Cultural activities provided a form of social space that was relatively free from repression that could sustain membership between generations. Family ties also became another means of sustaining the IRA from the 1920s onwards: as the group became smaller under the pressure of state repression, its membership became inward looking through marriage into ‘IRA families’.[[289]](#footnote-290) Thus through family ties, Republican traditionalism could be passed on between generations,[[290]](#footnote-291) and the fact that many of the core grievances of Republicanism remained had facilitated a move into violence, even if the extent of this was limited. Furthermore, disengagement failed because the disengagement frame did not resonate with members – through a lack of credibility, a lack of narrative fidelity, and through a lack of attempts to develop linkages throughout the movement to enforce or diffuse the frame. Crucially, many of the structurally based grievances that legitimised political violence in this frame still existed. As a consequence, when the opportunity and demand for an armed campaign emerged during the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, the IRA - albeit weak and divided - could provide the narratives and resources to guide violent mobilisation to a greater extent than if there had been no IRA network. The divisions that failed disengagement created in the IRA would lead to the emergence of the Provisional IRA, but in the Provisional IRA would be two different generations. One would be the traditionalists who joined the IRA prior to the civil rights movement and opposed the 1962 disengagement; the other would be the recruits who joined in response to the state response to the civil rights movement.

### Emergence of the Troubles

The following section explains how the Troubles emerged and what led to the emergence of the Provisional IRA. This section provides much of the context and analytical foundations for the proceeding chapters with regard to organisational (and generational) dynamics, attitudes, and structural factors. One key point that it seeks to make is the motivations for engaging in violence for the pre-1960s IRA generation and the 1960s IRA generation were quite different and this would have a substantial impact on the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. The pre-1960s generation is used to refer to the members of the IRA who were involved in the group during the 1956 Border Campaign and prior to the full emergence of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s. This generation tends to be linked in a network of familial ties and are bitterly opposed to a full political route to a united Irish Republic. The 1960s generation are those who were either active in the civil rights movement – such as Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness – and those who as teenagers experienced the violence and, for example, joined the IRA motivated out of revenge after events such as Bloody Sunday in 1972. The term 1960s generation is of course not entirely precise, but it is used to refer to the specific period in the late 1960s and early 1970s where the civil rights movement gave way to armed violence. Of course, many people joined the IRA, or later the Provisional IRA, in the preceding decades of the conflict, but the young generation that joined in the 1960s and early 1970s, in the main were motivated by the zeitgeist of the period and became the spearhead of the group.

The causes of the conflict that emerged in the 1960s that led to a reinvigoration of the IRA were built in to the formation of the Northern Irish state. O’Leary argues that it was the Unionists’ ability to exert hegemonic rule that was the primary cause of the 1960s conflict. The demarcation of Northern Ireland as six counties guaranteed an in-built Unionist majority and the presence of a Catholic, Nationalist ‘other’ minority encouraged the Unionists to maintain this hegemonic rule.[[291]](#footnote-292) The new Irish state in the South made claims to the six counties and De Valera’s reshaping of the Republic of Ireland as a Catholic state reinforced the fears of the Northern Protestants. And of course, whether they supported the IRA or not, the Catholic population in the North were looked upon with deep suspicion.[[292]](#footnote-293) Making up one third of the new state’s population, Unionists feared that the growing Catholic population could force reintegration with the South. However, before the 1960s the Nationalist population was mainly passive and the IRA was unable to mobilise the population. Instead, what occurred was an effective apathy to Unionist hegemony. The Catholic population shortly preceding partition had viewed the government in the South as the source of legitimacy and the Irish community as the identity group; they were looking to Dublin as the centre of power while a new centre of power was emerging around them. Very few Catholics joined the RUC despite having a one-third quota designated for Catholics; Nationalist parties abstained from Stormont; and little effort was made to challenge the redrawing of local government boundaries. Furthermore, separate social networks and institutions were maintained, such as the maintenance of Catholic schools in the face of attempts by Stormont to create a secular system.[[293]](#footnote-294)

However, by the 1950s some prosperous Catholics were prepared to accept the permanency of Northern Ireland, the sectarian divide was diminishing in the eyes of Catholics,[[294]](#footnote-295) and the British welfare system compared far more favourably than what was available in the South.[[295]](#footnote-296) Gradually, an emerging economically and socially mobile Catholic population came face to face with the restrictions that Unionist dominance placed on their aspirations in the political, economic and social spheres. Partition had guaranteed an in-built Unionist majority, providing the conditions for the Ulster Unionist Party to win all of the elections from 1920 to 1969.[[296]](#footnote-297) The Northern Ireland voting system still awarded more votes to businesses and universities, which tended to be Protestant. The changes in local government boundaries led to accusations of gerrymandering, whereby fewer Unionist votes would gain more seats than Nationalist votes. The outcome of skewed results would have knock-on effects on the distribution of resources, leading to further grievances such as the lack of housing. In addition to dominating the political sphere, Protestants dominated the civil service and security services through a mix of structural factors (e.g. education) and discrimination. Catholics in local councils that were dominated by Protestants/Unionists tended to face discrimination in terms of housing, with the council seeking to keep Catholics in ‘Catholic areas’, thus leading to overcrowding. Thus, Northern Ireland Catholics perceived and experienced a number of grievances and political exclusion, even if the Protestants were not convinced of this claim’s validity. Unionist hegemony extended to expressions of identity, with bans on the flag of the Irish Republic, singing the Irish national anthem and restrictions on Republican movements.[[297]](#footnote-298) Therefore, while the grievances that would motivate the conflict can be traced back to partition, it was only in the 1960s that the Catholic, Nationalist population began to recognise and articulate these grievances.

This was the context for the mobilisation of the 1960s, which took a number of forms. The first was tied to the disengagement of the IRA, with Republicans mobilising on identity issues and organising parades and flying the Irish Republic’s flag. The second type was community movements against grievances such as in housing, which IRA members became involved in but by no means controlled. The third, which was closely related to the second, was with regard to the new middle class and focused more on the denial of space in political opportunities. The fourth was the rise of Reverend Ian Paisley’s Loyalist movement and the Gusty Spence’s (new) UVF; this movement was provocative and violent toward the emerging civil rights movement and Catholics/Nationalists/Republicans[[298]](#footnote-299) in general. However, the political system meant that the new middle class would never gain power in Stormont to affect social change, hence incentivising extra-parliamentary activity such as sit-ins, marches and protests that encapsulated the 1960s civil rights movement. Stormont was not entirely intransigent to the civil rights movement: Prime Minister O’Neil had been pursuing a strategy of economic modernisation and inter-communal reconciliation. However, much of this strategy back-fired as it had raised expectations that could not be met. Economic modernisation may have facilitated the growing Catholic middle class but political and social constraints meant mobility was frustrated and brought them to make comparisons between themselves (as Catholics) and (middle class) Protestants.

Thus, experiencing grievances but unable to effect change, multiple social movements emerged and the growing support among the Catholic population provided an opportunity for the IRA leadership to implement its disengagement process into social activism. Bearing in mind that the failure of the Border Campaign was put down to a lack of popular support, the IRA leadership’s strategy had moved to social and grassroots political activism to create such relations – something which the future Provisional IRA leader, Gerry Adams, would seek to emulate.[[299]](#footnote-300) It is unlikely this was a plan to re-launch an armed struggle as Unionists saw it, but it did have the effect of helping the leadership to move away from such a strategy and recruit a new left-wing generation.[[300]](#footnote-301) Thus, through Republican clubs, they played a key role in forming and driving the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), one of the key movements in the period. Despite the role of the IRA within this movement and the huge potential for mass mobilisation that it possessed, there was still nothing in the early days to suggest that a return to violence was inevitable. Republicans were competing with a wide range of forces within the civil rights movement. However, the repression the civil rights movement and the Catholic population faced was to radicalise the population and revitalise the traditional elements of the Republican movement, thus leading to large-scale violent mobilisation.

The coercive arm of the Northern Ireland state consisted of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the B-Specials, a part-time reserve force initially recruited from the original UVF and being exclusively Protestant. Catholics viewed the B-Specials as an openly sectarian Protestant militia,[[301]](#footnote-302) whereas Protestants viewed them as heroic defenders of the state against the IRA.[[302]](#footnote-303) For many Unionists, the IRA and Nationalism was often synonymous, so the perceived threat was more to the identity and community rather than the violence itself. The RUC had foundational problems with regard to legitimacy with the Catholic population, who were underrepresented in the police force. A series of confrontations in Derry between the civil rights movement and the RUC and the B-Specials escalated the level of violence dramatically. The riots led to the establishment of Free Derry, whereby the RUC and the Northern Irish state effectively lost control over a part of the city. It also radicalised the Catholic electorate, where in the April election a number of civil rights and radical leftist candidates were elected.[[303]](#footnote-304) However, the absorption of the middle class into political structures risked making the civil rights protests more volatile: firstly, the transfer of civil rights stewards (responsible for calming violence) to political campaigning teams weakened the steward ranks at protests;[[304]](#footnote-305) secondly, the youth were left leaderless and without direction after having been mobilised and brought onto the streets by the civil rights movement.[[305]](#footnote-306) Violence between youths and the RUC, and sectarian attacks, were becoming a much more common feature: the RUC and B-Specials had lost all legitimacy and were deeply resented by the Catholic population. The violence that erupted in 1969 had a contagious effect, with protests and violence erupting throughout Northern Ireland. With the RUC exhausted and stretched, the British army were sent in.

The army’s presence was met with relief and disorientation by Catholics, and even Republicans. However, over the coming months the army came to be included in the same frame as the RUC and the B-Specials.[[306]](#footnote-307) Inter-communal violence increased, with Catholic communities being burned out of their houses by Loyalists. By this point, any concessions made to the civil rights movement failed: grievances of housing and electoral gerrymandering had shifted to a perceived need to defend the community and get revenge. The IRA had also been deeply involved in this transformation, while playing a role in organising the conflict (although this should not be overstated – instances of violence were much more organic), they also were seen as the solution by some. The youth that had been largely abandoned by the civil rights movement found the IRA much more accepting to its clashes with the RUC and the army. Gradually, some brigades of the IRA began to use the limited weapons it had available to it, with the IRA’s defence of St Matthews church against a Loyalist attack encouraging the expansion of the armed dimension. In this charged atmosphere, the British army’s tactics and means of dealing with the protests, culminating in Bloody Sunday, and Stormont’s indiscriminate arrest of suspected IRA members,[[307]](#footnote-308) functioned as the IRA’s best recruiting sergeant.[[308]](#footnote-309)

Throughout the early days of the civil rights movement, the IRA had been reluctant to or unable to use armed violence. However, with the radicalisation of the population, often deliberately cultivated by IRA members,[[309]](#footnote-310) old members came back and re-engaged in the organisational activities. Elements within the IRA began to argue for an armed strategy that revolved around launching defensive *and* offensive campaigns, however, this and a number of other issues led to the internal divisions that splintered the movement into the Provisional IRA and Official IRA in 1969. At the time prior to the split, the IRA leadership had been implementing a controversial disengagement strategy which emphasised grassroots activism at the expense of a military dimension, and ideologically it had shifted in a Marxist direction, which alienated a section of the group.[[310]](#footnote-311) The final breaking point was the IRA leadership’s attempt to expand its disengagement into a political route by dropping abstentionism – thus allowing its political wing, Sinn Fein, to take any seats it won in Westminster, Stormont and the Dail. The leadership managed to convince and manufacture a majority of the IRA to support its disengagement, but when it pushed discontented members out or senior leaders left of their own accord, they were being pushed into a political environment that provided opportunities for armed violence and recruitment on a large scale.

Following the split with the Official IRA in 1969, the key to the Provisional IRA gaining strength at the expense of its rivals was the resources it could draw: people became more willing to join because they were seen as more effective at fighting the British and RUC forces, and recruitment gradually increased over the 1970s. Another part of their success in this period was the continuation of the IRA network that existed prior to the civil rights movement. US-Republican relations were on the whole based on personal networks between former Republicans involved in the 1920s or 1950s campaigns: these networks acted as the hubs that could connect to a working-class American-Irish community who were moved by the romantic notion of Republican armed struggle.[[311]](#footnote-312) Within Northern Ireland, ties to the previous generation and their re-engagement provided the Provisional IRA with leadership, authority and political entrepreneurs to mobilise a frustrated but largely rudderless youth, specifically in Derry. Of course, the IRA had always attracted people in its youth wing so mobilisation would have most likely still occurred, though perhaps it would have had limited authority, experience and certainly fewer personal networks with the crucial US support-base. In a hypothetical situation where there was no generational link and militant mobilisation structure in place, the intensity of Catholic mobilisation, anger and youth violence could have still lead to the formation of an original militant group. However, such a militant group would have to compete with more established mobilisation agents such as Labour Youth and the problems above would still apply. Thus, the radicalisation of the 1960s generation had provided an opportunity for the former generation, who had not abandoned support for armed violence, to re-engage in the movement. The generational connection, and thus the lack of total disengagement by the IRA in the 1960s, enabled a much stronger form of violent mobilisation to occur. Through this trans-Atlantic inter-generational network, the Provisional IRA was able to procure weapons and resources which would lead the leadership to argue that 1972 was the year of victory.

### Failed Disengagement in 1975 and Generational Transition

For the Provisional IRA, 1972 was the year of victory; it was also the deadliest in the Troubles. Excessive repressive measures taken by the British army on Bloody Sunday and the indiscriminate arrest of Catholics through a botched policy of internment without trial gave the Republican movement a substantial propaganda boost.[[312]](#footnote-313) A few Catholic communities, such as Free Derry, became Republican strongholds that the British forces would not enter, much to the frustration of the Unionist community. The Republicans were able to claim another propaganda victory when the Unionist centre of power, Stormont, was prorogued and responsibility for Northern Ireland was given to Westminster.[[313]](#footnote-314) With this in mind, it can be understood why the Provisional IRA may have understood that the 1972 negotiations with Whitelaw, the British secretary for Northern Ireland, marked the beginning of a British withdrawal and the end of partition in Ireland.[[314]](#footnote-315) Such a perspective was not entirely far-fetched, with a Daily Mail opinion poll in 1971 indicating that 60 per cent of the British public supported the British army’s withdrawal.[[315]](#footnote-316) The Provisional IRA leadership called a 72-hour ceasefire to signal the intent of initiating negotiations, which two months later was extended to a week-long ceasefire to allow for negotiations to take place with Provisional IRA leader MacStiofain firmly in charge of the Republican negotiating team. The Provisional IRA negotiating team pushed firmly for a British withdrawal, on which Whitelaw later commented on: ‘the IRA leaders simply made impossible demands which I told them the British government would never concede. They were in fact still in a mood of defiance and determination to carry on until their absurd ultimatums were met'.[[316]](#footnote-317) After the quick failure of the negotiations, MacStiofain decided to escalate the campaign of violence, thus resulting in the strategic mistake of the Provisional IRA’s bombing of Protestant areas (known as Bloody Friday). The public outrage to the attack put pressure on the British government, who were now charged with full responsibility for the province, to act on the Republican strongholds. Through Operation Motorman, the British army asserted its territorial control throughout Northern Ireland, destroying the Provisional IRA’s military position and forcing the Republicans to adapt to the new circumstances.[[317]](#footnote-318)

Yet the lesson taken from this year was that violence had to be increased and brought to the British mainland in 1973 and 1974. The strategic rationale behind the campaign was to put pressure on the British establishment by terrorising the population. However, the intensity of the attacks was never enough and the public gradually became desensitised to the attacks. The inability of violence to provide the required gains slowly led to a strategic rethink, which will be explored later, and part of this rethink was toward negotiations.[[318]](#footnote-319) Since the 1972 ceasefire there was an emerging division within the movement, with some of the leadership, most notably Ruairi O’Bradaigh and Daithi O’Conaill, pushing for another ceasefire.[[319]](#footnote-320) Over the coming years, with MacStiofain’s growing marginalisation,[[320]](#footnote-321) O’Bradaigh and O’Conaill began to assert control, pushing the Provisional IRA toward the 1975 ceasefire. In late 1974 and early 1975, a series of backchannel meetings with intermediaries led the Provisional IRA to announce a truce to allow for negotiations with Britain; the truce would officially last for under a year until January 1976.

The chapter contends that the 1975 ceasefire was an attempt at disengagement, but it was a failed one which informed the more successful disengagement process that began in the 1990s. In many ways, the 1975 ceasefire was a case-study for Gerry Adams on how not to disengage.[[321]](#footnote-322) The leadership behind the strategy began to lose credibility, particularly following O’Conaill’s arrest, leaving a discredited O’Bradaigh to stand up to the hardliners.[[322]](#footnote-323) Furthermore, there was little dialogue between the leadership and members to explain the process and convince them by pointing to benefits that disengagement could bring, and there was little in the way of a clearly articulated strategy that framed disengagement. One Provisional IRA member who was arrested for carrying explosives during the 1975 ceasefire explained why it did not succeed:

*Politically, where it was going, militarily, where it was going, nobody knew, we hadn’t a clue. You just did what you were told. It didn’t surprise me that it didn’t [succeed] because there was no strategy behind it. It was like ‘let’s stop and see what happens’…The only dialogue that was going on was the secret dialogue between the leadership and the British government, I’m sure through mediators.[[323]](#footnote-324)*

In addition, the organisational linkages that would have allowed a disengagement frame to be diffused, even a weak one, were not developed and the generational gap exacerbated this problem. Brigade commanders initially accepted the decision but the determination to remain engaged by the new, young recruits demonstrated a lack of organisational discipline:

*In ‘75 I was young and we were just running the streets, we were up to all sorts and we didn’t want to stop. I think at times we put our foot over the line a bit and got our wrists slapped for it and everything else…On the ground for us it was like, we will do what we are told but we are getting ready to go here you know. You were probably looking for an excuse, an opportunity to go again and ‘that’s it, let’s go’. So that’s the way you were thinking, you were just ready to go again, it wasn’t like you were saying ‘no hold on a minute here, let’s think this out...this is an opportunity for peace here’. We didn’t think like that at that time.[[324]](#footnote-325)*

The type of attitudinal change that disengagement requires was not filtered throughout the movement, particularly among the younger generation. The breakdown of the 1975 ceasefire and the use of this time for the British government to implement a new strategy to counter the Provisional IRA had prompted significant change internally. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the older pre-1960s generation began to lose influence to the ascendant 1960s generation, specifically Gerry Adams. Recognising the problems the Provisional IRA’s command structure presented, Adams began the process of restructuring the movement into specialised cells. Furthermore, the Provisional IRA gradually began to build a social and political dimension to accompany the armed struggle. While these changes were primarily brought about to improve the Provisional IRA’s efficacy in armed violence, it also centred more power on Adams[[325]](#footnote-326) and it placed the 1960s generation – and therefore Adams’ own network - in a hegemonic position within the movement. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these changes provided the linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame.

### The Provisional IRA’s Disengagement: an Overview

Before the thesis goes into greater depth on the disengagement process in the next chapters, it will firstly provide a holistic overview to clarify the key stages of disengagement. In 1994, the Provisional IRA announced that it was implementing a ceasefire to allow for negotiations, which it felt had been signalled by the British government. The ceasefire had followed a number of developments in the 1980s. Firstly, the northern leadership had asserted its control over the movement and the older, southern leadership became marginalised and/or left the Provisional IRA in 1986. The 1986 walkout stemmed from the leadership’s desire to contest elections in the Republic of Ireland, which the old leadership saw as a betrayal of Republicanism and the beginning of the end of armed struggle. Secondly, there was a growing recognition in the Provisional IRA that it could not defeat the British state militarily, which also recognised that it could not defeat the Provisional IRA. Thirdly, electoral success following the Hunger Strikes by Provisional IRA prisoners reinforced the political direction that Gerry Adams wished to take the movement, but the political struggle was to be carried out in tandem with the armed struggle. This new political strategy opened up dialogue between Sinn Fein elites, although mainly Gerry Adams, with Nationalist allies in the form of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and the Republic of Ireland, all with the aim of encouraging the Provisional IRA’s end to violence to help facilitate a negotiated settlement. In the early 1990s, the British government had begun to send signals to the Provisional IRA, acknowledging that they could not be defeated, and that an end to hostilities would allow negotiations to take place. In addition, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced that Britain has no selfish interests in Northern Ireland, opening the prospect that it could become a persuader for Irish reunification and that it may withdraw British soldiers. Consequently, in August 1994, the Provisional IRA announced ‘a complete cessation of military operations’.[[326]](#footnote-327)

The ceasefire did not lead to negotiations as Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA had hoped. There were calls from the British, Unionists and the Irish governments for an unconditional and permanent end to hostilities. Furthermore, as a result of Unionist pressure and weak leadership, the Major government in Britain made Unionist demands for the decommissioning of the Provisional IRA’s arsenal a precondition for negotiations. Unable to meet this demand, the ceasefire broke down in 1996 for two years. With the election of a new government in Britain, decommissioning was moved as a requirement after negotiations, which culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Endorsed by Sinn Fein members, accepted by the Provisional IRA, and voted for by a majority in both north and south Ireland, the agreement marked the beginning of the peace process. The Good Friday Agreement enshrined the principle of consent for a united Ireland, which provided security for Unionists but it also allowed Republicans the prospect of ending partition through a border poll: changing demographics where Unionists were becoming a minority gave the Republicans optimism with this regard. Cross-border institutions were established to expand the Irish dimension and irredentist claims were removed from the Irish constitution, while Britain accepted the principle of a united Ireland if both the north and south consented in referenda. Crucially, a power-sharing agreement in a Northern Irish Assembly gave Sinn Fein the opportunity to participate in government. A system of bloc-voting was introduced, whereby Assembly members were designated as Nationalist, Unionist, or Other, with Nationalists and Unionists having a veto on legislation and requiring majority voting from both communities to pass legislation.

Sinn Fein’s participation in government was contingent on the Provisional IRA decommissioning and formally disbanding. In 2005, it was confirmed that the Provisional IRA had destroyed all of its arms and Seanna Walsh, the former officer commanding at the H-Blocks/Maze prison, announced that the Provisional IRA’s Army Council ‘has formerly ordered an end to the armed campaign’.[[327]](#footnote-328) The final major battle in the Provisional IRA’s disengagement was Sinn Fein’s acceptance of Northern Ireland’s new police force, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2007. Thereafter, Sinn Fein has encouraged Republicans to join the police force and have helped to legitimise it; they have publicly opposed attacks by armed Republican groups; and have substantially brought to an end their involvement in vigilante activities such as punishment beatings. Nevertheless, one of the main issues that has emerged in the last few years has been Sinn Fein’s perceived glamourisation of terrorism and armed struggle, through Republican commemorations in Castlederg for example. Having provided an overview of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, the next chapter will use a frames analysis to explain why the disengagement process in the 1990s was successful where others had previously failed.

### Conclusions

While the chapter has provided an historical background to the Irish Republican movement, it has been guided by one implicit question: why have previous IRA disengagement processes failed? The first reason regards the continued existence of political systems that were capable of driving two forms of mobilisation. The continued partition of Ireland, with the Unionist British presence in the north, and an illegitimate Free State in the south, meant that the rationale and legitimacy behind the IRA’s 1920s campaign still existed. Partition resulted in a political system in the north which was governed by a zero-sum logic between two supposedly incompatible identities and there was no institutional mechanism to manage it.[[328]](#footnote-329) Unionist hegemony, as the solution to this incompatibility, created further social and political grievances. The repression that followed the civil rights movement created a further set of grievances, and the presence of the British army and the RUC in Republican communities provided easy targets to address those personal grievances.

The second reason was because there was inter-generational continuity in the Irish Republican movement that allowed it to survive from the defeat in the 1920s civil war until the 1960s. Family networks provided the linkages for a traditionalist Republican movement to exist independently on any substantial support. Through the occupation of space in Republican commemorations, parades and clubs, the IRA could tap in to latent community support by utilising the credibility that appeals to Republican culture bestowed. It also provided an alternative route to continue mobilisation at a grassroots level, placing them in a good position when opportunities arose. While the 1960s context may have been sufficient for a new generation to take up arms, the continuity of Republican networks provided leadership, experience and resources.

Thirdly, group disengagement in each of the cases analysed varied in terms of their success. The 1920s disengagement was successful insofar as it left an IRA rump, although without the extensive repression in the north, perhaps its actual strength was latent. The 1960s disengagement was unsuccessful because its Marxist frame was anathema to many and forces external to the group marginalised and discredited any attempts by Republicans to argue for disengagement into a political route: recognising this, the Official IRA engaged in a limited armed campaign too. While the 1960s disengagement was driven by an incoherent frame, there was more of a strategy underpinning it than the 1975 ceasefire. The failure to communicate with members and show gains from disengagement, the lack of organisational discipline, and the lack of attitudinal change among the younger generation undermined any chance of success. Taken together, it is these three reasons which explain why the Provisional IRA existed and why the Irish Republican movement had managed to survive.

The next three chapters will explore the extent the Provisional IRA’s disengagement that began in 1994 has overcome these three factors that have allowed the Irish Republican movement to continue its armed campaign from one generation to another. Successful disengagement firstly needs to be underpinned by, to some degree or another, a commitment by actors involved. Upon recognising the need for disengagement, the difficult part in the process is convincing the rest of the group. The next chapter analyses how the justification for disengagement was made by the leadership in the form of a disengagement frame, which was then diffused throughout the group. The key difference with the 1990s disengagement from previous attempts was that it successfully resonated, which provided a strong foundation for the disbandment of the group, reformation at the political level, and transformation of inter-generational linkages.

## CHAPTER FOUR

**The Disengagement of the Provisional IRA**

While research on disengagement may still be relatively sparse, the same cannot be said for research on the Northern Irish peace process. In her work on How Terrorism Ends, Cronin outlines the dominant perspective of how the Provisional IRA’s campaign drew to a conclusion: State and non-state repression, combining a policing and intelligence approach with paramilitary assassinations, led both the British government and the Provisional IRA to see the conflict as a stalemate, and electoral success reinforced the potential in an exclusively political route. As the parties engaged in the peace process, they became invested in it and found it increasingly difficult to return fully to an armed strategy. The culmination of this process, the Good Friday Agreement, was ambiguously constructed to be acceptable to both Unionists and Republicans, with Sinn Fein arguing that its constitutional agenda was being advanced. In the background throughout this settlement was a changing international context, with South African intermediaries assisting with the process, thus leading to a sense that history was marching in a certain direction that made the Republican armed struggle obsolete.[[329]](#footnote-330)

As discussed in Chapter One, the criticism of this mainstream analysis is it vastly underplays the internal difficulties in implementing the disengagement process and the risk of a slip-back into violence. It conflates the leadership with the entire group, and assumes that the group came to the same conclusions at the same time, which they did not. Taking a slightly different perspective, Moloney argues that a clique surrounding Adams cajoled, bullied and tricked the entire Provisional IRA into disengagement, yet this analysis ignores discussions among prisoners and simplifies the debates taking place at the grassroots.[[330]](#footnote-331) Chapter Four demonstrates the significance of internal factors in implementing the disengagement process, from 1994 to 2005,[[331]](#footnote-332) by using a frames analysis approach to explain how narrative fidelity, credibility and linkages were fundamental to the resonance of the disengagement frame.

Having set out the focus of the chapter in the context of pre-existing literature, the chapter will briefly reiterate the framework that is applied in the chapter. In terms of levels of analysis, the chapter focuses on the group level of analysis, differentiating between the initiators of the disengagement process, which is by and large the leadership, and those members it seeks to convince. The leadership often has greater liberty to express new ideas and strategies, hence why they are often the proponents of disengagement frames, and others in the movement may also be sympathetic to these new ideas but reluctant to speak up at first. While most studies have been conducted at this level of analysis, there has been surprisingly little *conceptual* analysis of the Provisional IRA’s collective disengagement in the 1994 to 2005 period (see Chapter One). Furthermore, the chapter focuses on social networks in terms of generations to show how this can influence the disengagement process.

Although Moghadam and Sageman analyse disengagement in terms of generations,[[332]](#footnote-333) there is little in the way of an analysis of relations between generations and the consequences for disengagement, or how factors that shaped the generation – as opposed to simply the group – contributed to the success of disengagement. The thesis coins the phrase ‘generational hegemony’ to describe a situation where one social network, broadly born in the same period (and into similar experiences) and with deep and durable relations with each other, tend to dominate a movement whilst the next generation, for many reasons, find it difficult to assert themselves. Drawing on Rapoport’s definition, the chapter focuses on two generations of Provisional IRA members: the old generation consisted of members like McStiofain and O’Connail, members of the IRA before the start of the Troubles; and the Troubles generation from the late 1960s until the early 1970s.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter Two, the fundamental conceptual issue with regard to disengagement is the connection between attitudes and behaviour, and frames analysis provides a unique way of analysing disengagement and how attitudes change within a movement. The thesis argues that the disengagement process is built around a new frame being constructed by factions of the movement. Throughout the Provisional IRA’s disengagement until 2013 (the time under study), the thesis identifies three stages in the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame. Chapter Four will provide an overview firstly and then focus on the first stage, whereas Chapter Five and Six will analyse how it has transformed over time. Disengagement frames begin to exhibit different types of attitudinal change, accounting for differences in motivation and commitment to ending violence – the thesis identifies three types of frame: tactical disengagement; conditional de-radicalisation; and unconditional de-radicalisation. In group disengagement, one such frame becomes dominant and is used to convince members of the merits of disengagement. The chapter analyses how this frame emerges, but more crucially, how it is diffused throughout the movement to ensure successful disengagement. Successful disengagement in this context refers to the disengagement frame resonating – being accepted – by the majority of the movement. The thesis argues that frame resonance provides an additional indicator of the risk of recidivism to accompany recidivism statistics. In terms of disengagement, the chapter does not include organisational disengagement as this is discussed in the next chapter. For frames to successfully resonate there must be narrative fidelity: a disengagement frame must be consistent with the movement’s goals, beliefs and myths; there must be sufficient linkages that allow the frame to be diffused, which can be difficult for illicit groups like the Provisional IRA; and the ‘messengers’ of the frame must be seen as credible.[[333]](#footnote-334)

The framework outlined above provides an explanation of how the Provisional IRA disengaged in the 1994-2005 period of the process, and it is used to contribute to the conceptualisation of disengagement. As stated, the process of organisational disengagement will be discussed separately in the next chapter, which will explore how the disengagement frame was diffused throughout the Irish Republican movement. Yet it was the decision to disengage in the 1990s by the Provisional IRA, and the fact that the majority of its members supported it, which instigated the broader move toward disengagement. There were three main factors that contributed to the successful resonance of the disengagement frame among large sections of the Provisional IRA in the 1990s and onwards. Firstly, the frame maintained narrative fidelity, which legitimised past violence but de-legitimised current violence by referencing the initial motivations for engaging in armed violence in the 1960s. While in the early days of the disengagement frame, particularly at the start of the 1994 ceasefire, there was no overt de-legitimisation (apart from by some Sinn Fein figures), the conditions that surrounded disengagement meant that it soon would have to de-legitimise violence. Secondly, the messengers of the frame had credibility within the movement, which was augmented by the prison experience, generational hegemony and the structure of the group. Thirdly, the leadership had encouraged an intensive level of internal debate and discussion over a number of years, which helped to convince a large number of members on the direction the movement was going in. This had already been taking place within prisons, which were structured in such a way to facilitate this form of dialogue.

The chapter considers other possible factors: for example, the leadership was able to provide a number of incentives for disengagement which manifested in political, military and social dimensions from 1998 onwards. The thesis concedes that incentives were important, as will be shown in the next chapter, but it argues that these incentives are subordinate to frame diffusion as it was internal changes that constructed these routes as incentives in the first place. While interaction with the ‘other’ was not a substantial factor in the disengagement process, the findings of the chapter do lend some credence to Ashour’s argument that external interaction can affect the world-views of the leadership but not necessarily the followers.[[334]](#footnote-335) Furthermore, with regard to the literature’s emphasis on the role of state repression as outlined in Chapter One, the chapter finds that while state repression helped to change attitudes to armed struggle, this was not significant for all of its members who wanted to continue using violence. Thus, external interaction and state repression played a role in instigating disengagement among a section of the movement, but it was the three factors outlined above which ensured the frame successfully resonated.

### Disengagement Frames and De-Radicalisation

To build on the points made in Chapter Two, the thesis argues that just as frames are developed to mobilise members for political ends, frames need to be constructed and adapted to de-mobilise members from armed activity. Frames can function by linking together pre-existent or latent attitudes that an individual could not articulate, or they can lead to a transformation in attitudes by removing normative barriers or being more persuasive. A frame does not need to be entirely accepted as other influences such as peer pressure can compensate for a lack of resonance, and in this case a frame can act as a script to follow, which can then begin to resonate over a longer period of time. Frames analysis has advantages over the concept of de-radicalisation insofar as it can specifically explain how violence is de-legitimised and which forms of violence is de-legitimised. The thesis analyses three types of disengagement frame which shapes the success of the process: tactical disengagement; conditional de-radicalisation; and unconditional de-radicalisation.

To recap on the discussion in Chapter Two: tactical disengagement refers to when violence is stopped for tactical reasons with no de-legitimisation of violence; conditional de-radicalisation refers to when a cessation of violence is contingent (either explicitly or implicitly) on the existing or anticipated conditions and involves de-legitimising violence; unconditional de-radicalisation refers to the complete de-legitimisation of all violence, but it can also consist of the de-glamourisation of violence. These three frame types can be analysed as a spectrum, whereby adopting a tactical disengagement frame can push toward deeper disengagement, which requires the construction of frames that de-legitimise violence, therefore reducing the desire to engage in violence and reducing the risk of recidivism.

The literature has underplayed other manifestations of de-radicalisation that may be conditional,[[335]](#footnote-336) but on the whole, the thesis argues that conditional de-radicalisation is better at reducing the risk of recidivism in society because: firstly, conditional de-radicalisation can resonate more successfully; and secondly, the durability of structures, or whatever the conditions may be, tend to be just as durable as unconditional de-radicalisation, especially at a societal level. Furthermore, most discussions on disengagement limit the analysis to a very specific time period in the process,[[336]](#footnote-337) and therefore do not capture how attitudes change over a longer period of time after the commitment to disengage. As will be shown, the Provisional IRA’s frame was typified by a transition from tactical disengagement in the early 1990s to conditional de-radicalisation from the late 1990s onwards, and that the latter built on the former and were more intertwined than the arguments used in previous Provisional IRA ceasefires.[[337]](#footnote-338) The literature either presents this attitudinal change as not having a substantial effect on reducing the risk of recidivism[[338]](#footnote-339) or underplays the significance of attitudinal change by conflating it with tactical disengagement,[[339]](#footnote-340) but Chapter Four will argue that this type of disengagement frame was essential to end the Provisional IRA’s campaign. This example of conditional de-radicalisation can be contrasted with tactical disengagement which manifested in the 1920s, 1960s and 1975: tactical disengagement can lead to recidivism when the opportunities arise and the struggle can be passed on from one generation to another. The different types of disengagement frame employed can have a significant impact on the success of the disengagement process, and this has implications insofar as which type should be encouraged – states, for example, may be inclined to encourage unconditional de-radicalisation. The primary aim of Chapter Four is to explain the process by which it was diffused and why it successfully resonated, but firstly the chapter will provide an overview of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame as it currently stands.

At the beginning of the disengagement process in 1994, the process was partly driven by tactical considerations but it differed from the previous tactical disengagements in the 1960s. Underpinning the re-framing of armed struggle was its presentation as something to be traded in for political objectives, which is in stark contrast to typical cases of tactical disengagement, which is driven by a lack of opportunities. Also, as will be explored before, there were a growing number of Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein members who recognised the limitations of armed struggle in the long-term.[[340]](#footnote-341) While, the IRA in the 1960s marginalised armed struggle because it was not tactically efficacious in the given period, they were not using disengagement as a bargaining chip like the Provisional IRA in the 1990s, and unlike 1975, there was no substantial drive to re-engage in armed struggle. Therefore, while the Provisional IRA’s disengagement may appear tactical, there is a clear difference from other types of tactical disengagement, as its arguments in effect de-legitimised the use of violence if certain conditions were met – and these were negotiations.

Of course, the Tactical Use of Armed Struggle (TUAS) reinforced the perception that there was no genuine attitudinal change, but TUAS was subordinated to the disengagement frame and it did not contradict the inherent de-legitimisation of armed struggle that was built in to the frame. TUAS comforted some members and helped to bring them along on the process,[[341]](#footnote-342) but it was part of a broader disengagement frame which was driven by the logic of ending armed struggle. Therefore, in order to win the argument for the disengagement frame, key Provisional IRA members would need to discredit and de-legitimise violence later on, which occurred from 1998 onwards. While de-legitimisation may not take the form of moral arguments (at least not in the early stages of the process focused on in this chapter), the continued use of armed struggle independent of a strategy toward disengagement would be portrayed as irrational and driven by greed and personal gain. Rather than reflecting a lack of genuine commitment to ending violence, the tactical disengagement frame in the early stages of the process was an attempt to ensure the disengagement process resonated with as many members as possible, as the movement was still divided.

From 1998 onwards, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame took on a sharp conditional de-radicalisation component, with its de-legitimisation of present violence being one side of a coin to the legitimisation of past violence. While the construction of the frame in such a manner was not inevitable: the shape of the Provisional IRA organisationally and ideologically and the strong desire to avoid a split had incentivised this type of frame being constructed. Armed struggle has been a core part of the Provisional IRA’s mobilising frame, therefore the first aspect of the disengagement frame was to marginalise its role and subordinate it to Republican principles. Therefore a form of frame amplification occurred – a process by which the movement emphasises one aspect of a pre-existing frame in order to mobilise support – and in the context of a disengagement frame, this involved elevating aspects of the frame to disconnect them from armed struggle. The Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein’s abandonment of abstentionism[[342]](#footnote-343) provided them with a dry-run of this process:

*People mistake strategies for principles and that’s wrong. Abstentionism was a strategy, a tactic, and one day it wasn’t working too good so what do you do with a strategy that isn’t working, you change it….be pragmatic, that is the only way you are going to be successful…[[343]](#footnote-344)*

Having set the precedent for putting ‘the objectives’ ahead of the tactic of abstentionism, the same logic could be applied to armed struggle, and in doing so it has to compete with other tactics:

*On the back of the Hunger Strikes and elections there was potential for opening the floodgates for Sinn Fein becoming a ‘viable political party’; the armalite and ballot box was a good strategy but we knew that would have to end[[344]](#footnote-345)*

As armed struggle is recognised as a tactic which varies in its utility from one context to another, the disengagement frame then needs to identify what this context is in a way that can be reconciled with the objectives. As partition and the British influence still remained in Ireland, a coherent disengagement frame required another set of conditions to judge the armed struggle against whilst maintaining mobilisation or avoiding admitting defeat. Thus, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame constructs two sets of conditions: in one, armed violence is an inevitable, just and moral response to conditions (specifically the conditions of the 1960s); in the second, the Provisional IRA’s successful use of the political route makes armed violence irrational and illegitimate. In terms of the past conditions, the following quote represents how frame amplification has been used to link the use of armed struggle to conditions:

*The thing young people throw back at you is ‘you done it, you fought the Brits and you did this and you did that’. And I say, ‘yep, in them circumstances, where I was growing up, the influences, the politics of the day and all of that stuff, that all influenced me to respond in a certain way’. The next big question is, ‘would you go back to it?’ ‘If I lived in the circumstances then, I would go back to it because it is justified, because nobody has the right to treat me or my family like a second-class citizen’…nobody has a right to deny me a job or treat me like dirt like the Orange Order or the Unionists did, and nobody again will, because what we’ve done is stop that, we have cut that off. Didn’t achieve a united Ireland. Still not going to stop trying to achieve that, but it stopped that happening again….we have created a level playing field to talk...[[345]](#footnote-346)*

The extent to which the Provisional IRA’s disengagement can be attributed to these changes can be contested – considering many of the reforms to Northern Ireland occurred prior to 1994 – but it has been re-framed in order to legitimise disengagement. While there is a disagreement on the extent that these conditions determine behaviour or what the role of agency is,[[346]](#footnote-347) the disengagement frame is based on the contrast of these two conditions: the repressive, discriminatory treatment of Catholics in the 1960s; and equality in the 2000s. Once again, this aspect of disengagement emerged in the 2000s but it is rooted in the first stage in the 1990s. Thus, while the concept of de-radicalisation as used in the literature would expect the de-legitimisation of all violence, the Provisional IRA’s frame builds on the legitimacy of past violence to de-legitimise current violence, which can manifest in the following types of arguments, in no particular order:

1. **Moral Duty:** “To me, the armed struggle, we fought it when it was the only option to defend ourselves and then to progress our struggle we did that, but if the conditions no longer existed, we were morally compelled to examine other possibilities. Who wants to fight a war if you don’t have to?”[[347]](#footnote-348) This argument is often tied in with the discourse of providing a better future for the younger generation so they don’t have to engage in the armed struggle.
2. **Unique Conditions:** “For anyone who thinks that killing one or two people a year will bring [the Republican] project any further, is crazy. A few years ago the logic was they wanted to bring the British soldiers back on to the streets, but there’s no logic to that….the presence came around because of the repression of the civil rights. That period is passed, you can’t just recreate the conditions, they don’t exist today… And even if they did suddenly have the capacity to do what the IRA had done for years, in twenty years’ time they are going to be where the IRA was in 1994. To me, the logic just isn’t there.”[[348]](#footnote-349) This type of argument at first seems to be a form of tactical disengagement, yet its link to conditions which have durably changed makes any recidivism contingent on these conditions reversing. While this interviewee also used other arguments, this argument is often used to convince other members who may not be supportive of disengagement in general.
3. **Political Progress:** “There is power-sharing; differences with the Orange state. I know people dismiss the border poll but it isn’t something to dismiss, it is something to work toward. We now have a political voice, before it wouldn’t be tolerated.”[[349]](#footnote-350) Similar to the conditionality argument above, the credibility of this argument is influenced by the perceived progress at a political level. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, problems at the political level can then weaken this argument.
4. **Lack of Alternatives:** “The IRA fought the British army to a stand-still - these groups haven’t fought them to a start. Where is the campaign, where is the campaign? So you have all these groups all fighting the British government - what are you’s doing apart from racketeering, exploitation, tiger kidnapping, drug dealing?”[[350]](#footnote-351) In this example, the former Provisional IRA member attempts to associate the dissident groups with criminality and their lack of efficacy in using violence in order to de-legitimise them. Once again, this argument complements the overall disengagement frame and is targeted at those in the movement who may not be convinced by the other arguments presented in the frame.

As the frame later began to exhibit conditional de-radicalisation from the late 1990s onwards, the arguments that could be made against violence are pluralistic, meaning all four arguments presented above can be used coherently to de-legitimise violence to different audiences. Thus, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame relegated armed struggle to a tactic and amplified the part of the mobilising frame which emphasised the conditions that drove the conflict in the 1960s at the expense of the goal for a united Ireland. Consequently, it could coherently argue that the conditions had now changed which merited an end to the armed struggle, but those conditions were changed because of armed struggle too. Relating back to the literature on de-radicalisation, it could be understood why scholars would not classify the case of the Provisional IRA as a group that has ‘genuinely de-radicalised’. Yet quite clearly the disengagement frame does de-legitimise violence in terms of norms, morality and constitutionality, as discussed in Chapter Two. Subsequently, it represents a form of conditional de-radicalisation, rather than unconditional de-radicalisation or tactical disengagement. The literature has wrongly taken unconditional de-radicalisation as its expected standard for what de-radicalisation should entail: most Islamist de-radicalisation efforts have been highly conditional and even when these have entailed a complete rejection of all violence, their resonance has been limited. As will be demonstrated in the remainder of the chapter, and in Chapter Five, conditional de-radicalisation resonated more successfully in the Provisional IRA and it reduced the risk of recidivism far more effectively than a disengagement frame that emphasised unconditional de-radicalisation or the cases of tactical disengagement which had defined previous cases of disengagement in the Irish Republican movement. Having outlined the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame, the chapter will now argue that one key part of its success was that it maintained narrative fidelity to the goals of the movement.

### Narrative Fidelity: from Armed Violence to Politics

According to frames theory, a frame has greater chance of successfully resonating when it remains consistent with pre-existent values and beliefs.[[351]](#footnote-352) In terms of applying frames analysis to disengagement, the thesis contends that as the target are active militants, a disengagement frame has to be consistent with the frame that was used to mobilise them or sustain their mobilisation. However, as the failed 1975 ceasefire demonstrated, generations within the movement can have markedly different motivations and that there needs to be narrative fidelity between the message that motivates armed struggle and the message that motivates disengagement. One Provisional IRA activist stated that, during the ceasefire, he was convinced they were going to win the war, and although disengagement through a political route was at the back on his mind at the time, it was not as clearly articulated in 1975 as it was in 1990 – thus there was little in terms of an articulated strategy that connected with what motivated them to participate in the movement in the 1970s.[[352]](#footnote-353) Furthermore, the thesis also argues that the success of narrative fidelity in the 1990s disengagement process was helped by the dominance of the generation as this meant there was greater homogeneity in experiences, shared motivations for joining, and deeper friendships. Furthermore, ‘rubber-band diplomacy’ was conducted to ensure that the change in attitudes of the leadership did not drift too far away from the mainstream of the movement. Finally, to understand how the disengagement frame ensured narrative fidelity, it is important to contextualise it within the strategic changes that were affecting the leadership in the 1980s, and how, for example, the recognition of a stalemate in the conflict provided a bridge from armed conflict to a political direction.

When scholars state that there was no de-radicalisation among Provisional IRA members,[[353]](#footnote-354) they are neglecting the changes that occurred in the movement prior to the movement’s disengagement. Whilst the concept of de-radicalisation tends to blur the nuances in attitudinal change, frames analysis helps to identify these changes between generations and show how this is significant. M.L.R Smith makes a convincing argument on how the Provisional IRA transitioned from an ideologically driven group to a more pragmatic group willing to trade in the armed struggle for political gains short of their original goals. The breakdown between different generations within the movement in the mid-1980s marked this shift. Building on M.L.R Smith’s argument,[[354]](#footnote-355) the thesis argues that this generational disjuncture can be traced back to the manner in which it was mobilised. The older generation utilised frame bridging in the civil rights movement to mobilise the younger generation, but the way in which the younger generation interpreted the frame was markedly different. Firstly, while supportive of a united Ireland, exposure to Republicanism was seen in cultural and identity-based terms rather than ideological ones – in a sense, *being* a Republican helped to resolve some of the grievances that drove their involvement. Secondly, while the younger generation may have adopted much of the Republican frame of ‘Brits out’, their initial mobilising frame was based on the specific conditions of the 1960s. These two differences impacted upon the disengagement frame that would develop: firstly, parity of esteem and equality became a central part of the frame; and secondly, they were able to (re)amplify the conditions of the 1960s as the main justification for violence, placing less emphasis on the presence of Britain or partition. Before expanding on these last two points, however, the section will expand on the point with regard to the transition between generations and mobilising frames.

The Provisional IRA had split with the Official IRA in 1969 because the latter wished to end the policy of abstentionism and take up seats in parliament.[[355]](#footnote-356) The first generation leadership of the Provisional IRA called for a return to traditional Republican militancy, locating its claim to legitimacy in the 1916 Proclamation of Independence and the 1918 Sinn Fein election victory as a mandate for a united Ireland independent of Britain. Such ideals and principles did not factor much in the thinking of the young people who wished to join the Provisional IRA in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While some young people were motivated to join the Provisional IRA because family members were Republicans,[[356]](#footnote-357) this did not mean that there were large numbers of people necessarily sympathetic or understanding of Republican ideology. Instead, a number of Republicans commented on how the motivation to join was because of the environment (checkpoints; armoured cars; soldiers on the streets; beatings; Bloody Sunday), while others mentioned how, as children, it was cool to be given a gun.[[357]](#footnote-358) The primary role of social networks, rather than spreading Republican values, was in providing easy access to joining and functioning as a vetting-process for recruitment (at least initially).[[358]](#footnote-359) However, such a disjuncture between the frame of a group and the motivations for joining is not unusual,[[359]](#footnote-360) and while this is widely accepted in the terrorism literature, frames analysis provides insight into how this can be significant. Militant groups may often use frame bridging to reach new audiences for mobilisation; this involves connecting the group’s frame (Republicanism) with the frame (or general attitudes) of another group (the younger generation). The implicit frame and motivations that young people were mobilised by was one that was critical of the structure of the Northern Irish regime and discrimination against Catholics; it was the Republican movement and the Provisional IRA that reframed this as an anti-British campaign for the younger generation. Of course, there was extensive overlap and the two frames were complementary, however scholars underplay this distinction.

The Provisional IRA, under the leadership of the older generation, sought to subsume the anti-Stormont frame into its anti-British frame, and in many ways this successfully resonated with the younger generation. However, attempts at frame resonance came with two caveats. Firstly, the anti-Stormont frame was latent and it would be re-activated in the disengagement process. Secondly, an outcome of frame resonance, specifically through political education in prisons, was the strengthening of Irish and Catholic identity, not necessarily the older generation’s view of traditional Republicanism. Whilst this may have factored in on the sectarianism of the conflict, these two differences in how the Republican frame resonated would emerge in the 1980s.

Over the two decades from the emergence of the Provisional IRA, the older generation of leaders gradually lost authority to the younger (Troubles) generation based in the north. As discussed in the previous chapter, the failed disengagement process of 1975 undermined the authority of the older generation, which Adams and McGuinness would exploit in 1986.[[360]](#footnote-361) At the 1986 Ard Fheis, Adams and McGuinness spoke of removing the absention for the Dail in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that Sinn Fein would now take their seats in parliament. Following the Hunger Strikes, there was a belief that political participation could complement the armed struggle, which marked the beginning of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein’s broad strategy. Critics claimed that a greater political dimension would bring an end to the armed struggle and would lead to a compromised negotiated settlement; while they were proven to be correct, delegates at the Ard Fheis were convinced by Adams and McGuinness, voting in huge numbers to accept the new strategy. In protest, the older generation of leaders walked out to form Republican Sinn Fein and then later Continuity IRA.

While this perspective emphasises the role of political participation, or even the pursuit of political participation, in explaining moderation,[[361]](#footnote-362) the thesis adds greater emphasis on the generational gap outlined above. The traditional Republican frame never substantially resonated with the generation of the Troubles, although this is not to say that they opposed it while the older generation of leaders were in the ascendancy. The components of this frame were not seen as principles, but mainly served to strengthen the identity of Republicans, and it was this diffusion of a Republican identity within society that provided a political route. As the conflict became shaped more by identity, this prompted a realisation that the ‘other’ that needed to be addressed was not Britain, but the Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) community, which is discussed further below.

While the thesis is focusing on the evolution of frames and identity, this does not mean it neglects other factors which led to the Provisional IRA’s new strategy. Yet the thesis argues that the following mainstream arguments are also related to and reinforced the points made above. The most important factor was the weakening utility of armed struggle, but this should not be understood as a weakening of capabilities, which remained significant throughout the disengagement process even if it was not enough to force a British withdrawal. Firstly, relatively lower control beliefs[[362]](#footnote-363) with regard to armed struggle increased the perceived benefits of the political route. However, while members recognised they could not win the war, the acknowledgement that they also could not be defeated by the British Secretary of State helped a number of key figures to accept disengagement:

*[The Hunger Strikes] period made it much harder to have the debate [on disengagement]. But* *I do remember the day when [the British Secretary of State] made an aside that the British couldn’t defeat the IRA. And that was the one-liner that opened [things] up, and thinking ‘that’s very interesting’. And I remember phoning people up and asking ‘did you hear that statement?’ Some people were going ‘well they have been saying that for ages’, and you were going ‘no, they haven’t, they haven’t ever said that’. So that perhaps was an open, throwing the door open to see if we would come through it or an invitation.[[363]](#footnote-364)*

Secondly, the counter-terrorism strategy[[364]](#footnote-365) that the Provisional IRA faced in the mid-1970s prompted them to restructure their organisation to a tight cellular structure. This limited the scope of operations but improved their efficiency, yet in the 1980s improved British surveillance and, according to Moloney, a high-ranking informer, undermined this capacity.[[365]](#footnote-366) Crucially, the new organisational structure decreased the extent of recruitment which gave the Troubles generation a hegemonic role within the movement. Eventually a substantial number of this generation became imprisoned,[[366]](#footnote-367) and the new activists became less experienced and made more mistakes.[[367]](#footnote-368) Thus, while most research emphasises the effect of counter-terrorism strategy on limiting the efficacy of armed struggle, which it did to an extent, the thesis argues that another significant outcome was that it (unintentionally) secured the hegemonic role of the Troubles generation within the movement, by undermining the old generation and subordinating the new recruits. Thirdly, while Ulsterisation[[368]](#footnote-369) was seen to reduce the number of British soldiers being killed, for the Provisional IRA this was not a game-changer because ‘the RUC was not seen as part of our community’.[[369]](#footnote-370) The RUC had been seen as an entirely illegitimate police force which was a colonial force, an appendage of the British army,[[370]](#footnote-371) and importantly, it was staffed mostly by the PUL community. Thus, while Ulsterisation increased the sectarian dimension of the conflict, it also worked to increase the trend toward changing the Provisional IRA’s frame of analysing the causes of the conflict. Whereas the traditional Republican frame located the problem in British colonialism and imperialism, members of the Provisional IRA began to recognise that it was the PUL community that were the ‘problem’, and this was a view that gradually grew as dialogue increased.[[371]](#footnote-372) Given how the traditional Republican frame portrayed the PUL community as confused Irishmen living in false consciousness,[[372]](#footnote-373) the transformation of the frame to include their grievances had an impact on how Republican goals could still be achieved. As one interviewee noted, ‘I remember speaking to a priest and said that we cannot bomb the loyalists out [of Ireland]’.[[373]](#footnote-374)

Finally, another explanation for the evolution of the Provisional IRA that is commonly cited is with regard to interaction with the community. The 1975 ceasefire unintentionally increased the role of Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA in the community.[[374]](#footnote-375) While scholars would emphasise how this provided the groundwork for a political dimension years later, the thesis argues that it also played a significant role in diffusing the Republican frame, which had become more identity-based, around the communities the Provisional IRA were based. Of course, there were already pre-existent relations but this had increased. While Malthaner demonstrates how interaction with supporters can moderate a militant group, the thesis argues that it was not the Republican communities that were the driving force for moderation. Instead, the initial steps toward moderation were led by a small but dedicated base of activists within the Provisional IRA which *then* began to diffuse throughout Republican communities. Of course, there were voices from the community who did oppose violence, yet this did not have the impact that Malthaner suggests, at least according to one interviewee who played a crucial role in winning support for disengagement among Provisional IRA hardliners. He stated that:

*Community revulsion to the armed struggle had been present throughout the conflict and it did not have an impact, although if there were problems with tactics, then you would just change it…There was no straw that would have broken the camel’s back. There was always latent support which could not be affected. The Brits could curtail armed action but it would have no effect on community support.[[375]](#footnote-376)*

However, the newly accentuated difference between the Republican and nationalist community meant that by the 1980s when Sinn Fein were engaged in a political approach, it had to bridge the frame it had cultivated in Republican communities with the nationalist community, and even to an extent the Unionist community (firstly through Eira Nua, secondly, and much later, power-sharing). The double-edged sword here was interaction in the early 1990s only occurred between elites. Therefore, having diffused the Republican frame throughout pockets of communities, any disengagement process would have to convince not only Provisional IRA members, but also sympathisers:

*It’s something that became called ‘rubber-band diplomacy’. We were always aware that the minute you went too far beyond your community, you were lost to them. So if you turned around and said to them fifteen years ago ‘now’s the time to support the PSNI’, everybody would have went: ‘edjit, he’s a cuckoo’…so you were always trying put one leg out a wee bit and pull the community along or do something, but make sure a part of them was embedded within the community where you were attuned to what was going on and you understood...how that would impact upon the community.*

However, as the Provisional IRA were now very much an identity-based movement, with shared grievances stemming from the Troubles which led to their mobilisation and community support, they had a latent frame already existing to justify disengagement. Therefore, there were clear bridges that linked the mobilising frame to the disengagement frame, which, as discussed above, consists of two main components. Firstly, past violence was legitimate and just, and it was a result of the unique conditions of the time which was the cause of violence. Secondly, the conditions now do not exist that would justify violence as there are other means:

*Our struggle was a just war. Our struggle was the only way we could survive was by making them frightened of us. We had to go strong or we would have been eradicated...the war was right, and when the time was right, we ended it… the conditions existed which made armed struggle inevitable, there was no other way forward.[[376]](#footnote-377)*

These findings suggest that Horgan is correct in saying that de-radicalisation did not occur in the Provisional IRA. However the problem here is the concept of de-radicalisation and the assumption that it would have been a desirable goal. Firstly, given the nature of Republicanism, it was not possible to denounce past violence without causing great splits and disrupting the movement. Secondly, the disengagement frame has maintained narrative fidelity by maintaining Republican aspirations but it has re-emphasised the 1960s political system as the cause of conflict, thus functioning as a strong argument against using violence now. The disengagement frame would later develop in the 2000s onwards to emphasise further the unique circumstances that justified violence, but this is used to de-legitimise current violence, which is in effect what de-radicalisation refers to. However, without maintaining narrative fidelity, the frame would not have resonated from the beginning. The next factor that ensured frame resonance was the intense level of interaction between members and the central role of credible messengers in these debates.

### Credibility and Internal Interaction

For disengagement to be successful, Ashour argues that internal interaction and charismatic leadership are essential. Leaders of Islamist groups who were seeking to disengage engaged in meetings with their supporters intensely debating the theological legitimacy as well as the costs and benefits of disengagement, and through month-long tours around prisons communicating with their followers. Following on from this point, the extent disengagement can be successful is dependent on the extent that there is ‘a charismatic leadership that controls or strongly influences its followers’.[[377]](#footnote-378) As discussed in Chapter Two, the use of frames theory improves upon the vagueness of charisma[[378]](#footnote-379) and emphasises the perception of credibility and the structures and networks which form and channel this credibility. The thesis finds that, with a few qualifications, the same two factors were present in the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. Contrary to scholars who emphasise elite negotiations as the key to success,[[379]](#footnote-380) if there had been no internal interaction and the credible figures were not there, then the disengagement process would have ended before the negotiations had even truly started. Of course, it was the process of tactical learning – realising that armed struggle could not gain Republican objectives – which allowed these negotiations to take place. However this process of tactical learning did not occur in the Provisional IRA in a uniform manner – an internal process similar to the de-radicalisation process undertaken by Egyptian Islamists was necessary – and neither did this process end with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The presence of the aforementioned factors should not be taken as a given; there is an impression in some studies that internal dissent was merely a ploy by the leadership in elite negotiations or that the leadership could drag the members along, but this underplays how important the process of frame diffusion was. The 1975 ceasefire provides an indication of weak frame diffusion and the second generation of leaders, such as Gerry Adams, clearly learned this lesson. A substantial flaw in the failed 1975 disengagement was a lack of internal dialogue and a lack of credible figures in the few cases there was discussion. For example, in the cases where Daithi O’Conail – member of the IRA army council and main advocate of the ceasefire - met with members, there was suspicion that he had immunity from British forces while other activists were being arrested. Therefore, there was substantial internal pressure from activists that hampered attempts to move the process any further. Members had only recently been mobilised to fight and the lack of any substantial explanation of why they were now on ceasefire and why they should continue is a prime example of a disengagement frame failing to be diffused and failing to resonate.[[380]](#footnote-381) One could even argue that there was no real disengagement frame put forward at all by the leadership who were driving the process. Thus, as the transition in leadership gradually developed after the abortive 1975 ceasefire, Adams began to encourage internal dialogue, debate and discussion among members, although the topic was not disengagement at this time but on matters of strategy more generally.[[381]](#footnote-382) One possible benefit of having an established culture of internal debate is that it meant there was a more natural progression in members gradually talking about disengagement, rather than being too great a surprise.[[382]](#footnote-383) However, prior to the early 1990s, it would have been quite difficult for Provisional IRA members, specifically for those not in prisons, to openly question the use of armed violence, even if they had come to that conclusion themselves.[[383]](#footnote-384)

There were three aspects to the successful diffusion of the disengagement frame. Firstly, the culture of discussion cultivated by Adams in the organisation, and the surprising ease in which local activists had the space and time to meet considering the illicit nature of the Provisional IRA, led to intense discussions which brought members along with the process. Secondly, while the confidence members had in the high-ranking leadership was important,[[384]](#footnote-385) it was actually mid-ranking members who were essential at building up the trust in the new direction. Thirdly, prisons played a crucial role in diffusion, firstly as structures to facilitate discussion, but secondly as institutions which made prisoners credible voices that activists and the community listened to.[[385]](#footnote-386) Moloney acknowledges that prisoners were important for solidifying support for Adams’ strategy but he fails to explain how the prisoners came to share a similar view. That the prisoners were supportive suggests that there was greater internal support for disengagement which derived through the discussions that Moloney dismisses, rather than the behind-the-scenes machinations of Adams’ allies as he argues.[[386]](#footnote-387)

#### Internal Dialogue Outside of Prison

As discussed above, a few members of the Provisional IRA and most of Sinn Fein began to consider a political route on the back of electoral success in the 1980s and the realisation that the armed struggle had reached a stalemate. Thus followed a number of meetings in the early 1990s within the movement:

*They were held - ongoing - they were in secret locations and barns and garage. They would have went on for a year or a year and a half. They were ongoing through 1994 and obviously a long time after that right up to when Seanna Walsh sold everybody out [laughs] [2005]. From then [1994] onwards, there was always a history within Republicanism of getting as many people together for briefings and to hear what they were saying…Hundreds and hundreds of meetings taking place for such a long time, to make sure that every single person involved in the armed struggle had their opportunity to listen or to respond and to give their opinion. And it was basically taking the temperature of the IRA to see if there was an appetite, and was there the confidence to move into a totally exclusively political arena.[[387]](#footnote-388)*

Although the Provisional IRA sought to maintain unity as much as possible through dialogue, there have been some claims that there was also an element of coercion or the leadership was asserting its authority. One member of the Real IRA who was interviewed discussed his time in the Provisional IRA prior to the split of 1997. He stated how there *were* a lot of meetings during this period, but there were also a lot of *other* meetings that they did not know about. For him, the ‘dialogue period’ was more of a case of identifying the people who disagreed with the main approach, who would then face death threats and beatings. Others would be offered piecemeal promises for the Provisional IRA to not compromise on issues such as decommissioning and recognition of policing, but when these would be overturned, they would gradually leave.[[388]](#footnote-389) The use of secret meetings was refuted, however, by one member who remained in the mainstream Republican movement: ‘There was no way there were secret meetings. What would have been the purpose of only having secret meetings among people who were going to agree - you didn’t want that. We wanted the debate to take place in the room so it wasn’t going to take place in the street’.[[389]](#footnote-390)

When asked why the process was successful, one interviewee emphasised the bonds between members, once again emphasising the role of generational hegemony, whereby the group grew through the conflict together over decades, maintaining their dominance within the movement. Strong networked relationships allowed the space for dialogue and the freedom to challenge each other’s position without breaking the movement before dialogue could start:

*You might not always like them, but you love them...so there is that respect for each other, there is that understanding for each other. That’s why you, that’s why the engagements were so vital. And also because people had the confidence to get up and say ‘I’m totally opposed to this - this is a sell-out’…A friend of mine, a woman...I was doing a lot of travelling with her and her husband, and she said: ‘see since from you two started travelling together, my marriage has improved 100%, because when he comes in he is exhausted arguing with you’, and he was like ‘I can’t do it anymore’, because he was very opposed to the cessation of the armed struggle. We’d be [in the car] from Cork to Belfast, and we would have talked about nothing else, and there would have been screaming matches. It was not always comradely and ‘let me hear your opinion’, it was screaming: ‘are you stupid! Think it through, think it through, it’s not about the armed struggle, it’s about the objective and how best to get there.’ And once you have that in your head, it opens the possibilities: this is the best way forward, and nobody is going to die.*

Therefore, a culture of dialogue opened up space for discussing the possibility of disengagement and its consequences. While talking may seem a simplistic explanation for changes in attitudes, illicit organisations are often denied the opportunities for large-scale dialogue and a culture of silence can be prevalent in military organisations. Personal relationships were also important as members would later be able to discuss in public spaces and the respect built up over years enabled people to debate freely – although this seemed to occur later in the process than it did in the prisons, as discussed below. However, while personal relationships may have allowed the opportunity to debate, they did not necessarily mean they were enough to ensure successful frame resonance,[[390]](#footnote-391) but members may acquiesce for other reasons, whether this was personal loyalty to others or personal reasons.[[391]](#footnote-392) Another aspect of the dialogue was it allowed members to hone their debating skills, something which had been occurring in prison much earlier. Subsequently, there would be members who were opposed to disengagement but they were unable to articulate the reasons why, in contrast to the members arguing in favour of disengagement who had become more articulate and experienced.[[392]](#footnote-393) Aiding these discussions on the outside was the influence of credible figures who could instil trust in members who were unsure of the approach, whether through their own social networks or through institutional networks. One Loyalist stated what role charismatic figures had in the process’ success:

*I think [figures like Gerry Kelly] were incredibly important [in bringing the IRA along]. Incredibly important. And that can’t ever be underestimated. Their change in strategy and tactics, the need to have their key people on board with that, to bring the foot soldiers along with them...That’s why someone like Gerry would be pushed to the front in terms of policing and criminal justice issues, because of his involvement in the conflict, he has a lot of kudos. He has a lot of legitimacy and credibility.[[393]](#footnote-394)*

Whereas Ashour emphasises the role of the official leadership in Islamist disengagement, for the Provisional IRA, mid-ranking leadership was essential for convincing members:

*There was people in the middle tier there, people like Paddy McGeown, who could walk into a room full of IRA volunteers and had that respect, former hunger striker, former-prisoner, IRA volunteer himself, who was so well-respected and...people like Brian Keenan, prominent Republicans, so they had so much respect from the IRA volunteers on the ground that they were able to go into a room full of those people and say ‘look, we need to change’. And people would challenge that and question that, and they would get a logical reason used for doing that, then people could buy into that. In the main, the IRA volunteers on the ground did buy into that and trusted them. It was about trust as well because there is the context of whenever Republicans move out of armed conflict immediately all the words of sell-out, traitors, it all flies.[[394]](#footnote-395)*

These mid-ranking leaders had authority and respect among members for their time in prisons and in the armed struggle in general. As will be discussed below, the conclusions here would suggest that a decapitation strategy of state repression would remove this dynamic from ever developing, which would be especially important in contrast to Islamist groups where religion may provide an alternative source of credibility than from activism. Another aspect to the internal dialogue was its geographical nature, which helped to demonstrate to grassroots activists that support for disengagement was broad:

*I would suggest that two people were delegated to go into an area and neither of them would have been top command. They would have been seen as maybe a leader from another area, who was well respected, and he or she would be sent in to a different area…There were areas where if they had a strong leader - a lot of it was about personality - but if they had a strong leader who was opposed to the strategy you could bet you weren’t going to get an easy ride going in there. But what we had to remind people of was ‘this is your leadership, we elect a leadership and you elected this leadership. So don’t turn around and say you want to change it because they don’t agree with you’. Leadership leads, and it does so because we put them there to lead, and a good leadership will always want to bring its people along with it and this is what I think, by and large, the IRA did very, very successfully. But they didn’t do it just by sending out a general order saying ‘alright, this is what we are doing’, the debates, the meetings and the consultations were unending.[[395]](#footnote-396)*

The quote above suggests that while open discussion was encouraged, there were key elements who were pulling the discussion in a certain direction. The combination of a leadership approach and a consultative approach, coupled with the use of credible voices applied across organisational boundaries, managed to pull off the feat of bringing along the vast majority of the Provisional IRA membership despite some significant opposition, particularly in 1994. The long-drawn nature of the discussion provided the time for arguments and debating-skills to be honed, which seemed to have favoured the advocates of the disengagement frame at the expense of its antagonists. Personal ties facilitated discussion and built trust, and while these ties were not unbreakable, they prevented a large-scale split in the Republican movement. Importantly, in contrast to much discussion on disengagement which emphasises the merits of creating an organisational split,[[396]](#footnote-397) the leadership of the Provisional IRA were quite determined to avoid a split as they recognised the importance in bringing along the movement and the community together.[[397]](#footnote-398) Therefore there is a much stronger possibility that they would have simply put an end to disengagement if frame resonance was unsuccessful throughout the movement. While there was a culture of internal discussion cultivated early on, it was in fact the prisons which were the fore-runners of this form of debate where the disengagement frame was constructed, tested and then diffused. The next section outlines firstly the structural reasons why prisons allowed the disengagement frame to develop, why it increased the credibility of prisoners as messengers, and why, upon release in 1998, former prisoners were central to convincing members to make the further concessions that would be required in the next phase of disengagement.

#### The Role of Prisons

Prisons have played a central role in the Irish Republican movement’s campaign from the 1960s onwards and this centrality continued from the 1990s onwards with former prisoners being visible in the peace process that followed from the 1994 ceasefire. Prisoners and prison-experience has traditionally held a significant formative role in Republican narratives over the century. The prison experience, both directly and indirectly, has had a significant impact upon the Catholic Nationalist community in Northern Ireland specifically. Over the course of the conflict, there have been 15,000 Republican prisoners and between 5,000 and 10,000 Loyalists prisoners.[[398]](#footnote-399) Politically motivated former prisoners made up between 14 and 31 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland males aged 50-59, and between 4 and 12 per cent of those 60-64.[[399]](#footnote-400) The impact of the prison experience was much broader in Republican areas that were Provisional IRA strongholds during the conflict, with one in three of residents in the Falls Road having direct experiences of imprisonment on their immediate family.[[400]](#footnote-401) The prison experience would also have a broad cultural and political impact in films, songs, and murals, as symbolised by the death of Bobby Sands – a Provisional IRA hunger striker who was elected to be a Member of Parliament at Westminster.

In the early phase of the conflict, the Northern Irish security forces implemented a policy of internment without trial. In 1971 a series of dawn raids led to the arrest of 342 people suspected of involvement in Republican militant groups, however, due to faulty intelligence the vast majority of internees had nothing to do with any of the militant groups. From February to March 1971, over 650 people had been interned, and between 1970 and 1975 this figure was just under 2,000 internees. The indiscriminate nature of the arrests acted as the best recruiting sergeant for the Provisional IRA and coincided with an increase in the number of armed attacks at the height of internment.[[401]](#footnote-402) Internees were held in a disused military airfield called Long Kesh, with the rebuilt prison later known as the H-Blocks/Maze Prison. In the early 1970s during internment, prisoners were recognised as political inmates: they were allowed to wear their own clothes, had free association and made their own rules for order and cooperation.[[402]](#footnote-403) Prisoners continued to assert their position as political prisoners rather than ‘ordinary criminals’ with some success during the early stages of the conflict.

The removal of political rights for prisoners in 1975 marked the beginning of a series of protests and actions within the prison, culminating in the Hunger Strikes, which led to increased support for Sinn Fein and political status was eventually returned in all but name. Prison wings were divided along the lines of the militant groups, a command structure was maintained and Officers Commanding (OCs) were appointed to deal with the prison authorities and other militant groups.[[403]](#footnote-404) For many Republicans, time in prison was not only a way to continue the struggle against the British establishment; it also provided the space to discuss and refine the Provisional IRA’s strategy and to develop training and counter-interrogation manuals. Furthermore, in the prisons there was a culture that encouraged learning and reading political texts, writing plays, poetry and learning the Irish language and about Irish culture.[[404]](#footnote-405) After the 1994 ceasefire, the Good Friday Agreement made provisions for the conditional release of prisoners, with 447 prisoners being released upon its acceptance.

From 1995 onwards, a series of ex-prisoner groups emerged to provide welfare and support for ex-prisoners and their families: the umbrella group for those linked to the Provisional IRA is Coiste na n-larchimi.[[405]](#footnote-406) The numerous prisoner groups operating in Northern Ireland are involved in a number of activities, from running youth events, campaigning for a bill of rights, or offering free welfare advice services to the local community.[[406]](#footnote-407) One former Provisional IRA prisoner discussed how Coiste would provide training, support, advice and advocacy for former Prisoners.[[407]](#footnote-408) These networks would complement and/or replace the Provisional IRA structure which prisoners would find themselves in. On the whole, the unique prison system – with Provisional IRA-ran wings specifically – and the relatively broad exposure of the prison experience at the community level, meant that prisoners would play a key role in the disengagement process.

Prisons were important to the successful resonance of the disengagement frame, firstly as a potential site for its construction in the 1980s, and secondly, in terms of how prisoners released in 1998 helped to strengthen the credibility of the frame. Crucially, prisoners released on parole prior to 1998 also had a significant role in calming nerves in the Republican community. While after 1998 there may have been some inevitability in terms of the future concessions that would need to be made, former prisoners were crucial in helping maintain and conclude disengagement in 2005. Time in prison most crucially allowed time for the Provisional IRA members to discuss politics, the conflict and strategy. Militants on the outside would have less time to reflect because of involvement in operational activities, evading the British army and the RUC, and greater normative pressure to not be critical of the armed struggle. Furthermore, the prisoners were not as affected as much by what was going on outside in terms of the day to day pressures of involvement in the armed struggle. Prisons provided greater freedom which meant that they were more open to disengagement when the time had come. One senior Provisional IRA prisoner stated that ‘anyone could say what they wanted. In the main, there was one or two in every wing who were opposed [to disengagement]. A lot of them found it difficult to articulate why’.[[408]](#footnote-409) Another Provisional IRA prisoner also stated how the prison environment provided a space to rethink the direction the movement was going in:

*I think there was a whole thing within prison where people had the ability to…..that final stage of conflict would always have to be political engagement, and for me the end game was always going to be discussion and negotiation. Those kinds of discussions developed in prison where people would say ‘well I do agree with you’; outside it would have been heresy but inside you were allowed to have that thing going on.[[409]](#footnote-410)*

In addition to providing time and space for thinking, discussing and learning, a command structure was maintained in prison. In the prisons there were leaders for each of the groups who would still maintain authority and organisational discipline within the cells, therefore the external leadership were still able to exercise influence over members. While one interviewee stated how a number of prisoners came to the same conclusion themselves,[[410]](#footnote-411) the organisational structure within the prisons also allowed a more coherent diffusion of the newly emerging disengagement frame. Furthermore, prisons helped to reinforce the second generation’s control of the movement: while in prison they could still continue the armed struggle through other means; they could still distribute orders; and they still had authority. However, Adams managed to assert more control in prisons by changing rules so that the Provisional IRA leadership had a say in who would be Officer Commanding, rather than the prisoners (or the Active Service Units on the outside).[[411]](#footnote-412) Therefore, in other contexts where a new, more militant generation of members on the outside could come to dominance, younger activists still remained subordinate to the second generation inside and outside. This can also be attributed to a decline in recruitment of the younger generation[[412]](#footnote-413) and that new activists became less and less experienced and making more mistakes.[[413]](#footnote-414) Therefore, prisons helped to solidify this generation’s dominance of the movement, meaning there were still strong enough personal connections with the outside leadership. As stated in Shirlow et al’s extensive study on former prisoners, ‘imprisonment built up trust within groups and their respective leaderships due to the latter having themselves being imprisoned’.[[414]](#footnote-415) The prison system also gave the leadership a captive audience to engage with, meaning internal discussions could be done *en masse* and there would be more time for debate and discussion. While one interviewee stated how a number of prisoners came to the same conclusion themselves,[[415]](#footnote-416) the organisational structure within the prisons also allowed a more coherent diffusion of the newly emerging disengagement frame.

As well as prison providing space for dialogue, the credibility of the messenger diffusing the frame was important. As Guelke observed, ‘one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Sinn Fein leadership’s efforts to convince rank and file members of the value of the Agreement was its enlistment of aid from leading figures in the ANC [African National Congress]’.[[416]](#footnote-417) The thesis can corroborate the significance of this intervention in convincing members of the need of disengagement. Two Provisional IRA prisoners in the H-Blocks identified the invitation of the ANC to speak as being important for increasing support for disengagement. A senior Provisional IRA prisoner said:

*The ANC negotiators were brought into the jail and everyone came into the gymnasium, all the leaders like: Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams…The leadership had brought them over to talk to IRA members in the field. Probably you didn’t have the same time constraints and restraints on questions [in the prison]. And because of the numbers in the prison you could bounce more ideas around…The ANC had walked the walk – they were seen as an example of success…For people who were in any doubt it helped them get around to the idea the armed struggle was over.[[417]](#footnote-418)*

Another prisoner at the time mentioned the meeting with the ANC:

*That was one of the great occasions down in the H-Blocks, when the ANC were brought in. And that was at a stage where, prior to the Good Friday Agreement, that early period...and that was their advice to us, that your political struggle is going to be very important here. I think having people like that as allies, I think that was a great source of strength for people certainly. That was one of the great occasions for me, without a doubt, was that - as they were people who have been in a struggle for many decades, and they had come through it, and they said there are mistakes you can make, you don’t mean to do this, but you have to stand firm on it, you have to be united. But yeah, they were very important.[[418]](#footnote-419)*

These findings corroborate the argument made by Guelke on the role of the ANC and shows that internal dialogue was important to the disengagement process’ success.[[419]](#footnote-420) Furthermore, it helps to explain the gap in Moloney’s account of the period insofar as the majority of the Provisional IRA membership supported disengagement despite leadership disputes a few years earlier in the process. The ANC, as an international success-story, was utilised by the Provisional IRA leadership to provide credibility and legitimacy to the group’s disengagement frame.[[420]](#footnote-421) While from 1994 there had been internal debate both inside and outside prison, the prisoners arguing for disengagement had the advantage that their experience provided them with greater skills to articulate the frame, and their time in prison also meant they were seen as credible voices on the outside.[[421]](#footnote-422)

Throughout the disengagement process, prisoners had been released firstly on short-term releases and then (conditional[[422]](#footnote-423)) release as part of the Good Friday Agreement. The ex-prisoners were crucial in helping to diffuse the disengagement frame and to provide it with credibility, which is important for resonance to be successful. For many in the Republican community, ex-prisoners are respected for being in prison, especially in the H-Blocks which has become a central part of Republican identity following the Hunger Strikes. One interviewee stated how, when young people were asked what they want to be when they are adults, they would say they want to be an ex-prisoner.[[423]](#footnote-424) One interviewee felt that it was not by virtue of being a prisoner that they were respected, but through their actions and becoming more educated and articulate through their time in prison.[[424]](#footnote-425) With this credibility and respect, the prisoners were to have a significant effect on Republican communities upon release: ‘There was just much more reflection that was taking place inside than there was outside. I think what created the change outside was people getting out who had been inside…And I think people just got out and had those conversations’.[[425]](#footnote-426) Another Provisional IRA ex-prisoner explained the nature of dialogue when he was released on parole after the 1994 ceasefire and as part of the Good Friday Agreement, where he was able to relate to his experience in prison to justify disengagement:

*When you got out people will talk to you and ask ‘so where is this going’ and stuff like that. Even prior to my release I was allowed out during the ceasefire, and at that period people were a bit more uneasy, with people asking ‘what [do] you think is going to happen here, the ceasefire has been on for months and they haven’t even agreed on prisoner releases’….Negotiating with the prison administration, learning to negotiate a little bit: we had come through that and having that sort of experience and that, so when we were involved in the political process, that’s how I would relate it to people. Coming out of the hunger strikes...we got some concession because we took a different tactical approach. So when I spoke to people as an ex-prisoner, I spoke about how inside the H-Blocks we went about the war…I think most of the time people just wanted to ask, just for that wee bit of assurance that people were on board with this because it was something different.[[426]](#footnote-427)*

To conclude, prisons provided space for Provisional IRA members to reflect on the armed struggle and to interact with each other in debates, which was much more difficult on the outside. In many senses, they were a captive audience for the outside leadership and participation of the ANC is indicative of how interaction with credible voices ‘who have walked the walk’ can be powerful in creating attitudinal change. Furthermore, the continued organisation of members within prison and their political education helped in two ways: firstly, while discussions were free, they could be managed, which provided support for the outside leadership’s push toward disengagement; secondly, prisoners developed the skills to be credible articulators of the disengagement frame upon release. When the prisoners returned to their communities, they were influential in convincing other members or sympathisers to support the disengagement process, especially in the controversial part of disengagement, the giving up of arms and formal dismantlement of the organisation.

### Selling Disengagement after the Good Friday Agreement

The Provisional IRA leadership recognised the importance of prisoners in legitimising the disengagement process. In the crucial 1998 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis that was called specially to confirm support for the Good Friday Agreement, the leadership paraded two recently released former prisoners, Hugh Doherty and Liam Quinn. Upon presenting them to the conference, Gerry Adams referred to the ex-prisoners as ‘our Nelson Mandela’s’. This reference served two functions: for the public it sought to equate the Provisional IRA with the ANC’s and Mandela’s struggle, which had international legitimacy; for its own members it sought to use this legitimacy to justify the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. The crucial point that further strengthens the thesis’ argument that it was internal factors that were important is that the 1998 GFA was not necessarily the end of the disengagement process. The Provisional IRA had to still decommission its weapons, it had to disband its organisational structures (officially), and then recognise the authority of the PSNI. Overcoming hurdles such as decommissioning was seen as the logical conclusion of the decisions made in 1994 and 1998,[[427]](#footnote-428) and many of the same arguments were used:

*I suppose it was the same as with armed struggle. You would use your weapons in armed struggle for political gain, and I suppose the further you moved away from the ceasefire and that stuff, you are engaged in negotiations and the institutions are up and down and stuff. But I think over time people began to internalise that argument. Armed struggle: It’s a tactic. Weaponry, it’s a part of the armed struggle, it’s a tactic, and you make more advances using your weapons this way, and I think that’s what it was about. I mean would it do you more good lying in the ground rusting, or would it do you more good putting them beyond use.[[428]](#footnote-429)*

For some members these issues prompted them to consider leaving and required further convincing.[[429]](#footnote-430) One interviewee, who now engages with the PSNI in community work, outlined the narrative that led him to accept the 2006 decision to recognise the PSNI:

*On the issue of policing, it was probably the most difficult thing for me to buy into. I’ve suffered greatly at the hands of the RUC and it was the last barrier for me to get over. And I had discussions, debates and arguments with people, I was on the verge of walking, and I was convinced that we needed policing. The thing about it is our community needs policing. The IRA was never a police service. The IRA knee-capped people, shot them, executed them, and policed the areas to a certain degree but that is not policing. And any community needs proper policing, but it has to be accountable, it cannot be political policing… [There needs to be] more accountability, bringing Catholics in and more community policing. That brought me over, that they are right.[[430]](#footnote-431)*

For those who were not convinced, they left and have strengthened groups like the Real IRA.[[431]](#footnote-432) However, the staggered nature of splintering – in 1986, 1997 and 2006 – helped to minimise potential opposition and it divided dissident Republican groups as there was animosity between each faction, which may not have been there if all had left at the same time. Despite the benefits this may have had on the success of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, interviewees still emphasised a preference for unity[[432]](#footnote-433) and one refused to accept that, apart from the 1986 split, that splits even took place.[[433]](#footnote-434) While a number of Provisional IRA members were disillusioned with the decisions that emerged from disengagement, they recognise that the dissident Republican groups are not an alternative and have individually disengaged[[434]](#footnote-435) – similar to the experience in the 1960s disengagement process, but without the opportunities to re-engage later as had happened when violence increased at the end of the decade.

The final part of the disengagement process was the formal disbandment of the Provisional IRA. Thus, the Provisional IRA Army Council’s 2005 statement of its formal disengagement was read out by Seanna Walsh, the Officer Commanding in the H-Blocks, who had spent twenty-one years in prison. The reasoning behind having Walsh read out the statement was not only his credibility as a prisoner and former cell-mate of Bobby Sands, but as ‘an IRA hard-man’ who has respect as a reassuring face in the Provisional IRA[[435]](#footnote-436) and to send a message to potential dissident Republicans. In a leaked diplomatic cable, it was explained that the rationale for using Walsh was to ‘convey to people in the field that the army, including the most dedicated volunteers, and not just the politicians, was behind the statement’.[[436]](#footnote-437) The next chapter raises the issue of to what extent the Provisional IRA’s command structure has actually been disbanded, but the 2005 statement marked the official end of the Provisional IRA and it once again demonstrates how the leadership utilised credible voices to convince and cajole the membership to follow.

The manner in which the disengagement frame was diffused suggests that its acceptance was not necessary, but compliance was. Although the process had convinced the majority of the movement, the use of personal loyalties and friendship ties could be used to incentivise acceptance even when members were not fully behind the process in its final stages. Other members had already made the shift in 1994 which made it easier to accept the other elements of disengagement. Crucially, the flexibility of the Provisional IRA’s frame meant that members could also make arguments based on tactical disengagement, that the opportunities for violence no longer existed. Consequently, members who would not de-legitimise violence could also disengage without adopting the frame. Having outlined how the Provisional IRA’s disengagement process was implemented through a frames analysis approach, the chapter will relate this analysis to the literature on disengagement.

### Re-Evaluating the Disengagement Process

The chapter has argued that two factors were important to the success of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, with that success being judged by how much unity and discipline it could retain. The first factor was the ability to construct a frame that maintained narrative fidelity to the hegemonic generation’s shared experience in the 1960s; the second factor was the existence of a structure of networks that gave actors credibility and gave them linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame. These linkages, or social networks, provided added incentives to acquiesce to the disengagement frame. Even when members did not accept the disengagement frame, they did accept a tactical disengagement frame that had been nested within the Provisional IRA’s main frame. While the main contribution of the chapter is in explaining the significance of frame diffusion, the findings also inform some of the more relevant debates discussed in Chapter One with regard to how terrorism campaigns end: firstly, negotiations and popular support; and secondly, repression, decapitation and prisons.

#### Negotiations and Popular Support

While negotiations through a peace process are important for ending terrorism campaigns, the thesis makes the following points. Firstly, Ashour may be correct in his argument that interaction through secret negotiations with the ‘other’ – and the other ‘other’, the Nationalist movement - may have prompted attitudinal change in the leadership. However, another argument that seems convincing is that leaders such as Adams always had an idea of the political direction the group would have to go in, and this would require a parallel disengagement process; he was only waiting until he could convince others of the new approach.[[437]](#footnote-438) Furthermore, the change in attitudes to armed violence that preceded the construction of a disengagement frame that had especially begun to occur in prisons in the 1980s suggests that it was less to do with interaction with the ‘other’ or negotiations, but through observation of the environment and dialogue between members. Secondly, the offer of negotiations can act to provide an incentive, but this is firstly contingent on the disengagement frame resonating for negotiations to be constructed as an incentive – they should not be assumed to be as a matter of fact. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the British government provided a number of incentives in the form of secret negotiations and through public declarations such as the recognition of a stalemate. Thirdly, negotiations are important to help construct a mutually shared understanding of the disengagement process but this construction needs to recognise the dual ‘rubber band diplomacy’ that the leadership are involved in. Just as the leadership has to pursue ‘rubber-band diplomacy’ with its own members, it has to pursue a similar approach with the state it seeks to negotiate with. The demand by the Unionists for decommissioning prior to the provision of incentives (through inclusion in peace talks and the release of prisoners) was an unrealistic approach that failed to recognise or care about the salience of internal group dynamics. As negotiations progressed from 1998 onwards, frame diffusion extended into negotiations with the state and Unionists, but of course the dynamics here are entirely different to those which took place internally. Many scholars have noted that the Good Friday Agreement was an ambiguous document which could be ‘sold’ to different audiences: thus, it managed to maintain narrative fidelity through its inclusion of an Irish dimension, the prospects of the border poll, and by laying the groundwork for parity of esteem – the crucial bridging point between the Provisional IRA’s mobilising frame and disengagement frame.

The thesis’ research did not indicate a substantial role for popular support in the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. Among Provisional IRA members interviewed, they perceived themselves as the community, and while opinion polls may have suggested support was in the minority, this may not accurately represent the networks, communities and streets the interviewees lived in. This perspective would correspond with Waldmann’s notion of the ‘radical milieu’[[438]](#footnote-439) which may have reinforced many of the beliefs of Provisional IRA members prior to disengagement. Scholars have argued that engagement in politics brought Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein members into contact with a new constituency that lived outside this ‘radical milieu’,[[439]](#footnote-440) and while such interaction may prompt a shift in attitudes and perspectives, as observed by Malthaner in Islamist movements,[[440]](#footnote-441) the effect of this would have been only an indirect change in attitudes to armed violence. Engagement in politics shifted the relative value of armed struggle for members, and the expansion of target constituencies brought it into touch with new norms against violence, which may have influenced their attitudes to armed violence. However, the interviews show that one figure that would later be essential to the success of disengagement was not influenced by this, therefore changes in popular support varied in their impact on attitudes, but they did provide an opening for the disengagement frame. Furthermore, the findings of the thesis suggests that popular support from the ‘radical milieu’ may actually prevent disengagement, as the Provisional IRA had to diffuse the disengagement frame in the communities, although this was done far more superficially than internally,[[441]](#footnote-442) and given the credibility of Provisional IRA members, the fact that Provisional IRA members supported disengagement was often enough for the community to support or accept it.

#### The Role of Repression, De-Capitation and Prisons

As discussed in Chapter One, repression is seen to be a double-edged sword with regard to ending terrorism campaigns. Harsh military responses can lead to greater mobilisation – for example, Bloody Sunday – therefore policing and intelligence approaches are seen to be far more effective. Policing and intelligence can prompt a strategic re-evaluation as has been suggested, but the thesis has shown how this does not necessarily lead to disengagement because the effect of repression may not be universal in the extent it changes attitudes. Identifying when a strategic re-evaluation is occurring can be difficult: it is unclear to what extent the re-think contains the beginnings of a disengagement frame and it may only be possible to do this retrospectively. Ceasefires are the clearest sign but the contrast between the 1975 and 1994 ceasefire is telling. While there was less organisational discipline within the Provisional IRA in the 1975 period, continued state repression against some members of the group while others were perceived to have immunity only undermined the credibility of the leaders arguing for disengagement. Once again, while the 1994 ceasefire differed in terms of organisational discipline, a mutual ceasefire between the militant group and the state helps maintain the credibility of leaders. Although, the relaxed security in the UK in 1996 made Provisional IRA attacks easier and perhaps provided incentives for those wishing to return to armed struggle,[[442]](#footnote-443) however the relaxing of security was a short-term opportunity – the strategic situation that justified the ceasefire in 1994 had not changed. Thus, during the period the ceasefire ended in 1996 until 1998, the pro-disengagement leadership were in control and the ceasefire worked to their advantage, unlike the leaders during the 1960s disengagement or the 1975 ceasefire. As shown above, maintaining the option for a return to armed violence provided some members with the psychological security to explore the options of disengagement, and any hard crack-down by security forces during the ceasefire that threatened this option would have been counter-productive. Repression, whether through military or policing, loses its edge and function once the disengagement process has reached the point of a ceasefire, although this depends largely on the extent to which the disengagement frame has successfully resonated within the group.

Another aspect of repression that is discussed in the literature is the de-capitation strategy – i.e. removing the leadership and key figures.[[443]](#footnote-444) The thesis provides some reasons to be sceptical about the efficacy of this approach in successfully ending terrorism campaigns at the group level. A combination of poor intelligence and a de-capitation strategy almost saw key figures in the 1975 Provisional IRA leadership who were advocating the ceasefire being arrested by the Irish police. Furthermore, the efficacy of having the leadership in prisons seems to be double-edged considering how Gerry Adams used it to refine and improve the organisational structure of the group and how the hunger strikes in the 1980s – albeit not necessarily by the leadership – increased support for the group. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement suggests that previous research on disengagement has placed too much weight on removing the leadership to weaken the group[[444]](#footnote-445) while neglecting how decapitation and prison can strengthen the position of activists who support disengagement. The inability to decapitate the group – despite high-ranking informers - facilitated the establishment of generational hegemony, but repression and less recruitment of new members may have helped more at limiting a younger generation emerging. Generational hegemony meant that a network of members at the top ranks of the movement experienced a similar interpretation of the strategic environment. Corresponding with the findings of Tsvetovat and Carley, the longer the leadership can stay at the top of a group, the more they are able to institutionalise their control,[[445]](#footnote-446) therefore providing the networks and linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame later on. Furthermore, even the most committed and ‘extreme’ leader can undergo a change in attitudes – Martin McGuinness being a case in point – and the chapter has already demonstrated the benefits of a credible figure supporting disengagement. Prisons that can act as ‘terrorist universities’ can equally be turned into sites for disengagement. The relative openness in prisons allowed for internal dialogue but it also allowed for a degree of external control and influence. Therefore the advocates of disengagement could use prisons as a linkage for diffusing the frame to their advantage. In return, as prisons were used as sites of resistance and education, they bestowed credibility to the disengagement frame and the disengagement process in general through their release. However, the fundamental factor was attitudinal change, as without it, there would have been no substantial change in how prisons operated. This attitudinal change was shaped by frames.

#### De-Radicalisation: Nuanced Frames

The thesis contributes to the disengagement literature insofar as it takes a more nuanced analysis of attitudinal change, or de-radicalisation, by utilising frames analysis. The literature has primarily focused on two types of attitudinal change that drives disengagement: a group may disengage for tactical reasons or it may disengage because it views violence as illegitimate. The Provisional IRA has been portrayed as a case of the former, and this is significant in wider debates because the type of disengagement can inform counter-terrorism strategies. Just as the disengagement process is internally constructed within a group, the state also plays a role in constructing it but often with inaccurate knowledge of intentions: thus, if a state makes too high demands or misinterpretes the type of disengagement, the consequences can be high. The thesis would contend that, in part, the Major government’s inability to allign its disengagement frame (how it perceives how the Provisional IRA should end) with that of the Provisional IRA’s frame, was a significant factor in the peace process stalling and collapsing in 1996. Likewise, Israel’s unrealistic demands that Fatah-PLO’s disengagement should take on an unconditional de-radicalisation aspect raised expectations that could not be met.[[446]](#footnote-447) Therefore, defining the type of disengagement has serious consequences as it is through creating a mutually shared understanding of what the process should entail that it can be successful.

The implications of the mainstream argument with regard to the Provisional IRA is that attitudinal change was not important for successful disengagement as negotiations, incentives and repression were sufficient in changing behaviour. However, the thesis has argued that, despite appearances, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement in 1994 was significantly different from other forms of tactical disengagement. Conditional de-radicalisation can be problematic as it will often lead to mixed signals with regard to the de-legitimisation of violence, but the very logic of it will lead members to de-legitimise it themselves, particularly once the conditions are strengthened. Therefore, state demands for the group to de-legitimise violence or to disarm can be counter-productive, particularly if the conditions have not been achieved. The conditions in this type of disengagement frame will often vary, but for the Provisional IRA these were regarding a new political system that included them through negotiations, and in these (at the time) imagined conditions, armed struggle would be illegitimate. Thus, the thesis’ analysis of disengagement being driven by three types of frames challenges the assumptions made in the literature by emphasising the importance of de-radicalisation that exists somewhere in-between tactical considerations for ending violence and ‘genuine’ opposition to violence.

While the chapter has provided an alternative explanation for how terrorism campaigns end and it has related this back to key arguments in the literature, the overall aim of the thesis is to provide a multi-level analysis. The chapter has alluded to the continuation of dissident Republican groups, and there still remains the question of how stable the conditions are which the Provisional IRA’s disengagement is contingent on. It is these very problems which motivate the thesis to move beyond the group level analysis, therefore the next two chapters will explore how the Provisional IRA’s disengagement process has impacted upon the rest of the Irish Republican movement and society more broadly.

### Conclusion

Previous research on how terrorism campaigns end and specifically how the Provisional IRA’s campaign end have tended to underplay internal factors and the process by which a leadership convinces its membership to support disengagement. While negotiations through a peace process can provide strong incentives to end violence, these first of all need to be reconstructed to be perceived by the group as an incentive. Furthermore, state repression can only work up to a point, and while it may prompt the leadership to consider a change in strategy, there is still much to be done from this position to the point where a group disengages in a manner which is durable. Chapter Four has argued that a change in attitudes toward armed violence leads to the formulation and diffusion of a disengagement frame. Three types of disengagement frame can emerge – tactical, conditional, and unconditional – each of which effects disengagement and the risk of recidivism differently, which is determined by the extent to which it resonates.

The Provisional IRA managed to construct a conditional frame, which allowed it to also co-opt arguments from a tactical frame and, as will be discussed in the next chapter, an unconditional frame. Therefore, the Provisional IRA was able to deploy multiple arguments for disengagement but this was subordinated to the primary frame: while violence in the past was legitimate, the conditions have changed which makes violence illegitimate. The leadership were able to construct this frame by reconstructing armed struggle as a tactic to be traded in and amplifying the grievances of the 1960s to establish a new set of conditions against which armed struggle should be judged – rather than, say, the need for a united Ireland. The leadership of the Provisional IRA were successful in constructing and diffusing this frame throughout the group and it was the successful resonance of the frame which was essential to the end of their campaign in 2005.

The successful resonance of the disengagement frame was because of three intertwined reasons: narrative fidelity; credibility; and linkages. The disengagement frame maintained narrative fidelity because much of the generation who had joined the Provisional IRA in the late 1960s onwards had been motivated by the conditions that gave rise to the civil rights movement. While the older generation had fused these grievances with a Republican frame – emphasising armed struggle against the British presence – the latent difference provided a bridge to a disengagement frame based on those conditions, thus allowing it to question the utility of the armed struggle. The establishment of a generational hegemony in the group, followed by the older generation and its supporters leaving in 1986, helped to establish a degree of congruence, but it also provided the leadership with linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame. The organisational restructuring had put the leadership in a stronger position of control, in contrast to the 1975 disengagement, and the structure of prisons aided this control, which would also provide credibility to the process. Intense discussions and debates between members helped to construct a credible frame which could bring along the majority of its members, referred to as ‘rubber-band diplomacy’. Prisoners, mid-ranking leaders, and external figures were utilised to provide credibility to the frame too. The linkages by which the frame was diffused were also utilised by the leadership to guide the direction of discussions. Mid-ranking figures in favour of the disengagement process would be sent in to other areas to challenge commanders opposed to the process, personal ties could be used to help bring along people not entirely convinced of the direction, and there are some claims that interaction was managed in a way to marginalise dissenting voices. Finally, the manner in which the process developed in stages, and the flexible nature of the frame, also helped to marginalise dissenting voices or counter-frames: members who could not accept the process at least accepted that the tactical opportunities for an armed struggle no longer existed.

The Provisional IRA’s attempt to diffuse the disengagement frame was successful in terms of resonance, and this can account for the reduced risk of recidivism – thus, attitudinal change is important, not behavioural constraint as has been suggested,[[447]](#footnote-448) and this ocurred without the need for ‘genuine de-radicalisation’. The thesis argues that, ironically, if the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame was underpinned by unconditional de-radicalisation, the disengagement process would have failed and the risk of recidivism would have been much greater, as it would have had no credibility among large swathes of the group. Furthermore, to describe the process solely as tactical disengagement underplays the substantial attitudinal change that has occurred in the movement and the extent the frame works to de-legitimise violence in the current conditions. The difference between this frame and other frames (whether held by dissidents or in previous disengagement processes) was the conditionality that underpinned the frame, which acted as a bridge that would incentivise the Provisional IRA to de-legitimise violence once the conditions had been met. The fact that it is based on conditionality does not detract from the genuine attitudinal change that has occurred and as the conditionality is based on structural change in the political system, there is a degree of durability that is far greater than what may occur even in cases of unconditional de-radicalisation. The Provisional IRA, in effect, had transferred the risk of recidivism to the structural conditions, and its members are not waiting for opportunities to return to violence as the concept of tactical disengagement would imply. Chapter Four has examined how the Provisional IRA’s campaign ended. The next chapters will now address its impact on the Irish Republican social movement through the organisational disengagement of the Provisional IRA, and how this affected the political system and attitudes within the movement.

## CHAPTER FIVE

**Social Movement Disengagement**

While the previous chapter outlined the factors that drive group disengagement, the thesis contends that a problem with the group level of analysis is it is insufficient in explaining the potential continuation of violence in a social movement: if terrorism and political violence continues, then claims that the group’s disengagement was successful may seem hollow. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement formally concluded in 2005, yet since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement up until now, there has remained a risk of a slip-back into violence, otherwise referred to as recidivism. Whereas recidivism has referred to individual disengagement, its application to a social movement requires a broader definition. Recidivism at a social movement level can manifest in four dimensions: 1) the risk of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein officially returning to violence; 2) the risk of some of its members returning to violence; 3) or emerging opportunities that strengthen dissident Republicans or maintain the existence of Loyalist and Republican militant groups; 4) and passing on the armed struggle to the next generation. Therefore, disengagement at the social movement level – or social movement disengagement - will involve addressing these four dimensions and it encompasses the processes of group disengagement, recidivism reduction and prevention. Chapter Four discussed the group process of disengagement yet it did not explore how the Provisional IRA organisationally disbanded in order to reduce the risk of its members returning to violence. Chapter Five will explore how the Provisional IRA organisationally disengaged – otherwise known as Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) - and the extent this prevented it or some of its members returning to violence, and the impact this had on other militant groups in the Irish Republican movement. The chapter will also analyse how the diffusion of the disengagement frame and organisational disengagement impacted upon the Loyalist groups because Loyalist violence can act to encourage recidivism and provide opportunities for Republican militants.

There are three processes which drive social movement disengagement: organisational disengagement, attitudinal change and changes at a political (structural) level. The thesis begins by looking at the process of organisational disengagement as it is this process which then prompts changes at a political level and attitudinal change. Organisational disengagement includes the demobilisation and reintegration of members into society, which seeks to reduce the risk of them and others returning to violence. The chapter argues that by doing so, linkages are formed with society at large through which the disengagement frame can be diffused. Thus, organisational disengagement can also have a domino-effect, leading other militant groups in a movement to consider disengagement. The structural aspect of social movement disengagement refers to the military, political, social and economic conditions that a) emerge from negotiations stemming from disengagement, and b) influence the extent that organisational disengagement can be maintained or the opportunities for violence being contained. For example, frustration at the political level may de-legitimise organisational disengagement and/or it may present opportunities for militant groups to recruit old and new members. The third factor that can drive social movement disengagement is attitude change, or de-radicalisation, as discussed in Chapter Four, which analysed the frame that underpinned the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. As the Provisional IRA organisationally disengaged, this frame was diffused throughout the Irish Republican movement, in doing so, transforming to de-legitimise violence and creating opposition to violence in the social movement.

Chapter Five engages with these three elements to explain how they work together to reduce the risk of recidivism among the Provisional IRA and within society in general to help foster social movement disengagement. This analysis is underpinned by a number of social movement theories, as outlined by in Chapter Two. To explain organisational disengagement, otherwise known as Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR), the thesis applies a network analysis. The use of a network analysis provides original insight into how organisational disengagement often manifests in social networks which often maintain the features of the organisation, thus challenging the entire conceptualisation of DDR programmes as a means of reducing the risk of recidivism. To explain political/structural change, the chapter builds on the concept of political opportunity structure, which analyses how the political system can create opportunities and constraints for the exercise of violence. Through an analysis of political opportunity structures, the chapter will engage in debates on how the political system in Northern Ireland, underpinned by the principles of consociationalism, impacts upon the Irish Republican movement. Finally, in order to explain attitudinal change, the chapter will once again utilise a frames analysis, as outlined in Chapter Four.

By utilising these three social movement theories, the chapter analyses how the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement had a domino-effect on the Irish Republican movement. The successful resonance of the disengagement frame, underpinned by conditionality, was sufficient to bring about organisational disengagement, and an unconditional de-radicalising frame would have been counter-productive. Organisational disengagement was a slow and mixed process, but it led to political and social changes that legitimised disengagement and limited the opportunities for militants wishing to use violence. Crucially, the demobilisation of Provisional IRA members into an informal network at the community level – herein referred to as the mobile phones network - buttressed the changes at the political level by containing inter-communal violence and encouraging co-operation between militant groups. The chapter gives particular focus on the mobile phones network as it challenges many assumptions in the literature and it played a significant role in preventing violence from re-emerging. While the political system can still frustrate these mechanisms of reducing the risk of recidivism, the successful resonance of the disengagement frame among Provisional IRA members means that disengagement is less contingent on structural factors than it was at the start of the process. And while the opportunities for dissident Republicans may have decreased, the chapter concludes that although the disengagement frame may reduce the risk of recidivism among Provisional IRA members, it is feared that it could legitimise violence among the next generation. The next section of the chapter will explain how and why disengagement and de-radicalisation are applied to the social movement level.

### Social Movement Disengagement

The previous chapter has followed a similar path to the majority of studies on disengagement and de-radicalisation by focusing on the group level of analysis, but it contributed to this literature by applying a frames analysis to explain internal dynamics which have tended to be underappreciated. However, there has been a lack of research on the multi-level analysis.[[448]](#footnote-449) The literature itself highlights the necessity for an approach that is broader than the group for one reason: while the group itself may disengage, most of its members can start a new group or join a rival, or the next generation may take up the struggle when the opportunity presents itself. In such a case, organisational disengagement could hardly be described as successful and, if anything, it suggests that de-radicalisation or social change is important to reduce the level of violence and risk of recidivism. Yet this does not mean that the group level of analysis ought to be applied to a multitude of groups, especially when these groups have a degree of popular support in society - or a radical milieu[[449]](#footnote-450) - which can help sustain armed campaigns over generations, independently of organisational structures. In effect, many campaigns of terrorism and political violence are associated with social movements, therefore it is the social movement that also undergoes a process of disengagement and de-radicalisation. Thus, the thesis adopts a multi-level analysis – provided through a social movement approach - to explain how the social and political changes, enhanced by group disengagement, affect the rest of the social movement and particular those aspects which still engage and support the use of political violence. However, given the vast scope of a multi-level analysis, the thesis focuses on the role of social, political change and the Provisional IRA’s disengagement on diffusing the process throughout the rest of the Irish Republican movement, of which it is a substantial part.

The Provisional IRA is significant part of the Irish Republican social movement, which includes a number of other militant groups, some of whom who are disengaged, and some of whom who are still engaged in armed violence. There are also sections of the Republican community who may sympathise or support either of these groups. However, the Loyalist paramilitaries introduce another dynamic that exists outside of the Republican social movement, as they can engage in violence which can prevent groups from disengaging, it may encourage former Irish Republican combatants to become re-involved in armed violence, and it can provide opportunities for other Republican groups to engage in violence. Consequently, the chapter includes Loyalism in the analysis, but it is primarily on how they impact the Irish Republican movement rather than their own process of disengagement. Thus, the chapter analyses how the Provisional IRA’s disengagement – in the context of attitudinal and political change – help to spread this process throughout the social movement, to lead to social movement disengagement. As it is unlikely that a social movement will ever be entirely disengaged from an armed campaign, it should be seen as a spectrum akin to disengagement at the individual and group levels of analysis.

Disengagement at the group level is, in theory, rather straightforward, but disengagement at a social movement level is not simply an aggregation of group disengagement as it needs to take into account (potential) supporters and sympathisers too. Furthermore, the disengagement of one group can have a knock-on effect and just as the leadership seeks to diffuse the disengagement frame within its own group, they can also seek to diffuse this frame externally.[[450]](#footnote-451) The necessity to externalise disengagement can be driven by social and political circumstances as well as their own interests. For example, in Fatah-PLO’s disengagement there was an implicit Israeli expectation that Fatah-PLO would be responsible for disengaging other militant groups such as Hamas.[[451]](#footnote-452) The Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein, on the other hand, have sought to maintain their monopoly on the Republican movement by marginalising counter-narratives. This process of externalising disengagement can take the form of: 1) having a ‘domino-effect’, thus prompting other militant groups to voluntarily disengage; 2) reducing the risk of a slip-back into violence by its own members or the organisation; and 3) making it difficult or less desirable for other groups or sympathisers to engage in and support violence. It is in the last point that the thesis overlaps with the literature on preventing and countering terrorism and political violence, and while these approaches emphasise state approaches, the thesis can contribute to the literature by demonstrating how a successful disengagement process can contain a preventative dynamic. The chapter identifies three interlinked factors that affect attempts at social movement disengagement. The first regards the political system: often when the largest group in a social movement disengages, it changes the political system, or it can buttress changes that had already taken place, and this can cause further disengagement in society. Secondly, the manner in which the largest group disengages as an organisation can build linkages with the social movement that can reduce the risk of recidivism. Thirdly, through the development of these linkages within the social movement, the group may be able to diffuse its frame to convince others, thus changing attitudes toward violence.

Chapter Five explains the impact the Provisional IRA’s disengagement had socially and the knock-on effects it had in the period from the Good Friday Agreement onwards. Firstly, the chapter examines how the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement manifests to reduce the risk of recidivism within the social movement. Secondly, the chapter outlines how the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement shaped the political system in Northern Ireland and how this political system impacts upon the Irish Republican movement. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the extent to which these two aforementioned changes prompted attitudinal change in the social movement that is commensurate with de-radicalisation. The manner in which the Provisional IRA organisationally disengaged was quite unique in comparison to other cases of disengagement insofar as former combatants were able to take an active role in community activism. Community activism developed the linkages in society that could maintain the Provisional IRA’s presence at the community level but it also developed links with the Loyalist community. The linkages that developed were crucial in three ways: firstly, it provided added incentives for Provisional IRA members to remain disengaged; secondly, a mechanism developed which helped to contain structurally embedded trigger causes of violence which could disrupt attempts at social movement disengagement; and thirdly, the increased interaction between the paramilitaries led to some of them disengaging voluntarily and it restricted the space in which dissidents could operate. However, pressures in the political system demonstrated the limitations of this mechanism, but also limitations to the extent the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame could resonate with Loyalists and dissident Republicans. The chapter explores the debate of de-radicalisation in a social context which has emerged, highlighting possible limits to how far the disengagement frame can produce social movement disengagement.

### Organisational Disengagement: the Mobile Phones Network

Once a militant group ceases to use violence and declares an intent to end campaign, the challenge of organisational disengagement emerges. Given the vast amount of research on the topic in peace and conflict studies, the thesis builds on its conceptualisation of organisational disengagement rather than that which is found in the terrorism literature or in the social movement literature.[[452]](#footnote-453) Thus, there are three aspects of organisational disengagement: disarmament; de-mobilisation; and re-integration (DDR). These components of organisational disengagement aim to ensure that peace is permanent[[453]](#footnote-454) and that militant can play a positive role in conflict transformation.[[454]](#footnote-455) Organisational disengagement can provide a number of exit routes – destinations, or new roles[[455]](#footnote-456) - for militant group members to be integrated into: military; political; community; and civilian routes (although the community route tends to be substantially neglected). As Ozerdem argues, the integration of militants into new roles can help leaders sell a peace agreement to members because there are tangible benefits for them.[[456]](#footnote-457) As there has been much discussion of the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement, the chapter analyses a specific case-study to demonstrate how one aspect of organisational disengagement – the mobile phones network - has reduced the risk of recidivism at a societal level. While social movement theory has tended to neglect organisational disengagement, the application of this approach can provide a substantial contribution to DDR. Perspectives on DDR tend to be dominated by a liberal state-building perspective whereby the risk of recidivism is reduced by integrating former combatants into political institutions or ‘back’ into civilian life; in many ways, the terrorism literature also makes this assumption.[[457]](#footnote-458) However, a social movement approach (specifically of the network analysis variety) indicates that even when a group’s members have been ‘integrated’, relationships between them in their new roles may still be maintained, thus constituting a network of former combatants. Thus, given how networks have been important for mobilisation and involvement in terrorism,[[458]](#footnote-459) the continuation of networks after DDR and the potential for re-engagement that this brings therefore calls into question the assumptions underpinning organisational disengagement. Therefore, the thesis contends that applying a social movement (network) approach to the study of organisational disengagement will provide a far richer analysis of the process which has not been explored. Before outlining the case-study of the networks that emerged and were maintained following the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement, the chapter will firstly contextualise this within the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement.

#### Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-Integration

The disarmament of the Provisional IRA, known as decommissioning, was a contentious process, especially because it was against the group’s constitution.[[459]](#footnote-460) But in 2005, a third party confirmed that the Provisional IRA had put their arsenal beyond use, thus paving the way for Sinn Fein to enter government at Stormont. Decommissioning had been raised as an issue after the 1994 ceasefire, with Unionists and the British government making political negotiations contingent on disarmament. However, this failed because it was unsellable to members who had difficulty accepting negotiations and it was perceived to be a call for surrender rather than the beginning of parity of esteem. The decision to defer disarmament provided the space for the 1998 Good Friday Agreement to emerge, thus providing the incentives to consider disarmament. Decommissioning occurred in 2005 for many of the same reasons that led to disengagement in 1994. The disengagement frame diffused by the Provisional IRA leadership, which had been internalised by most members, presented decommissioning as a tactic to be traded in for concessions in political negotiations.[[460]](#footnote-461) Disarmament was portrayed in internal dialogue as not necessarily limiting the option of a return to violence if negotiations failed, as the process of re-arming is easy because ‘you can’t decommission what is in people’s heads’.[[461]](#footnote-462) The option of a return to violence, as represented by the TUAS strategy of the period, provided some members with comfort to help them make the progression, but organisational disengagement would diminish the need for that option.[[462]](#footnote-463) Other external factors, mainly the September 11th attacks, helped the leadership to convince members. This encouraged the leadership that the time had come to make the trade of disarmament. Disarmament was not entirely successful, with some members opposed to disengagement taking a significant amount of weapons to form the Real IRA. Considering the dismissal of disarmament reducing the ability to return to violence, the most substantial impact of disarmament on reducing the risk of recidivism was in enabling the Provisional IRA to progress to other forms of organisational disengagement. It was when members adopted these new roles that they began to put to rest the option of returning to violence in their mind.[[463]](#footnote-464) Thus, while disarmament may have played a small role in leaving violence behind and limited the potential resources for dissident Republicans, its real impact on recidivism reduction was in moving the barrier to further disengagement and it paved the way for other militant groups to consider disengagement (discussed below).

In terms of demobilisation, which refers to the dismantlement of command structures, the Provisional IRA formally completed demobilisation in 2005. However, as noted by Shirlow et al, most research on the Provisional IRA underplays the extent that, organisationally, it still functions in one form or another. One Loyalist perceived that there still exists a command structure and that the army council continue to meet,[[464]](#footnote-465) and while this has been largely merged into Sinn Fein,[[465]](#footnote-466) it also manifests itself in ex-prisoner groups and informal social networks, with volunteers engaging in community activism as part of continuing to serve the Republican movement. Informal demobilisation is a common feature, with Loyalist groups still maintaining their organisational structure and even bringing in new recruits.[[466]](#footnote-467) However, contrary to many of the assumptions on the need for demobilisation to reduce the risk of recidivism made in the literature, the Provisional IRA’s continuation as an informal social network has in fact helped to reduce violence and the risk of violence. It has provided them with activists that can be mobilised in conflict transformation and the existence of a hierarchy allows local leaders of the militant groups to meet up and discuss flare ups in violence to then return to their members and pass on the outcomes of the meeting. The reason why demobilisation took an informal nature which actually helped to reduce the risk of recidivism was because attempts to build frame resonance had been so successful and because of the exit routes for members to re-integrate into.

The type of conflict and the nature of the group in question can shape which exit routes are available to a group that is disengaging. For the Provisional IRA, the option of disengaging into military structures, as had happened for Fatah-PLO, was closed off because of the perceived illegitimacy of such a move. A political route, however, had been gradually legitimised since 1986 therefore the Provisional IRA had by and large merged into Sinn Fein’s political structures. A community route, cultivated through years of grassroots activism and European Union funding, presented an alternative option for Provisional IRA members who could not or would not be integrated into the political routes. Since 1995, alongside funding from other international organisations, the European Union has channelled £2 billion to promote reconciliation.[[467]](#footnote-468) While organisational disengagement is often undertaken under the auspices of the state, the fact that this is the very state which a militant group fought over its legitimacy can act as a barrier to groups wishing to organisationally disengage. Thus, the European Union could provide funding which the Provisional IRA could legitimately apply for,[[468]](#footnote-469) under its PEACE I, II and III projects aimed at initiatives working toward conflict transformation. The PEACE funding initiatives began in 1995 and a PEACE IV stage has been launched from 2014 to 2020, providing 105 million Euros in funding for the purpose of peace and reconciliation.[[469]](#footnote-470)

One such area that the chapter focuses on is initiatives at interface areas – areas where traditionally Republican and Loyalist areas that are separated by barriers meet at intersections. In Belfast there are thirteen interface clusters in four geographical areas: Suffolk-Lenadoon (South West Belfast); Falls-Shankill and Divis (West Belfast); Ardoyne-Glenbryn (North Belfast); and Short Strand-Inner East Belfast. As will be discussed below (and as outlined in Chapter Two), a number of organisations have sprung up to work at stopping interface violence, the biggest being Belfast Interface Project, North Belfast Interface Network, and Intercomm, and with a number of government agencies and local government also playing a role. Interface work is also complemented by informal networks and by individuals associated with paramilitary groups. Each of the groups actively involved in working at the interface areas consist of a handful of people but they are able to draw into their personal networks in the paramilitary groups to help out. At each interface area there are usually four people on each side who are active regularly.

Another aspect to the community route has been the presence of ex-prisoner groups, which have also played a significant role in the interface projects outlined above. Former prisoners re-entered a society where they had limited options to rebuild their careers and faced marginalisation because of their time in prison.[[470]](#footnote-471) The lack of services and job prospects for former Republican and Loyalist prisoners – 25,000 since the 1970s, 15,000 of whom were Republicans - meant there was a need for the group to provide support for its members, and this has the effect of increasing loyalty between members and dependency on the informal social network.[[471]](#footnote-472) Furthermore, it incentivises remaining disengaged, and provides legitimacy and credibility within the community which dissident Republicans cannot compete with. Finally, the lack of legitimacy the police force have in Republican communities creates a demand for the Provisional IRA members to meet, and while punishment meetings are not a viable option now, other creative means such as restorative justice need to be used to prevent dissident Republicans exploiting this opportunity.

The chapter will now focus on one particular manifestation of organisational disengagement to demonstrate how it functions to reduce the risk of recidivism. Shirlow et al have highlighted the role of former prisoners in conflict transformation but have not explored in detail the work that is conducted at interface areas that connect Republican and Loyalist communities. Through the case-study based on interviews conducted in Belfast, August 2013, the thesis demonstrates how the manner in which the Provisional IRA disengaged organisationally reduced the risk of recidivism, limited opportunities for dissident Republicans, and, through interaction, led to a ‘domino-effect’ with other militant groups agreeing to disengage.

#### Mobile Phone Networks and Interface Violence

For disengagement to be successful at reducing the risk of recidivism at a social movement level, the causes of violence, or at least a substantial number of them, need to be addressed. Most studies on disengagement focus on the group level, meaning there is a tautology that they are the causes of violence, or they are dismissive of the argument that resolving the ‘root causes’ of terrorism ever results in disengagement.[[472]](#footnote-473) As discussed in Chapter One, research on preventing and countering radicalisation, in effect, seeks to link the causes of terrorism to its decline. The thesis co-opts the three factors identified in the literature to explain how social movement disengagement occurs: counter-narratives (attitudinal change); counter-grievances (political change); and counter-mobilisation (organisational disengagement). With regard to the latter, the thesis focuses on how one type of cause – trigger causes – can pose problems for attempts at disengagement and how these are overcome. Trigger causes are specific events that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism[[473]](#footnote-474) and they can provide opportunities for militant groups wishing to mobilise potential supporters. As the thesis will demonstrate, trigger causes can also be structural, and something which is under-appreciated in the terrorism literature is how militant groups can often be pulled in to (re)engaging in violence because of these causes and the expectations of their sympathisers.

One such trigger cause is interface areas in Belfast. Republican and Loyalist communities in Belfast are often divided by barriers, known as ‘peace walls’, with both communities meeting at certain intersection areas. In the most volatile of interface areas, the militant groups have a significant presence in their communities and this presence has often come at the expense of the police-force who has traditionally struggled with legitimacy. During the conflict, groups such as the Provisional IRA would assume a de-facto policing role to fill the gap that they had encouraged.[[474]](#footnote-475) However, the culture of antipathy toward the police that the militant groups fostered have limited the extent the police could assert themselves in these communities once the groups began disengaging.[[475]](#footnote-476) In the case of Northern Ireland, much of the initial violence at interface violence has little to do with the broader conflict and those involved have no political motivation,[[476]](#footnote-477) which by and large involves stone throwing, which can hardly constitute terrorism. Yet there are two factors that make interface areas unique in terms of trigger causes in Northern Ireland. Firstly, they are by and large durable structures, meaning they are regular, difficult to change but at least probably predictable. Interface violence tends to be triggered by events that have particular resonance with unionist and nationalist identity, such as parades, sports, bonfires, and flag issues.[[477]](#footnote-478) As these events are mostly regular and closely tied to identity it means that interface violence and the ‘peace walls’ are a relatively durable structure, which reinforces the perception of the ‘other’ in negative terms. The limited interaction between communities on either side of the interface means that violence is underpinned by rumours, mistrust and suspicion[[478]](#footnote-479) which in turn makes it difficult to remove the ‘peace walls’ to foster trust.[[479]](#footnote-480) Secondly, while they may not be trigger causes of terrorism initially, they can quickly escalate into more serious forms of political violence. One senior security official in Northern Ireland stated that the violence ‘starts off with a low level of violence but it can escalate into terrorism’[[480]](#footnote-481) and a community worker with former combatants commented that ‘all you need is one person to be killed by accident or design, and it could just set off an inferno in a place like that’.[[481]](#footnote-482) One Loyalist mentioned the different stages that interface violence goes through:

*It’s a part of everyday conflict, first it’s the bricks and bottles and whatever comes to hand, and if it really develops heavy, you move into the petrol bombs, and if it gets heavy heavy then it’s the bombs and the guns. So it’s got its stages, and it depends on what stage it develops into.[[482]](#footnote-483)*

Therefore, interface areas function as potential trigger causes of violence which are structurally durable, meaning they have existed broadly independently of political changes that have emerged as part of the peace process or even the Provisional IRA’s disengagement. Nevertheless, one interface worker – a former member of the Provisional IRA – commented that the growing acceptance of policing has meant that it is the police who would now deal with violence,[[483]](#footnote-484) yet it was clear there are still gaps in the PSNI’s ability to manage violence at the interface areas.[[484]](#footnote-485) Historically, the illegitimacy of the police in interface areas – both Republican and Loyalist communities – often means their intervention would actually exacerbate rather than calm violence,[[485]](#footnote-486) and that these areas were traditionally under the influence of paramilitaries who – prior to disengagement – would encourage violence by young people when it was in their interest. Subsequently, a social space has existed in Northern Ireland which could potentially destabilise disengagement and the peace process, often against the wishes of the Provisional IRA and the militant groups who would later disengage. It could function as an opportunity for grassroots activists opposed to disengagement or the peace process to de-rail negotiations, as a means to assert their authority, to strengthen their position with new recruits, or the violence could take a life of its own and restrict the bargaining power in negotiations. It was this potential to disrupt the disengagement process that prompted the mobile phones network to emerge in 1997, which lay the groundwork for co-operation between militant groups in order to prevent violence from erupting.

The mobile phones network has its roots in the interface violence that erupted in North Belfast in 1996, leading to violence and rioting in nationalist areas throughout Northern Ireland. As stated above, the violence was triggered by a combination of controversial parades, rumours and mistrust between communities, and the lack of a police force with the legitimacy to contain the rioting. In response, in 1997, a statutory sector organisation gave mobile phones to key groups and individuals in existing community networks around key interface areas. They would keep the phones turned on all the time during the parades season with the aim of keeping people away from interfaces, preventing stone-throwing, calming tensions and defusing rumours.[[486]](#footnote-487) The success of the network in 1997 led to the increase and expansion of the mobile phone network, yet over the years the network has transformed. At first, a long list of numbers would be made available to the community for people to phone interface contacts when an issue emerged, but then the contacts began to use their own personal phones:

*So people were getting uncomfortable with their own mobile phone numbers being made public...and then gradually, through pieces of work and projects were going on where people began to form a relationship across interfaces, and they were happy to share mobile phone numbers, but they didn’t want the rest of the city to know their mobile phone numbers. So essentially you have ended up in a situation where now most of the interfaces across the city, there will be clusters of people, relatively small clusters of people, you are probably talking about maybe half a dozen people across an interface, maybe two or three in each community.[[487]](#footnote-488)*

Therefore, the network has morphed into three dimensions: a smaller formal network of community safety partnerships; a larger network of former combatants such as a project called the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium (BCRC) – which is dominated by the Provisional IRA;[[488]](#footnote-489) and informal networks, including former combatants and, for example, one woman’s group in the Short Strand/East Belfast.[[489]](#footnote-490) Former combatants from the Provisional IRA, the Official IRA, the INLA, the UDA, and the UVF are to varying degrees involved in the networks at the interface areas. Paramilitary organisations have been able to adopt a central role in the mobile phone networks because the contacts have more respect in the community and among young people than, say, community workers, and their role in the conflict provides them with legitimacy to engage with the ‘other’, whereas for others it would be far more difficult. However, membership of a paramilitary organisation does not necessarily give automatic credibility. Therefore former combatants who live in the area will be utilised:

*The people I would phone would live in the area or probably be known to be associated with us or former prisoners of ours, but at the same time, because they live in the area, and they understand the frustrations that the young people have, the young people are willing to listen to them to an extent…. The reason why I wouldn’t go to Short Strand and Ardoyne and try to tell kids to get off the street is because they would call me a ‘Westy’ because I live in West Belfast. They’d stone me quicker than the police or the ‘Orangies’.[[490]](#footnote-491)*

Thus, the mobile phone network provides some informal organisational continuity, whereby nodes in the network will mobilise former combatants to resolve interface problems. Another key factor in the growth of the networks was, at the beginning of the network, the police force would actively encourage it by utilising former combatants to help calm down interface areas:

*Then what would have happened is the police would call and say ‘listen we are a bit stressed can you go up, there’s a riot taking place’. We’d go up and there’s two jeeps sitting there, and the police sitting in the jeeps saying ‘we can’t get out of the jeeps for security reasons, we don’t have the riot gear on’. And we’d say ‘hang on, are you kidding me’. So we’d have to go in and say ‘hang on you are not doing it on these people’s behalf or have a wee discussion why they shouldn’t be doing it. So on both sides you’d have to intervene. Other times you would phone up the other side and say ‘hang on, they are gathering here because they think you have over 300 petrol bombs over there’ ‘hang on, we’re here because we think you have 300 petrol bombs’. Sometimes you’d have to go back to people and tell them what they didn’t want to hear because they had gathered because they thought they were threatened by the other side.[[491]](#footnote-492)*

Therefore, pressures at the social level incentivised the maintenance of networks that had previously made up the militant groups instead of breaking them up, which began to function as an early warning system to de-escalate potential conflict. While the interviewee above argued that such intervention has been less regular, interviewees from an INLA and Loyalist background talked about the continued role of former combatants in calming interface violence in the last few years. The mobile phone networks, and the role of former combatants within them has helped to reduce the risk of riots and further escalation by managing the interface areas and dispelling rumours of imminent attacks from opposing sides.[[492]](#footnote-493) In addition to limiting violence, the network has acted as deterrence to paramilitary organisations who wish to use violence.[[493]](#footnote-494) As it was established prior to the Good Friday Agreement, the mobile phone network helped to reduce violence which could have derailed the peace process in its early days and even more recently in 2009, as will be elaborated on below.[[494]](#footnote-495) The gradual process of organisational disengagement through the mobile phone network not only provided combatants with a new role, it also functioned to reduce the risk of recidivism which could have pulled them and their organisation back into conflict.

In addition to reducing violence, the network has become a means of group competition for authority and influence in communities, with the informal networks of former combatants utilising gaps in the network to assert their role. Whilst organisational disengagement would assume an integration of combatants into society, the networks have allowed the organisations to continue in an informal manner, and while this provides them with a potentially powerful role in society, the structure of the networks incentivises co-operation and disengagement. Inter-community co-operation is possible because it does not create competition, as Republican groups cannot expect to mobilise the Loyalist community, and intra-community competition serves to strengthen the inter-community co-operation.[[495]](#footnote-496) Since the mobile phones network provides group with a way to maintain and build their influence socially and politically, community activism provides many attractive resources which the groups compete with each other to establish. Competition has provided multiple options for collaboration between communities, providing them with a choice, and it has helped to fill the space where the Provisional IRA is relatively weak and the dissident Republicans seek to exploit:[[496]](#footnote-497)

*We are not part of [the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium] and we don’t want to be part of it, right. But still, the Loyalists call us because, as they would turn around and say, ‘the Provies [the Provisional IRA] work 9-5, it would be great if that was the only time there was trouble, but the trouble is always at night’ and they don’t come out and won’t be seen. And one of the aspects, one of the reasons why they can’t go out to areas like Ardoyne and tell the kids to get off the streets is because the kids would tell them to fuck off.[[497]](#footnote-498)*

Therefore, while the Provisional IRA former combatants would have worked to control areas, they would have been limited in their reach, but the network provides incentives to co-operate to reduce the risk of violence more holistically. Once again, using a social movement approach which can take networks into account demonstrates how former combatants function despite the absence of an official organisational structure. In addition to reducing trigger causes of violence and limiting the scope of dissident groups, the mobile phones network has provided an alternative route to organisational disengagement. A key part of organisational disengagement is the integration of former combatants into new roles, which can provide them with incentives to remain disengaged and help facilitate the disengagement process. Community activism has provided a role for Provisional IRA former combatants where a role in the political sphere may be restricted or unattractive, or the use of state resources would have been illegitimate.

It is unclear to what extent community activism would reduce the risk of recidivism given how many former combatants in the mobile phones network have accepted the disengagement frame prior to their involvement in the project. Nevertheless, there are incentives for becoming involved in community activism: participants can feel like they are continuing the ‘war’ by different means, aiding narrative fidelity; it can be a form of penance for past actions, particularly among Loyalists; it can provide employment in an area they feel passionate about; and it can boost their standing and authority in the community. Therefore, once former combatants enter an organisational disengagement route they have incentives to remain disengaged, but these incentives should also be weighed up against the strength of attitudes toward disengagement. The thesis’ application of social movement approach, thus, informs debates in terrorism on the significance of attitudinal change, showing that a nuanced manifestation of de-radicalisation among former combatants can lead them to play a positive role in containing conflict.

However, it is questionable the extent that involvement in community activism constitutes organisational disengagement as it is quite apparent that a command structure does exist (although perhaps exercised informally, in the case of the Provisional IRA). As a result, the limited nature of organisational disengagement means that, to ensure that the informal existence of a command structure does not increase the risk of recidivism, it is important that there has been sufficient attitudinal change. This point challenges the assumption in the literature which emphasises disengagement over attitudinal change in order to reduce the risk of recidivism.[[498]](#footnote-499) In the case of the Provisional IRA, the successful diffusion of the disengagement frame has turned the limited organisational disengagement into an advantage, as its members can work to maintain and promote disengagement and a reduction in violence through projects like the mobile phones network. Where there has not been a successful diffusion of the disengagement frame, for example among Loyalist groups,[[499]](#footnote-500) the maintenance of organisational structures (partly) through the mobile phone network can be utilised to increase violence when it is in their interest. As in East Belfast, pressure by certain (UVF) brigades can limit the efficacy of those in the network, meaning their organisation is no longer called and this can have a spiralling effect which strengthens hard-liners. Therefore, whereas organisational disengagement would typically place structural constraints on recidivism, the mobile phone network has retained a degree of informal organisational engagement, making attitudinal change on armed violence important.

As mentioned above, the Provisional IRA dimension of the mobile phone network consists of members who had undergone the extensive dialogue during the 1990s disengagement process. In the 2000s, the mobile phone network acted to create linkages between paramilitary groups, Republican and Loyalist, to help diffuse support for disengagement at a societal level. Therefore, the mobile phone network played a key role in producing the ‘domino-effect’ of disengagement referred to by Ashour. Through interaction with the ‘other’ and the Republican social movement, the disengagement frame began to developed new dimensions that could resonate further in society. The Provisional IRA disengagement frame outlined in Chapter Four was constructed by Provisional IRA members for Provisional IRA members: it would need to be modified to convince other groups to disengage. As interaction between Republicans and Loyalists increased, they were able to reduce the level of violence, culminating in the disengagement of the INLA, the Official IRA, and the UDA.

#### Interaction and the ‘Domino-Effect’

As argued above, participants in the mobile phone network gain incentives from their involvement, and the only way to ensure their own efficacy in the network is to co-operate, be reliable and trustworthy. If a participant can no longer have influence at interface areas or does not answer the phone regularly, the nodes in the network will utilise other contacts in rival paramilitary groups. Subsequently, the network encourages deeper interaction and co-operation, thus acting as a pull-factor away from violence:

*…we became accountable to each other, and that’s when the mobile phones came in. And we would meet each other on a fortnightly basis, so if I say to you there’s a problem, you need to get this sorted out. If you come back to me in a fortnights time and I’m sitting there looking you in the eye going ‘what did you do about that’, and I know if you’re bullshitting me if you like, I’m not gonna phone you anymore. That relationship diminishes. If you come back and say ‘here’s what I did, blah blah blah blah, and we stop bullshitting each other… So I think that’s how it began to change, it came from this personal commitment in a way to each other and coming back and saying ‘well, no point in me bullshitting you because you can do it to me next week. I think we have to be honest and up-front with each other and deal with it that way’, and I think that’s how that stuff developed.[[500]](#footnote-501)*

Subsequently, Republican and Loyalist former combatants began meeting more regularly, which had previously only happened in much smaller ways in prisons because of the strong normative constraints against inter-community dialogue. While there were traditionally strong disincentives for inter-group interaction in both communities, the work of the network and experience as a former combatant gave a green light for interaction, which began to grow beyond the remit of the mobile phone networks:

*...we meet fortnightly and regardless of what happens, every fortnight for the last eight years. You come in and sometimes going ‘there’s nothing happened this week and we’ll call this meeting off’, but then you go ‘no, because these meetings are useful, they keep us in touch with each other, we know what we are doing and it also develops that relationship where we have a trustful working relationship. There’d be another six or seven chairs in this room and eighteen people would be in the room and maybe every second Monday morning. And I wouldn’t have gone out with a drink with any one of them - so we have a working relationship and probably a friendly enough relationship. We are pally like but we wouldn’t go over to someone’s for dinner...but hopefully the relationship can work in that direction, but we are just not there at the moment.[[501]](#footnote-502)*

While inter-group and cross-community co-operation improved the efficacy of the mobile phone network in calming interface violence, the occurrence of regular dialogue also helped to build trust and avoid misinterpreting signals. Partly building on this earlier dialogue, funding from the European Union’s PEACE II project (2000 to 2006) was utilised by former combatants to develop a number of projects on conflict transformation, prevention and inter-community dialogue. The different groups began to invite each other into the ‘other’s’ community, going to trips to Dublin and Stormont together, and bringing young people from one side of the interface to the other.[[502]](#footnote-503) Also, senior leaders of the paramilitary groups in Belfast, including representatives from the Provisional IRA, began to hold meetings regularly throughout the 2000s up until now. The growing dialogue firstly built up enough trust to prompt other paramilitary groups to consider disengagement:

*These relations were so important that eventually they contributed to, in large part, the decommissioning of weapons by the UDA, the INLA and the OIRA, and that happened a few years ago. There was an impetus to decommissioning anyway: you had the commission overseeing it. But it hadn’t happened and I can’t verify this because I wasn’t part of the process but what we have been told by the individual groups that are here was that the relationships that were built up around the table and beyond, when they went to events together, when they went to Dublin together, that they were instrumental in building up the confidence that allowed people to believe what the others were saying and to get rid of the weapons. The INLA and the UDA in East Belfast, in Strabane, in Derry, in Tyrone, and so on, and they talked about it and they eventually decided to believe one another and accepted that if they decommissioned their weapons, then the others were going to do the same, and they did it. Now we don’t know for sure if everything is gone, but there is a hell of a lot of stuff gone.[[503]](#footnote-504)*

The quote above strengthens the argument made by Ashour that interaction can help diffuse the disengagement process, whereby trust is built up.[[504]](#footnote-505) Furthermore, while there has been much emphasis on elite negotiation on decommissioning or the impact of external events such as September 11th,[[505]](#footnote-506) the thesis highlights how the transformations occurred at the local level, arguably where it mattered most. Secondly, inter-group meetings helped to prevent a slip-back into violence during contentious flash-points. One interviewee present at meetings of senior paramilitary figures in Belfast discussed their importance:

*Another thing the relationships around the table prevented was a slide back into conflict on a number of occasions. When the two soldiers were killed in the barracks [and the policeman in 2009]...that was a very dangerous period because that could have slipped back into conflict. The loyalists came to the table, they were quite angry. Initially, when the policeman was killed, it was pointed out around the table that this represented an old mind-set on the point that the police...belong to your community because that’s the impression you are giving here, and that they now belong to everybody, so people on the nationalist side are entitled to be just as annoyed as on the Unionist side. I think for a number of the Unionist groups around the table...it was a wake-up for them you know, suddenly they thought ‘that’s true, that is a mind-set we’ve had’…In fairness to them, they took it on-board and went back into their communities and said ‘look, there’s no support for this amongst the nationalists/Republican community in general’. They just kept a lid on things. Same when the two soldiers were killed; same situation again. Recognition that there was no support for this anymore, that people didn’t see this as contributing in any way as a way forward, and again the Loyalists went back into their communities and put a lid on it.[[506]](#footnote-507)*

The UDA, INLA and the Official IRA utilised different disengagement frames from the Provisional IRA. However the meetings between the groups helped to diffuse the Provisional IRA’s frame, which provided security for the UDA to disarm and convinced the two Republican groups to officially disarm too. The Provisional IRA’s support for shared policing – under the rubric of its equality agenda – and its own ability to decommission had a substantial knock-on on the remaining paramilitary groups. Therefore, while interaction with the ‘other’ may not have been important for the Provisional IRA’s disengagement in the 1990s, it was important in diffusing disengagement in Northern Ireland, reducing the risk of recidivism (albeit primarily from other groups) and containing the trigger causes of violence.

Throughout this period, dissident Republican groups continued to be active, but as mentioned above, their ability to escalate the conflict by killing two soldiers and a policeman was severely limited by the inter-communal dialogue and ability of Loyalist leaders to assert their authority in their communities. Therefore, the presence of former combatants at a community level and the success of the mobile phone networks have occupied a space that fosters disengagement in society: this can be contrasted with earlier incidents during the Troubles where killings would lead to a significant escalation in violence. Therefore, organisational disengagement in Northern Ireland has taken a unique form whereby informal networks of former combatants and command structures – varying in terms of formality from one group to another – has complemented political change from the Good Friday Agreement and diffusing the disengagement process in society. Linking back to theoretical and conceptual debates discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two, the implications of the thesis’ findings manifests in two ways. Firstly, networks of former combatants will continue to exist after organisational disengagement, therefore the process of organisational disengagement does not end with disbandment of the group. The Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement ensured that networks of former combatants would not return to violence by utilising them to contain violence. Secondly, former combatants have a role in preventing terrorism and removing the causes of violence which can augment or supplant state approaches. The literature has so far not acknowledge this role,[[507]](#footnote-508) but where there is state weakness and a lack of credibility, former combatants may be in a more advantageous position due to the linkages with the community that were established during the conflict. However, two significant problems with this unique form of organisational disengagement limit the success of disengagement more broadly within the social movement, which will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

### The Political System: Consociationalism and Conflict

The thesis contends that organisational disengagement is not sufficient on its own to reduce the risk of recidivism and that there must be a political system in place that not only facilitates organisational disengagement but solidifies the process and limits the opportunities for violence. The previous section demonstrated how the mobile phone network limited the risk of recidivism but, as will be shown, such social networks are a temporary solution. Building on the work presented by Della Porta and LaFree, the chapter analyses the political system that emerged from disengagement. As discussed in Chapter Two, the thesis draws on the social movement concept of political opportunity structures, which analyses how political frameworks provide opportunities and incentives social movement behaviour.[[508]](#footnote-509) The thesis builds on this approach to analyse the interaction between different layers of political structure which emerged from the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, shaping the contemporary landscape for the Irish Republican movement.

Following the electoral successes in the Hunger Strikes, some members within the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein recognised the opportunities to woo voters beyond its core support, which led them espouse a disengagement frame within the group (as discussed in Chapter Four). Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA’s support of the Good Friday Agreement (1998), and later the St Andrews (2006) and Hillsborough Agreements (2010), led to a substantial change in the political system for supporters of political violence. While this political process would provide incentives for disengagement due to opportunities to mobilise new supporters and gain political resources, it would also need to ensure that frame resonance was maintained with the movement. The new political dispensation that emerged was a consociational system, which enshrined political identities institutionally. The arrangements under the consociational system mean that political parties, including Sinn Fein, were designated as ‘Unionist’, ‘Nationalist’ or ‘Other’, and it provided government power-sharing by proportional inclusion of parties, thus ensuring both identity groups had a stake in governance at Stormont. Therefore, following the Provisional IRA’s formal disengagement in 2005, Sinn Fein entered government with the Democratic Unionist Party, with the former Provisional IRA commander, Martin McGuiness, taking the role of Deputy First Minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The new political dispensation also provided for a certain amount of cross-border institutions and cultural autonomy and, specifically, ‘group vetoes to assure Catholic and Protestant communities that important decisions will only be made with the broad consent of representatives of the relevant community’.[[509]](#footnote-510) Critics argue that the consociational system encourages a zero-sum outlook, freezes and perpetuates the status quo, marginalises moderate voices and new identities, and that the political process can be held to ransom by one side.[[510]](#footnote-511) Proponents of consociationalism, for example O’Leary and McGarry, retort that consociationalism is a reflection of the divisions in society and is a pragmatic solution.[[511]](#footnote-512) In this debate, there has been no discussion on how consociationalism relates to the disengagement process in society, which the chapter will briefly address.

The Provisional IRA’s disengagement helped to change the political system, which can then seek to address grievances and opportunities that can drive terrorism and political violence. Chapter Three outlined how two types of grievance has driven Republican violence: 1) constitutional grievances – the desire to establish an all-Ireland Republic; 2) identity and discrimination grievances – the 1960s’ political system discriminated against Catholics and Nationalists, who were treated as second-class citizens. Loyalist grievances have also driven these two aspects, with their desire to remain a part of Britain constitutionally and their perception that British culture is under threat. Loyalist grievances are important because they can provide opportunities for dissident Republicans by increasing anger through provocative marches or by stalling the political system, thus challenging the legitimacy of the disengagement process. Therefore, for a political system to consolidate on the gains made through organisational disengagement, it will need to be able to address grievances and limit the opportunities for militants to mobilise support. There are three layers of the political system that the thesis focuses on - Stormont (including Westminster and Dublin); local government; and communities – and consociationalism has been institutionalised at each layer to a different degree. In Stormont it has been institutionalised more, with more veto powers on the area of culture than local government, and at the community level there is no formal consociationalism but ethnic division is perpetuated by social practices, including physical barriers such as the ‘peace walls’.

Therefore, while one layer of politics may be stable, decisions at one level can have a serious impact at different layers where there is less protection for political identities, and political actors have varying influence and pressures in each layer. This approach contributes to social movement theory which tends to focus on elite structures, but as the network analysis above shows,[[512]](#footnote-513) the so-called elites in a social movement can operate at the grassroots where they can have a different form of power to the elites in the main political institutions. Consociation literature on Northern Ireland has tended to focus on its manifestation in ‘high politics’ and while it shows how this can function differently at other political layer,[[513]](#footnote-514) there has been no analyse of how each layer interacts, specifically in the context of disengagement.

Another important layer of the political opportunity structure to consider is, of course, the European Union and the Republic of Ireland. As argued above, the EU has been very significant in helping former combatants to legitimately gain funding to strengthen the disengagement process, where the use of UK or Stormont funding would have damaged their credibility in the early stages of the peace process. Sinn Fein have participated in the EU and the Republic of Ireland Dail, where they may find incentives to moderate their frame to mobilise support. Despite recognising the importance of these structures, the thesis does not focus on them primarily because the Stormont opportunity structures remain the most influential and the most contentious. The financial crises and its effect on the Republic of Ireland, for example, may reduce the likelihood of support among nationalists for a united Ireland, but this does not affect the disengagement frame’s dual emphasis on equality and unification, which is shaped by the opportunities in the Stormont political system more substantially given the powers for unification reside primarily through it.

As previously discussed, a key part of the disengagement of social movements and militant groups within it is organisational disengagement, and consociationalism had a significant impact on this process. The Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement developed in two directions, into a political sphere and, as discussed above, a community sphere. Much of the Provisional IRA was merged with Sinn Fein, with notable figures becoming Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Stormont or local councillors. These new roles can provide added incentives for disengaging and remaining disengaged, and they may also lead to a change in attitudes through institutionalisation and interaction with the other. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame, particularly after 1998, constructed the political system as one that addressed some grievances and provided a long-term solution to address constitutional grievances. In this perspective, the causes of conflict were attributed to inequality between Catholics and Protestants, in terms of economic, social, cultural and political aspirations. Therefore, the consociational political system enshrines a parity of esteem – equality – between both communities. Constitutional grievances can only be dealt through parity of esteem too, as Loyalists cannot be coerced in to a united Ireland, and only through a referendum can re-unification be achieved. Once again, the frame holds that the use of violence is futile and irrational in this political system, but without the legitimate armed struggle and sacrifice of volunteers in the past, this political system would not be possible. Disengagement into political routes can facilitate the diffusion of this disengagement frame to different audiences but this creates problems for Sinn Fein: it has to balance the expectations of the Unionists at Stormont, who have a veto, with expectations in the community sphere, who can move to support dissident groups if they are not content. As consociationalism encourages bargaining, Sinn Fein therefore supports Unionist policies in return for support for their policies, which are used to legitimise their disengagement to the community sphere. As an example, Sinn Fein will gain funding for housing development in the Catholic, Nationalist community, and in return, Unionists will be given equal funding even when there is less need for housing development in the awarded community.[[514]](#footnote-515) However, the community sphere can contradict the bargaining that needs to take place in consociationalism. The community sphere has been largely independent from other political spheres insofar as paramilitary groups have held significant influence, at the expense of the police force. In Republican areas, the dominance of the Provisional IRA has meant that with disengagement there is a greater link between the community sphere and the political sphere through Sinn Fein. Loyalist areas, however, tend to be alienated from the political sphere as the political parties can operate more independently of the opinions of voters in Loyalist areas.[[515]](#footnote-516) Thus to summarise, Republican disengagement into the consociational political system can create tensions because of the different linkages between layers of the political system, each of which differs in how it responds to the arguments that have been put forward for disengagement.

In terms of disengagement, the outcome of this political system is that Sinn Fein has to be able to compromise with Unionists and maintain its hegemonic position within Republicanism. It does this through its disengagement frame, emphasising Irish independence and equality. Equality legitimises compromises with Unionism in the political sphere, which is argued to be essential to achieve a united Ireland. This strategy is presented as a continuation of the struggle, drawing on Republican tradition to legitimise it. To emphasise this continuation at the community level, Sinn Fein works to maintain a monopoly of Republican commemoration to celebrate their volunteers who died in the struggle. The purpose of this – apart from genuinely believing in it – is to deny this space to dissident Republicans. Given how the IRA in the 1960s had maintained its presence and avoided full disengagement partly through the use of commemorations, it is clear that they play an interesting role in diffusing disengagement at the community level. By maintaining a strong position on Republican commemorative events, the Provisional IRA’s perspective on disengagement and how the political system justifies this can be spread throughout the community that dissident Republicans seek to mobilise. However, as will be shown below, Republican contestation for this space leads Unionists to claim, often following Loyalist pressure, that such events are glorifying terrorism, thus disrupting compromises at other levels of the political system.

Consociationalism encourages co-operation between Republicans and Unionists at Stormont, which legitimises the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame, but this can be frustrated because the need to maintain linkages with the community level in order to counter dissident Republican narratives which can disrupt co-operation at Stormont. The disconnection between Unionists at Stormont and Loyalist communities encourages the disruption of co-operation and places greater responsibility on the networks like the one discussed above. Thus, the consociational political system contains features that can spark violence. Firstly, it does not resolve the constitutional issue for Republicans and its zero-sum nature can mean that attempts by Sinn Fein to convince its constituency of progress on the constitutional front can prompt a violent response by the Loyalist community:

*You could slide back [into violence] again because the fundamental issues haven’t been resolved, the constitutional issues haven’t been resolved and that is the fundamental one. That’s the one that leads to all the other side-shows like the flag protest...One side tells its supporters we are moving toward a united Ireland, and the other side tells their supporters that we are not. They both can’t be right. There is no doubt about it; it is like a tug of war. If it goes this way then that side thinks it’s losing, if it goes that way then this side thinks it’s losing...[[516]](#footnote-517)*

While the limited support for dissident Republicans suggests that the unresolved nature of the constitutional question does not pose a risk of recidivism, this may not be the case in the long-term. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame presents the constitutional issue as one that will be resolved over time through changing demographics, meaning Loyalists can be persuaded into a united Ireland through a referendum. However, there are disagreements on how much the Loyalists should be considered or electorally forced, and whether Loyalists would resist militarily the decisions of a referendum. One particular meeting between Republican and Loyalist leaders in Belfast demonstrates the long-term tensions on the constitutional issue:

*Another thing that came out of that meeting was that [a senior Provisional IRA figure] said ‘look lads’ he said to these senior Loyalists, ‘there is a train coming. Only thirty-six percent of primary school children, right now, are from the Unionist tradition. So you better be getting your people ready for this, preparing the way forward, not pretending that there is going to be no change’...[The loyalists] were stunned, absolutely stunned. One of them actually said, ‘shit’ he said, ‘does that mean you are going to get what you want, and we aren’t going to get what we want’.[[517]](#footnote-518)*

It is impossible to tell whether consociationalism can overcome this constitutional contradiction without either leading to Loyalist violence or disillusionment among Republicans of the political route. Yet the political system has led to low-scale Loyalist violence which may be indicative of the limits of consociationalism in dealing with identity and constitutional grievances, and these tensions cannot be dealt with through mechanisms such as the mobile phones network. Two period of Loyalist violence emerged, one in 2011 with paramilitary-influenced attacks on the Short Strand (a Republican enclave in East Belfast), and the 2012-2013 riots and protests following the decision to remove the Union flag from Belfast City Hall. In both cases, the mechanisms of managing conflict mentioned previously failed to work, firstly because the rationale behind removing the flag – equality - did not resonate with the Loyalist community, and secondly, the mobile phone network broke down. The inability of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame to resonate among Loyalists is not surprising. The disengagement frame bridges to Loyalist frames through the ‘partity of esteem/equality’ agenda, but this has not been successful in resonating with the Loyalist paramilitaries or in Loyalist communities, particularly on identity and constitutional matters:

*We actually had a meeting here to discuss the issue [of parades] back in January, and it was quite hot. To be honest it was people from the Loyalist side, they were absolutely bouncing up and down…. Now we had discussions here and we had fairly senior people from the organisations around the table, and the Unionists/Loyalists were absolutely livid about the flag coming down. And other people were saying this is part of the equality agenda but they weren’t buying it. That to me was very revealing because that was an issue that was quite contentious and quite inflammatory and people, well certainly the Loyalists, had moved back into the old camp. The whole [equality agenda] was quickly side-lined, and no doubt that would have ricocheted back into communities as well. They were actually bringing the feelings of the communities with them as well, but instead of challenging them locally [they did not]...and the unionist politicians stirred the thing up.[[518]](#footnote-519)*

Therefore, while the equality agenda facilitated dialogue between both communities with regard to policing, thus de-escalating the risk of violence in 2009, it has been unsuccessful in creating agreement on identity issues (such as parades and flags) or constitutional issues. This has implications for Ashour’s theory of de-radicalisation and how the process diffuses, particularly with regard to interaction with the ‘other’ which Ashour identifies as a significant factor. Frame diffusion within the Irish Republican movement can be relatively smooth due to the existence of credible figures who can maintain narrative fidelity, but as discussed in Chapter Four, the disengagement process is one which is also constructed with an actor external to the social movement. In the cases that most theories of de-radicalisation build upon, the external actor is a state, and in such cases the state’s main goal in constructing a disengagement process is to assert its monopoly on the means of violence.

However, the presence of the Loyalists in Northern Ireland, now enshrined in the consociational political system, changes how disengagement manifests in a political system: on the one hand, frame diffusion seeks to construct a shared meaning of how violence ends; but on the other hand, the strength of identity and the political system limits the boundaries of dialogue between the Irish Republican movement and Loyalism. Consequently, the political system limits the opportunities for the Irish Republican movement – led by Sinn Fein – to pursue a Republican strategy through politics and disengagement as pushing too far in this agenda can lead to Loyalist violence, thus shutting down the political system and the very rewards this provides to justify disengagement. Inter-group dialogue is limited in terms of how it can convince Loyalists to contain violence, which can be linked back to the lack of a similar internal discussion that the Provisional IRA went through. Other factors include internal Loyalist politics[[519]](#footnote-520) – out of the scope of this thesis – which has incentivised groups to encourage violence and has limited the capacity of the mobile phone network in containing it:

*I think definitely in the last few years because relationships have been fragmented, the phones have routinely just been turned off. So there has been more of a tendency to do that recently where relationships are bad with Republicans and relationships are bad with the police, and we are not going to fill the police’s role and we are not going to talk to Republicans, so we are going to turn our phones off. There are still key people within the community who keep their phone on, and you are right, when it works well, it works really well. I think there has been some really good relationship-building and there have been very good forums where straight-talking has been able to take place, but it’s very difficult to maintain those relationships in an environment like this where probably we are at the worst place we have been since the [GFA]. It’s difficult to keep the relationships going in the face of opposition from your own community who calls you ‘traitor’ for being involved in those discussions.[[520]](#footnote-521)*

Thus, the ‘high politics’ layer can disrupt mechanisms such as the mobile phones network because its success is contingent on inter-community links, and those who wish to maintain the link can find themselves undermined. This problem has some impact on a key debate on consociationalism which contends that a grassroots approach can overcome the community divide which seemingly necessitates consociational institutions.[[521]](#footnote-522) The thesis’ data suggests that grassroots approaches are equally susceptible to the zero-sum logic of consociationalism and while they may allow common ground to develop (as shown above), the continued prevalence of political identities constrains this. Subsequently, grassroot approaches such as the mobile phone network – which has the potential to contain violence and overcome community divisions, thus strengthening the Irish Republican movement’s disengagement - tend to be undermined by consociational institutions and deep-seated community divisions. However, another factor that limits the capacity of the mobile phone network in containing violence is its informality:

*What has happened in Northern Ireland is mechanisms like the mobile phone network have grown up organically and evolved organically, but aren’t funded or supported strategically at a high level. So they are difficult to sustain and the baton isn’t going to be handed on because it is all about the current relationship, it’s not about the framework in which they operate. It’s not about systems or any of that, it’s all about the relationship. And those guys are all tired and there is very, very little personal and human support, partly because people don’t know how to ask for it because it’s such a macho culture.[[522]](#footnote-523)*

Consequently, the weakness of the mobile phones may be less to do with their vulnerability to disruptions from other political layers, but because they have not been sufficiently institutionalised or incentivised with resources. Gaps in the mobile phone network provide opportunities for militants who wish to provoke violence at interface areas for their own political agenda. When paramilitary groups or dissident Republicans assert control over an area that are opposed to disengagement, there is little the mobile phone network can do prevent an escalation in violence. Ardoyne has been highlighted as one interface area in which dissident Republicans have a degree of control, thus enabling them to engage in political violence. While one Provisional IRA interviewee laughed at the claim made by a Real IRA member that the latter had gained control over Ardoyne at the expense of the former,[[523]](#footnote-524) another Republican interviewee explained what Provisional IRA members had been saying to Loyalists in meetings:

*I mean up there over the years they were saying there is no dissidents in Ardoyne to the Loyalists, now they are saying okay we have no control over Ardoyne anymore. As a matter of fact, when they have their protest at Ardoyne, their silent protest, most of them are people bused in from outside Ardoyne. There’s no doubt that the so-called dissidents are the ones who can get the numbers in Ardoyne and stuff like that…. But the downside is [the Provisional’s] are losing control of the area, if they ever did have control over the area in the last eight or nine years like. And thats encouraging these groups, but these groups are fragmented and fighting among themselves as well, there is no unity in them, and that’s one thing the Provies will always take advantage of.[[524]](#footnote-525)*

The limited penetration of the mobile phone network in areas such as Ardoyne has provided dissident Republicans with a power base where they have encouraged young people to riot and attack the police at interface areas.[[525]](#footnote-526) However, the inter-group dialogue that the mobile phone network facilitated has had a lasting effect, and even when the groups may have little impact on areas such as Ardoyne, the relationships built up can still be used to prevent violence that would play into the hands of dissident Republicans:

*There were instances in Ardoyne where there was an Orange march passing Ardoyne and one of the newspapers put out a story that the INLA was going to attack the march. Of course, that triggered off a response in the Loyalist areas, that people were going to come along and prevent the INLA from attacking the march. Again, people around the table discussed it and representatives from the INLA constituency assured the Loyalists that there was absolutely no truth in this. The loyalists went back in their communities saying ‘nobody is to go to Ardoyne, this isn’t true’ and there was no riot, basically. Whereas if it had been allowed to run its course, there probably would have been.[[526]](#footnote-527)*

Therefore, the mobile phone network has created relationships which can contain violence despite weaknesses in the network, but it still does not remove the capacity for dissident Republicans or Loyalist paramilitaries to engage in violence if it is in their interest. Furthermore, the Provisional IRA’s organisational disengagement has not been completely successful, and recently some cases of recidivism have strengthened dissident Republicans. The recent escalation in dissident violence from 2009 onwards suggests that there has been recidivism among some Provisional IRA members, which can be attributed to discontent on the recognition of policing in 2006.[[527]](#footnote-528) Furthermore, the disengagement of Provisional IRA members into a social route has not always led to a role in conflict transformation, with some members continuing to operate as vigilantes against drug dealers. Disengagement into this form of social route has encouraged this network in Derry to re-engage and form the New IRA:

*Who are [the New IRA]? One was a group from Derry, an anti-drugs group; that was actually set up by the Provisionals, that was their Frankenstein. They set it up and it got beyond their control. Anyone in Derry could tell you, this group Republican Action Against Drugs was Provies initially and it just got out of control. So now you have got people who were confined to Derry who have joined this New IRA.[[528]](#footnote-529)*

In essence, the mobile phone network reflects the system that operates at the political level, albeit less well resourced: when one community is in opposition to a decision, they can veto it, but at the community level this results in violence rather than a vote being cancelled. While there was some cross-community work to calm down violence during the flag protests,[[529]](#footnote-530) and some dialogue still continued during this period, the violence demonstrated that the mobile phone networks and the disengagement frame is far weaker on the Loyalist side, leaving it open to challenge from paramilitaries in favour of using violence. Furthermore, despite the relatively low-key nature of violence, it had its intended effect at the political level. The Unionist politicians focused their attention on the alienated Loyalist community and in their attempts to repair relations, vetoed Republican projects such as the H-Blocks Centre, increased rhetoric against Republican parades, and have hardened their position on identity-issues in rejecting attempts at an agreement. Violence by Loyalists worked to grind to a halt political compromise at Stormont between Republicans and Unionists/Loyalists, meaning progress in the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein’s equality agenda through a political approach can become stuck. As a key part of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame is built upon the argument that Republican goals can be achieved through the political process, stalling in the consociational system can undermine the legitimacy of this claim. Although this may not be significant enough to disrupt the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, it may increase competition with dissident Republicans.

### De-Radicalisation and the Limits of Frame Diffusion

One means of limiting competition from dissident Republicans is to emphasise the Provisional IRA’s legacy in the conflict and monopoly over the Republican tradition through commemorations. Once again, the disengagement frame fundamentally serves to utilise past violence to provide disengagement with credibility and maintain hegemony over Republicans to limit dissenting voices. However, a debate has emerged on whether this disengagement frame is contradictory insofar as it aims to reduce recidivism by maintaining credibility and narrative fidelity, but by doing so it glorifies violence which actually can encourage others to participate in violence.

In 2013, a Republican commemoration was held at Castlederg that would be later condemned by the Unionists as glorifying terrorism. This speech, delivered by Sinn Fein MLA and former Provisional IRA member, Gerry Kelly, represents how Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame has evolved. Gerry Kelly’s speech[[530]](#footnote-531) at Castlederg was to commemorate former Provisional IRA members in Tyrone, Castlederg specifically. It is worthy of a detailed discussion considering how significant it was at the time and how the exact same tensions and discussions have manifested in different controversies (for example, the naming of parks after former Provisional IRA members). The speech at Castlederg thus epitomises how consociationalism impacts upon disengagement frames. While Unionists claimed this was glamourising terrorism, the disengagement frame was quite clearly expressed in the speech. In the speech, Kelly firstly emphasises that they have a right to commemorate the death of ‘comrades who gave their lives in the Struggle for Irish freedom and equality’. Kelly then goes on to emphasise the unique environment in the 1960s, amplifying these conditions as the cause of the conflict and the Provisional IRA’s role in it as it’s source of credibility:

*The Republicans and Nationalists of Castlederg/Aghyaran and of Tyrone remember the oppression of house raids, harassment, internment, collusion, imprisonment and shoot to kill. They also remember when the RUC, UDR and British Army in their thousands tried to prevent the dignified burials of our comrades killed in action…. There was a war, which the Orange Apartheid State caused through its institutionalised and endemic discrimination and oppression of the Catholic population over generations. It was described succinctly by Lord Craigavon as “A Protestant State for a Protestant People.”*

As discussed above, frame amplification of the 1960s conditions as the cause of the war allows for the pursuit of Irish independence to be achieved through politics, while maintaining narrative fidelity – even if this involves a degree of re-interpreting history considering many of these members had initially emphasised Irish unity. Commemorations play a significant role in legitimising the Provisional IRA’s disengagement and the equality aspect of the disengagement frame allows them build on the credibility of past volunteers with the overarching aim of a united Ireland:

*But today, let me say this on the 40th Anniversary of the deaths of Volunteer Seamus Harvey and Volunteer Gerard McGlynn who gave their lives so that we could be free…They were ordinary young men in the extraordinary circumstances of the early 1970’s who rose to the challenge of the time. They had a vision of Equality and Freedom and they knew the risks they were taking to achieve it but they could not stand idly by or leave it to others… We should not and cannot act as if it is 1916 or 1969 or 1980 or 1996 or even 2006. We cannot live in our past but we must learn from our past to secure and improve our future.*

This passage best encapsulates how the disengagement frame builds on the commemoration of volunteers to link to changes away from armed violence. Furthermore, the speech links the sacrifice of dead volunteers to opportunities for the next generation to achieve a united Ireland through political means:

*Republicanism on this island has never been so strong, so organized and so capable of achieving its objectives. This generation of republicans is laying the foundations for a New Republic — a 32-County Republic with social justice and equality at its core. This generation has the greatest opportunity since Partition to finally achieve genuine national self-determination. Finally, and importantly we could not have got this far without the activism, dedication and self-sacrifice of the people we are here to honour today. Our best tribute to them, I would suggest is to rededicate ourselves to the achievement of the United Ireland for which they gave their lives.*

Another key aspect of the speech then develops from this point to emphasise the equality and parity of esteem agenda and to frame commemorations, such as Castlederg, as a part of that, which then is used to legitimise dialogue with Unionism:

*We are told by Unionists that Tyrone Republicans are insensitive to those who suffered at the hands of Republicans, in this area. Yet Castlederg is where Republicans have been involved in dialogue with the Loyal Orders and others within the Unionist section of our community for over 5 years…It was agreed in those talks that the centre of Castlederg should be a shared space. Yet when a single Republican commemoration parade is organised we are confronted with a deluge of orchestrated complaints. In effect we are being told that it is right for unionism to remember their British dead without interference but how dare Republicans remember their Irish dead in the same way.*

However, the speech also typified the problems with diffusing the disengagement frame among society, particularly among Unionists. As noted earlier, the context of the Castlederg speech was how commemorations were perceived as glamourising violence, even if the frame also serves the purpose of linking past violence to provide legitimacy to dialogue with Unionists and the new political approach. The problems in seeking to diffuse this frame to multiple and very different audiences were noted by one Loyalist:

*I think if you read carefully the speech that Gerry gave [at Castlederg], I think he was trying to find a delicate balance between sending a message to the dissidents, sending a message to the hawks within the IRA, sending a message to the doves within the organisation, and also trying to, at one level, still send a message saying that we are still committed to this notion of reconciliation. That’s a difficult thing to do. I don’t think he got it right. He is quite adamant that he tried his best in that speech not to be aggressive, not to be as militaristic as he could have been, and not to be offensive to the Protestant community…. I think they are always looking over their shoulder to make sure their hawks don’t join the dissident movement. And as the dissidents grow that is an incredible threat to the Shinners and the IRA. So that’s always the big piece of work that they are trying to manage behind the scenes...[[531]](#footnote-532)*

However, it is unclear to what extent there are actually still people within the movement who would consider a return to violence if they don’t achieve their political goals. A key aspect of the disengagement frame is the recognition that the conditions for armed struggle no longer exist, and even if they did exist, the outcome of a renewed armed struggle would be no different from that of the Provisional IRA’s 1970-1990 campaign.[[532]](#footnote-533) The primary function of Republican commemorations is to assert Sinn Fein’s legitimacy; once again, the credibility of its frame is built upon its role in a ‘just war’, helping it to juxtapose its perceived successful campaign with the unsuccessful campaign of dissident Republicans. The motivation for disengaging and remaining disengaged are based on conditions, or expectations, and these are: the social and political system today is so different from the 1960s that there is no need to use violence; the current political system provides opportunities to provide Republican goals; and pursuing equality between both communities ensures there will be no return to the past and can facilitate the goals of a united Ireland. Loyalists interpret this disengagement frame to mean that if either of these is not achieved, then it is legitimate to return to violence:

*Remember, Sinn Fein and the IRA did not leave violence behind because they became pacifists. They just changed their strategy. So there still is a mentality there ‘in our mind, that if it is tactically and strategically expedient for us to go back to war, why would we not do it’…external governments tip-toe around Sinn Fein because they can always threaten to go back to war if they don’t like it.[[533]](#footnote-534)*

This perception is the same argument that scholars make on the disengagement or de-radicalisation debate, assuming that the Provisional IRA’s disengagement is driven by tactical considerations rather than ‘genuine de-radicalisation’. However, as the Provisional IRA’s disengagement is made conditional on relatively durable structures, it would require substantial political upheaval to even reverse some of these conditions, and pursuit of the equality agenda is far more flexible in terms of what it needs to emphasise. Furthermore, this assumption underplays the extent that individual attitudes have changed over the last few years. One former Provisional IRA member indicated that such a change occurred:

*Years ago, I suppose yeah, people who had come through the armed struggle, always in their mind was, you can always go back to that, even though they would never reveal it. But at this stage, yeah, I think that most of those who have come through the armed struggle have evolved in politics. I mean, I’m at the stage where, no matter what, that’s not the option. It’s not that there’s always that wee voice where I put him to sleep, where people can just turn it on. I think in the process where we are at...there’s nothing niggling there saying ‘well just someday’.[[534]](#footnote-535)*

Furthermore, if de-radicalisation is taken to refer to de-legitimising violence, then Provisional IRA members re-state this time and again. The suggestion that de-radicalisation ought to entail the de-legitimisation of all violence, particularly past violence, is unrealistic in conflicts where there has been substantial support for it. The de-legitimisation of violence justified by conditions – in both senses of the word – was crucial for the frame to resonate but it does not drastically effect the risk of recidivism, one because the conditionality is durable, and two because attitudes to violence have changed over time, as shown above. Thus, referring back to the theoretical discussions in Chapter Two, the thesis’ adaptation of de-radicalisation by using frames analysis demonstrates two points that are significant for the terrorism literature. Firstly, the disengagement-or-de-radicalisation dichotomy underplays how attitudes to violence can change over time in interaction with structure (or conditions) and behaviour, and specifically how initially tenuous disengagement frames can contain mechanisms which will allow these frames to solidify into greater opposition to violence once certain conditions are met and behavioural change takes place. Secondly, de-radicalisation is a social process rather than an individual process which can be inculcated in rehabilitation centres as many de-radicalisation programmes are. The success of the Provisional IRA and the Irish Republican movement’s de-radicalisation – underpinned by conditionality – is contingent on how former combatants are organisationally disengaged and integrated into a new political system, therefore de-radicalisation programmes would be better served by building linkages in a social movement to strengthen and diffuse a disengagement frame rather than focusing on reducing the risk of individual recidivism.

However, one other claim that has been made is that while there is no longer support for violence among former Provisional IRA members, that the disengagement frame they use, while delegitimising violence for them, actually glorifies violence for young people who have no conceptualisation of the conditionality that underpins the frame:

*Some young people do believe they’ve missed out on the conflict, for whatever reason.  Part of that is we have recognised that the way we talk about the past in some social setting, you are talking about things and you make it sound adventurous, you make it sound fun and stuff like that. So young people are getting this image in their head that it is some sort of adventure.[[535]](#footnote-536)*

Recognising this contradiction in the disengagement frame, and the risks that it posed in terms of encouraging young people to join dissident Republicans, substantial efforts were made to diffuse the disengagement frame to the next generation. Social movement theory (and de-radicalisation theories to an extent) has tended to neglect to analyse frame diffusion between generations, especially when the frame is seeking to mobilise young people and discourage violent mobilisation. And it was this effort which would represent the new challenge in the disengagement process, which will be discussed in Chapter Six.

### Conclusion

If the Provisional IRA were the only militant group active in the conflict, organisational disengagement would have been largely sufficient to reduce the risk of recidivism and limit the opportunities for those who opposed disengagement to mobilise support and escalate the campaign. Yet the vibrancy of the Irish Republican movement and its ability to survive it military dimension despite episodes of group disengagement throughout its history demonstrates that a more expansive process is necessary. Chapter Five has demonstrated the intertwined and complex nature of the disengagement process, thus vindicating arguments for a multi-level analysis,[[536]](#footnote-537) with social movement theory capturing the interaction between organisational disengagement, political structures, and attitudes. Importantly, the factors that may make disengagement at the group level, as discussed in Chapter Four, are not necessarily similar to the factors that would encourage disengagement at the social movement level. Hence, the thesis provides a more thorough explanation of how terrorism campaigns end.

The unique manifestation of organisational disengagement helped to build a broadly stable political system which legitimised and rewarded the decision to disengage to the point that a return to violence among key Provisional IRA members is unthinkable and irrational. The expansion of community activism filled the space which the new political system could not penetrate. Although community activism has not overcome the in-built dangers that can spark violence, it can contain it. Successful co-operation between militant groups that emerged from community activism has had a domino-effect on other militant groups. While the disengagement frame is built upon conditions rather than unconditional arguments, the relative durability of the political system makes the attitudinal change equally durable, thus bringing into question the argument that unconditional de-radicalisation offers better safeguards against recidivism. This is a significant critique of the de-radicalisation literature (discussed in Chapter One) which has reduced the debate to a dichotomy between attitudinal change and behavioural change, with the thesis showing that the nuances of attitudinal change (namely, frame resonance) which shapes the risk of recidivism.

The one caveat concerns constitutional and identity issues, particularly among Loyalists, which can potentially reverse the way organisational disengagement and the political system reduces the risk of recidivism. Once again, while the thesis does not focus on Loyalism, it functions as part of the political system, providing constraints and opportunities for the Irish Republican movement (violent and disengaged). By using political opportunity structures to inform the analysis, the thesis showed how the interaction between two layers of political structure can create tension, sometimes disrupting the community-level mechanisms which have been successful at reducing the risk of recidivism. The implications of community approaches such as the mobile phone network on the literature is quite significant as it suggests that not only do former combatants have a role to play, that in the Northern Ireland context this role may need to be formalised to bridge the gap between political layers and strengthen it against shocks from vetoes at Stormont. For example, the mobile phone network has played a crucial role in providing the space for the PSNI to establish legitimacy in Republican communities and former combatants have worked toward de-essentialising violence by young people, thus changing its perception from political violence to criminality. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates how organisational disengagement many not necessarily be the guard against recidivism as it is assumed to be, as a network of activists can lead to an informal command structure existing. As a result, attitudinal change among former combatants becomes all the more salient to avoid this informal command structure being utilised to (re)engage in violence.

The thesis would argue that sufficient attitudinal change has occurred among Provisional IRA members that in the long-term this will not motivate a return to violence, or they will simply not be around to deal with the consequences of the potential frustration of constitutional goals. This makes the next generation all the more crucial for finalising the disengagement process, but the contradiction remains that while the disengagement frame is sufficient to reduce the risk of recidivism among themselves, it can actually inspire the next generation to take up arms if and when the opportunity arises.

## CHAPTER SIX

**De-Radicalisation and the Next Generation**

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Provisional IRA developed a disengagement frame which justified and enabled it to implement the process of ending its armed campaign. It provided the justification and rationale for disengagement, it aimed to maintain narrative fidelity and gave incentives for the new approach. However, the analysis of the frame demonstrated how it based its credibility and legitimacy on past armed struggle, and that giving up the struggle was contingent on the conditions having changed (and remaining changed). Chapter Five demonstrated how the organisational disengagement of the Provisional IRA reduced the risk of recidivism through, among other things, inter-group co-operation. This co-operation helped to create a domino-effect, whereby a number of militant groups also disengaged, which changed the conditions that the younger generation find themselves in and it is these new conditions which the de-legitimisation of violence is based on. However, tensions in the political system provide opportunities for dissident Republicans to increase attacks, and attempts to compete with dissidents and potential dissidents led to the accusation that Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA were glamourising violence.

In the last few years, some Republicans have recognised how the disengagement frame contains problems, as it does not resonate with the some of the younger generation and can in fact facilitate their violent mobilisation. Therefore, just as the Provisional IRA sought to diffuse the disengagement frame to other militant groups in the movement, the remaining informal network that disengaged into community activism have sought to diffuse this frame to the younger generation. The younger generation hold the key as to whether or not disengagement is successful, and while politicians ‘cannot legislate for the next generation’,[[537]](#footnote-538) former combatants have a crucial role to play to shape and change the attitudes of the next generation to oppose violence and limit the risk of terrorism and political violence re-emerging in the future.

While the significance of the younger generation in the disengagement process has been acknowledged,[[538]](#footnote-539) it has been the least studied aspect in the literature. A key factor in the decline of terrorism campaigns can be a group’s inability to pass the struggle on to the next generation, meaning the group can no longer recruit to replace members who have disengaged.[[539]](#footnote-540) In such cases, the groups have tended to be ideologically driven and to have no substantial relations with a supportive community, such as the Weather Underground in the USA or the Red Army Faction in Germany. The Irish Republican movement has certainly not suffered from this problem, as various incarnations of the IRA have recruited youngsters to varying degrees from the 1900s onwards. Familial ties and the passing on of stories of Republican tradition through commemorative events between generations has ensured that, while there may have been ebbs and flows of the strength of inter-generational bonds, they have been considerably durable. However, such inter-generational bonds are not fixed but can degrade, leading to a gradual decline in the movement’s capacity to regenerate. Thus, in terms of the end of terrorism campaigns, it is the degradation of inter-generational support which is the key to social movement disengagement, which can help to stop Irish Republican history repeating itself.

Research on this phenomenon has been very sparse, with the ‘waves of terrorism’ theory being the main attempt to address the causes of inter-generational declines in terrorism. Sageman analysed how the understanding of Islamist ideology changed from each generation, with the political dimension becoming severely diminished[[540]](#footnote-541) and Moghadam examined how each generation of the Red Army Faction disengaged.[[541]](#footnote-542) Yet none of these studies explored the interaction between generations and the role of disengaged and de-radicalised militants in convincing the next generation to disengage or remain disengaged from violence. The thesis differentiates itself from these studies by applying a generational analysis to the case of the Provisional IRA and by providing greater conceptual depth and clarity by applying a frames analysis approach. Research on disengagement and de-radicalisation has specifically neglected to explain the impact of the process on the next generation. Chapter One highlighted how the salience of de-radicalisation is underplayed by Silke because he doesn’t acknowledge that the continued attitudinal support for violence may facilitate the participation of the next generation.[[542]](#footnote-543)

The DDR literature on the Republican movement has also neglected the relationship between generations: Shirlow et al demonstrate how significant former combatants are in conflict transformation but there are no indications of how successful this has been with youngsters.[[543]](#footnote-544) Therefore there is a link between the disengagement and de-radicalisation of one generation, the likelihood of the next generation becoming involved. Thus, the thesis provides an original contribution by exploring the impact of disengagement and de-radicalisation on young people, asking to what extent this frame has diffused to the next generation. This contribution is important to understand how violent campaigns decline and how significant de-radicalisation is in reducing the risk of violence re-emerging.

Chapter Six explores frame alignment between generations in three dimensions. It firstly draws on the secondary literature and qualitative data that seeks to capture the attitudes of young people. Secondly, original interview material with a focus group of young Sinn Fein members from West Belfast is analysed. Thirdly, the chapter provides a case study of a government-funded pilot project which facilitates former prisoners to share their experiences in schools. As frames analysis has not been previously applied to the study of disengagement and de-radicalisation, the next section briefly provides this application in the context of inter-generational change. The structure of the chapter deals with the following issues: 1) the rationale for focusing on young people and how that is defined; 2) how the idea of disengagement frames needs to be contextualised when focusing on the younger generation; 3) why disengagement frames that were used by the previous generation actually have any relevance for younger people; and 4) the main problems encountered in diffusing the frame to the next generation. Having demonstrated the problems between generations, the chapter then moves to explain attempts to overcome this in terms of Sinn Fein Youth members and in the Prison to Peace programme in schools.

### Disengagement Frames and the Next Generation

The thesis focuses on the younger generation for the reason that militant campaigns end when the next generation no longer support them. As young people are often born into a world not of their choosing, their attitudes can be (implicitly) shaped by the pre-existent conditions they find themselves in and the dominant frames that are expressed in this community. Analysing how young people interpret and adopt frames can provide nuanced insights into the link between generations which scholars have argued is important but have insufficiently addressed.[[544]](#footnote-545) Young people may no longer support the use of armed violence because social transformation has removed the drivers of violence for the previous generation; in such a scenario, a durable change of social structures would indicate a decreased likelihood of violence returning. Conversely, there may have been inadequate social transformation so that young people are supportive of using violence; in this scenario, a change in opportunities may increase the likelihood of violence returning.[[545]](#footnote-546)

Defining who the younger generation is, to an extent, arbitrary, but the thesis bases its designation on people born from 1990 onwards, focusing on 17-24 year olds in particular, as this group had become socialised in the cease-fire context. The average age of a movement can provide indications of the extent it is declining or being renewed. For example, the Provisional IRA members averaged 25.5 in the 1970s, 26.7 in the 1980s, and 30.3 in the 1990s – and this was broadly representative of higher ranking Provisional IRA members too. Republican groups in favour of violence, such as the Real IRA, have an average age of 35.5, suggesting there is a trend toward declining recruitment of younger people.[[546]](#footnote-547) However, there are exceptions to be found, for example with two young people being arrested for involvement in dissident Republican activity in 2013.[[547]](#footnote-548) Nevertheless, there are clear indications that the armed Republican campaign is declining based on this data. While this data demonstrates the importance of a generational analysis, the chapter’s main focus is on the extent that the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame resonates with the younger generation, and the extent this leads them to oppose violence. The chapter also explores the extent that the development of linkages and interaction with young people has an impact upon the disengagement frame. The analysis of frame diffusion between generations can help inform how attitudes to violence are formed and the extent to which they can prevent the next generation returning to an armed campaign. As was argued in Chapter Three, the IRA was able to survive through the decades as there was little attempt to de-legitimise violence between generations, and in order for terrorism and political violence to end, there needs to be a break in this link, and de-radicalised militants have a crucial role to play.

However, the frames analysis approach needs to be modified slightly to be applicable to the current chapter. Frames analysis is mainly used to account for attempts at mobilising, and while Chapter Six applied it to disengagement, the application to the younger generation requires both to be analysed concurrently. Therefore, disengagement frames, when applied to the next generation, transform into mobilising frames which seek to prevent and counter violent mobilisation, but the term disengagement frame is still used as there is an overlapping period. Young people in traditionally Republican communities interact with and experience a number of frames which seek to mobilise them into the numerous Republican organisations that exist. While groups such as Sinn Fein oppose violence and have disengaged, they still seek to mobilise young people alongside a wide range of other Republican groups, some of whom still support armed struggle. Thus, the disengagement frame that was used to demobilise the Provisional IRA intersects with how the Republican movement interacts with young people. Such interaction can take an organised form (as most frames do) or a more natural form (through dialogue between former militants involved in the disengagement process and younger people). In terms of the organised dimension, the disengagement frame is used competitively by Sinn Fein to discourage young people from joining rival violent Republican organisations; this can be out of genuine concern for young people and their welfare, therefore should not be solely understood as a cynical tactic. However, much interaction that young people have with the disengagement frame is less coherent and planned, with young people hearing a mix of stories through their social networks (including family and friends), in an educational environment or through media.[[548]](#footnote-549) Their own level of interest in politics and Republicanism, or their location in Republican social networks shapes the degree of understanding that they have of the disengagement frame. The fact that the younger people did not experience the conflict themselves makes them susceptible to the competing interpretations that exist.[[549]](#footnote-550) Thus, the thesis focuses on different types of frames from a range of actors, but also more generally the social conditions that socialise young people and the attitudes they have, whether articulately formed or not.

Having acknowledged the differences in applying frames analysis to young people in the context of disengagement, the chapter now addresses why a disengagement frame matters. With regard to young people, the disengagement frame can act as a counter-narrative for mobilising frames which legitimise armed struggle. Rather than only challenging attitudes toward armed struggle, or to ideology, a disengagement frame can provide a coherent justification for opposing armed struggle whilst providing space for mobilisation into potentially radical politics.[[550]](#footnote-551) Consequently, diffusion of the disengagement frame does not have to be the purview of a group (such as Sinn Fein) wishing to mobilise young people for its own objectives, but can be articulated by a range of actors (e.g. community workers, NGOs, non-Sinn Fein Republicans, and school teachers). In this sense, the thesis’ concept of disengagement frames overlap substantially with counter-narratives as outlined by a number of scholars,[[551]](#footnote-552) but the thesis focuses on the role of former combatants because they are the main articulators of the frame and have most credibility (at least in the case of Northern Ireland). Therefore, the diffusion of the disengagement frame can act to discourage young people to engage in armed struggle and shape their attitudes toward violence, thus providing the generational change required for the Republican armed campaign to decline.

However, disengagement frames have their unique idiosyncrasies which complicate the matter with the younger generation. Generally, disengagement frames can contain varying degrees of de-radicalisation: the extent the use of armed struggle is delegitimised can differ greatly.[[552]](#footnote-553) While de-radicalisation may not be essential for reducing recidivism during the disengagement process[[553]](#footnote-554) as it can be offset by incentives or repression, the argument in this thesis is that the de-radicalisation component is essential for changing the attitudes of the next generation. The thesis demonstrates how the contradictions – by glorifying violence - within the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame have created tensions when engaging directly and indirectly with young people. While the disengagement frame had been diffused and resonated substantially with Provisional IRA members, the younger generation were (at least initially) not the target audience so there have been mixed results in terms of its resonance. Another issue is that there are contradictions in the frame, so even when young people do interact with it, the resonance promotes an unintended type of behaviour: for example, former combatants have commented on how they inadvertently glorify past violence, which may encourage them to join dissident Republican groups.[[554]](#footnote-555) However, the chapter argues that this confusion depends partly on the extent one interacts with the disengagement frame, by showing how Sinn Fein youth members are able to distinguish between the contradictory elements to then build a frame which opposes violence. The chapter then argues how the recognition of the contradiction by former combatants has prompted the active diffusion of the frame into schools and the community. It demonstrates how the school project not only overcomes the problems of glorifying violence; it also acts as a feedback loop, prompting the disengagement frame to exhibit elements associated with unconditional de-radicalisation. Nevertheless, the chapter concludes by recognising that the school project and participation in Sinn Fein is within a broader process of socialisation. Before detailing how young people have broadly interpreted the disengagement frame, linking back to the framing approach, the chapter will provide context to the case studies on youth engagement.

### Lost in Translation: mixed signals and the glamourisation of violence

While interaction by the Provisional IRA, internally and externally, was crucial to building the disengagement process, the nature of interaction with the younger generation has been substantially different. Indeed, there has been a much broader breakdown in dialogue between generations with regard to experiences during the conflict, with a preference to emphasise the positive aspects of the conflict rather than the negative aspects, or none at all. Parents tend to not talk to their children about their experiences of the conflict and a number of former combatants also commented on how they also don’t talk to their children about past activity.[[555]](#footnote-556) Young people also felt unable to talk to adults about the pressures they felt with regard to paramilitaries and violence.[[556]](#footnote-557) A review of how the Troubles were taught in Northern Ireland also found this lack of inter-generational dialogue at schools too, where teachers would also be reluctant to discuss the troubles.[[557]](#footnote-558)

In addition to avoiding discussion, inter-generational engagement tends to be selective in terms of observation and interaction. Harland’s study demonstrated how the continuation of low-level violence and the presence of paramilitary organisations sent mixed messages. This serves “to further confuse young men’s understanding of whether their society is at peace or preparing for war”.[[558]](#footnote-559) The same study demonstrates how, despite being born after the ceasefires, young people spoke articulately of how the conflict was remembered and glorified by members of their communities: these members were viewed as heroes who defended and died for their beliefs, gaining respect, fear and status in their communities.[[559]](#footnote-560) When former combatants engage with young people there is a tendency for them to talk about humorous stories or the ‘good times’ from their past involvement in the armed struggle and in prison: ‘You come out of the jail yourself and sit in the bar with a lot of young ones, and you talk about the things you done inside – the drugs that you took to parties, whatever. You never told them the bad story, only the things that they seemed to want to hear’.[[560]](#footnote-561)

While the quote above is from a Loyalist, the thesis’ research corroborated this perspective from a member of the INLA. Talking to young people about the exciting experiences provided him with a boost in self-esteem, but he then realised that this was glamorising violence.[[561]](#footnote-562) Therefore, in a sense, there already exists a positive attitude toward aspects of the armed struggle among some young people[[562]](#footnote-563) which blurs the distinction between preventing, countering and de-radicalisation processes. Former combatants, when engaging with the younger generation, find personal incentives to glamorise violence and perhaps even to not attempt to diffuse the disengagement frame or what they actually feel about their past involvement. Yet the interaction with the younger generation led to a recognition by former combatants of the challenge that discontented young people posed to disengagement. One loyalist commented that:

*The only thing stopping a resumption of bombings and shootings is that there are enough sensible heads still in local communities who experienced the conflict and know that it’s not something you want to go back to willy-nilly. But there’s young ones out there who are just waiting for a chance to get involved.”[[563]](#footnote-564)*

A Republican former combatant, below, demonstrates the attitudes of some young people who are dissatisfied with the disengagement process:

*The ones that I have met will tell you that ‘we were betrayed, there was a Republican sell-out, you lot were defeated, but we will defeat them next time, blah blah blah...’ and with total conviction. A conviction you would maybe have seen in yourself years ago. And if they see people as legitimate targets they will not go to bed crying and saying this is terrible, certainly not the young people that I have come into contact with. They are saying: bring it on, the sooner the better. If they get to that stage it is probably too late to tell that kid: ‘Look, you want to leave what you are in, for it’s not the way to go.’ It’s trying to get in there before that mindset has closed. My son has never been involved in anything and he’s now twenty-one years of age. But that’s because in the house there was no Republicanism preached, I didn’t bring my kids up with that, even though I was.[[564]](#footnote-565)*

The last part of the quote touches upon the debate concerning to what extent being exposed to Republicanism is responsible for inspiring young people to hold such attitudes. In an interview, a Republican also stated that his children were not involved because Republicanism was not discussed in the household.[[565]](#footnote-566) However there were indications of other factors at play: for example, the interviewee discussed how his children interacted more with Protestants and there were indications of greater affluence. Yet, while Republican ideology is not the sole driver of support for violence, the point made above suggests that a Republican mobilising frame does not sufficiently contain or effectively diffuse the disengagement frame. The Republican interviewee in question stated that other Republican groups not involved in non-mainstream (e.g. Sinn Fein) events have a radical appeal:

*But I know you will see young people around because they think some of this other stuff is a little more radical than what has taken place. Mainstream politics is boring for younger people and they think ‘lets fight the man’ you know what I mean.[[566]](#footnote-567)*

Corroborating this view, an NGO worker involved highlighted the growing drift between generations that was developing generally, but also specifically in Loyalist East Belfast.

*The older generation are beginning to be challenged by the younger generation. There is a disconnect between the ex-prisoners who oppose conflict and the younger generation. The younger generation see it as something they want to be a part of, they want to get involved in the violence. A riot is exciting for them, it is an adrenaline rush…Adults don’t talk about their experiences to the younger generation, about how it was to kill someone and the nightmares they continue to have. All they will talk about is its glamourisation. So the younger generation aren’t hearing this side, they want to get involved for the glory, status, and to get involved in drugs.[[567]](#footnote-568)*

Therefore, in addition to receiving mixed messages from former combatants who are opposed to armed struggle and the limited diffusion of the disengagement frame, a competitive Republican environment is encouraging attitudes supportive of the armed struggle. One study found that five percent of Catholics and ten percent overall of young people in the study spoke positively of dissident Republicans and paramilitaries respectively.[[568]](#footnote-569) Of course, there have been difficulties in ascertaining the level of support for dissident Republican groups among young people, and while there are few convictions for violent activity (one way of ascertaining the level of support), Horgan and Morrison suggest this may be because young people are being deployed in non-violent activities in dissident groups.[[569]](#footnote-570) Furthermore, young people’s observation of the continued presence of paramilitaries – whether or not they are engaged in violence – adds to the confusing signals being sent out. As a consequence, there are concerns that young people continue to hold attitudes sympathetic to paramilitaries and engaging in armed struggle.

In reaction to this, a number of attempts at de-radicalising or preventing radicalisation among young people have taken place. However, instead of only trying to change attitudes, these attempts, driven by disengaged militants, have largely manifested in providing linkages between the disengagement frame and the younger generation. The chapter explores two forms of such activities: the first involves young members in Sinn Fein who interact with former combatants on a daily basis; the second focuses on the hitherto largely unexplored attempts at de-radicalisation within schools. The aim of these two sections is to provide insight into how interaction and the diffusion of the disengagement frame impacts upon young people, in juxtaposition to the cases set out above where there is a deficient level of dialogue. The conclusions will aid the thesis’ main argument that de-radicalisation among former combatants, in its nuanced form, is important in providing social transformation which can reduce the likelihood of violence re-emerging from one generation to another.

### Frame Diffusion and Networks: Sinn Fein Youth

A main contention of the thesis is that different types of attitude-change in the disengagement process – tactical disengagement, conditional de-radicalisation and unconditional de-radicalisation - is important in reducing armed violence: while it may not make such a difference on disengaging combatants,[[570]](#footnote-571) the attitudes they hold (and the extent these support or oppose violence) can have an impact upon the next generation. Taking the literature as a starting point,[[571]](#footnote-572) the hypothesis would be that disengaged militants who have not de-radicalised would encourage young people to become involved in violence, whereas de-radicalised, disengaged militants would discourage young people becoming involved in violence. Taking this further, the thesis has argued that de-radicalisation is a far more nuanced process, so it is important to analyse the messages – or frames – that are used rather than trying to identify among militants and young people a pre-judged standard of acceptable attitude-change. Different narratives on the problem and solution facing a movement, and narratives that provide motivation combine to form a frame, and as a frame can mobilise for violence, they can equally demobilise and prevent violence. While one frame may aid disengagement for one generation, the frame may not have the same effect on younger people – which has been argued to be the case in Northern Ireland.[[572]](#footnote-573) Two arguments are made with this regard: one, there is no substantial inter-generational dialogue; and two, when there is dialogue, it tends to glamourise armed struggle. Glamourisation functions to provide motivation in frames, but it can occur implicitly or by accident. The supposed consequence of this is that some young people are sympathetic to dissident Republicans, waiting for the opportunity to arise to allow them to engage in the armed struggle, and glamourisation of violence by former combatants can increase the appeal to join dissident Republicans. The following section aims to explore the accuracy of this argument when young people interact with former combatants. While the scope of the study limits the generalisations that can be made, the section will provide an explanation of how the disengagement frame is diffused to the younger generation and how it resonates.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the focus group consisted of three male and two female participants aged 17-18, while one participant was 24. The focus group was set in the context of a Republican commemoration event that had been held at Castlederg, leading the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) First Minister, Peter Robinson, to condemn Sinn Fein’s involvement in an event that he felt glamourised violence and terrorism. Gerry Kelly, who is the elected representative for the area and was a senior member of the Provisional IRA, had been in the building at the time and had just given a speech in response to Castlederg. Subsequently, much of the discussion in the focus group revolved around former combatants such as Kelly, the stories they would tell like the ‘Great Escape’,[[573]](#footnote-574) the glamourisation of violence and the relationship this has in leading to support of violent Republicanism. The data from this focus group provides an original contribution in itself: previous research has not focused on the attitudes of politically-active Republicans who interact with disengaged militants on a regular basis. With regard to the disengagement literature, no study has explored the relationship between former militants and the next generation. While there are obviously problems with generalisation and selection bias, the purpose of this section is to analyse what former combatants tell members and how they interpret this to provide an indication of the effect of close interaction with former combatants that have conditionally de-radicalised.

The next section briefly discusses the different types of networks that the younger generation interact with; demonstrating how embedded the focus group participants are with former combatant networks. These networks act as linkages for frames to be diffused through, shaping the credibility and resonance of the message. The second section focuses on the participants’ interaction with society in general, namely family and friends. The purpose of this section is to relate the experiences of the focus group to the general arguments, set out above, on the breakdown of intergenerational relations leading to the glamourisation of violence. The third section focuses on the interaction between the focus group participants and former combatants. It is here where the chapter demonstrates the extent that interaction leads to the development of attitudes among young people that de-legitimise violence. A crucial point to explore is how they frame the tendency by the Republican movement to supposedly glamourise past violence: does it support or contradict the de-legitimisation of violence?

#### Frames, Stories and Networks

This section develops frames analysis and networks theory as a framework for analysis. Whereas frames are far more coherent and organised, much interaction that shapes and informs attitudes is less coherent, in the form of stories or, in this case, the lack of stories. As stated above, the older generation in Northern Ireland, when discussing the armed struggle, can tend to glamourise it. Furthermore, a lack of intergenerational dialogue can fail to contextualise stories that may glorify violence or they may miss an opportunity to express attitudes and feelings which may serve to de-legitimise or de-glamourise violence. Actively attempting to show the negative aspects of armed struggle (de-glamourisation) is an aspect of the process of de-legitimisation, which can take the form of denunciations, linking the activity to criminality, countering narratives and challenging the credibility of those who use violence, to name a few methods. Whereas de-radicalisation in the literature refers to the changing attitudes of the militant, the only way this can be ascertained is through behaviour, which includes their speech. While de-glamourising violence is a key part of de-radicalisation, the act of glamourising violence is far more ambiguous, which is why it is perceived as a possible driver in young people joining armed Republican groups.[[574]](#footnote-575) Crucially, though, in addition to the message (or lack of a message), the type of networks that diffuse the message can be crucial for its resonance with, in this case, the younger generation.

The participants interacted with former combatants on a number of levels: family networks; social networks; and political networks. These distinctions are for analytical purposes as these networks naturally overlap and there was no means to distinguish between the impact of different networks. The first form of interaction concerned family members who may or not have been actively involved, but were affected by the conflict. The second form of interaction is with friends or neighbours they know from living in the community, who may have been former combatants. The third form of interaction comes from becoming a member of Sinn Fein, where they come into close interaction with former combatants involved in the party, elected representatives, or the ex-prisoner group, Coiste. The chapter focuses primarily on interaction with political networks, namely those consisting of disengaged militants; which seemed quite extensive for participants in the focus group:

*…[G]roups like Coiste will have events that we are invited to and young people go and speak to them. It’s not just within Sinn Fein, it’s a Republican thing. You can come in and talk to them, you can talk about stories in the past, you can talk about the future, you can talk about how they can go around the city in Unionist outreach.[[575]](#footnote-576)*

Networks differ in terms of how much authority, respect and credibility they have among young people, which can influence the extent the message resonates. Furthermore, political networks, by their very nature, will be more likely to actively push a coherent and structured message, e.g. a disengagement frame, while also talking about stories from the past: ‘Some of our ex-prisoners and groups like Coiste are saying to us the things that they are doing at the minute, that they are going into cross-community stuff, and they are pushing us into it. To go and see the craic and tell us wee stories and that’.[[576]](#footnote-577)

#### Intergenerational Dialogue and Glamourising Violence

Before expanding on the impact that Coiste’s engagement with young people has had, the chapter firstly explores the argument that a lack of intergenerational dialogue has posed problems with regard to de/legitimising violence. Interaction with the first and second type of family and social networks may be the least effective means of diffusion (depending on the specific networks of course).[[577]](#footnote-578) With regard to diffusion, the participants below were identifying family and social networks primarily, which exhibited signs of either a lack of dialogue and/or stories of the ‘good times’. However, while there was a limitation in dialogue expressed, some participants were able to interpret the meaning behind this lack of inter-generational dialogue. In the excerpts below, participants were able to identify the negative impact of conflict despite it not being explicitly articulated by family members or friends:

*See to be honest...my mother’s brother was murdered in 1971 by the British army and although it was forty-three years ago it still affects my mother in so many ways. And now recently it’s like there are wee surges where you see her fall into the devastation again. And every time she retells the story she relives it. And not only that as well, my youngest brother, he’s nineteen, and he’s sort of similar to my uncle and see now, my mother is looking at him and you know, he is only twenty, and John was twenty when he was murdered. She just has this, and I watch her, and it’s really really sad to watch you know, that was her brother. See if anyone murdered my brother I wouldn’t want them to live, you really really wouldn’t. For me it’s always just been watching her and the devastation that ran through that family and to be totally honest I see the trauma that is passed down do you know, and it’s sad.[[578]](#footnote-579)*

*I think a lot of people still have, still find what they have been through as traumatic and hard to deal with. They don’t like to talk about the negativity side because it affects them. More so, I have, a family friend of ours sits with us...and you would laugh the whole night, the stuff that he’d tell you about being in jail and all the good bits and pieces of it but he would never talk about the negative sides of things. But you could see that that fella, deep down, has a lot of issues; I just think its people’s way of coping is by talking about the good times.[[579]](#footnote-580)*

Subsequently, while limited intergenerational dialogue may create problems with ambiguity, young people embedded within more dense networks can perhaps read between the lines. Therefore, even in such cases, the participant was able to identify that there were negative aspects that showed violence to be less glamorous, even if this was not articulated through interaction with family and social networks. McEvoy argues that more experience with the conflict provides young people with a deeper understanding of peace and a greater inclination to being involved in peacebuilding; the thesis’ findings suggest a similar effect with regard to perceptions of violence. Nevertheless, the lack of an explicit dialogue that could frame the stories and grief leaves the recipient to operationalise it: thus, because of the inability to express their views, family and social networks suspend their potential role as credible, normative actors against armed violence. However, the argument that is presented in the first quote (above) - referring to ‘I wouldn’t want them to live’ - is demonstrative of how unrealistic expectations of de-radicalisation are: the quote is to an extent legitimising violence but this should be contextualised in every-day reactions to the [potential] loss of a loved one. The legitimisation of violence through a desire for revenge tends to be a short-term gut reaction and it requires this attitude to be placed in a political frame for it to sustain long-term mobilisation, as one Provisional IRA member suggested.[[580]](#footnote-581) Equally so, such grief placed in a disengagement frame may help to de-politicise the feeling for revenge. Yet, interaction with the mother does lead the participant to imagine (political) contexts in which violence would be legitimate, which is loosely framed in a political context. Therefore, the role of family and social networks as a conduit for diffusion of disengagement frames is limited. Also, despite the mixed signals from intergenerational dialogue seemingly legitimising violence, there are indications that the more explicit the dialogue is then young people will view armed violence as not being glamorous:

*Friends of the family and stuff lost loved ones and listening to their stories it makes you realise it wasn’t just going out, picking a weapon up and, its happy days, go back to your house and that’s it. There’s actually one fella, he’s an ex-POW [Prisoners of War], he’s actually dead now, but his wife says some days he would wake up in the night. He used to see people walking at the bottom of the bed, so obviously regardless, if he’s even seen them as legitimate targets it’s still on his conscience.[[581]](#footnote-582)*

From this quote, it was difficult to ascertain to what extent the participant had been exposed to family and social networks, or whether this interaction emerged from exposure to political networks. Nevertheless, the distinction is often intertwined, yet what it suggests is that greater exposure to the past, stories and the disengagement frame, the participant is more likely to be able to de-glamourise armed violence themselves. A crucial factor is the role of political networks insofar as they provide a more coherent story, integrating these with the disengagement frame which, for example, could help contextualise the experiences of personal loss that may motivate mobilisation. Specifically in the case of the Provisional IRA, they are in a strong position to do this because they are seen to have credibility. While this credibility is gained through appeals to the legitimacy of past violence, the young people are able to distinguish between the legitimacy of past violence and the illegitimacy of current violence.

#### Frame Resonance: Credibility and De-Legitimising (Current) Violence

A fundamental aspect of frame resonance is the perception that the person espousing the frame is a credible figure. In Chapter Four, it was demonstrated how people considered to be credible, often gained by their experience in prisons, were actively utilised when the internal discussions took place – it was shown how this was crucial in ensuring the disengagement frame resonated with Provisional IRA members. The credibility of former combatants also helped the frame to resonate with young people, particularly for those embedded within political networks. When asked why former combatants have credibility, participants in the focus group stated:

*Ex-combatants are the ones that young people will listen to. Also because our elected representatives are ex-combatants, I think we have more respect for our elected representatives than in Unionist communities because...ours are on the ground, they are there when something is going to happen. Our ex-combatants are on the ground and are stopping things happening.[[582]](#footnote-583)*

The quote above also demonstrates that the credibility also derives from their role in disengagement, which differs from the findings of Chapter Four. Whereas credibility was based on the role in the armed struggle for the previous generation, the younger generation are also basing it on former combatants’ role in peace-work and the respect they have in the community. Rather than glorifying or encouraging support for violence, the stories that former combatants told, and the fact they were involved in the conflict, boosted the credibility and respect the young participants had for them:

*As young Republicans, we would have more respect for those dead and alive who devoted their lives to achieve a united Ireland and achieve where we are today, you know, living in a society that is equal for Catholics and Nationalists to live in. To be honest, I love sitting down and listening to the stories, like the ‘Great Escape’ and loads of different things. And you just sit in admiration you know. Yes, we would all be devoted Republicans, but they gave so much and to have them spend life in jail as well. And they did it for us; they did it for this generation to live in a peaceful society.[[583]](#footnote-584)*

*It’s respect, you are looking upwards to them. You want to be in their boots, you want be in their shoes, take on what they’ve done, obviously not in a war situation. We are not looking up to terrorists, we are not looking up to murderers, we are looking up to soldiers. They were in a war, they weren’t getting a pay cheque, they weren’t doing it for their own doing. They were in it just to bring civil rights and to bring common courtesy to all citizens...So there is so much admiration for those who were involved in the campaign.[[584]](#footnote-585)*

The participants were quite clear that these stories or commemoration events, such as at Castlederg, do not glorify violence or encourage people to engage in armed violence. Instead, the purpose they tend to serve is, in addition to establishing credibility, to incentivise collective participation within Sinn Fein:

*We’ve all been there, we’ve all heard stories like the ‘great escape’ and it hasn’t motivated any of us, if it motivated any of us we wouldn’t be sitting in this room. It’s motivated us politically and that’s why we joined Sinn Fein. We hear their stories, and there is a peace process now and if it’s good enough for ex-prisoners after the stories they tell us and what they had to go through, and if that’s good enough for them, then it’s good enough for every one of us sitting in this room.[[585]](#footnote-586)*

Thus, the experience of former combatants is used to legitimise the peace process. Furthermore, contrary to the arguments with regard to the stories glamourising violence, young people perceived these as actually de-legitimising and de-glamourising violence.

*A lot of time when it comes to positive stories on the past, its nothing really about going out and killing someone, it was stuff like...like the prisoner issue, and you always hear about the issues there, it was madness, people were living in their own filth, getting kicked to death every day, getting no visits. And they’d come to the positive sides like at night they’d have a sing-song about Irish folk and stuff, and that was the positive stuff coming from the past. When you do hear stories about the past, it’s not so much about glorifying what was going on, but taking positive points out of it and how they actually got through it…But because of that I can’t sympathise now with anyone rioting or attacking the police now…In telling stories about the past, the negative stories you see how much they have changed and you listen to some ex-prisoners and it’s just madness...they make you feel so lucky that you are living in a non-violent place now. But obviously they do tell you about the positive stuff from the past, but it’s not about killing people it’s about the craic that they had when they were in jail.[[586]](#footnote-587)*

Therefore, talking about past violence helps to draw parallels to the current use of violence, de-legitimising those who use it in the contemporary setting. Certainly after former combatants realised that they may have been glamourising violence, they began to more overtly discourage violence young people from engaging in violence: ‘When ex-prisoners are telling us the stories, they are going “this was the only option then” and whenever you hear these kind of stories you always hear them saying “we are just so glad that you don’t have to go through any of it”. Every time that’s what they will say to us’.[[587]](#footnote-588)

Therefore, the building of the credibility of former combatants through stories of the past, and through commemorative events honouring Republican dead, provides a basis for the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame to be diffused and resonate successfully. As discussed in the previous chapter, this frame states that the previous armed struggle was necessary because of discrimination against Nationalists. The conditions now have changed because there is parity of esteem between Nationalists and Unionists, British soldiers are no longer on the street, and there is a political route toward a united Ireland. The armed struggle was fought so the younger generation do not have to experience discrimination or conflict. As the conditions have changed so much now, there is no justification for armed struggle as a) tactically it is ineffective; b) there are better alternatives; and c) the perpetrators are criminals, drug dealers, and are heavily infiltrated. This frame still identifies the problem being partition, seeking to establish a united Ireland, yet it completely delegitimises Republican violence from 1998 onwards, based on the conditions having changed *and remaining changed*. Thus, relating to different typologies of disengagement and de-radicalisation, the motivation for being disengaged and remaining disengaged is conditional on the political system providing incentives. Yet, while the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame initially based this conditionality on short-term processes (the negotiations) or unproven structures in their infancy (Stormont), in engaging with young people the conditions being emphasised are far more durable. Rather than basing arguments for an end to violence on conditions which may easily be revered (thus justifying recidivism), the unique conditions of the 1960s are being emphasised to demonstrate how there is a substantial difference between ‘then and now’.[[588]](#footnote-589)

The focus group participants were quite familiar with this frame and could clearly articulate how the circumstances have changed. While for them it was an obvious change, the continuing sectarian divisions and the fact that partition remains the constitutional arrangement has led other young people to feel there has been no change. Nevertheless, there are indications that greater interaction with disengaged militants (at least in West Belfast) leads to a diffusion of the frame that justified the end to the campaign. The participants had a strong understanding of the reasons behind disengagement, and while this was tied up with claims to the legitimacy of past violence, they perceive the absence of conflict as a positive thing, as expressed by the following participant:

*I wouldn’t see myself as having missed out on the war, I just feel lucky. I was born just two days after the ceasefire was called, in ‘94. I consider myself so so lucky that I am not in a war. I come to meetings where I do canvassing, I don’t have to put a gun in my hand or bring violence. I think that I am so, so lucky I don’t have to live in the past. It’s a peaceful strategy, I have civil rights, and I can walk down the street without being harassed, I can go to a police station, I can get a job. So obviously it’s very exciting knowing what they went through, but they went through that brought us to a completely different place. For me there isn’t any romance in it. It was a hard, bloody campaign...and they say they wouldn’t want anyone to go through it. They had to, they had no other choice.[[589]](#footnote-590)*

Compared to the narratives of former combatants (see Chapter Four), the focus group generally saw armed struggle in negative, sometimes bewildering, terms. Thus, intergenerational interaction through political networks facilitated the diffusion of the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame, though of course the primary motivation is to mobilise youngsters into the organisation and fight off potential competition from other Republican groups. This may explain why one Sinn Fein party officer was opposed to the group being described as de-radicalised as it wished to still be seen as a radical organisation, albeit not in terms of violence. While there may be criticisms against their appeals to the past, commemoration of dead members, or stories that talk positively about the past, this function to establish their credibility. In some cases, these stories are accompanied explicitly by a de-legitimisation of (current) violence, but when this is absent, the young people are able to draw similar conclusions through implicit interaction with the movement, as the disengagement frame has been integrated into their own frames.

Others might contend that the exact same stories and glamourisation of violence are used to mobilise young people into armed groups.[[590]](#footnote-591) However, glamourisation functions as a small part of a frame to provide motivation, therefore as the Provisional IRA had not modified this part of their frame, it could help dissident Republicans as both were glamourising violence, albeit to different ends. Nevertheless, exposure to the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame contextualised the glamourisation of violence for Sinn Fein Youth members. For example, one participant commented on the relationship between commemorations and support for dissidents: ‘It wouldn’t make me join the dissidents. I think the stories, telling them stories, to teach us that they did it as a sacrifice for us to join politics, without having to go down that route, not using a gun. So I think the stories are about educating us and teaching us that we don’t need to go back to the past’.[[591]](#footnote-592)

As the narratives that glamourise violence can provide credibility to both combatants and former combatants, and that these attitudes among young people are informed prior to involvement in political networks, it becomes more important to contextualise the glamourisation of violence in a coherent frame. Interaction between young people and the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame helps to link the glamourisation of past violence to an end to violence. Furthermore, as will be discussed below, the Provisional IRA’s frame was modified to de-glamourise violence to help prevent a move to violence among young people who may not have had the same understanding of the conflict that Sinn Fein Youth members have.

To conclude this section, the dominant perspective has been that the combination of mixed signals and a lack of dialogue leave young people confused with regard to the process of disengagement, potentially leading them to sympathise or support dissident Republican groups.[[592]](#footnote-593) However, while the thesis accepts that this may be the case in some circumstances, interaction with former combatants can overcome this confusion as they can order these conflicting signals and attitudes into a frame which, for them, makes sense, and de-legitimises violence. On the basis of the Sinn Fein Youth focus group, the thesis concludes the following points: a) previous arguments on the lack of dialogue do not take into account the observational aspect, which removes some of the ambiguity for young people; b) increased interaction with disengaged militants not only enables the diffusion of the disengagement frame, this has transformed into a deeper form of de-radicalisation; c) there is a contradiction within the disengagement frame that does risk glorifying violence, yet interaction with the frame means young people are able to place it in context and use it to strengthen their arguments against armed struggle. Therefore, where there has been a small level of attitude-change (or de-radicalisation), as was the case with the Provisional IRA, interaction with the younger generation diffuses this frame.

Yet their adoption of it brings slight transformations, whereby they emphasise more de-radicalising aspects of the frame – for example, much softer language or a clearer rejection of armed struggle. The thesis contends that the main driver toward greater de-radicalisation is the changed social environment young people are conditioned within, which is the central part of the Provisional IRA disengagement frame. Thus increased interaction brings young people into close contact with the main motivations behind disengagement, and that they can observe changes which strengthens the validity of the frame. The observation of these structural changes can take place prior to their interaction with former combatants, but interaction clarifies and makes it clearer. The disengagement frame becomes transformed into a more stable and durable form of conditional de-radicalisation. There is less likelihood of a return to violence or young people engaging in violence because the social change underpinning their perception of violence is not likely to be reversed.

As the conditions for justifying armed violence become more and more abstract, the attitudes of the young Sinn Fein members exhibits some signs of unconditional de-radicalisation, with past violence being de-glamourised and being used to justify peace. This can be seen in that the credibility of former combatants is associated with their peaceful role, as well as their role as former combatants. Having discussed the impact of intergenerational diffusion on the Sinn Fein Youth focus group, the chapter now looks slightly more broadly at the interaction between former combatants and young people within a school setting as part of the Prisoner to Peace Programme – an initiative by former combatants to engage with young people about the conflict.

### Former Combatants in Schools

The case-study above sought to outline how members of Sinn Fein youth, who interact regularly with former combatants, interpret and adopt the disengagement frame. Of course, as the participants said themselves, they would not be in Sinn Fein if they supported violence. While this does not detract from the findings, it says little about how successful the disengagement frame has resonated at the community level, particularly among the small percentage of young people who are sympathetic to dissident Republicans.[[593]](#footnote-594) Most conflict transformation projects and youth projects will have a selection bias insofar as the participants will be there voluntarily (in most cases) and so may already oppose violence. Yet projects involving former combatants have been successful in reaching a broader audience of young people. An unexplored linkage to a broader audience of young people has been schools, which can provide access to young people who may be inclined to join militant groups but cannot be reached through networks such as the one discussed above. The thesis’ fieldwork highlighted attempts by one project – the Prisoner to Peace project - in Northern Ireland to introduce former combatants into schools to increase interaction and resolve the problems of glamourising violence. The Prisoner to Peace project has a broader remit where it has also organised youth conferences and events, and Coiste – the Provisional IRA ex-prisoner group – has actively engaged young people. The school project has been included in the thesis because there is no identifiable research that has looked at de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation attempts within schools: while the project is discussed in two academic publications,[[594]](#footnote-595) this is within the discipline of Education. Therefore, before linking the project back to Northern Ireland, the chapter relates how the UK Home Office has begun to engage schools in their counter-terrorism strategy. Both of these programmes mark a significant shift in terms of recognising, albeit implicitly, that *conditional* de-radicalisation is more effective at challenging attitudes to armed violence, and that ideological change or unconditional de-radicalisation is not necessarily integral to this process.

Terrorism research on schools has primarily focused on the role of religious schools as sites of extremism and radicalisation[[595]](#footnote-596), how terrorism is taught,[[596]](#footnote-597) school-children who are victims of terrorism,[[597]](#footnote-598) or the lack of education as a cause of terrorism.[[598]](#footnote-599) Yet there has been no research on the role of schools in the context of de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. This area was highlighted as a significant research gap by an official at the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism. The UK Home Office has been inviting schools in London to have their students’ debate political violence (significantly, not Islam or radicalism), leading to an organic de-legitimisation of al-Qaeda-style violence.[[599]](#footnote-600) In addition to accepting that ideology should not be the focus of discussion, the programme accepts conditionality: ‘[the students] don’t really challenge [the Home Office’s] position on al-Qaeda but they do…challenge our position on Hamas. But for our policy that is fine’.[[600]](#footnote-601) The Home Office’s programme is primarily concerned with counter-radicalisation, yet it represents a shift toward challenging attitudes toward violence rather than primarily challenging ideology and accepting that some forms of violence will still retain support. The Home Office would not be able to use former combatants in this context, and while the interviewee acknowledged this may be useful, this has not happened because of government interests in not promoting Islamist views that contradict its views on, for example, gender.[[601]](#footnote-602) In Northern Ireland, the broad support that the militant groups had and the greater overlap in identity led to a completely different dynamic for former combatants, whereby it is more politically acceptable to give them a role in schools and the community.[[602]](#footnote-603)

The project the thesis focuses on is the Prison to Peace project, and while it will focus primarily on its activities in schools, the chapter will firstly set out the broader context of the project. The Prison to Peace project has been funded by the EU PEACE III funding and has been the outcome of the mobile phone network as discussed in Chapter Five; the school-specific aspect of the project has been funded by the Office for the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). This suggests that, while international organisations may be best placed to fund projects to facilitate disengagement in the early stages, the state can play a role without undermining the legitimacy of disengaged groups in the latter stages. The project, led by Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, involves a number of ex-prisoner organisations such as Coiste na n-larchimi, Teach na Failte, Lisburn Prisoners’ Support Project, An Eochair, and EPIC. These organisations represent, respectively, the Provisional IRA, the INLA, the UDA and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), the Official IRA, and the UVF. The programme involved 864 young people aged 14-17 years old, most from 14 post-primary school settings across Northern Ireland. Schools selected in the programme were broadly representative, from urban, rural, mixed schools, Catholic schools, in rich and poor areas.[[603]](#footnote-604) The project has other functions or there have been other complementary projects ran by the individual groups, such as increasing inter-community dialogue, conflict transformation and creating social change at the community level. Under the Prisoner to Peace Project, former combatants have been engaging with young people in the community and in schools. For example, the Coiste youth worker discussed events here organised which allowed young people to meet former British soldiers and PSNI officers. At the meeting with the PSNI, the 102 young people from both communities who had attended reported a substantial increase in respect of police. At such events, former combatants challenged young people on attacking police and have sought to help the PSNI improve policing with young people to prevent them pushing them toward dissident groups.[[604]](#footnote-605) Within this broader interaction between former combatants and the younger generation, the chapter will explore the project’s impact in schools.

#### Prisoner to Peace Project in Schools

In Northern Ireland, schools have also been recognised as a potential site for attitudinal transformation (or to prevent certain attitudes from developing), but the key difference has been the central role of former combatants in the programme. Similar to the Home Office programme, school engagement does not seek to de-legitimise Republicanism or Loyalism; it seeks to facilitate a narrow and contextualised de-legitimisation of violence. The key difference is it reproduces a frame that legitimises *past* violence, but this provides credibility for a non-violent form of Republican (and Loyalist) identity. While the previous section did not explore interaction with the ‘other’, Sinn Fein Youth participants were encouraged by former combatants to engage with Loyalist youths. Where this project differs, however, is how the interaction with the ‘other’ is between former combatants, replicating the process which led them to disengage, in front of the school children. While other militant groups, especially the Loyalists, may frame disengagement differently[[605]](#footnote-606), the most important aspect is that they too seek to de-glamourise violence and the prison experience, thus complementing the Provisional IRA disengagement frame. Therefore, the chapter refers to a singular disengagement frame but it is still referring to the Provisional IRA’s frame.

The project emerged in response to the recognition of the problem of a lack of intergenerational dialogue, as discussed above. The project emerged in a context where children at school have previously had little exposure to the conflict. As stated by a key participant in the project:

*A number of schools don’t really cover the Troubles; sometimes they only look at it in the last few weeks. This is because the teachers either don’t feel comfortable or they think it is better to keep it in the past instead of risking bringing it back up and it happening again.[[606]](#footnote-607)*

Therefore, a limited engagement with the past in schools means there is a mixed and simplistic understanding of the conflict among younger people. The lack of inter-generational dialogue is further exacerbated by the lack of dialogue between youths and their parents.[[607]](#footnote-608) Further, the project[[608]](#footnote-609) partly emerged from recognition by former combatants who were engaging with young people that the stories they would tell tended to glamorise the conflict.[[609]](#footnote-610) Subsequently, the Prison to Peace school programme emerged from a determination by ex-prisoners to share their experiences with young people, to show that there ‘is no sense of glamour in their stories nor any sense of self-aggrandisement’.*[[610]](#footnote-611)* The project involves the participation of former combatants in school discussions which takes place within a two-week course, outlined in a learning resource for teachers. The schools targeted in the pilot project included Catholic, Protestant, upper-class, middle-class and working-class.[[611]](#footnote-612) While it may not be implemented in every school, a key project participant was optimistic that it will become included in the school curriculum in Northern Ireland.[[612]](#footnote-613)

Prior to the participation of the former combatants, the students have two weeks to prepare for the session, which leads them to explore issues in greater depth.[[613]](#footnote-614) Previously, when students would engage with former combatants without preparation the initial questions would revolve around issues like the type of guns, therefore inviting an answer that would focus on superficial and more glamorous aspects of the conflict. Having given the students the time to study the conflict prior to the engagement, it was possible to have a dialogue that emphasised the less exciting aspects of being a combatant. The learning resource, building around the former combatants’ session, involves nine sessions for students to engage with. The first sessions introduces the students to the term ‘political ex-prisoners’, emphasising the continuation of their political identity as Republican or Loyalist, whilst differentiating them from ‘ordinary criminals’ or paramilitaries (which is associated with gangs). In the second session, students engage with a number of ex-prisoner narratives for becoming involved in the conflict and are encouraged to discuss the context in which conflict was viewed as legitimate. The third session then presents a number of narratives from Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners which seek to delegitimise current violence and participation in militant groups, encouraging students to juxtapose the conditions in which the conflict emerged with the conditions in Northern Ireland now.

The school programme therefore provides linkages for the disengagement frame to be diffused, but these very linkages shape the frame - just as the Provisional IRA’s organisational structure and mobile phone network did for the disengagement frame. Furthermore, for linkages to work toward diffusing a frame, the messenger at one end of the frame needs to be seen as credible by the audience – hence why former combatants were utilised. As will be shown, the shape of the linkages and interaction with the audience induced former combatants to de-glamourise violence.

#### Credibility, Linkages and De-Glamourising Violence

One potential criticism is this process tends to strengthen the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame and marginalising narratives which denounce and delegitimise all violence, as the main Nationalist and Unionist parties would.[[614]](#footnote-615) When engaging with young people in the school programme, the conditional de-radicalisation still underpinned the narratives the former combatants used to frame disengagement:

*The narratives used by the ex-combatants do not delegitimise violence in the past. When the students ask if the ex-combatant would do it again, they say ‘yes’; the circumstances were entirely different then. So the narratives are trying to emphasise the differences between then and now, which is built on identifying things like the presence of the army on the streets. They also identify how suspicion was a big factor that differentiated the context from now, and that now there is no need for violence.[[615]](#footnote-616)*

However, as argued in Chapter Four, the de-legitimisation of all violence would not be supported by many former combatants and it would not be as credible among the (Republican) community who have been broadly supportive of or sympathetic to past violence.[[616]](#footnote-617) A key part of successful frame resonance is for it to be delivered by someone who is seen as credible and who has authority within society,[[617]](#footnote-618) and this applies to young people too. When young people in a survey were asked ‘who had the most authority in their community’, only one per cent said ‘teachers’, as opposed to nine per cent who said youth workers, thirty-four per cent who said paramilitaries, and thirty-nine per cent who said police had most authority.[[618]](#footnote-619) Especially in the Republican community, former combatants are recognised as having significant credibility and influence within their communities.[[619]](#footnote-620) Nevertheless, it is unclear whether narrative fidelity is important for the credibility of the frame for young people, or whether it is more important for maintaining the cohesion of former combatant networks by ‘being honest with’ themselves.[[620]](#footnote-621) The school programme takes a pragmatic perspective insofar as former combatants will not de-legitimise past violence and that it would be counter-productive for them to do so, but it does emphasise de-glamourising aspects of the conflict. The design of the programme functions, which acts as a linkage to diffuse the disengagement frame, incentivises and structures behaviour that de-glamourises the conflict.

With regard to the nature of interaction between students and former combatants, the project involves bringing two former political prisoners into schools to speak to youths. Two prisoners attend from ‘each side’ – Republican and Loyalist, who are trained prior to being included in the project and are encouraged to not glorify violence. The ex-prisoner groups put forward one of their members to participate in the programme, which tends to incentivise groups to send the most suitable person. The strong organisational ability of the Provisional IRA group means their members tend to get selected, creating competition from among other Republicans to get their perspective put to young people. Participants who tend to glorify violence too much tend to be not invited back, thus not only acting to screen out types of attitudes but it also amplifies narratives that de-glamourise past violence. The very process of interaction has also led former combatants to rethink how they ‘tell’ the conflict upon realising its negative impact upon young people, and while some of these combatants may not be de-radicalised themselves – for example, one called for the execution of the ‘capitalist class’ – the fact they don’t want the next generation to experience conflict means they filter some attitudes. Thus, structured inter-generational interaction between former combatants and school children strengthens voices that delegitimise present violence and deglamourises past violence, which can also lead to small changes in the attitudes of former combatants, too. To demonstrate how the former combatants de-glamourise violence, the chapter will outline the narratives used extensively.

One of the participants, a former member of the Provisional IRA, outlined the type of narrative he would use when talking to young people in the project. He sought to de-glamourise the use of violence in the following terms:

*One of the sharp points I make to young people, even when speaking to young Protestants...What I say is: pick just one member of your family that you don’t want to have here. Pick one member of your family that you don’t want to have, that doesn’t exist no more’. ‘You can’t do that’. So I start to push them on it and say ‘listen, what about your Dad, he must be a grumpy right bugger, get rid of him’. ‘I’m not getting rid of him’. ‘What about your sister or your brother, beating you up all the time, get rid of them. Pick somebody.’ And a lot of them think about it for a few minutes and I come back to them and say ‘alright have you picked anybody’. Not one of them had picked anybody out. And I said, ‘right okay, why did you not pick anybody’. ‘Well it’s my family, it’s my sister, I love them’. And I say ‘Well every family is the same. When you shoot somebody, when you go blow somebody up, you are making that choice for that family’. Now the reality of armed conflict and the reality of war, shooting and bombing and blowing people up, do not kid yourself for one split second that that is a nice thing to do. And even in my years back involved, it was never a glorified thing, it was never a nice thing in any shape or form to see happen. I’ve seen quite a bit happen...and when that hits home, reality, you have to take the consequences of what you’ve done, and you have to live with it...[[621]](#footnote-622)*

Then, the interviewee relayed the type of personal story that he would tell young people to de-glamourise prison. After a female Provisional IRA volunteer was put in prison, her daughters were put into care where they were sexually abused, told they had been abandoned by their mother, and one of the daughters committed suicide. The interviewee then would tell the students:

*“Go down to her, to the woman whose girl killed herself, go down and ask her, does she feel proud and happy? That’s the reality of jail.” And that is what we try to explain to young people. “Get it out of your head that jail is a glorifying place. I can sit here and tell you funny stories about jail till the day I die, and you will laugh at them, and the craic was brilliant and everything else. It doesn’t take away from the reality of being in jail”. We try to impress on young people that that is the scenario of being in jail: it’s not a nice place to be; it’s not something to brag and boast about. And when you do get out of jail, you are discriminated against. You can’t get a job, you can’t go to certain countries in the world...a lot of ex-prisoners have left jail and hit the drink and hit the drugs. I see ex-prisoners walking up the Falls Road every day, pathetic, black, drunk and it’s a sad sight to see. These guys, best guys in the world and put their lives on the line, and look at them now, they are down and outs. Guys have died alone in a wee room. Pat McGeown, a hunger striker, with a family and everything else: family disintegrated, found dead in a flat in Newtonards Road.*

The crucial part of this narrative is it seeks to challenge the notion prevalent among young people that ‘when they grow up, they want to be ex-prisoners’.[[622]](#footnote-623) While this is perceived as a result of young people ‘wanting their day in the cell’,[[623]](#footnote-624) it can also be a side-effect of the former combatants working in the community being aspiring role models as peace-workers. Thus, the narrative presented above seeks to implicitly distinguish between the two roles. A fundamental aspect of frames is ensuring that they resonate,[[624]](#footnote-625) and the narrative above seeks to do this by linking to the hunger strikers who are often lionised in Republican communities. Yet for one key participant in the programme, the argument with regard to not being able to travel (specifically to the USA) does not resonate in working class communities.[[625]](#footnote-626) Nevertheless, the data is indicative of how nuanced frames can be developed to target specific attitudes and behaviour to discourage support for violence, whilst not making reference to Republican or Loyalist ideology, much unlike previous approaches to de-radicalisation.[[626]](#footnote-627) The narratives presented in the Prison to Peace teaching pack also seeks to de-glamourise violence:

*…At the time there was a glamour involved in it. If they just knew what it’s actually like in being involved in killing someone. It’s not like the movies. If they see the result they leave on the family left behind and the result on their own family and their own mind. I did it a few times and it felt worse each time. It was something you felt had to be done but you didn’t like it. [Loyalist ex-prisoner]*

*…The killing of people was easily justifiable. The act itself. But how heavily it sat on your shoulders was another thing. There’s a lot of things you look back on and realise how callous you were playing God with someone’s life, to being about to be killed and thinking ‘so what –no big deal’ to the jubilation of not being killed [Republican ex-prisoner][[627]](#footnote-628)*

Crucially, much of the de-radicalisation literature focuses on de-legitimisation,[[628]](#footnote-629) yet it has said nothing with regard to the de-glamourisation of violence and where this ought to fit within the de-radicalisation process. A frame espoused by former combatants which seeks to de-glamourise violence can resonate because the former combatant provides credibility for the statement, and therefore they can seek to make aspects of violence or involvement in a militant group unappealing and unattractive to young people. In terms of the Reasoned Action Model which classifies how attitudes inform behaviour,[[629]](#footnote-630) a frame which de-glamourises violence can still affect perceived norms (just as de-legitimisation can) and it can affect the perception of violence. While a de-glamourising frame may be ‘softer’ in denouncing violence than a frame which seeks to de-legitimise it, the former has the benefit of maintaining narrative fidelity: the interviewee above quite clearly did not de-legitimise past violence, but he did de-glamourise it. The evaluation of the school programme has clearly shown that it has led to a reduction in support for violence among young people.[[630]](#footnote-631) By utilising a frames analysis to demonstrate the nuance of de-radicalisation, the thesis provides a substantial challenge to assumptions held in the literature that focus on behavioural change or ideological change. Interaction with the younger generation in a structured programme has led to frame transformation among Provisional IRA members, and while this may not be uniform, the results suggest that incentivising de-glamourisation may be sufficient when unconditional de-radicalisation may be problematic.

Finally, the teaching pack also contains narratives on the impact of prison. The themes they touch upon include: 1) difficulties in re-integrating into society; 2) negative impact on family relationships and ability to interact with the opposite sex; and 3) the psychological impact. By far, the greatest impact the narratives get across is the devastating effect the prison experience had on their families, which made some realise how selfish they had been. Therefore, while conditional de-radicalisation had helped former combatants maintain credibility, it glamourised violence for young people, who had not adequately understood the conflict. The programme provided linkages into schools to diffuse the frame, underpinned by conditional de-radicalisation, but these linkages helped to put forward narratives that de-glamourised violence. There are two outcomes from this project which are relevant to the thesis: firstly, the disengagement frame resonated with participants and has helped to challenge their attitudes toward conflict and prevent them from participating in violence; secondly, involvement in the programme has prompted another change in the disengagement frame, moving it from conditional de-radicalisation to a hybrid form of unconditional de-radicalisation. While the further change in attitudes among former combatants may have little effect on the risk of recidivism, it does help to challenge such attitudes among the next generation.

#### Frame Resonance and Unconditional De-Radicalisation

A review of the programme has suggested that it has boosted young people’s understanding of the peace process, opposition to violence, increased inter-generational dialogue, and in one reported incident, discouraged one student who was supportive of paramilitary activity. McEvoy’s study argued that greater experience of the conflict among young people meant they were more inclined to be involved in peacebuilding,[[631]](#footnote-632) and the school programme helps to expand this beyond areas such as West Belfast which McEvoy’s research was based on. Greater support for the peace process through more experience with the conflict is important because of the degree of investment in the process among young people, and perception of political efficacy, will influence whether they will use the ballot box or whether they will turn to violence (political or otherwise).[[632]](#footnote-633) In addition to increasing their knowledge of the conflict, the narrative fidelity to ‘being Loyalist and Republican’, which is maintained through the disengagement frame, resonates with the identities of the students:

*The findings from the project suggest that children are responding positvely. They are coming out more hopeful and more confident about the peace process because of the discussion with combatants. The reason why is the children can see that they are still Loyalists and Republicans despite opposing violence. They also recognise that you can still maintain the same goals of the identity. It is more realistic because the project acknowledges identities and perspectives, rather than trying to impose a middle-class ‘Northern Irish’ identity on somewhere it doesn’t exist. The current school policy legitimises some political identities and delegitimises others - Loyalists and Republicans are portrayed as sectarian, which marginalises the working class.[[633]](#footnote-634)*

The programme recently released a report, which reviewed the effects of the Prison to Peace programme on the attitudes of young people. The findings of the study compares the schools pre-test and post-test with a control group which was not involved in the programme. The programme led to a ten percent increase in those who believed there will be a permanent peace in Northern Ireland. Crucially, the programme also led to an increase in trust for the police by 10% among the students involved in the programme, while the control group experienced a small decline in trust. The programme results show that young people in the programme have a much greater understanding of the causes of the conflict, which resonates with the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame’s emphasis on civil rights (3.3% to 10% increase) and disagreement over politics and national identity (11.6% to 22.5%), while blaming the other side for causing the conflict declined from 15.3 to 7.1%. Finally, the report shows that students in the programme are more likely to support non-violence and the qualitative feedback corroborates the argument that exposure to former combatants’ de-glamourising their own involvement led young people to understand the consequences of becoming involved in dissident groups.[[634]](#footnote-635)

The successful resonance of this narrative is based upon believing that the conditions have changed, something which the younger generation may not instantly appreciate. Therefore, their patch-work knowledge of the conflict, as discussed above, poses problems for the frame resonating. Within this context, through interaction with former combatants within a school setting, students are able to build a much more coherent frame with regard to the conflict, meaning that afterwards the ‘students are able to recognise the complexity of the conflict and what others think’.[[635]](#footnote-636) Buttressing this improvement of understanding among the younger generation, the school project has motivated parents to discuss their experience of the conflict:

*An outcome of the project is it is leading to intergenerational conversation on the conflict and about experiences between the students and their families, and this is helping to de-glamourise it.[[636]](#footnote-637)*

And where attempts to de-glamourise violence may not work, the credibility and authority that former combatants have places them in a unique position to de-legitimise engagement in violence by young people. One teacher in the programme explained how the programme helped to prevent one student becoming involved in paramilitary organisations following the upsurge in dissident Republican attacks in 2011:

*There was one incident when a teacher said that one student was on the edge of getting involved in paramilitaries. He asked [the Loyalist ex-prisoner] about recent dissident attacks and what the Loyalist was going to do about it. [The Loyalist] defused the situation by, in a very clear and simple way, highlighting the differences with the Republican movement and how it is dissidents, not Republicans in general, doing the attacks. He then stated that the police and army would deal with it, and said ‘I’m not going to do anything, and you are not gonna do nothing about it’. And from that point the student sat down and took it in.[[637]](#footnote-638)*

Thus, former combatants have greater credibility and the structured interaction amplifies more de-radicalised voices which can resonate with young people more likely to join paramilitary and dissident groups. In the case above, the interviewee demonstrated how the interaction can help to discourage young people, but the interaction also encourages further attitudinal change among former combatants.

Therefore, interaction with young people through such a school programme enables the disengagement frame to be diffused – but crucially it provides space for the ‘other’ in the respective identities.[[638]](#footnote-639) The structure of the programme fosters a sense of competition between groups and incentivises narratives which deglamourise violence. However, the nature of the programme also incentivises and reproduces the broadly Sinn Fein and Provisional IRA narrative of conditional disengagement. Yet, this narrative is, in most cases, a genuine reflection of attitudes among Republicans, therefore its reproduction in the class room boosts the credibility of the message, which enables it to resonate with the younger generation. Firstly, having ex-prisoners as the messengers provides credibility, as they have ‘been there and done that’ and they, or the group they are implicitly associated with, have authority within the community.[[639]](#footnote-640) Yet to maintain credibility they have to maintain narrative fidelity, which the conditional disengagement narrative allows them to do, therefore ensuring frame consistency. The programme demonstrates that despite no longer supporting violence that the beliefs of the movement are still consistent; it is possible to still have a Republican identity and a Republican frame (of achieving a united Ireland), while opposing violence. Of course, some young people will continue to view participants in the programme as having ‘sold out’ and this seems to be more the case where there is less of a Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein presence in specific areas like Ardoyne, which would suggest that interaction is still an important factor. With regard to the empirical credibility of the message, young people from the nationalist community cannot necessarily verify the claim that there has been a real change unless they engage with the past, and the school programme allows this. While the thesis was not able to explore the specific attitudes to the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame, there was a general increasing confidence in the peace process,[[640]](#footnote-641) and this is a key part underpinning conditional de-radicalisation.

Crucially, analysis of this project has shown that the diffusion of disengagement frame is not a one-way process. By engaging with young people, in and out of the programme, former combatants have recognised how their day-to-day discussion of the conflict can glamorise the conflict and contradict the disengagement frame somewhat. The glamorisation of violence is understandable as it is mainly the source of their credibility and provides them with respect in the community. The Prisoner to Peace programme was very successful at framing this attitudinal shift, creating an informal process of selecting the ‘correct’ narratives and incentivising others to adopt a similar disposition. In terms of de-radicalisation, the thesis argues that this represents a substantial shift. While the Provisional IRA’s disengagement was guided by initially tactical disengagement and then conditional de-radicalisation, the success of the frame was contingent on maintaining narrative fidelity by legitimising past violence and commemorating dead volunteers. While this frame made sense for Provisional IRA members, the hitherto lack of intergenerational dialogue potentially caused problems insofar as it may glamourise violence for young people, which dissident Republicans may exploit. Therefore, attempts by former combatants to de-glamourise past violence acts as a compromised version of unconditional de-radicalisation. Thus, the Provisional IRA disengagement frame has shifted toward de-legitimising violence in the current context, which is based on durable conditions, and while it still legitimises past violence, this is now framed more negatively as part of a sacrifice for the next generation to live in peace.

### Conclusion

Ending campaigns of terrorism and political violence requires a break in support to occur between generations. While this did not happen substantially in the 1960s, large swathes of Provisional IRA volunteers have left violence behind and are passing on the justifications for disengagement to the next generation. The type of frame that underpins disengagement, however, matter in terms of what message is being passed on to the next generation. Frames informed by tactical disengagement – as had been the case in previous IRA disengagement processes – encourage the next generation to look for opportunities to engage and expand the armed struggle. The crucial difference from these failed attempts at disengagement is the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame was informed by conditional de-radicalisation. However, the next generation either did not comprehend this frame or they were confused by the mixed signals they were receiving as former combatants often glamourised violence. While the disengagement frame was, of course, aimed to justify the Provisional IRA’s end to the armed struggle, there was recognition that not only did the frame have to be diffused throughout the social movement, it had to be diffused to the next generation.

Firstly, the chapter showed that the type of networks that the disengagement frame was diffused through influenced how young people interpreted the frame. As may be expected, involvement in political (or social) networks and deep interaction with proponents of the disengagement frame provided young people with a strong understanding of the frame. They did not perceive former combatants to be glamourising violence as they could see themselves that it was often to hide the difficult experiences. The building of the credibility of former combatants through stories of the past, and through commemorative events honouring Republican dead, provides a basis for the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame to be diffused and resonate successfully. However, young people adopt a different frame insofar as the credibility of former combatants is based on the sacrifices they made in the armed struggle so they do not need to engage in violence under the new social conditions. Therefore, young people are not necessarily legitimising past violence but are instead reframing it as something the previous generation did for them, motivating them to ensure against a return to violence.

Secondly, where there are fewer linkages to young people, and thus less of an ability to diffuse the frame, the informal network of Provisional IRA activists that organisationally disengaged into community activism have sought to engage with young people more. Interaction between former combatants and young people in a school setting has a two-way effect that is salient to disengagement. Firstly, the programme provided young people with a better understanding of the conflict and this increased optimism is central to the conditionality that underpins disengagement. The programme has helped to de-glamourise violence and can deter young people from joining dissident and paramilitary groups by introducing them to credible figures who de-legitimise the violence whilst still maintaining an identity that some young people share. Secondly, the programme has played a part in transforming the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame by incentivising narratives that de-glamourise violence. Thus, what was underpinned by conditional de-radicalisation has changed, and while past violence is still legitimised, this is qualified in language that seeks to de-glamourise it, much to the same effect that it had on Sinn Fein Youth members. Therefore, when there are sufficient linkages, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame resonates with the next generation, albeit changed to suit the new audience, helps to strengthen the support for disengagement, thus weakening the link between the younger generation and dissident Republicans who may seek to mobilise them. The thesis will now conclude by placing these finding in a conceptual context.

## CONCLUSION

**The De-Radicalisation of the Irish Republican Movement**

The Provisional IRA’s disengagement process has had such a substantial impact on the Irish Republican movement that it may succeed where previous attempts at disengagement have failed: the movement has shown signs of de-radicalisation that make a return to Republican violence unlikely. Despite numerous defeats and lulls in activity, the IRA has been able to continue in one form or another for a century, returning to violence when the opportunity arose. Whenever it disengaged in the past, it was on the basis of tactical disengagement, therefore there was no substantial opposition to using terrorism and political violence. When the opportunity arose, following the repression of the 1960s civil rights movement, the Provisional IRA embarked on an armed campaign against the British state that would be responsible for claiming the lives of thousands. Now the Provisional IRA’s campaign is over and with dissident Republicans weakened but still active, Republicans both hope and fear that history will repeat itself: as the commitment to armed struggle still remains, the IRA will re-emerge when the opportunity presents itself. In such a mind-set, claims that terrorism has ended in Ireland may seem like a hollow conclusion to draw.

However, the thesis has argued that the Provisional IRA’s disengagement has led to substantial change that gives optimism when stating that terrorism has ended and that the likelihood of a return of violence is substantially lower than it was any time in the last one hundred years of the Irish Republican movement. A successful framing of disengagement underpinned the organisational disbandment of the Provisional IRA, which acted to not only bring along most of its members but also large swathes of society. The political system that emerged following disengagement, despite being fraught with problems, is durable enough to continue legitimising the disengagement frame and acts as a mechanism to approach constitutional and identity issues. Finally, there is optimism for further durable change insofar as attitudes have been transformed gradually to the point that armed violence has little legitimacy. In contradistinction to periods in the past, the younger generation have incorporated these views and the previous inter-generational networks that passed on the armed struggle in the past have been broken up and need to compete with a Republican identity that de-legitimises armed struggle. Thus, over a long process of at least twenty years, these three factors have led to the de-radicalisation of the Irish Republican movement.

With regard to the question of ‘how terrorism ends’ in the Irish Republican movement the thesis had a long history of attempts at disengagement upon which to build an analysis. When militant groups disengage in the Irish Republican movement, there are three types of frame which can guide their change in behaviour. A tactical disengagement frame has often been the most unreliable with regard to reducing the risk of recidivism. It is often driven by recognition that the conditions are not appropriate for an armed struggle. The factors that can lead to this frame emerging include internal frustration or burnout, state repression, and a lack of normative support. The IRA tactically disengaged in the 1920s and the 1960s but their re-emergence soon after each of these periods demonstrates how violence can re-emerge once the opportunities arise. In both of these cases of tactical disengagement, a lack of substantive political change meant that grievances were internalised and postponed and a lack of change with regard to how violence was perceived meant that the networks through which the IRA existed could continue the struggle. The abortive 1975 disengagement showed other weaknesses with the tactical disengagement frame, namely that it will not be successful when the opportunities for violence still present themselves and that members will need to be brought along on the process if it is to progress to a more substantive form of disengagement. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement was different insofar as it developed a frame that set out conditions in which armed violence would end, and while this may have included aspects of the tactical disengagement frame, since conditionality underpinned it there was a need to de-legitimise violence once these were achieved. While the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame has not been defined by unconditional de-radicalisation, if it were, then it is likely the frame would not have resonated, thus leading to a breakdown in disengagement. Yet, upon interacting with the next generation, some Provisional IRA members are now past deglamourising violence, and this should be encouraged more broadly rather than de-legitimising past violence.

### How Terrorism Ends

The question that has driven the thesis has been ‘how does terrorism and political violence end’, which is also taken to include how the risk of recidivism is reduced. However this has been approached differently from the literature, which is critiqued in two ways: 1) in how it has under-emphasised internal processes in group disengagement; and 2) in how the over-emphasis on the group level of analysis has hindered explanations of how social movement campaigns of terrorism end.

#### What makes a disengagement process successful?

With regard to the first point, the invocation of this question draws it into the debates on the role of factors such as repression, negotiations and popular support in bringing about an end to terrorism campaigns – or more specifically, militant groups. Although the thesis has been highlighted the weaknesses of the literature’s emphasis on the group level of analysis, it recognises that the disengagement of social movements can be triggered when the largest group in the movement begins to disengage. While the thesis has addressed the significance of the main factors to explain group disengagement, it has been more concerned with how internal factors have been underplayed. Therefore the question also refers to the *process* by which the group’s members came to accept and work toward an end to the campaign. Of course, the literature has taken into account the role of internal factors in terms of individual disengagement, the structure of the group and ideology, and the role of repression in prompting a strategic re-think. However, the Provisional IRA did not agree to disengage at the same time as one homogenous block. While negotiations through a peace process can provide strong incentives to end violence, these first of all need to be reconstructed to be perceived by the group as an incentive. Furthermore, state repression can only work up to a point, and while it may prompt the leadership to consider a change in strategy, there is still much to be done from this point to the point where a group disengages. Indeed, despite many of the factors that apparently lead terrorism campaigns to end being present, many members of the Provisional IRA wanted to continue to the armed campaign, and without bringing these members along with the process then disengagement would never have begun or a substantial split would have occurred. Therefore, the thesis has argued that analysing the process of attitudinal change is important to explain successful disengagement, whereby group campaigns end with bringing along most of their members and supporters rather than dividing. One study that does seek to explain this collective processof attitudinal change – which he refers to as de-radicalisation - identifies four factors to be important in its successful completion: repression; (charismatic) leadership; incentives; and interaction.[[641]](#footnote-642) The thesis built on this argument and applied it to the Provisional IRA’s disengagement from 1994 onwards.

The thesis argued that just as political entrepreneurs construct a frame to mobilise the population to engage in terrorism and political violence, they also construct a disengagement frame to bring this aspect of the campaign to a conclusion. The purpose of this frame is to convince members of the need to disengage and it may involve adding new dimensions to the mobilising frame and amplifying some aspects of the mobilising frame over others. Therefore, the success of disengagement can be determined by the extent to which a frame resonates, whether this means the attitudes of members are changed or whether they simply comply with it, because frames have a conditioning and normative function in addition to being an emergent property of attitudes within the group. As will be discussed below, the thesis has argued that frames can be underpinned by different types of attitudinal change, known as de-radicalisation. A frames analysis approach explains how a disengagement frame emerges and how it resonates with the movement, and the thesis has argued that frame resonance has been a substantial factor in the disengagement of the Provisional IRA. The Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame has undergone three stages: in the 1990s, disengagement was presented as a tactic for achieving political objectives, whereby (realistic) conditions in which violence would end were articulated; as the peace process developed institutions in the 2000s, the frame emphasised the changed conditions as de-legitimising the use of violence now, whilst still claiming that past violence was legitimate; from around 2010 onwards, past violence has, to an extent, become de-glamourised. The thesis argues that the first stage was crucial for the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, the second stage was crucial for reducing the risk of recidivism, and the third stage has been important for discouraging the next generation from becoming involved in armed violence. The first two stages will be addressed here.

The leadership were able to construct this frame by reconstructing armed struggle as a tactic and amplifying the grievances of the 1960s to establish a new set of conditions for which armed struggle should be judged against – rather than, say, the need for a united Ireland. The successful resonance of the disengagement frame was because of three intertwined reasons: narrative fidelity; credibility; and linkages. The disengagement frame maintained narrative fidelity because much of the generation who had joined the Provisional IRA in the late 1960s onwards had been motivated by the conditions that gave rise to the civil rights movement. While the older generation had fused these grievances with a Republican frame – emphasising armed struggle against the British presence – the latent difference provided a bridge to a disengagement frame based on those conditions, thus allowing it to question the utility of the armed struggle. The establishment of a generational hegemony in the group, followed by the older generation and its supporters leaving in 1986, helped to establish a degree of congruence, but it also provided the leadership with linkages to diffuse the disengagement frame.

The organisational restructuring had put the leadership in a stronger position of control, in contrast to the 1975 disengagement, and the structure of prisons aided this control, which would also provide credibility to the process. Intense discussions and debates between members helped to construct a credible frame which could bring along the majority of its members, referred to as ‘rubber-band diplomacy’. Prisoners, mid-ranking leaders, and external figures were utilised to provide credibility to the frame too. The linkages by which the frame was diffused were also utilised by the leadership to guide the direction of discussions. Mid-ranking figures in favour of the disengagement process would be sent in to other areas to challenge commanders opposed to the process, personal ties could be used to help bring along people not entirely convinced of the direction, and there are some claims that interaction was managed in a way to marginalise dissenting voices. Finally, the manner in which the process developed in stages, and the flexible nature of the frame, also helped to marginalise dissenting voices or counter-frames: members who could not accept the process at least accepted that the tactical opportunities for an armed struggle no longer existed.

The Provisional IRA’s attempt to diffuse the disengagement frame was successful in terms of resonance, and this can account for the reduced risk of recidivism – thus, attitudinal change is important, not behavioural constraint as has been suggested,[[642]](#footnote-643) and this ocurred without the need for ‘genuine de-radicalisation’. The thesis argues that, ironically, if the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame was underpinned by unconditional de-radicalisation, the disengagement process would have failed and the risk of recidivism would have been much greater, as it would have had no credibility among large swathes of the group. Furthermore, to describe the process as tactical disengagement underplays the substantial attitudinal change that has occurred in the movement and the extent the frame works to de-legitimise violence in the current conditions. The fact that it is based on conditionality does not detract from the genuine attitudinal change that has occurred and as the conditionality is based on structural change in the political system there is a degree of durability that is far greater than what may occur even in cases of unconditional de-radicalisation. The Provisional IRA, in effect, has transferred the risk of recidivism to the structural conditions, and its members are not waiting for opportunities to return to violence as the concept of tactical disengagement would imply.Thus, through the thesis’ original application of a frames analysis to explain disengagement, it has shown how a group constructs and diffuses the arguments for leaving terrorism behind and what ensures this message resonates. The thesis’ conclusions contribute to academic literature on the topic by accounting for the disengagement process that exists alongside repression and negotiations.

#### How do social movement terrorism campaigns end and reduce the risk of recidivism?

Secondly, the thesis built upon the observations by Crenshaw, Cronin and Gvineria that the conceptualisation of terrorism ending is difficult to pin-point because of the risk of recidivism and that other actors in a social movement can continue from where the previous group ended. A number of studies have suggested that a solution to this problem is a multi-level analysis, which the thesis sought to address through a social movement approach. Rather than analysing terrorism campaigns as international waves of terrorism bound by a similar ideology and the occasional moments of co-operation, a social movement approach analysed multiple actors operating in a similar environment, connected together by networks, institutions and identity. In a sense social movements are more contained units of analysis than waves of terrorism are and more expansive and inclusive than the group level of analysis. The analysis of social movements, in the context of disengagement and de-radicalisation provides a far broader but focused object for analysing how terrorism and political violence ends. Group disengagement can actually lead to a continuation of violence through splintering, militant groups can be dormant in terms of activity only to re-emerge later, and all the factors that drive the continuity of violence in a movement remain unclear and vague when using the main perspectives in the literature. Studies into counter-radicalisation have sought to explain how terrorism campaigns can end more broadly by analysing how countering the causes of violence in society can bring an end to violence. Building on this literature, the thesis argues that there are three factors that account for the how campaigns of terrorism and political violence by social movements draw to an end and reduce the risk of it re-emerging: organisational disengagement; de-radicalisation; and structural change.

With regard to organisational disengagement, the thesis argues that while terrorism campaigns obviously end once all or more of the groups active in the movement disengage, it finds that its manifestation is not as obvious, particularly when other disengagement routes are analysed. However, the thesis has challenged two assumptions: firstly, DDR does not necessarily reduce the risk of recidivism - in fact, the actual maintenance of an informal network can be more effective; secondly, organisational disengagement can have a domino-effect, whereby a peculiar situation emerges where so-called ex-terrorists become far more effective at countering terrorism than the state can be. On the first point, the Provisional IRA and other militant groups have actually maintained much of their organisational structure, whether formally or informally, when they disengaged into the social route. Organisational disengagement into a social route was not inevitable but it occurred because: a) it emerged through a reluctance or inability to enter political routes; b) interface violence and community pressures drew (former) combatants into a social route; c) incentives for organisational disengagement came from a number of non-state sources, circumventing the problems that a lack of state legitimacy had and any negative effects state influence would have on the projects; and d) a social route helped to provide role-substitution who wished to maintain active in the movement. Thus, the social networks that emerged were crucial in containing and preventing violence at trigger areas which could escalate into more wide-spread violence, thus denying opportunities to dissident Republicans. The nature of the social networks locked the militant groups into a co-operative system which built up trust between them, leading them to follow the Provisional IRA’s example by disarming and work together to diffuse potentially violent situations. The success of organisational disengagement, however, is contingent on attitudinal support for disengagement. While attitudinal change is discussed below as part of discussions on de-radicalisation, another element that maintains this support is structural change.

Just as terrorism campaigns emerge as a result of real and imagined structures and grievances, terrorism campaigns end once these grievances are addressed, whether there has been actual structural change and/or this change has been perceived. Secondly, structural change which limits the opportunities for mobilisation can prompt disengagement or at least limit the capacity to engage in violence. The thesis demonstrates how the causes of terrorism and political violence can shape how it ends. The Provisional IRA’s campaign was motivated by social grievances that emerged around the 1960s civil rights movement, and while this was subordinated to the traditional Republican master frame of constitutional grievances, structural change that mostly addressed the former led the Provisional IRA to realise that conditions had changed substantially.

The new political system that emerged after disengagement has ensured that both communities can address their grievances and vetoing any agreements which are unfavourable to them. Progress on constitutional matters require agreement between both communities but can be argued to provide hope to the aspirations of both Republicans and Loyalists. However, the downside of consociationalism is it incentivises both Republican and Unionist/Loyalist parties in Stormont to represent their own community, particularly more radical voices which the parties seek to placate, thus running the risk of alienating the other community. While the institutions and social changes that have emerged are mainly durable, thus helping to legitimise the disengagement process, the contradictions outlined above suggest some uncertainty as to how effective and stable governments will be. Therefore, when consociationalism has worked, it has helped to strengthen disengagement and reduce the opportunities for militants to engage in violence. However, if the community vetoes continue to be exercised, this may undermine the conditions on which Republicans have justified disengagement and provide an opportunity for dissident Republicans. The thesis argues that it is more likely that Republican confidence in the process will be maintained at the expense of Loyalists who may turn to violence again. Firstly, the increased dissident Republican activity in 2011 may not necessarily be indicative of a long-term return to violence, but simply a final reaction the Provisional IRA’s disengagement which has now been contained. The thesis has not been able to explore the issue of Loyalism, however, there has been re-armament of the UVF in East Belfast and Loyalists have tried to replicate the 1960s civil rights movement in which the Provisional IRA emerged. In conclusion, the thesis argues that consociationalism manages to address many grievances that drive terrorism and political violence but its inability to co-opt, contain or placate a strong community sphere can damage its long-term legitimacy.

Finally, the end of terrorism campaigns at the level of social movements necessitates a break in links between the generation engaged in violence and the next generation. The thesis has focused on the younger generation for the reason that militant campaigns end when the next generation no longer support them. Young people may no longer support the use of armed violence because social transformation has removed the drivers of violence for the previous generation; in such a scenario, a durable change of social structures would indicate a decreased likelihood of violence returning. Conversely, there may have been inadequate social transformation so that young people are supportive of using violence; in this scenario, a change in opportunities may increase the likelihood of violence returning.[[643]](#footnote-644) The thesis has contended that a combination of structural change and attitudinal change can break the link between generations, and as will be shown below, the role of frame diffusion by militants has played a substantial role.

### De-Radicalisation

The thesis has made a substantial contribution to the literature on de-radicalisation by unpacking the concept. A substantial problem with the concept has been its weak definition over what de-radicalisation actually is. By developing de-radicalisation conceptually, the thesis has been able to explain the role attitudinal change has had in ending social movement campaigns of terrorism and political violence, firstly by reducing the risk of recidivism of militants and secondly by helping to prevent the next generation from engaging in violence.

#### What is de-radicalisation?

The thesis has argued that at the heart of the concept is the relationship between attitudes and behaviour, which the literature has not substantially explored. Contrast this with the psychology literature which has analysed the extent to which attitudes can predict behaviour, which has moved on substantially from the assumptions that have previously underpinned de-radicalisation. The thesis has used the work of Fishbein and Ajzen to suggest how a change in attitudes might lead to disengagement, identifying three types of attitude that are important: the perceived utility and attraction of the behaviour; the perceived capacity to ‘perform’ the behaviour; and the perceived norms surrounding the behaviour. The extent of change in each of these attitude types can vary, therefore leading to lesser risk of the behaviour being ‘performed’ if all types are affected – otherwise known as de-radicalisation. While this approach is difficult to apply to terrorism studies, the thesis overcomes this problem by analysing these attitudes as emergent properties: that the combination of these types of attitudes in a group constitutes the frames that are constructed. Since there is an interplay between attitudes and frames, the thesis makes the case that de-radicalisation and counter-terrorism are connected and should be analysed together.

In these frames, it is possible to ascertain which types of attitude change are dominant, and therefore, the frames are underpinned by different degrees of de-radicalisation: tactical disengagement (tactical efficacy); conditional de-radicalisation (mixed de-legitimisation); unconditional de-radicalisation (de-glamourisation and/or full de-legitimisation). In addition to providing indications of the prevalent attitudes within a movement, the purpose of a frame is to resonate with others, to either change their attitudes or to make pre-existing attitudes more coherent to guide the desired behaviour. Frames can shape the attitudes that inform behaviour: they can weaken tactical efficacy by highlighting constraints or other options; they can undermine the attractiveness of the behaviour by de-glamourising it; and they can affect the perception of norms through de-legitimisation. The thesis’ reconceptualisation of de-radicalisation through a frames analysis challenges the literature’s assumption of the relationship between de-radicalisation and recidivism: the risk of recidivism is bound by the extent frames resonate. Therefore a frame underpinned by unconditional de-radicalisation may not resonate and can damage disengagement rather than advancing it. This argument has implications for states who seek to encourage groups to disengage because when states make too big a demand on what type of disengagement frame they expect to observe, disengagement processes can stall, break down and lead to more violence. The thesis’ approach provides a means of analysing different nuances of frames and shows how even accepting frames that may be unpalatable to the state can in time lead to frame transformation. Finally, the thesis argued that because disengagement frames have a social impact – that is, if the group is diffusing the frame to a broader audience – which places it in a good position to account for the breakdown in support for terrorism and political violence between generations.

#### What role does de-radicalisation play in the ending of terrorism?

De-radicalisation plays two roles in the end of terrorism campaigns at the level of social movements: firstly, it can provide motivations for disengagement and act as a barrier against recidivism; secondly, de-radicalisation can have a domino-effect on the social movement and can discourage the next generation from becoming involved in terrorism and political violence. However, as de-radicalisation is nuanced and bound by the need to resonate, the different types of de-radicalisation can mean it plays a varied role in the end of terrorism.

The extent that a movement has undertaken de-radicalisation does affect the risk of recidivism but there are different types of de-radicalisation. In tactical disengagement, the risk of recidivism is linked to the presence of opportunities that will provide gains – structural constraints can mitigate these but the long history of Republicanism raises questions on how long this can be maintained. In cases where disengagement is guided by conditional de-radicalisation, a re-emergence of the structural conditions that sparked violence or the break-down in institutions that incentivise disengagement can lead to a risk of recidivism. In cases where disengagement is guided by unconditional de-radicalisation, the actors in question see no reasons that could justify a return to violence as it is viewed as illegitimate regardless of the conditions. Much of the literature has characterised the Provisional IRA’s disengagement as being underpinned by reasons of tactical efficacy rather than a de-legitimisation of violence. While this is to an extent accurate, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame was substantially different from other IRA disengagement frames which were clearly underpinned by tactical efficacy. The Provisional IRA recognised a change in conditions from the very beginning of the process and as disengagement brought more and more changes to the conditions, distance grew between the conditions in the past that legitimised violence and the conditions now that de-legitimised violence. As stated above, it was crucial for the Provisional IRA to maintain that past violence was legitimate in order to retain credibility and it used this experience in the armed struggle to drive disengagement. If it were to de-legitimise all violence as has been demanded, the disengagement frame would have not resonated as substantially as it did. While the resonance of disengagement frames and de-radicalisation are bound together, thus requiring ‘rubber-band diplomacy’, disengagement frames can also lead to more attitudinal change.

Consequently, it is possible for a group to gradually progress from one end of the spectrum to the other. When a disengaged militant group seeks to diffuse its disengagement frame beyond itself, the development of linkages with the new audience can result in a feedback loop, which modifies the disengagement frame and members of the militant group. The thesis found this occurred when the disengagement frame was extended to the next generation, whereby they recognised the contradictions in their frame and modified it by trying to de-glamourise prison life and terrorism and political violence. Thus, the thesis corroborates Rabasa et al’s assertion that deeper de-radicalisation can occur after disengagement, and while Ashour is correct to observe that interaction drives this, the thesis is closer to Malthaner’s perspective that it is through attempts at frame diffusion that the feedback occurs. Furthermore, the development of links between groups in a social movement can provide the linkages that facilitate frame diffusion, therefore reproducing the process which occurred within the Provisional IRA: the result of this in the case of the Provisional IRA was their disengagement had a domino-effect on other groups. Finally, the thesis has focused on how de-radicalisation impacts upon the next generation, which has hitherto been a vastly unexplored area of research.

Ending campaigns of terrorism and political violence requires a break in support to occur between generations. While this did not happen substantially in the 1960s, large swathes of Provisional IRA volunteers have left violence behind and are passing on the justifications for disengagement to the next generation. The type of frame that underpins disengagement, however, matters in terms of what message is being passed on. Frames informed by tactical disengagement – as had been the case in previous IRA disengagement processes – encourage the next generation to look for opportunities to engage and expand the armed struggle. The crucial difference from these failed attempts at disengagement is the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame was informed by conditional de-radicalisation. However, the next generation either did not comprehend this frame or they were confused by the mixed signals they were receiving as former combatants often glamourised violence. While the disengagement frame was, of course, aimed to justify the Provisional IRA’s end to the armed struggle, there was recognition that not only did the frame have to be diffused throughout the social movement, it had to be diffused to the next generation.

The thesis found that the type of networks that the disengagement frame was diffused through influenced how young people interpreted the frame. As may be expected, involvement in political networks and deep interaction with proponents of the disengagement frame provided young people with a strong understanding of the frame. They did not perceive former combatants to be glamourising violence as they could see themselves that it was often to hide the difficult experiences. The building of the credibility of former combatants through stories of the past, and through commemorative events honouring Republican dead, provides a basis for the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame to be diffused and resonate successfully. However, young people adopt a different frame insofar as the credibility of former combatants is based on the sacrifices they made in the armed struggle so they don’t need to engage in violence under the new social conditions. Therefore, young people are not necessarily legitimising past violence but are instead reframing it as something the previous generation did for them, motivating them to ensure against a return to violence.

Secondly, where there are fewer linkages to young people, and thus less of an ability to diffuse the frame, the informal network of Provisional IRA activists that organisationally disengaged into community activism have sought to engage with young people more. Interaction between former combatants and young people in a school setting has a two-way effect that is salient to disengagement. Firstly, the programme provided young people with a better understanding of the conflict and this increased optimism is central to the conditionality that underpins disengagement. The programme has helped to de-glamourise violence and can deter young people from joining dissident and paramilitary groups by introducing them to credible figures who de-legitimise the violence whilst still maintaining an identity that some young people share. Secondly, the programme has played a part in transforming the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame by incentivising narratives that de-glamourise violence. Thus, what was underpinned by conditional de-radicalisation has changed, and while past violence is still legitimised, this is qualified in language that seeks to de-glamourise it, much to the same effect that it had on Sinn Fein Youth members. Therefore, when there are sufficient linkages, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement frame resonates with the next generation, albeit changed to suit the new audience, helps to strengthen the support for disengagement thus weakening the link between the younger generation and dissident Republicans who may seek to mobilise them.

### Implications

The findings of the thesis have a number of broader implications academically and on counter-terrorism:

1. Academics and policy-makers have been too quick to dismiss the concept of de-radicalisation. Its weakness has been derived from a lack of conceptual clarity rather than attitudinal change not being prevalent. While the Provisional IRA’s disengagement was largely a self-managed exercise, there is a role for the state in being able to correctly assess which type of frame underpins this process to facilitate ‘rubber-band diplomacy’, otherwise disengagement will not lead to an end to terrorism in the long-term. Furthermore, in the short-term governments should be willing to accept that militants will continue to legitimise violence, although preferably this will be conditional and not within the state in question. Groups will also continue to glamourise violence but this is to reduce the risk of recidivism rather than an indication that they are not genuinely committed. Encouraging groups to diffuse their disengagement frame to other audiences, particularly young people helps to transform the need for them to glamourise violence.
2. A decapitation policy against groups, for example in Afghanistan against the Taliban and in Palestine against Hamas may be counter-productive. A network of high-ranking and mid-ranking leaders who have a shared experience of the conflict and have the time to establish generational hegemony in the organisation provides strong foundations for disengagement in the long-term. The network will most likely have experienced a change in attitudes toward violence in response to opportunities and repression, and should they begin to consider another course of action, they are in a stronger position to implement disengagement. While the nature of this disengagement may be tactical, the case of the Provisional IRA demonstrates how the underpinnings of the frame can develop into something more substantial, durable, and something more palatable to the integrating state. Targetting the younger generation can help to reinforce this generational hegemony, yet the main caveat would be that this strategy would only be applicable when the younger generation do not constitute a large proportion of the movement: internment in the 1960s radicalised the younger generation whilst the changing structure of the Provisional IRA ensured that incarcerated younger members were subordinate to the older generation, especially in prisons.
3. Schools remain a vastly under-researched site for de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation, and there is a shift among policy-makers to engaging with schools as part of a counter-terrorism strategy. Schools act as a useful site because they provide linkages to young people who may be out of reach by using other types of engagement such as youth centres. The thesis has shown that carefully managed projects involving former combatants can act as credible voices to discourage young people from engaging in violence where state narratives would not resonate.

To conclude, the Provisional IRA’s disengagement has been markedly different from past attempts, meaning there is an opportunity for the Irish Republican movement to move further away from violence in the near future. The thesis has demonstrated that social movement disengagement requires a degree of pragmatism and, instead of expecting repentance and opposition to all forms of violence, successful disengagement will emerge from a grounded approach which recognises that violence and legitimacy are contested concepts. At the heart of disengagement processes is the effort to construct shared understandings of what these entail and to ensure they produce an end to terrorism, an holistic approach that integrates organisational disengagement, attitudinal change, and political/structural change, can move the Irish Republican movement away from armed violence.

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286. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
287. English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
288. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
289. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
290. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
291. O'Leary and McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
292. Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1995 and the Search for Peace*. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
293. Dingley, "Northern Ireland and the 'Troubles'." [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
294. Derek Birrell, "Relative Deprivation as a Factor in Conflict in Northern Ireland," *The Sociological Review* 20 (3)(1972). [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
295. Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
296. O'Leary and McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
297. Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
298. The Unionist narrative tends to blur these distinctions. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
299. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
300. Thus when English and Dixon refer to a rise in the IRA membership in the 1960s, it implies a growing resurgence in militancy however it fails to acknowledge the level of control the leaders had and the fact that the new members reconstituted the organisation’s approach. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
301. Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change*. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
302. Thomas Hennessey, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
303. O'Leary and McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. 170 [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
304. Election leafleting was also far less arduous than stewarding too. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
305. Niall O'Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
306. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
307. Many of those interned were not involved in the IRA, but upon their release they were more likely to become involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
308. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
309. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
310. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
311. O'Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles*. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
312. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. pp. 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
313. English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the Ira*. pp. 151-154 [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
314. Michael Von Tangen Page and M. L. R. Smith, "War by Other Means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy," *Armed Forces and Society* 27 (1)(2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
315. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*., pp. 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
316. Ibid. pp. 106 [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
317. Page and Smith, "War by Other Means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy." [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
318. Negotiations had always been a part of IRA strategic thought, although the extent of compromise is another matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
319. Freddie Cowper-Coles, "'Anxious for Peace': The Provisional Ira in Dialogue with the British Government, 1972-75," *Irish Studies Review* 20 (3)(2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
320. MacStiofain, having been incarcerated, began a hunger strike. However he lost credibility in the movement when he gave up. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
321. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
322. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
323. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
324. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
325. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
326. BBC News, "Ira Declares 'Complete' Ceasefire," http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/31/newsid\_3605000/3605348.stm. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
327. "Ira Statement in Full," http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\_ireland/4724599.stm. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
328. O'Leary and McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
329. Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
330. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
331. Some of the internal discussions that were crucial to disengagement occurred before the 1990s. Furthermore, the factors that led some members to begin constructing a disengagement frame can be traced back much earlier too. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
332. Moghadam, "Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction." Sageman, "Ripples in the Waves: Fantasies and Fashions." [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
333. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
334. Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
335. Rabasa et al., "Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists." [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
336. Ashour, "De-Radicalization of Jihad? The Impact of Egyptian Islamist Revisionists on Al-Qaeda." [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
337. As will be argued in Chapter Six, from 2010 onwards, there have been signs that the Provisional IRA frame has transformed again to de-glamourise all aspects of violence within the conflict. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
338. Rabasa et al., "Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists." [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
339. Horgan and Braddock, "Rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-Radicalization Programs." [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
340. Former Provisional Irish Republican Army Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
341. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
342. Until 1986, the Provisional IRA would contest elections (sporadically) but they would not take up any seat in the parliaments in the Dail, Stormont, or Westminster. The policy of abstentionism is rooted in the fear that involvement in politics will undermine the armed struggle and was so contentious it was a significant factor in the split with the Official IRA. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
343. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
344. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
345. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
346. CFNI, "From Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners," (Belfast: Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
347. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
348. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
349. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
350. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
351. Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
352. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
353. Horgan, "Deradicalization or Disengagement?." Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
354. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
355. Of course, at the time both groups were all in the IRA, although the split had begun slightly before the vote. Other issues were the leftist nature the leadership was taking the movement in, the perceived inactivity in the armed campaign and the end of abstentionism. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
356. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
357. CFNI, "From Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners."Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
358. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
359. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
360. Robert White, "The 1975 British-Provisional Ira Truce in Perspective," *Eire-Ireland* 45 (3)(2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
361. Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash, "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change," in *Social Movements*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper (Oxon: Routledge, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
362. As discussed in Chapter Three, control beliefs refer to the extent an actor perceives they are able to actually behave in a certain way. For example, an actor may believe it to be beneficial to assassinate a political figure, but if they perceive this to be impossible through experience (low control beliefs), then they may begin to re-evaluate the utility of assassinating the political figure. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
363. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
364. This includes Operation Motorman and the policy of Ulsterisation and Normalisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
365. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
366. With regard to debates on decapitation, imprisonment of the most influential members – as opposed to killing them – allows for the tactical learning which can facilitate the disengagement process, but the effect of this may be contingent on the extent a new group of members become influential on the outside. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
367. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
368. The policy of reducing the presence of British soldiers and increasing the role of security services in Northern Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
369. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
370. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
371. Although, the conflict was still portrayed as an anti-imperialist struggle against Britain [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
372. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
373. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
374. Silke, "Rebel's Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the Ira, Sinn Fein and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
375. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
376. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
377. Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
378. Thomas Hegghammer, "The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements. By Omar Ashour," *New York* (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
379. See, for example, Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, "From War to Peace in Northern Ireland," in *A Farewell to Arms?: From 'Long War' to Long Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed. Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke, and Fiona Stephen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
380. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
381. Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1995 and the Search for Peace*. pp. 207 [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
382. Moloney claims that disengagement did surprise many members, yet this underplays the dialogue that had been occurring inside and outside prisons. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
383. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
384. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013; Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
385. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013; Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
386. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
387. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
388. Interview, 32 County Sovereignty Movement Member, Belfast, 15th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
389. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
390. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
391. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
392. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
393. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
394. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
395. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
396. Weinberg and Perliger, "How Terrorist Groups End." Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
397. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
398. K McEvoy and P Shirlow, "Re-Imagining Ddr: Ex-Combatants, Leadership and Moral Agency in Conflict Transformation," *Theoretical Criminology* Vol. 13 (31)(2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
399. Ruth Jamieson, Peter Shirlow, and Adrian Grounds. "Ageing and social exclusion among former politically motivated prisoners in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland." Belfast: Changing Aging Partnership (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
400. Ruth Jamieson and Adrian Grounds, ‘Facing the Future: Ageing and Politically-motivated former prisoners in Northern Ireland and the border region’ Report commissioned by Ex-Prisoner Assistance Committee (EXPAC), September 2008, pp.1-49 [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
401. R.T. Spjut, "Internment and Detension without Trial in Northern Ireland 1971-1975: Ministerial Policy and Practice," *The Modern Law Review* Vol. 49, No. 6(1986). [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
402. Gerry Adams. (1990) Cage Eleven. Dingle: Brandon Books [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
403. Rolston, Bill. "Review of literature on Republican and loyalist ex-prisoners." (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
404. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*.; Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013; Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
405. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
406. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
407. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
408. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
409. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
410. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
411. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
412. John Horgan and Paul Gill, "Who Are the Dissidents? An Introduction to the Icst Violent Dissident Republican Project," in *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, ed. P.M. Currie and Max Taylor (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
413. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
414. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*., pp. 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
415. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
416. Guelke, "'Comparatively Peaceful': South Africa, the Middle East and Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
417. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
418. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
419. Guelke, "'Comparatively Peaceful': South Africa, the Middle East and Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
420. International events such as the Israel-Palestine peace process in 1993 and the September 11th 2001 attacks were utilised by the leadership to build a narrative that the tide was turning against armed violence, although the latter actually had more tangible consequences in terms of a crackdown on Republican funding in the US. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
421. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
422. These conditions state that if the ex-prisoner commits an offence or breaches specific conditions of release, such as participation in Republican marches, then the person can be re-detained. Republicans, such as the Real IRA’s political wing, currently mobilise on this, which they refer to as internment-on-remand. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
423. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
424. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
425. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
426. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
427. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
428. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
429. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
430. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
431. Martyn Frampton, "Dissident Irish Republican Violence: A Resurgent Threat?," *The Political Quarterly* 83 (2)(2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
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435. John O'Farrell, Gaby Hinsliff, and Henry McDonald, "Ira Declares Peace, but for Some Old Warriors It's Abject Surrender," *The Observer* 31st July 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
436. Tom Brady, "Wikileaks: Why Ira Chose 'Hard Army Man' to Deliver Peace Message," *Belfast Telegraph* 31st May 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
437. Moloney, *A Secret History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
438. Waldmann, "The Radical Milieu: The under-Investigated Relationship between Terrorists and Sympathetic Communities." [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
439. Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The Ira and Sinn Fein* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
440. Stefan Malthaner, "Mobilizing the Faithful: The Relationship between Militant Islamist Groups and Their Constituencies" (University of Augsburg, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
441. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
442. English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the Ira*. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
443. Weinberg and Perliger, "How Terrorist Groups End." [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
444. Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
445. Tsvetovat and Carley, "Structural Knowledge and Success of Anti-Terrorist Activity:The Downside of Structural Equivalence." [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
446. Clubb, "Re-Evaluating the Disengagement Process: The Case of Fatah." [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
447. Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
448. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." Della Porta and LaFree, "Guest Editorial: Processes of Radicalization and De-Radicalization." [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
449. Waldmann, "The Radical Milieu: The under-Investigated Relationship between Terrorists and Sympathetic Communities." [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
450. However, there are exceptions where a group may not externalise the disengagement process, either through weakness or self-interest. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
451. Clubb, "Re-Evaluating the Disengagement Process: The Case of Fatah." [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
452. The term ‘disengagement’ is found in the terrorism literature but not in the peace and conflict literature, which instead refers to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-Integration (DDR). For the sake of simplicity, the thesis groups these three processes under the term ‘organisational disengagement’. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
453. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
454. Dwyer, "Expanding Ddr: The Transformative Role of Former Prisoners in Community-Based Reintegration in Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
455. Horgan, "Deradicalization or Disengagement?." [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
456. Ozerdem, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Afghanistan: Lessons Learned from a Cross-Cultural Perspective." [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
457. See Bjorgo and Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
458. Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
459. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
460. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
461. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 2, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
462. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
463. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
464. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
465. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
466. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
467. Clare Magill and Brandon Hamber, ""If They Don't Start Listening to Us, the Future Is Going to Look the Same as the Past": Young People and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Youth and Society* 43 (2)(2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
468. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
469. It was not possible to find how much has been given to fund projects related to the network. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
470. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
471. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
472. Noricks, "The Root Causes of Terrorism." [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
473. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13 (4)(1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
474. Ken Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding," *Youth and Society* 43 (2)(2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
475. Once again, the extent to which groups actually disengaged is disputable, with Loyalist paramilitaries still continuing to have a presence and Republicans working as an informal social network. What did change was a desire to move away from punishment beatings by these groups, therefore in addition to disengaging from armed violence they also sought to disengage from their role as vigilantes. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
476. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
477. Neil Jarman, "Peacebuilding and Policing: The Role of Community-Based Initiatives," *Shared Space: A research journal on peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland* 3(2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
478. "Managing Disorder: Responding to Interface Violence in North Belfast," (Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
479. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
480. Interview, Northern Ireland Police Official, Belfast, 15th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
481. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
482. Interview, Community Worker GN, Belfast, 14th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
483. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
484. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013; Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
485. Jarman, "Managing Disorder: Responding to Interface Violence in North Belfast." [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
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488. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
489. Interview, Community Worker CH, Belfast, 30th August 2013; Interview, Community Worker SA, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
490. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
491. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
492. Interview, Community Worker JD, Belfast, 30th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
493. Interview, Community Worker CH, Belfast, 30th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
494. Jarman, "Managing Disorder: Responding to Interface Violence in North Belfast."; Interview, Community Worker CH, Belfast, 30th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
495. See Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
496. Interview, 32 County Sovereignty Movement Member, Belfast, 15th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
497. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
498. Horgan, "Deradicalization or Disengagement?; Bjorgo and Horgan, *Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement*. Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
499. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
500. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
501. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
502. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
503. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
504. Ashour, "De-Radicalization of Jihad? The Impact of Egyptian Islamist Revisionists on Al-Qaeda." [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
505. David Mitchell, "Sticking to Their Guns? The Politics of Arms Decommissioning in Northern Ireland, 1998-2007," *Contemporary British History* 24 (3)(2010). Eamonn O'Kane, "Decommissioning and the Peace Process: Where Did It Come from and Why Did It Stay So Long?," *Irish Political Studies* 22 (1)(2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
506. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
507. See Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
508. Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
509. Horowitz, "Explaining the Northern Ireland Agreement: The Sources of an Unlikely Constitutional Consensus." pp. 193-220. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
510. Paul Dixon, "The Politics of Antagonism: Explaining Mcgarry and O'leary," *Irish Political Studies* 11 (1)(1996).; Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
511. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Proving Our Points on Northern Ireland (and Giving Reading Lessons to Dr. Dixon)," ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
512. David Meyer and Debra Minkoff, "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity," *Social Forces* 82 (4)(2004). Opp, *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
513. Rupert Taylor, ed. *Consociational Theory: Mcgarry & O'leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
514. Interview, Community Worker CH, Belfast, 30th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
515. Interview, Community Worker JEB, Belfast, 14th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
516. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
517. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
518. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
519. The violence has primarily emerged in East Belfast where the UVF leadership has little control over the battalion in this area. Violence has also been motivated by a desire to assert their authority on the political landscape and to send a signal against prosecuting UVF members for killings during the Troubles. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
520. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
521. Dixon, "The Politics of Antagonism: Explaining Mcgarry and O'leary; John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, "Proving Our Points on Northern Ireland (and Giving Reading Lessons to Dr. Dixon)," ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
522. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
523. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013; Interview, 32 County Sovereignty Movement Member, Belfast, 15th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
524. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
525. Jonny Byrne and Neil Jarman, "Ten Years after Patten: Young People and Policing in Northern Ireland," *Youth and Society* 43 (2)(2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
526. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
527. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding; Frampton, "Dissident Irish Republican Violence: A Resurgent Threat?." [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
528. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
529. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
530. "In Pictures: Gerry Kelly' Speech in Full," *News Letter* 2013. URL: <http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/in-pictures-gerry-kelly-s-speech-in-full-1-5376906> [Accessed] 1/11/2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
531. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
532. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
533. Interview, Community Worker DE, Belfast, 13th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
534. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
535. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 3, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
536. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." Della Porta and LaFree, "Guest Editorial: Processes of Radicalization and De-Radicalization." [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
537. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
538. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism." [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
539. Cronin, *Ending Terrorism : Lessons for Defeating Al-Qaeda*. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
540. Sageman, "Ripples in the Waves: Fantasies and Fashions." [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
541. Moghadam, "Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction." [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
542. Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
543. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
544. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism." Sageman, "Ripples in the Waves: Fantasies and Fashions." [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
545. McEvoy, "Communities and Peace: Catholic Youth in Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-546)
546. Horgan and Gill, "Who Are the Dissidents? An Introduction to the Icst Violent Dissident Republican Project." [↑](#footnote-ref-547)
547. BBC News, "Three Arrests in Dissident Republican Investigation," http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25449442. [↑](#footnote-ref-548)
548. Waldman’s concept of the ‘radical milieu’ and the ‘waves of terrorism theory’ discuss structural factors that condition the attitudes and behaviour of the next generation. However, the thesis does not build on these contributions because they tend to be structurally deterministic and it is out of the scope of the research to provide the conceptual clarity that could link structure and agency. Nevertheless, as the thesis has been informed by Critical Realism’s approach to the structure-agency debate, it implicitly makes the case for combining the macro level that Rapoport discusses with the micro and meso level which is more relevant to the study of de-radicalisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-549)
549. Morrison, "Why Do People Become Dissident Republicans?." [↑](#footnote-ref-550)
550. In a discussion with a Sinn Fein official, they stated their opposition to the term ‘de-radicalisation’ as Sinn Fein sought to radicalise young people. Nevertheless, the important factor is not whether Sinn Fein can radicalise young people, but if young people view Sinn Fein as being radical and attractive for them to join. [↑](#footnote-ref-551)
551. See Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review." [↑](#footnote-ref-552)
552. See the discussion in Chapter Two [↑](#footnote-ref-553)
553. Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-554)
554. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
555. Interview, Community Worker SA, Belfast, 2nd September 2013; Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-556)
556. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding." [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
557. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 pp. 416 [↑](#footnote-ref-558)
558. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding." [↑](#footnote-ref-559)
559. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-560)
560. Michael Hall, "Preventing a Return to Conflict: A Discussion by Ex-Combatants," (Netownabbey: Island Publications, 2009). pp. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
561. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-562)
562. Thus, there are indications that back up Waldmann’s concept of the ‘radical milieu’. While it may be a pedantic issue of definitions, de-radicalisation, rather than counter-radicalisation strategies, would be more relevant in this scenario. While the thesis does not have the scope to explore this issue further, there seems to be a case for arguing that there is a significant difference. Whereas counter-radicalisation refers to preventing someone from becoming radical through intervention, the process of de-radicalisation requires attitudes which have already been developed to be challenged and ‘de-programmed’. In cases where there is a ‘radical milieu’ present, especially among the younger generation, counter-terrorism efforts may require a social de-radicalisation strategy then. [↑](#footnote-ref-563)
563. Hall, "Preventing a Return to Conflict: A Discussion by Ex-Combatants." pp. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-564)
564. Ibid. pp. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-565)
565. A problem with mixing primary and secondary source interviews that have both been anonymised is it is unclear to what extent there is overlap. There are indications that, in the quote referenced, this is the same interviewee, however there is no way to confirm this. [↑](#footnote-ref-566)
566. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-567)
567. Interview, Community Worker SA, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-568)
568. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding." [↑](#footnote-ref-569)
569. John Horgan and John Morrison, "Here to Stay? The Rising Threat of Violent Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23 (4)(2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-570)
570. To repeat, Horgan and Braddock are sceptical as to whether individual participation in de-radicalisation programmes reduces the risk of recidivism. Silke argues that the differential recidivism rates are marginally different and that a change in attitudes is not necessary for militants to remain disengaged. [↑](#footnote-ref-571)
571. Rabasa et al., "Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists." [↑](#footnote-ref-572)
572. In addition to some academic sources, proponents of this view include former combatants and NGO workers. [↑](#footnote-ref-573)
573. Reference to the ‘Great Escape’ was quite substantial. It refers to the stories that former combatants such as Kelly would tell about the 1983 escape from the Long Kesh/Maze Prison by thirty-eight Provisional IRA prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-574)
574. Morrison, "Why Do People Become Dissident Republicans?." [↑](#footnote-ref-575)
575. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 3, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-576)
576. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 2, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-577)
577. For example, where family and social networks are highly politicised. [↑](#footnote-ref-578)
578. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 1, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-579)
579. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 1, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-580)
580. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-581)
581. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 3, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-582)
582. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 1, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-583)
583. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 1, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-584)
584. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 3, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-585)
585. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 2, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-586)
586. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 3, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-587)
587. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 1, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-588)
588. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-589)
589. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 3, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-590)
590. Morrison, "Why Do People Become Dissident Republicans?." [↑](#footnote-ref-591)
591. Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Male 2, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-592)
592. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding."; Clare Magill and Brandon Hamber, ""If They Don't Start Listening to Us, the Future Is Going to Look the Same as the Past": Young People and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina," ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-593)
593. Ken Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding," ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-594)
594. Lesley Emerson and Allan McCully, "Teaching Controversial Issues in Conflict and in Transition to Peace: An Analysis of Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland," in *Cross-Cultural Case Studies of Teaching Controversial Issues: Pathways and Challenges to Democratic Citizenship Education*, ed. T Misco (Nijmegen: Wolf Legal, 2014). Lesley Emerson, "Conflict, Transition and Education for 'Political Generosity': Learning from the Experience of Ex-Combatants in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Peace Education* 9 (3) (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-595)
595. Alexander Evans, "Understanding Madrasahs: How Threatening Are They?," *Foreign Affairs* 9(2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-596)
596. Wayne Nelles, ed. *Comparative Education, Terrorism and Human Security* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-597)
597. Rony Berger and Ruth Pat-Horenczyk, "School-Based Intervention for Prevention and Treatment of Elementary-Students' Terror-Related Distress in Israel: A Quasi-Randomized Controlled Trial," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 20 (4)(2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-598)
598. Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17 (4)(2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-599)
599. Interview, Home Office Security Official, London, 9th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-600)
600. Interview, Home Office Security Official, London, 9th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-601)
601. Interview, Home Office Security Official, London, 9th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-602)
602. Interview, Community Worker CA, Belfast, 5th September 2013; Interview, Home Office [↑](#footnote-ref-603)
603. Lesley Emerson, Paul Connolly, and Karen Orr, "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the 'Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners' Educational Programme," (Belfast: Centre for Effective Education: Queen's University Belfast, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-604)
604. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-605)
605. The Loyalist motivation for disengagement has been largely built around the Provisional IRA’s disengagement, therefore the decline in Republican violence removes the perceived need for violence. Thus, inter-community dialogue has been far more essential for Loyalist disengagement as it has created the trust that has prevented Republican recidivism legitimising Loyalist recidivism. However, it remains to be seen if the recent drift to violence by the UVF in East Belfast and attempts to mimic the 1960s civil rights movement represent a change in the direction of Loyalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-606)
606. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-607)
607. Interview, Community Worker SA, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-608)
608. Once again, the project was funded under the EU Peace III programme, although details on the amount of funding was not available. [↑](#footnote-ref-609)
609. Interview, Former INLA Member, Belfast, 26th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-610)
610. CFNI, "From Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners." [↑](#footnote-ref-611)
611. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-612)
612. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-613)
613. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-614)
614. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-615)
615. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-616)
616. Harland, "Violent Youth Culture in Northern Ireland: Young Men, Violence, and the Challenges of Peacebuilding." [↑](#footnote-ref-617)
617. Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." [↑](#footnote-ref-618)
618. Jonny Byrne, Mary Conway, and Malcolm Ostermeyer, "Young People's Attitudes and Experiences of Policing, Violence and Community Safety in North Belfast," (Institute for Conflict Research, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-619)
619. Shirlow et al., *Abandoning Historical Conflict?: Former Political Prisoners and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. [↑](#footnote-ref-620)
620. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-621)
621. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 4, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-622)
622. Interview, Community Worker CH, Belfast, 30th August 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-623)
623. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 5, Belfast, 3rd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-624)
624. Snow et al., "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." [↑](#footnote-ref-625)
625. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-626)
626. See Horgan and Altier, "The Future of Terrorist De-Radicalization Programs." [↑](#footnote-ref-627)
627. CFNI, "From Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners." [↑](#footnote-ref-628)
628. Although they disagree on what should be de-legitimised and whether this should be unconditional. [↑](#footnote-ref-629)
629. Fishbein and Ajzen, *Predicting and Changing Behavior: The Reasoned Action Approach*. [↑](#footnote-ref-630)
630. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-631)
631. McEvoy, "Communities and Peace: Catholic Youth in Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-632)
632. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-633)
633. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-634)
634. Emerson, Connolly, and Orr, "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the 'Prison to Peace: Learning from the Experience of Political Ex-Prisoners' Educational Programme." [↑](#footnote-ref-635)
635. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-636)
636. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-637)
637. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-638)
638. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-639)
639. Interview, Former Provisional IRA Member 1, Belfast, 22nd August 2013; Sinn Fein Youth Focus Group, Female 2, Belfast, 11th September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-640)
640. Interview, Academic/Project Manager, Belfast, 2nd September 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-641)
641. Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*. [↑](#footnote-ref-642)
642. Silke, "Disengagement or Deradicalization: A Look at Prison Programs for Jailed Terrorists." [↑](#footnote-ref-643)
643. McEvoy, "Communities and Peace: Catholic Youth in Northern Ireland." [↑](#footnote-ref-644)