DICHIARAZIONE SOSTITUTIVA DI CERTIFICAZIONE
SULLA DISTRIBUZIONE DEL LAVORO DI RICERCA

Il sottoscritto Lorenzo Bosi
Nato a Volta Mantovana (MN), il 18/08/1976 e residente a Bologna in via Petrarca 44/2.

La sottoscritta Donatella Della Porta
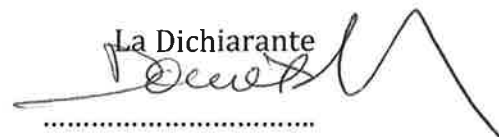Nata a Catania, il 3/6/1956 e residente a Firenze in via Santo Spirito 19.

DICHIARANO

In relazione all'articolo "Micro-mobilization into Armed Groups: Ideological, Instrumental and Solidaristic Paths" 35: 361-383, DOI 10.1007/s11133-01209237-1, dichiariamo che gli autori hanno collaborato alla sua stesura, ma che ogni autore ha contribuito a sezioni specifiche. Lorenzo Bosi ha scritto le sezioni "An Interpretive Multi-Level Approach" e "Conclusion"; Donatella Della Porta ha scritto le sezioni "Introduction" e "Empirical Cases and Methodological Caveats". Entrambe gli autori hanno scritto la sezione "Paths toward Armed Activism Mobilization" in particolare Lorenzo Bosi e' responsabile delle parti riguardanti la PIRA e Donatella Della Porta delle parti riguardanti le BR.

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La Dichiarante

Micro-mobilization into Armed Groups: Ideological, Instrumental and Solidaristic Paths

Lorenzo Bosi · Donatella Della Porta

Abstract Based on biographical materials of armed militants of the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Red Brigades, this article analyses variation within the micromobilization that leads to armed groups. Three general paths are singled out: the ideological path, the instrumental path and the solidaristic path. Each of these is characterized by complex interactions between the individual motivations for involvement (micro-level), the networks that facilitate the recruitment process (meso-level), and the effects of repression on individuals (macro-level). We discuss the discoveries we have made and conclude by describing the advantages of our approach.

Keywords Political violence · Social movements · Northern Ireland · Italy · Qualitative interviews

This article seeks to improve our understanding of how individuals join armed groups. In doing this we do not point at root causes, nor look at one simple profile or unitary pattern of any sort—features very typical of past terrorism studies literature, which "has been narrowed and distorted by the search for effective responses to terrorism" (Goodwin 2004, 260). Neither do we aim at providing a general model of micro-mobilization. Rather, we are interested in empirically singling out—without pretending to be exhaustive—some of the central paths followed by those individuals who join armed groups. We root this in a theoretical discussion of the reciprocal interplay between individuals, armed group dynamics and changing situational contexts. As we will see, all three levels of analysis—the micro, meso and macro—provide useful explanations, but it is their complex, repeated interactions that especially need to be studied in detail, since each compounds and complicates the others. To unpack the web of complex interactions between these levels we look specifically

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at three central dimensions: the individual motivations for involvement, the networks that facilitate the recruitment process, and the effects of repression on individuals.

By building on our field work on the Provisional Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland (PIRA, hereafter) and the Red Brigades in Italy (BR, hereafter), we single out the three distinct paths of micro-mobilization that, in our cases, emerged as central ones: an ideological path, an instrumental path, and a solidaristic path.[1]

–   Common to the individuals who followed an ideological path was the presence of deeply rooted family and/or local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness. Their recruitment process passed through different steps in terms of their involvement in violent actions. They perceived their sociopolitical context as open to a potentially revolutionary situation, where particular transformative events worked to confirm and support previous views, up to legitimizing the choice for armed activism.
–   In comparison, those who followed an instrumental path tended to break more with their past when mobilizing in armed groups. They joined the armed groups following their belief that armed activism would lead to concrete results. The conversion from more conventional forms of participation to political violence was generally triggered by critical events that played a crucial role in their life histories. Recruitment took place through a personal contact with the recruiter(s) and matured during previous experiences of socio-political activism.
–   For those who followed a solidaristic path resorting to political violence was the result of escalating political conflict, which they deemed to be beyond their normal control. Along with their peers they felt compelled to join armed groups as a means of defending and avenging their own community, rather than for more general political reasons. They usually entered armed activism later in the history of our armed groups than those individuals from the other two paths. This was facilitated by the armed group's degree of inclusivity in the recruitment process.

These are of course ideal types. Armed activists present different mixes of the three dimensions we have just mentioned. Additionally, we do not imply that these three paths cover all potential types in all different forms of violent activism.[2] Rather, our effort is oriented towards providing a multi-level approach in order to better understand variations among those people who join armed groups that later studies might use as a reference point for finding further paths of micro-mobilization. Table 1 helps us to illustrate some central dimensions within each of the three paths.

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[1] Although our empirical testing concerns PIRA and BR armed activists, we believe that similar micro-mobilization paths can be found in other armed groups. This is true if we think of the works of Jocelyan Viterna (2006) on the women's mobilization into the FMLN in El Savador, that of Fernando Reinares (2001) with ETA militants, Olivier Roy's (2004) work with Islamic militants mobilization into Al Qaeda in the Middle East, or the work of Gilda Zwerman and Patricia Steinhoff (2005) regarding left-wing armed groups in the US and Japan in the post 1960s.
[2] While we retain that the process of becoming engaged in armed activism has some important bearings on the process of disengagement, we want to be clear to avoid any assumption of these as linear, discrete, and indistinct. What brings individuals into armed activism in the first place may or may not be the same as what sustains their continued involvement. Thus, a person starting out following a solidaristic path may become highly politicized and ideological, or move from being a follower to a leader with a higher status. Disengagement is far from a simple reversal or mirror-image of the initial process of micro-mobilization into political violence.

Table 1 Three ideal types of activists and their pathways to activism

Paths	Dominant Motivations	Recruitment-Relevant Networks	Political Opportunities
Ideological	Counter-hegemonic consciousness (Republicanism/betrayed resistance and Marxism-Leninism)	Family and territorial traditions	Potential revolutionary situation
Instrumental	Aspiration to change	The political groups	Closed opportunities
Solidaristic	Defense and revenge	The peer group	Escalation of political conflict

An Interpretive Multi-Level Approach

Research on political violence has focused on various individual characteristics to explain why some resort to armed militancy. The first studies in the field pointed to psycho-pathologies, such as dependent or identity-seeking personalities, without, however, employing close empirical examination (psychological-individual approach). Socio-structural approaches have stressed grievances: "Terrorists" are said to come from the most deprived (frustrated and therefore aggressive) groups within a given population. Here too, empirical evidence has been at best inconsistent. Moving from grievances to greed, recent psychosocial approach in terrorism and political violence studies instead stress instrumentality, defined as a rational means of redressing poverty, inequalities, social exclusion or disenfranchisement. Profiling groups of the population that possess one, or more, of the above mentioned characteristics as "at risk of radicalization" became a widespread "counterterrorist" tactic (Goodwin 2004). In this article, we want to go beyond these approaches.

Focusing on left-wing political violence in Italy and Germany in the 1970s, della Porta (1995) singled out some different (micro) characteristics of two different generations of militants, linking them to the escalation of social and political conflicts (macro), fuelled by "violent entrepreneurs" (meso). Looking at insurgencies, Jeremy M. Weinstein (2007) has combined the three analytic levels within a rational choice approach in what he calls a "micropolitics of rebellion." Criticizing the lack of attention of research on the organizational dimension of civil war, he explains the different degrees and types of the use of violence against the civil population by insurgents by looking at the basis of resources available for them and the effects of these bases on organizational strategy and types of membership. The assumption is that in resource rich contexts insurgent organizations tend to attract greedy individuals, who aim at short-term (material) rewards and who do not rely upon the support of the population. Vice versa, in resource poor contexts, insurgent organizations tend to attract idealists, motivated by long-term rewards, and rely more heavily on the support of the population. Joselyn S. Viterna's research (2006) on women guerrillas in El Salvador establishes links between the types of recruits and the role played by biographical availability as well as networks. Distinguishing between the politicized guerrillas, the reluctant guerrillas and the recruited guerrillas, Viterna shows that these three types display different motivations. The politicized guerrillas were attracted by ideological commitment and "were pulled into guerrilla participation by their strongly held beliefs in the political cause" (20). The reluctant guerrillas were motivated by a lack of alternatives and "were pushed into the guerrilla camps because a crisis left

them with no other options" (24). Finally, the recruited guerillas were searching for adventure or retribution and "were persuaded to join the movement"(28). The politicized guerrilla shows family ties as well as previous organizational memberships in political organizations, which are not important for the other two types. Instead, biographical availability, especially being of a young age, and location in the rebellious camps were particularly relevant for the recruited guerrillas. Another difference was that, though politicized guerrillas were more relevant in the founding phase, recruited guerrillas tended to arrive later on. While we do not share all Weinstein's assumptions, and work on a different empirical subject than Viterna's, we think it is useful to reflect on the ways in which the context and the organizational structure influence how individuals join armed groups.

Building upon these previous works, we want not only to test the extent to which the results about different paths of militancy are confirmed by other types of armed groups, as well as other forms of political violence, but we also go a step forward by mapping different paths of individual involvement in armed groups, reflecting the complex interactions of micro, meso and macro levels. Individual mobilization is, in fact, tightly linked to changing situational contexts and armed group dynamics (macro→micro and meso→micro). The socio-political context has a bearing on the decision to participate through the perceptions that individuals hold (macro→micro). The organizational level affects the choices made by individuals (meso→micro), as the organizational recruitment strategy targets specific groups. At the same time, armed groups and contexts change over time as they constantly influence each other (macro→meso and meso→macro). Also due to changes in the socio-political environment, expectations spread within the armed group constituencies, and organizational strategies may need to be adapted in order to attract new recruits (macro→meso). Armed groups are not only influenced by their environment, but are themselves agents of change that can alter the socio-political context, manufacturing opportunities (meso→macro). Finally, new flows of armed activists may alter the composition of an armed group and its trajectory from within (micro→meso).

While these interactions are all equally important, in this article we focus in particular on three central dimensions, which our empirical analysis has shown to better grasp the variation among those individuals who join armed groups: the individual motivations for involvement (micro), the networks which facilitate the recruitment process (meso), and the effects on individuals of repressive strategies (macro).

By motivations we mean here not a psychological element, which our study is unable to grasp, but rather the activists' perceived reasons for joining, as they emerge in biographical accounts by former militants. Influenced by the armed group's context and loose activist networks (past experiences, primary socializations, and both formal and informal networks of interaction in everyday life), expectations depend on the perception of the external socio-political environment. Instrumentality is not the only motivation for joining. As socially related actors, individuals feel they belong to a group and tend to act accordingly when friends, colleagues, relatives, and so on mobilize in movement activities. Activists are also drawn into contentious politics by the force of their ideas, even when faced with unfavorable opportunities.[3]

Armed groups are entrepreneurs who distribute selective (economics, power, and status) and collective (identity, solidarity, and ideology) incentives that enhance individual participation despite their illegal and clandestine character. The type of organizational structure in

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[3] The different motivations we have mentioned can be easily summarized in the language of social movement studies. Bert Klandermans' (2004) "identity" is a conceptual parallel to our "solidaristic" motivation.

place influences the incentives and motivations available to the dominant recruitment strategy. Armed groups decide who might be a "good militant" and target specific individuals as potential recruits. Selective effects are even more important when compared to social movements organizations' recruitment techniques, due to the illegal and secretive nature of the armed groups. Some social networks, which are considered to facilitate the recruitment strategy process, are then targeted according to the dominant mobilizing message present at a particular stage. Over time, due to changes in the socio-political environment, armed groups can strategically choose to further isolate themselves from their own broader constituency by accentuating their ideological purity and thus retaining the commitment of armed activists, thus raising collective incentives, and recruiting among their strict circles of friends and relatives; conversely, they can become more inclusive, raising selective incentives, and recruit from the broader constituency of the armed group. In this choice, armed groups are constrained by both external (political opportunities and public support) and internal (resources and intra-group dissent) dynamics. The dominant recruitment strategy, then, is not static over time, but varies depending on which kinds of people make a "good militant" for an armed group and how it is possible to establish trust in potential recruits at a particular stage.

Repression has a direct impact on armed activism, being a sort of barometer for available political opportunities but also, given some degree of police discretion, directly affecting armed group repertoires and their capacity to establish trust in potential recruits. The effects of repression on individuals are not constant. They depend on time and space, on whether repression is specific or indiscriminate, how the repression is perceived by different strands of the population who have diverse attitudes towards the establishment and how it is afterwards reconstructed by armed groups and their wider constituencies (Della Porta 1995). Thus, specific traumatic events of repression, which have a transformative power, are weighted very differently among individuals depending very much on one's earlier socializing processes. For individuals with pre-existing socialization in anti-systemic subcultures repression serves as a confirmation of the illegitimacy of the regime, working to mobilize or remobilize those individuals (Bosi 2007). For individuals who are not familiar with anti-systemic subcultures, specific traumatic events of repression represent a loss of innocence that delegitimizes the regime and reveals what is then perceived as a hidden malignant nature, thus justifying micro-mobilization in armed groups for some.

Empirical Cases and Methodological Caveats

Comparative Design

We have constructed our typology through an iterative (abductive) procedure of field-work related, inductive thinking, and theory-oriented, deductive considerations. Going beyond a methodological tradition in qualitative research on political violence that has usually focused on specific ideological types, we develop instead a paired comparison of most-different cases of micro-mobilizations into armed activism with the aim of singling out some similarities between them (McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow 2010). Our cases represent two of the most influential armed groups in Europe, among the few who lasted for more than 10 years, with a broad territorial coverage and a relatively high number of members and sympathizers. They differ however in their main ideological roots: ethnonationalist for the PIRA, socio-revolutionary for the BR.

This most-different research design is unusual in research on political violence (and beyond). Since September 11th, 2001 the field of terrorism and political violence studies has experienced an explosive growth in publications. This has not been followed up, however, by the type of comparative research that is essential for developing theoretically sound explanations of micro-mobilization in violent political organizations. Existing comparative studies tend to cover only armed groups that have similar ideologies and political purposes. Cross-type comparisons have long been jeopardized by the unspoken assumption that underpins much of the literature and the broader public debate, namely that factors relating to a specific ideology offer a sufficient explanation of political violence, its particular cruelty, intransigence, and persistence (Bloom 2005; Post 2002). A case in point is the dominant approach to the study of Al Qaeda-type terrorism: By focusing on the organization's religious, cosmopolitan millenarianism, these studies tend to construct a direct causal and inevitable connection between Islam and terrorism (Crenshaw 2006, 2011).

In contrast to the dominant paradigm, therefore, our comparative design covers dissimilar types of armed groups. This allows the analysis to move beyond a simplistic focus on ideology and look, instead, for similar paths, thereby promoting a broader understanding of micro-mobilization into armed activism. Although we compare two cases, our primary aim here is not a systematic comparison of armed activism in the two organizations. Rather, using biographical data mainly for the purpose of illustration, we are interested to see to what extent similar micro-mobilization paths among those who join armed activism can be found "in substantially divergent periods, places and regimes" (McAdam et al. 2001, 82). Furthermore, we treat the differences that undoubtedly exist between our two empirical cases as useful dimensions for a comparative understanding, rather than as obstacles.

Case Selection

Utilizing a most-different case studies approach, we focused upon the Provisional IRA and the BR, which we had studied in detail in previous works (Bosi 2012; Della Porta 1995).

The Provisional IRA

At the end of the 1960s political contention emerged in Northern Ireland over the civil rights movement (CRM) opposition to discriminations, a claim which the Unionist establishment and the Loyalist counter-movement resisted with harsh state repression and open violent confrontation. This socio-political crisis in the region opened up a space, first for extreme communal violence during the summer of 1969, and then for the emergence of the Provisional IRA at the end of 1969, a result of a split within the IRA. From 1971 the PIRA military campaign, aiming for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and unification with the Irish Republic, incorporated strategies such as bombings and shooting attacks on security forces (from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland), soldiers, commercial premises, militants from competing republican armed groups and Loyalist paramilitaries, and civilians. The Provisional IRA was responsible for over 1,750 deaths between 1970 and 1994. Until 1977 its organizational structure was equated to that of the British Army, with hierarchies of leadership and territorial brigades, battalions, and companies. While the active membership of the organization never exceeded a few hundred at any one time, it is estimated that over 10,000 individuals participated in the PIRA in its almost 30 years of military campaigning.

The Red Brigades

In Italy, left-wing political violence in the 1970s was rooted in the massive upsurge of the student movement and the workers' struggle of 1968–69, and their perceived failure to bring about broad social and political change. Radicalization began to unfold when right-wing violence, aimed at left-wing groups with the intention of provoking a reaction from the Italian state, led to increased repression against social movement protests. Political violence then began to be perpetrated by left-wing groups, which also felt abandoned as a result of the gradual co-optation of the Communist Party by the establishment, as a means to resist and keep up the offensive in order to destroy the capitalist state. In this tense socio-political atmosphere left-wing armed groups, including the Red Brigades, were founded. The BR was the largest and leading organization among the armed left-wing groups in terms of the degree of political violence it deployed—claiming responsibility for 145 killings—and longevity, lasting—despite splits into various groups and wings—until the end of the 1980s. Marxist-Leninist in its ideology, the BR were organized in city columns, which were subdivided into brigades, with "cells" of three to five members each. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s it was estimated to have over four hundred full-time members, plus an unknown number of supporters. Initially, the BR's main activities were fairly low level. They did not go beyond damage to company properties, setting fire to numerous automobiles owned by business executives, security staff, heads of sections, or brief kidnappings of industrial managers and right-wing trade unionists. The development of the BR towards the adoption of more violent repertoires came about gradually. By the mid 1970s, the focus of the organization had shifted to attacking and destroying capitalist power by "striking at the heart of the Italian State."

Data Methods and Sources

Whereas most literature on micro-mobilization in armed activism relies on secondary and even tertiary accounts, our comparative analysis of the paths leading to armed activism is empirically grounded. Focusing on the periods between 1964 and 1972 in Northern Ireland and between 1969 and 1980 in Italy,[4] we have gathered data on political violence from a wide range of sources, including interviews carried out by the authors and armed activists' autobiographies; historical records (newspapers, government documents, court and police records, and documents from organizations); and the systematic consultation of secondary sources.[5]

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[4] Four of the Northern Ireland interviewees were already involved in the IRA before 1969. They moved to the Provisional IRA at the time of the split with the Official IRA. It is worth remembering that in the aftermath of the failure of the Border Campaign, 1956–1962, the leadership of the IRA decided to keep the use of political violence in reserve, preferring and promoting a new gradualist-reformist grassroots agitation strategy focused on civil rights demands (Bosi 2006). Those who joined the IRA first during the 1960s and later moved on to the PIRA were thus initially joining an organization which was illegal, but which was keeping the armed struggle in reserve.

[5] Throughout the article former armed activists interviewed are referred to numerically rather than with names in order to maintain anonymity. The first author carried out 25 semi-structured interviews with former rank-and-file members of the PIRA in Northern Ireland during four field trips to the region between 2007 and 2008. Interviews on the Italian case were collected in the framework of a wider research program on political violence and terrorism led by the Carlo Cattaneo Institute of Bologna since 1981. We would like to thank the Istituto Carlo Cattaneo for providing access to its archive and in particular to the part of the *Documentazione sul terrorismo* (DOTE) archive. A fuller description of the empirical cases and complete documentation are available respectively for the Northern Ireland case in Bosi 2012 and for the Italian one in Della Porta 1995.

For the analysis of the pathways into armed groups we rely mainly on the two authors' access to 40 former armed militants (27 male and13 female)[6] in the form of interviews (32) and autobiographies (8).[7] As often in qualitative research, these individuals were not selected as representative of a population (on which we have little uncontested knowledge), but, rather, we tried, with limited availability, to identify former armed activists with diverse backgrounds. This was done in order to discover some theoretically-critical dimensions. In particular, we aimed at including activists belonging to different generations, as our expectation was that paths of recruitment are influenced by (changing) circumstances at the meso and macro levels.

Various types of biographical materials are used in order to single out paths leading to armed activism, so linking the micro, meso and macro conditions to the individuals' choices to join. Semi-structured interviews and autobiographies are certainly highly selective and even self-serving, providing the opportunity for retrospective self-justification by (ex-) militants. They are also constrained by the meso- and macro-level realities at the time they were produced, so that the account of the past is colored by the perception of the present. For example, all our interviewees were in jail during their interview or they have spent a long time there. In our interpretation of the autobiographies and life histories we have used various additional sources (contemporary and present-day sources, unobtrusive and face-to-face techniques, state and nonstate sources, and sources originating from different geographic locations) that, we think, helped us to locate these histories in their context. Triangulation with other sources helped our interpretation of the militants statements about, e.g., the role of the family or of networks of friends in the recruitment processes or of specific transformative repressive events that they have experienced, as well as in contextualizing individual statements by looking at a given actor's role and commitment within the armed group. Furthermore, by comparing life histories and/or biographies with each other, we were able to single out some collective memories, common to groups of interviewees. Having said that, each interview and autobiography of former armed activists remain, in the end their, stories and reveal the way interviewees and writers want to be portrayed, once the cycles of political violence have ended.[8]

Paths Towards Armed Activisim Mobilization in the PIRA and in the BR

The Ideological Path

Interviewee no. 1 was born in 1948 in Belfast on the Falls Road, in a working-class family with strong traditions in the republican struggle. From the mid-1960s he worked as a textile printer. This is how he described his political attitudes and motivations in 1964, when he decided, after no previous social-political activities, to join the Republican Movement.

> What motivated me was basically the feeling of being a republican and seeing no space for colonialism by another country. And looking back at the 800 years of history

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[6] From the sources we have no single path typical emerges for female armed militants.

[7] 8 autobiographies of former BR armed activists were consulted: Guerri 1983; Scialoja 1993; Mosca and Rossanda 1994; Balzerani 1998; Franceschini 1988; Morucci 2004; Gallinari 2006; and Grandi 2007.

[8] In line with recent qualitative methodological developments (Smilde 2005), further ethnographic work might be needed to explain the relationship between the paths we singled out, the militants' role and degrees of commitment within the armed groups, and militants' subsequent careers. This will be particularly helpful in order to control for the retrospective bias of the biographical materials.

of British presence in Ireland and how they have treated Irish people I think that, among other reasons, it is the outstanding reason for it [joining the IRA] and the prevailing reason. I joined for the right of Irish people for self-determination, a united Ireland free from British rules.

These beliefs seem to have fuelled his republican activism throughout his life. He considered the choice of joining the republican movement as nothing but the logical continuation of the long-standing "counter-hegemonic consciousness" present in his home, where political violence was seen as a legitimate repertoire of action for political redress, portraying his mobilization into the IRA in an ideological manner. In his own words:

It wasn't really the thing to do [to join the IRA]. The thing to do, instead, was going out to dance and going out with girls. Joining the republican movement was not the thing to do at that time, you were too busy enjoying your life when you are young. Probably a lot of friends couldn't understand what I was doing. But they seemed to have realized this when the troubles started. They didn't have the background I had, the knowledge I had. They didn't see really what was going on in the country and how bad it was.

His choice to join was perceived as relatively straightforward even in a period in which the republican movement was not at its strongest (the mid 1960s) after the failure of the "Border Campaign" (1956–1962). Family involvement in the republican movement was not only central in furnishing a background for further activism but also fundamental during the recruitment process into the organization:

Mine was a very much interested republican family. My father and my uncle were in prison in the early 1940s. Family networks were getting me involved in the republican movement. My uncle was involved in the IRA during the 1960s, my father at that time was not, he was trying to rise nine children.

However, joining the republican movement cannot be seen in absolute linear terms in the development and crystallization of his previously vague and fragmented beliefs. Alongside his family's background in the republican struggle, he also mentioned his first experiences of state repression in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) marches, which he had joined as a republican activist in early 1968. Whereas the Northern Ireland establishment's reaction to the CRM did not appear particularly new to him, since he had grown up with stories of state violence against republicans and the broader nationalist community, experiencing it first hand had a particular effect, further radicalizing his approach to politics and resonating with his previous family ideas: "I had very strong emotions. The Civil Rights Movement and the way they were treated was shameful. I was not so much shocked as I was angry. I knew that these people, [the Northern Ireland police], were capable of this, but I didn't see this before first hand."

Like other republicans at the time, he had joined the protest not with the intent of reforming the state, but with idea that the CRM could serve as a vehicle towards the final goal of Irish reunification, and that the armed struggle was merely being postponed due to a more favorable phase of the conflict (Bosi 2006). Therefore, even while protesting against the Northern Ireland regime he seemed to know that everything would finally come down to a conflict with the British State interests in Ireland. For this reason the British State was perceived as the natural enemy against which political violence should be addressed, and once the British Army started to patrol the streets of Northern Ireland it was time to move to the armed struggle strategy once again. When, in 1969, the Provisionals split from the

Officials IRA, Interviewee no. 1 chose to join the PIRA which, in his view, marked a continuation of an earlier involvement with the republican strategy to drive the British out of Ireland through political violence. The changed political context was in his view a positive opening for a nationalist insurrection led by an armed vanguard: "The choice between the Provisional and the Officials was a military decision on how things should go."

Born in the "red" region of Reggio Emilia in 1950, Prospero Gallinari was one of the founders of the Red Brigades in 1970. The son of a peasant, he grew up in a family and communitarian environment in which the Resistance against Fascism and left-wing political activism were deeply rooted. In his autobiography, he remembers the relevance, in his adolescence, of the "old communists I had the good luck to meet. All people, neighbors or relatives, most of which had been partisans… They were product of the resistance" (Gallinari 2006, 13). In this strongly politicized "red territorial culture" of the 1950s, his political career started when he was still in his early teens. He remembers:

> I was twelve and, following the habits of the time, I started as a pioneer. I sold *Milione*, the little journal of the very young activists of the PCI [Partito Comunista Italiano (Comunist Italian Party)], and then moved up to distribute *Unità* [the party daily]. I had just finished primary school when I started to meet with comrades, not just as friends or neighbors, but also as people I met at the party section or the *Casa del Popolo*. (14)

Socialization to left-wing values therefore happened during his childhood, especially listening to his grandfather's tales of the anti-fascist struggle, but also of rebellion as an expression of human dignity. He wrote in fact of his "family path" to politics, which began when he was just 6 years old, listening to stories of life experiences in 1919–20, "when the fascists started to become aggressive" (20–21), but also of the workers' struggles. The rebellious history of "red" Reggio Emilia plays a central role in Gallinari's narrative. It is a story of peasant struggles, the building of worker cooperatives, the first experiences of socialism at the beginning of the 20th century, of the factories "occupied in 1920 by the workers under the motto 'Ag vol Lenin!' (We need Lenin), with the aim of creating a Soviet inside the factory" (25).

A particularly central role is played by the "mythical" Reggiane metal works, which "exploded again after July 1943 [liberation from Nazi occupation], declaring a struggle against the war and hunger, and paying for this the price of nine workers killed, among which a pregnant woman. Workers killed by machine guns during a march against fascism and calling to 'stop the war'" (25). This story—so rooted in the consciousness of the city that —as Gallinari recalls, was one he learned "face-to-face, before reading about it in books." For Gallinari, this same story continued with the struggle and the occupations of the 1950s, which saw about a thousand arrests per year and 500 sentences in 2 years for political crimes. The history of Reggio Emilia is therefore a history of contentious confrontation with the state in which the entire community participated. In Gallinari's memories, "Those struggles also expressed a true counter-power. In the occupied factory, the workers continued to work and the city mobilized around them" (27).

The heavy repression of the labor movement, with five workers killed by the police during a peaceful demonstration in July 1960 that made Reggio Emilia an important symbol of working class resistance at the national level, is part of the direct experience of the 9 year old Prospero, who remembered,

> That afternoon, I was in the fields… when I saw several men and women nearing a big old nut tree… it was a machine gun bullet that entered the roots of the nut tree… it was

only two or three kilometers away from the center of the city, where the march was going on, against which the police were shooting… Granddad came home to bring news. He came from the city center, and there were already news of many dead and wounded people. (28)

The narrative involves continuity, but also discontinuity in terms of a slow detachment from the Communist Party he had belonged to. As a member of the local directing committee of the youth organ of the party, the FGCI, Gallinari came to disagree, along with other young activists, with the party, which he accuses of having "betrayed the ideals, betrayed the hopes, betrayed the efforts that had cost so much" (36). Influenced by the protests in 1968 and 1969, the critical young activists within the party rented an apartment to meet with others to discuss the turbulent times. The party reacted strongly to this, threatening to expel those who frequented the apartment; while some obeyed, "for many, it was simply the acknowledgment of something that, in their hearts and minds, had already happened: the break" (57). Expelled from the party, the group of young rebellious communists founded the Collettivo Politico Operai Studenti (Political Collective of Students and Workers) and then sought contacts with "the revolutionary forces in the neuralgic centers of the social struggle" (62). Through a member of the student collective in Trento, they entered into contact with other future founders of the Red Brigades and with them founded the CPM (Collettivo Politico Metropolitano (Metropolitan Political Collective)), later to become—through mergers and splits—the Sinistra Proletaria (Proletarian Left) and then the Red Brigades, and decided to move to Milan, as "the central place of the struggle is the metropolis" (64).

Like other activists who follow this path, in both our cases (interviewees 1, 6, 11 and 17 for the PIRA and Curcio, Buonavita, Franceschini, Gallinari and Moretti for the BR), it was the presence of deeply rooted family and/or local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness that made the passage to armed struggle appear as a normal evolution, although there is more continuity in the Northern Ireland case than the Italian. This was particularly true in communities where either the republican movement or the partisan/class struggles had a strong and continuous presence, increasing the possibility of younger family members being influenced by older relatives, or close figures who had previously participated in struggles. In both our cases, the armed activists perceive themselves as belonging to a long history of struggle, packed with stories of brave resistance. The same cannot be said of those who followed the other two paths. A family background with deep-rooted traditions in the republican and partisan struggles was either not present or not mentioned in other armed activists' accounts of their trajectories towards mobilization. The ultimate choice to engage in armed activism is interpreted by those individuals who followed an ideological path as a sort of moral 'obligation' (Interviewee no. 17 and Alfredo Buonavita, quoted in Catanzaro and Manconi 1995, 98). Joining armed activism represented the fulfillment of promises already made in their very first socialization. For these reasons the choices of those who followed an ideological path into armed activism were not perceived as breaks, but rather the continuation of a much longer involvement in the radical milieu (Interviewee no. 6 and Alberto Franceschini, quoted in Fasanella and Franceschini 2004, 23).

For both our cases, this path was particularly widespread among the founders of the two organizations, in 1969/1970 and 1970 respectively, as they possessed better resources in terms of networks, but also in terms of political education, as they had politically mobilized before. This does not mean that individuals following an ideological path in our two cases of armed groups did not also mobilize at later stages, but the near absence of individuals from the other two paths makes the ideological path almost hegemonic at the beginnings of these groups, and placed those who followed an ideological path in a better position to become

leaders of those groups. They provided the armed groups with ideological and organizational continuity with previous struggles (micro→meso).

At the meso-level, at their foundation, the armed groups tended to focus recruitment efforts on these milieus—as Alfredo Buonavita (126) recalled, recruitment was in fact addressed to the political vanguard, not the fighting vanguard. In other words, recruitment was focused on those engaged in political struggle, not those primarily interested in carrying out violent attacks. Moreover, the groups that were formed display ideological and organizational continuities with the organizations their activists had previously participated in. So, the PIRA initially reflected the IRA's structure of an army, and the Red Brigades the bureaucratic centralism of the PCI. Moreover, in both cases, aims were framed within the traditional discourse of the struggle for independence in Ireland, and a class struggle in Italy. In terms of networks that facilitated the recruitment process, in both organizations this implied a conception of the individual selection of the armed vanguard, usually accompanied by long-lasting ideological indoctrination and recruits passing through different stages in their involvement in violent actions before coming to be seen as trustworthy people. In fact, it was through their presence in deeply rooted family and/or local traditions of counter-hegemonic consciousness that they came to be seen both as ideal recruits and at the same time came to think themselves as armed activists (meso→micro). Franceschini for example remembers, "We were all trusted comrades: we had known each other for a long time and were very good friends" (Alberto Franceschini, quoted in Fasanella and Franceschini 2004, 44). In other words, in their initial phases both armed groups exploited pre-existing social and affective ties in recruitment processes in order to avoid possible infiltrations. While in the Northern Ireland case the family was also relevant in recruitment to the armed group (e.g. interviewees 1, 6, 11 and 17), in the Italian case the family remained more important as a cultural symbol, and joining the BR was perceived as a rupture with the family environment.

At the macro level, the contexts in which the armed groups emerged were also characterized by the institutionalization of previously existing groups (the IRA and the PCI), which triggered feelings of betrayal. In both, however, there was also a moment of heightened conflict that was perceived as a signal of a potentially revolutionary situation. This ideological background was in fact attached to structural and experiential contexts. Participating in the use of political violence was critical for these individuals, and cannot be seen in absolute linear terms in the development and crystallization of their previously vague and fragmented beliefs. Those who followed an ideological path seemed to realize more easily than others, and without specific individual breaks with their political views, that the situation had changed and that armed struggle now seemed relevant. State repression events affirmatively consolidated their previous views and legitimized the final mobilization into armed activism, rather than functioning as some kind of a revelation or loss of innocence, as was the case for those who followed the second path (macro→micro). The very actions of these tradition-driven militants at the same time later contributed to increasing tensions at the macro level (micro→macro).

The Instrumental Path

Interviewee no. 19 was born in 1951. His family, which had no particular political views on the Northern Ireland conflict, lived on the River Front in Derry, a mixed area. Since 1967 he had worked as an apprentice plumber in the same city. From a young age he became involved in the youth wing of the Nationalist Party; his hero at that time was Che

Guevara. When the CRM started to march in the streets of his hometown he joined it as a young member of the Nationalist Party. This is his recollection of why he decided join the CRM movement in order to transform Northern Ireland:

> I was politically aware and I had seen the deprivation that existed within the Derry area. I was totally aware of the gerrymandering, this town was for the majority Nationalist, but the city council was dominated by unionists because of the redrawing of the electoral boundaries. I was also aware, as a member of the youth wing of the Nationalist Party, of how Nationalist politics was ineffective at the Stormont parliament. It was for all that combined, united with the housing conditions, the lack of employment that I realized that we needed to change the system.

Until the early 1970s, Interviewee no. 19 remained a member of the youth wing of the Nationalist Party, despite reservations about its effectiveness, because he could not think of a better solution. Through his involvement in the CRM he had experienced the Northern Ireland state reaction to that mobilization, as "absolutely brutal and totally over the top. There you had a couple of hundred of people marching to highlight the injustice and all the parts of the state came down on their heads, repressing them." The experience of those days had a strong impact on his political radicalization, but it was only with his imprisonment in 1971 that he came to the conclusion that the armed struggle was the only repertoire capable of bringing change to the socio-political situation of the time. Whereas this triggering event was certainly relevant for joining the PIRA, it is also true that it took him some time to make the final decision to join an armed organization with all the consequences that this entailed.

> I decided to join the IRA as I was disillusioned with ordinary politics and how ineffective our politicians were in any sort of change; then I believed that an armed conflict could lead to a change in our society. Gradually. From 1970 on for one year, I get on and on more radical. Internment had a huge effect on me and I successively thought then of joining the Provisional Irish Republican Army. I discussed with my friends and I was very aware of what an involvement in the Irish struggle meant, but I decided that there was no other option. And I joined late 1971.

The violent repression of the Northern Ireland police and later the British Army that he had experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s had the effect of terminating any kind of innocence he said he previously had toward the Stormont and Westminster regimes, which progressively became external enemies against which to address violence. Among all the practical alternatives, the PIRA seemed to represent the most efficient organization to obtain radical change in what he perceived as the socio-political situation of the time. At this stage his radicalization involved a complete rejection of Northern Ireland's political order.

> My political convictions led me to join the struggle. I didn't react to a situation, I probably reacted to a series of situations. But I rationally thought that the State was unreformable and then that the only strategy that could break the British presence was the armed struggle. I came from a political perspective.

Interviewee no. 19 personally approached republican volunteers who he knew through his previous involvement in political activism.

> I made a decision to join on my own. It was not a conspiracy of a group of friends. To me the decision to join the IRA had to be personal and it also remained highly secretive because of the nature of the struggle. The longer you remain unknown the

better it is for the organization. I didn't discuss it with my friends. I only discussed it with those I was in contact with in the movement.

Looking now at the BR case, Interviewee no. 27 was born in 1939 in Genoa, in a lower-middle-class family. His father, who had been confined under fascism and had been a member of the Communist party, died in 1967. In his view, his father did not however have a big impact on his political socialization. In the early 1960s, Interviewee no. 27 was married and a researcher at the university of Genoa. In 1967, he took part in the occupation of the university, and a year later he joined a committee of students and workers, before becoming a member of the Communist party and abandoning activism for family life. He mobilized again in 1973 in a faculty occupation calling for the opening the university as a space for political experimentation. After the occupation was over, he remembers "a phase of waiting… for the call of the emperor, Kafka would say," until, in 1975, he first came into contact with the BR through a university colleague. In his account, his recruitment followed an individual path that lasted for a fairly long period:

> I was near to F., who once told me, "Don't you want to be introduced to some of them?" … and I accepted this encounter… things went slowly here in Genoa… and then what happened is that … the experience of F. with the BR was very short, tormented and ended up with his expulsion. I had had some contacts, but this became more rare because he was expelled.

Interviewee no. 27, however, maintained what he calls personal contact with the BR, through one of their members, and then another, who then asked him to participate in an action. He describes his choice as "an individual choice," that "remained indeed very secret, as both the police and the carabinieri assured me, when they had information about me [being part of the BR] from B., they were shocked."[9] As he recalls, "I arrived there through jumps, bit by bit, sometimes quick ones, but following a line of coherence, so that it is difficult to isolate a specific moment, also for the type of individual relations I had." The armed struggle was therefore chosen as a potentially useful strategy after the failure of peaceful protest:

> [It is] a choice… a possible choice and a choice for those who were aware of all the things that had to be done… even if, after all, I thought, "If all the others made that choice, and I could stay at home, I'd be more happy," but unfortunately I felt that consciousness and sense of justness of that choice, that I cannot withdraw.

In Italy as in Northern Ireland then, many activists joined armed groups after a long search for effective strategies to achieve their political aims (Interviewees 2, 5, 18, 19, 20 for the PIRA and Balzerani, Fiore, Peci, Ronconi and Interviewees 26 and 27 for the BR). They usually joined armed groups later in life following dissatisfaction with the "ordinary" politics in which they were involved. They judged armed groups according to whether or not they had the capacity to stage successful campaigns and lead to concrete results. In most of these cases, individual choices were perceived and practiced as personal, following mostly strategic reasoning (Balzerani 1998). It was an instrumental action taken in line with a sense of personal efficacy, where other "legitimate" means of contention were considered to be becoming ineffective (Interviewee no. 20 and Susanna Ronconi, quoted in Novelli and Tranfaglia 2007, 173). For this path armed group recruitment processes did not occur through family ties, but through personal contacts with the recruiters developed during

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[9] The Carabiniere is the national military police of Italy.

political activities. Trust was developed during previous socio-political activism or through networks of friends and colleagues (Interviewee no. 2).

As for the meso-level, specific networks of credible and prestigious activists were targeted by recruitment efforts. Often, these instrumentally-oriented members did not have strong bonds with any specific clandestine organization. Rather, the armed groups deliberately used selective incentives for recruitment purposes: acting against injustice and gaining protection against state repression. In the case of recruitment practices in the BR, as Caselli and Della Porta have written, "Particular attention was paid to small groups of the extreme left that seemed a more 'promising' source of 'proselytes'" (1991, 74).

In both our cases, armed activists following this path entered at various stages of the development of the two violent political groups. Such choices required time and a final transformative event in order to be made. Repression by the state, violent counter-movements or actions by existing armed organizations produced turning points, making armed struggle appealing as a strategy to pursue political aims for those who did not follow an ideological path. Former social movement and/or political party activists felt progressively dissatisfied with their current political activities, seen as not capable of producing results. Traumatic events of repression became a step in their militancy, which resonated with perceived changes in external opportunities (Susanna Ronconi, quoted in Novelli and Tranfaglia 2007, 160).

Among all the practical alternatives, joining an armed group was perceived as the most effective strategy in order to obtain the desired changes in what they perceived as the new, closed socio-political situation. This pushed those who followed the instrumental path to seek contact with violent political organizations, approach militant milieus or become more susceptible to recruitment, as they wanted to join armed activism.

The Solidarity Path

Interviewee no. 4 was born in 1953, in a Nationalist enclave in East Belfast, Short Strand, a predominantly Loyalist and Unionist area. During the 1960s his family then moved to West Belfast and he went to school there. His family was not interested in politics, and in his teens he was not either: "I had absolutely no interest in politics at that stage in my life. I would come down into town, socialize and dance, I was interested in girlfriends, clothes and some drinks… I was not aware of any IRA at that time." Despite his family's lack of interest in politics, he does however have some recollection of how he perceived the Northern Ireland State at the time, portraying the unjust situation in which his community was living.

> My opinion on the Stormont regime would have been formed by older people, telling me stuff about it in relation to how they were treated. Catholics had less jobs and less houses, they were just second class citizens and worse. There was no place for them in society, they just had to get on with an existence and survive, while the State could prosper. So to me it was Unionist rule and that is simply how it was. We were not part of it. We had absolutely no identity in terms of the State of Northern Ireland. We just existed.

Although not initially interested in politics, by the summer of 1969 he was pulled into it through the eruption of communal violence. He then became involved in different street battles with the British Army and the Loyalists. Along with his friends in the neighborhood, he felt compelled to join riots as a means of defending his community, rather than for more general political reasons. In his own words:

In 1969 the troubles broke out. I witnessed the burnings and some of the shootings. I also witnessed the death of a school friend. Shortly after that I was arrested for riotous behavior and I was sentenced to 2 months in prison. While I was in prison I met some people who were both members of the Provisional IRA and of the Official IRA while their influence was really strong, but they just probably stoked an awareness then for the first time, it was the first recollection of anything political. Before, during the very early stage of the troubles I wouldn't have known what was going on, the political issues and colonization and all that, never given it a thought before. And it is then when I came out of prison, late 1971, that I made my own choice to join the IRA… I wanted revenge and for my people to live in a better world. It wasn't through any political motivation that I decided to join the IRA, I decided to join the IRA to be able to fight back at the British. I still did not understand the politics of Ireland.

For Interviewee no. 4 it was very much what was happening immediately around him that moved him rapidly into the PIRA armed struggle with the intent to fight back against the regional establishment's coercive measures: British Army repression and Loyalist violence. His mobilization into armed activism stemmed from anger about how his community was, in his view, treated. The armed struggle became an instrument to fight injustices in a larger sense.

People who had grown up with riots, people who would have known their parents had been victims, been attacked by soldiers fully armed, army vehicles, coming under attack by loyalism as well. And so starting to think something should be done about this, somebody has to do something. I wanted just to be part of it, I wanted to defend my area, not just that you were thinking in terms of defense, I wanted just to be able to do something without even realizing whatever you were taking on. For me that is how it was. I have never given it a second thought.

His transition to armed struggle appeared to respond to the need to defend his primary solidarity networks. Connected with this he felt a strong emotional need to take revenge against the enemy, whether the loyalists, the British Army or the Northern Ireland establishment. He says that he personally knew his recruiter prior to recruitment. His rapid involvement in armed activism made him a typical example of a militant following a solidarity path, interpreting politics as a form of violence.

Inevitability wasn't a factor. At that particular time I was 17, I was looking at what was happening around me, I probably made my own conclusions very very quickly and I just made a decision to join the IRA. With a sense of being able to fight back with any sense of meaning at the British and at Unionism. Not that I fully understood then, but I just felt that what was done towards us was wrong and that someone had to do something, and that is what it was what motivated me. A very very simple choice forward. And the only wagon at that particular time was looking at other people that lived here who were IRA men, and sort of saying yeah I want to be one of them.

Interviewee no. 4 described the hope of those days as being mixed with anger in his retrospective accounts of his involvement in armed struggle. In his impatience for action, he felt he could play a role in what seemed, at that stage, like an historic opportunity to drive the British out of Ireland in a relatively short time span. In his view a sense of self-affirmation was definitely fostered by a sense of possibility that Irish reunification was close. Everything seemed, in his view, to be moving in this direction at that time. And he just wanted to be part of it:

1972 it was non stop, it was purely physical force especially in this area here [Bullymurphy] with quite a number of people carrying out operations and you had that sense that if this is going to continue the Brits would be out the next day, literally. That is what you thought. It was as simple as that, that you can shoot and bomb enough and make them just get on the boat or on the plane next morning and go home. Obviously, having said that, it was really naïve but going back to that particular time that was what my thoughts would have been, because I would definitely not be politically aware. But I knew the basic things that the Brits should not be in this country, they didn't belong here, they were different, very very simple analogy.

In Italy as well solidaristic micro-mobilizations were present. Antonio Savasta was born in 1956 in Rome. His father was a police officer and his mother a housewife of working-class origins. Although his mother's family was of the left-wing tradition, and his grandfather a socialist who had refused to become a member of the Fascist Nationalist Party, politics was not discussed at home, as his father was of the opinion that "politics is dirty" (Antonio Savasta, quoted in Catanzaro and Manconi 1995, 416). Politics did not, in fact, play a role in his first socialization. At sixteen, Savasta had "a limited experience of life, a limited consciousness of life, but a great taste for rebellion" (409). In fact, his very first (and superficial) contact with politics, while still at the primary school, was with an extreme right group, Europa e Civiltà, with whom he practiced sport and went leafleting (421). Moving into a "red" neighborhood, Centocelle, he began to get involved in left-wing politics; however, this was mainly a result of the youth subculture of the time:

> I'm very interested in music, have long hair, and friends in the libertarian world of the hippies… Obviously, the sense of freedom, liberation, and rebellion were couched in pacifist terms. … Vis-a-vis the traditional world and culture there was also a direct clash on issues such as drugs… Drugs, hashish, marijuana was liberation, feeling good, overcoming an oppressive normality. (423)

He defined himself an anarchist, like his brother: "Young, long hair, hippy, libertarian, for free love and free drugs" (424). His participation increased with the occupation of his school, and directly in the extra-parliamentary New Left, as he perceived the PCI as "another world": "Because the way I was at that time, the long hair, the drugs, even if light drugs, hashish." Therefore, Savasta recalls that when his activism started "it had nothing to do with the Italian Communist Party, the FGCI. I felt closer instead to Potere Operaio, Lotta Continua, because they dressed like us, they talked about the same things, we met at the same concerts, they were much more determined" (424).

In the radicalized context of the early 1970s, politics was in fact the immediate experience of violence in the street battles with radical right activists. Savasta recalls that, in his neighborhood, "there was this thing of anti-fascism, very strong" (ibid.). He writes of him being "punched by these people, just because I had long hair" and of having identified them as those who wanted to negate freedom, not only politically but also culturally. In 1972, he was a member of the militant organization Potere Operaio. There he had to change his external look: "For the first time, I had to wear different clothes. Before, I went around with the Eskimo and with long hair; I went to the assemblies with leather jackets à la Elvis Presley, long hair and shoes with high heels, tight jeans. Instead, I was told to wear good clothes, in order to avoid being stopped and searched" (428). And there he started justifying violence as "an active defense against the fascists. … Those were the days of hunting the fascists. The marches started to be self-defended against the fascists, the first arm is the stick, which you could transform into a red flag" (426). Violence was also justified by the

international symbols and myths of Che Guevara and the Vietcong, as well as by "state slaughter," that is the assumed involvement of the Italian state in the bombing of piazza Fontana in Milan in December 1969. But violence was first of all experienced through intense emotions: "I was in the fifth row of the marshal body that was facing the police, with a terrible fear… I saw the first molotovs being thrown… there was the fight… and then we ran with the police behind us" (427). In various parts of the interview, Savasta insists on the "big emotional charge, the desire for change, against the widespread moral," of an "intensity of the relationship, in the sense that we talked really about everything" (ibid.).

In this emotionally charged atmosphere, radicalization happens—similarly to the Northern Ireland case, which is, in fact, mentioned in the interview—around a symbolic, occupied territory. In this case the occupied territory was the occupied houses in San Basilio, where a young activist was killed by a policeman in September 1974. This served not only as the symbol of a struggle "for one's own needs," but also as the arena of daily conflicts with the police and the marshal body of the PCI. He presents it as a dramatic experience:

> Three days of conflict with the police; I went out in the morning, went to fight, came back home to eat, went back in the afternoons, until the evenings. It was a sort of Londonderry, a battle made of Molotov cocktails and stones to conquer five meters of land, ten meters at the crossing… all 'till a boy from the Collettivo dei Castelli was killed, and they killed him in front of me, while we were attacking a police post. The policeman was shooting, and this boy died, and I took it very badly, very badly. I came back from these fights in the evening and then, at night, there was this incredible shoot-out because… we all came back, armed, and fought with the wrath of God, that is armed fights with the police, in fact there were policemen hurt by bullets. (434)

The events gave new strength to the ongoing debate on the organization of violence and mass mobilization, a debate which, according to Savasta, involved a large number of activists:

> When we took to the streets we had three or four hundred people, only with the Comitato comunista Centocelle; it was a big reality, that involved especially school kids, and some neighborhood kids, and discussed violence in extremely normal terms. So, until '76 I was involved in this type of discussion. (435)

In fact, criticism of the Red Brigades was especially linked to their clandestinity and therefore their distance from the social struggles, more than for their use of violent forms of action.

With the concrete failure of the attempt to combine armed struggle and mass mobilization, however, his fascination with the Red Brigades increased "because the Red Brigades, nobody knows what they are, one thinks it is an extremely compact organization" (444). A small network of former Centocelle militants (amongst whom was Savasta's girlfriend, Emilia Libera) entered into contact with the BR through a fellow activist: "It stays in the family, it's all in the family, we talked with someone we had known since 1972" (446). After their recruitment, they formed a Centocelle brigade that continued to intervene in the neighborhood, although no longer to stimulate "mass struggles," but rather to "recruit a series of vanguard people in that situation" (449). The choice for armed conflict thus emerges as a natural consequence of the environmental conditions:

> It is useless to joke, that it was possible to do other things, given the way in which things were, given the roles, the function of the parties and the function of the society.

In those years, in that situation it was unavoidable for some people, a few or many as they were—it may be they were not so few after all—to take that route. (447)

When he entered the BR in 1976, he thought, "The things we were doing were going to blossom in a true insurrection, or at least open guerrilla warfare" (448).

As in the Northern Ireland case, the Italian armed militants we associate with the solidaristic path have less (or less visible) continuity with a family history of left-wing activism, and in fact their encounters with politics happen later than in the previous paths. Political violence is legitimized less by reference to ideology or political strategies than as an everyday element in handling escalating political conflicts, which they deem beyond their normal control. Also, as in the Northern Ireland case, violent experiences pre-dated entrance into the armed organization, developing in a radicalized environment through street battles with neo-fascists and the police. Unlike the Northern Ireland case, however, the community to be defended was not the ethno-nationalist group of reference, but rather a radical subculture where political and friendship ties overlapped. Peer pressure also existed in the Italian case, but stemmed not from a territorial community, but from a radical counterculture. Those who followed a solidaristic path collectively perceived of themselves as engaged in a war and referred to "their" armed group as a second family (interviewees 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 for the PIRA and Arancio, Morucci and Savasta for the BR). Defending one's own community was not only a motivation to get involved in armed activism, but also offered an important moral justification for the decision to resort to violence. If the main motivation given for joining was that of a necessary response to state violence, there was also a strong emotional need to take revenge against the enemy, whether the Loyalist and neo-fascist counter-movements or the British Army and the Italian police. Self-defense and retaliation were strongly interlinked motivations among those who followed this path.

Armed groups in both our cases, as a result of the escalation of the conflict and the imprisonment of former armed activists, had to become more inclusive to be able to recruit new activists. However, they were not selecting at random from the population at large, but were recruiting among their broader constituency. In the Northern Ireland case the existence of safe territories where the PIRA was able to recruit without interference from the authorities was particularly important to the maintenance of the conflict. In both Italy and Northern Ireland this path tended to be the preserve of a younger generation, even teenagers, of Red Brigades or PIRA armed activists. Their mobilization into armed struggle was, compared with the two other pathways, very quick. Both armed groups, for different reasons, had then started to recruit from the broader constituency, becoming more inclusive. For the PIRA this was the stage, at end of 1970, of the organization of a full offensive armed campaign and all-out resistance to British forces, similar to a civil war situation.[10] As Tommy McKearney, a former PIRA volunteer, writes:

Two factors forced the Provisional leadership to adopt this pragmatic attitude. For a time after its formation, the movement was not sufficiently confident of its own capacity to resist assault on Nationalist areas and therefore welcomed help from almost all quarters without making overly onerous demands on its assistants. The second factor encouraging the Provisional IRA to keep its door open to as many as possible was the struggle for supremacy in the Catholic communities with the rival Official IRA from which it had split. (2011, 76)

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[10] "Resist, resist, resist.". *Republican News*, September 1971.

In the case of the BR, the opening up to a new generation of militant activists was due to the incarceration of most of its early activists, which posed serious threats to the very survival of the armed group. Only around 10 effective members were still at liberty in 1976. According to Caselli and della Porta (1991):

> With their ambitions to find new recruits, the BR…turned their attention to new groups that had taken the strategy of violent action on board, especially the groups of the so called terrorismo diffuse. In the documents of this period the BR talked about subjects partially outside the factory who had already chosen the road to civil war. (91)

At same time, at the meso-level, the entrance of these types of activists led to some organizational and ideological innovations, as these recruits tended to be not only younger, but also less disciplined and less loyal to the ideological orthodoxy (micro→meso). From the mid 1970s, the Provisional IRA was increasingly contained by a multilevel response from the security forces. Its reorganization in 1977 into small cellular Active Service Units, the transformation of its armed campaign into a long war of attrition through acts of "armed propaganda," and the sharp move to the left in its political tone happened only when the leadership of the armed group passed, between 1976 and 1977, to a younger generation of northern Republicans. In the case of the BR an escalation of violence marked the years between 1976–1979, as a shift in focus from the factory to more directly political objectives ("the heart of the state") and a change in strategy from "armed propaganda" to the unleashing of civil war (Caselli and Della Porta 1991) took place. This shift can be explained by internal competition within the extra-parliamentary left and the everyday conflicts with the police and the extreme right. However, the fact that a younger generation of armed activists who were less constrained in their use of violence had entered the organization and rapidly moved up within its ranks cannot be underestimated.

The context in which these individuals mobilized was in fact one of escalation. For many individuals the armed struggle was a way to cope with societies which seemed to them in turmoil. High repression and counter-movement violence in collaboration with the establishment worked for young individuals as a loss of innocence, which further delegitimized the regimes and justified their mobilization in the PIRA and the BR. Individual radicalization was, if not triggered, at least strengthened by the presence of armed conflict (meso→macro). The leadership of the PIRA had, for example, planned to provoke street disturbances with the deliberate intention of producing an outward spiral of violence, knowing full well the benefits the British Army repression would reap in terms of support and recruits from the nationalist community.

Conclusions

Our main aim in this article was to single out variation among those who join armed groups by conceptualizing three central paths of micro-mobilization: the ideological path, the instrumental path, and the solidaristic path. While this tentative typology was inspired by categories developed by scholars of social movements and contentious politics, we have tried to take the model one step further by explaining how micro, meso and macro level interactions compound and complicate one another (Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

In the ideological path, we singled out the relevance of deeply rooted family and local traditions, which allowed participants to frame the choice of joining armed struggles within a narrative of continuity. The family and the immediate environment provided political socialization into an ideological background in which rebellion could be framed as a sort

of obligation in a context perceived as ripe for the successful continuation of the old struggle. Within the instrumental path, mobilization passed instead through the belief that non-violent forms of political protest were no longer helpful in the face of closing political opportunities. They were driven mainly by political grievances. Those who followed this path tended to break more with their past when mobilizing in armed groups in comparison to those who followed an ideological path. A third path developed out of solidarity with a community in struggle in an environment characterized by intense emotions (amongst which anger and revenge were often cited). At least initially, violence was not legitimized by reference to ideology or political strategies, but rather as an everyday element in handling conflicts. It appeared to result from a search for meaning and loyalty to the peer group.

This comparison between the PIRA and the BR has already helped to single out some differences, such as the greater degrees of organizational continuity in Northern Ireland as compared to Italy for tradition-driven militants, or the different definitions of the community in the two cases. The strength and the length of the respective conflicts, as well as the different political opportunities for their channeling, are also likely to have relevant explanatory capacity. It remains to be seen, however, if and to what extent differences can be explained by the different natures—ethnic, class or religious—of the conflicts.

Several insights can inform future research on the topic. First, our approach has a greater explanatory value than mono-causal explanations, given that one motivation alone cannot adequately explain variations in individuals' decisions to join armed activism across different circumstances, backgrounds and the dispositions of the individual actors, nor in relation to the social contexts of their mobilization. It recognizes the internal heterogeneity of armed groups. Whereas this has so far been studied from a static and one-dimensional perspective, our approach allows us to make further progress towards understanding the variation that occurs over time and to assess the effect of synchronic changes at different levels of analysis. Armed groups then pass from being static subjects to dynamic and interactive ones as they undergo various stages of mobilizations over time.

Second, this work not only confirms the importance of individual motivations for involvement, the networks which facilitate the recruitment process, and the effects of repression on individuals, it also enhances our understanding of how each level works in combination with the others. For example, our approach allows us to understand the different effects of repression on particular individuals, given their previous socialization and the time they joined armed struggle. An overly deterministic understanding of networks is challenged here by recognizing the varying impacts of different types of networks in relation to the motivation and the stage of the activist's mobilization in the armed group. We thus move in the direction of answering such questions as: Which networks explain what? Under what conditions do specific networks become relevant? And, what networks account for what type of participation? Our explanation of micro-mobilization into armed groups places particular emphasis on the questions of how and when such processes unfold, rather than on why it happens in the first place. We would thus argue that further examinations of armed activism micro-mobilization should pay more attention to how motivations, networks and political opportunities are formed in action.

Finally, our approach offers a powerful tool for situating micro-mobilization processes diachronically, thereby contextualizing micro-mobilization synchronically at both the meso and macro levels, and rejecting the scholastic opposition between agency and structure. Individual mobilization in armed groups is the result of macro and meso constraints and the subjective evaluation of those constraints allowed by agency at the micro level.

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