This PDF is a corrected chapter from a PhD thesis and additional materials from the thesis related to Corsica:


The abstract for this thesis is as follows:

This study is concerned with how ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism is countered within liberal democracies and what impact government responses have on how a conflict involving the use of terrorism is transformed from one of violence to constitutional political activity. Specifically, we are concerned with the balance between coercive and conciliatory responses. A moderate terrorism studies approach is used, which focuses on root causes of terrorism and places them in a historical context ranging from the historical precedents of a terrorist campaign to when a group reaches a permanent and verifiable ceasefire. The study combines theories from within terrorism studies and conflict studies to develop a theoretical framework, in which the relational conflict triangle model of situation-attitudes-behaviour is informed by academic knowledge on terrorism. In order to put the study into context preliminary matters are addressed as to what ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism is and the relationship between terrorism and liberal democracy. The following chapters introduce conflict studies, terrorism studies, and develop the theoretical framework, noting the convergence of interests between the two disciplines.

The framework is then tested by comparing three protracted cases of ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism in the Basque Country, Corsica and Northern Ireland. The analysis centres on the terrorist groups involved and how they come to emerge and, in many cases, reach the decision to abandon violence. The analysis is historical and takes into account the situation, attitudes and behaviour of the protagonists involved, noting the proneness of terrorist organisations towards volatile division. The conclusion drawn is that a combination of coercion, conciliation and reform led to the eventual ending of terrorist campaigns in the three cases but conciliation and reform were dependent on the use of coercive measures targeted directly at the groups involved. The reasons for splinter groups continuing violence are also discussed.

Included here are:

Chapter Eight: Corsica
Matrix for Historical Analysis of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorism
The Stages of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorist Conflict
Corsica: Historical Precedents to Escalation
Corsica: Normalisation to Re-escalation
FLNC Genealogy
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Chapter Eight: Corsica

Introduction

Corsica is distinct in that the challenger groups, predominantly the FLNC and its successor groups, have pursued a general strategy of a non-lethal and persisting low level of violence when pursuing their goals. Fatalities have occurred, as will be seen below, but these are far lower in number than that in the Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. It is for this reason that the conflict is less well known, despite its impact on France. The Corsica case is also the only one not to have passed through a de-escalation stage. This chapter follows the same structure as those which have preceded it, following the stage model, and presenting the history of the conflict followed by the application of situation-attitudes-behaviour to the challenger groups, and the impact of government response, broken down as coercion, conciliation, and reform. The Corsica case was the last to reach a permanent ceasefire, taking place in 2014, and because of this any conclusions are made with caution, although it should be noted that the FLNC have definitively declared an end to armed struggle.

Historical precedents (to 1950)

History

Much of Corsica’s history in prehistoric times is a mystery although there is evidence of a pastoralist megalithic culture dating back to the 10000 BC and a Ligurian incursion around 2000 BC that resulted in an increase in art and organisation into clans. A bronze age Iberian-Celtic people invaded in the latter half of the second millennium BC and their culture replaced that of the Ligurians. Corsica’s geographical location meant that it was of interest to the major Mediterranean powers who sought mastery of strategic sea routes: the Phoenicians traded and Greeks sought to establish colonies. Rome continued coastal urbanisation and introduced Christianity and Latin speech but left the pre-existing Corsican

1 Ian Thompson Corsica (Newton Abbot:David & Charles:1971).
administrative divisions and social division of the interior culture almost untouched.\(^2\) The fall of Rome resulted in a period of ‘oppression, misery and depopulation’\(^3\) that lasted around six hundred years with invasions by the Vandals, Ostrogoths, Byzantines and Lombards.\(^4\) During Arab occupation, in which the indigenous population remained within the interior, the people were allowed to maintain their own government in the form of elective chiefs called ‘Caporali’ who sided successfully with expeditions sent to expel the Arabs. The island was then typically ruled by feudal lords, or ‘signori’, who were originally foreigners and had some influence on the interior, prompting the formation of an association of villages called the Terra Del Commune based on the ecclesiastical division of the pieve (parish). The elected leaders of the pieves were the Caporali, although this became over time a hereditary position.\(^5\)

Feudal warring between nobles in Corsica and extreme violence led to the Corsican people making a plea to the papacy who appointed the archbishop of Pisa to administer the island and throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was relative calm, allowing the building of churches, bridges and public works and an extension of the island’s agricultural area.\(^6\) Pisa was defeated by Genoa who ruled Corsica for four centuries, building a chain of citadel towns between 1195 and 1539 and despite a democratic legal code and near absence of open warfare the period was miserable and the seventeenth century became known to Corsicans as the ‘century of iron’. An interlude in the fourteenth century after a revolt led by the Corsican Vincentello d’Istria in 1407 was followed by a war against the feudal lords, which decimated the noble families and resulted in economic ruin and emigration.\(^7\) Genoese governors exploited the island although Corsicans served abroad in the Genoese army and amongst Corsicans the vendetta re-emerged, a custom that would be passed down through generations as families’ exercised vengeance on each other.\(^8\)

In 1729 the Corsican War of Independence began after the introduction of a new tax and establishment of a Greek colony by Genoa and a Corsican government was proclaimed.

\(^2\) Thompson, op cit.
\(^3\) Thompson, op cit, p71
\(^4\) Thompson, op cit.
\(^6\) Caird, op cit; Thompson, op cit.
\(^7\) Thompson, op cit.
in 1747. France intervened and pacified the island in 1747 but was forced to withdraw due to continental concerns and Genoa returned.\textsuperscript{9} The war of independence was revived by Pascal Paoli who was proclaimed ‘General of the Nation’ on his arrival on the island in 1755. He implemented political, economic and agricultural reform\textsuperscript{10} and mitigated the effects of the vendetta, the suppression of which is credited with an increase in Corsica’s population.\textsuperscript{11} His defeat in 1769 led to exile in England and he would later lead the Corsicans to defeat at the hands of Napoleon in 1792 and 1793.\textsuperscript{12} Napoleon drew heavily on Corsican manpower, raising Corsican regiments in an Army, which had around forty generals of Corsican origin. He also made tax concessions, yet the most important factor was the man himself, development of Corsica was limited, but the legend that was Napoleon drew the Corsicans to France.\textsuperscript{13} Corsicans fought for the French during the First World War, served disproportionately in government service and resisted the overtures of Mussolini’s fascists. The only interlude was after the fall of France in 1940 when the island was occupied by Axis forces and Corsica was to become the first department of metropolitan France to be liberated during the Second World War. An underground movement, the \textit{maquisards}, took part in the liberation.\textsuperscript{14} Corsican history has been one of prolonged occupation and mostly unsuccessful resistance, but the benefits of French rule from Napoleonic times onwards meant an increasing connection and loyalty to France.

The modern Corsican political identity can be summarised as developing in four stages. The first, from 1769 to 1896, was one of slow integration into France and characterised by an opposition between the Italian and the French cultures. The second, from 1896 to 1940, saw an increased focus on identity, particularly culture and language and an anti-establishment stance on the part of social and cultural actors’ such as poets and writers. The third, from 1940 to 1965 was driven by the dual problem of the results of decolonisation and the implementation of French regional plans in opposition to local realities, bringing about an economic, demographic, cultural and political crisis. The fourth, post 1965, is a consequence of the third, and passes through social and economic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Caird, op cit; Thompson, op cit.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Thompson, op cit.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Caird, op cit.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Caird, op cit; Robert Ramsay \textit{The Corsican Time-Bomb} (Manchester University Press: Manchester:1983), op cit; Thompson, op cit.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Robert Ramsey \textit{The Corsican Time-Bomb} (Manchester University Press: Manchester:1983).
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ramsey, op cit; Thompson, op cit.
\end{itemize}
regionalism and autonomy to the nationalist organisations. Corsica was undeniably connected to France, but their language and society are more closely related to that of Sicily, Sardinia and Southern Italy, resulting in a fusion of French and Italian identities and the political dominance of Corsican clans within a French political system.

Corsica was subject to constant invasion and occupation for much of its history due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean and proximity to competing powers. Most, if not all, of the great powers with a Mediterranean coastline had, at some point, sought to dominate the island, resulting in a tortured history of occupation, repression, resistance and exclusion of Corsicans from the exterior of the island.

Corsica is unique amongst the three cases in the modern era as, with the exception of the World War Two occupation by Italy, they were part of a French Empire, which offered new opportunities for Corsicans abroad. They were in fact colonisers under the auspices of the French empire, serving in disproportionate numbers overseas. Nor did they have the antipathy towards France that the Basques and Irish had to Spain and Great Britain and they have been described as more French than the French. Corsicans did not see the French as occupiers and but for later events, and had there not been a development crisis, there would have been no Corsican case to compare to that of the Basque Country and Northern Ireland.

What the Corsicans did have was a tradition of banditry and vendetta, which until the Napoleonic era had been responsible for thousands of deaths and was etched into the historical and cultural memory of the islanders, particularly those of the more traditional interior. When Corsican nationalism began to reassert itself as a major political force, there was a historical and cultural memory of rebellion, tragic heroes, banditry and vendetta, very similar to that of Sicily, present in Corsican history on which to draw.

Origins (1950-1968)

History

In Corsica political forces began to move as social and economic factors combined to produce political discontent. The clan system had pursued its own interests contributed to the weakening of the Corsican economy and caused the French system of governance to be seen as distant and with no moral authority. Clan and kinship prevailed and to contest it was seen as non-conformist and contrary to the interests of Corsican society. The clan system had acted as a mediator between Corsica and distant France for generations:

‘There was, then, a symbiotic relationship between the clan and the central government. The central government needed the clan in order to effectively govern the island, and was prepared to turn a blind eye to its abuses. This was in part a reflection of the difficulties posed by Corsican social organization and social violence....It was also, in part, a symptom of a policy of disengagement: Corsica did not have enough votes or resources to make it worth the bother.’

Corsicans, who are naturally suspicious of others, had to accept the corruption, fraud and violence as a customary and normal mode of operation in the social and political system. Corsica’s underdevelopment became a major issue, in 1957 the Plan d’Action Regionale (CAR) for Corsica was initiated as part of a wider French project for regional plans and this led to the establishment of two agencies which would put the plan into effect with a dual focus on agriculture and tourism. The first was the responsibility of the Societe de la mise en valeur agricole de la Corse (SOMIVAC), the second the responsibility of the Societe d’Equipement touristique de la Corse (SETCO). By the end of the 1960s it seemed that these two elements of the island’s planned development were coming to some form of fruition as the tourism industry had expanded and there was more land for farms. Yet this did not benefit the island as a whole and few Corsicans benefited from the investment.

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18 Ibid, p 51.
19 Ibid.
21 Thompson, op cit.
The main beneficiaries of SETCO were the owners of hotel and campsite developments and the entrepreneurial capital required to invest in the development of hotels came from France. Few of the jobs created went to Corsicans. Likewise, the main beneficiaries of SOMIVAC were outsiders. The redevelopment of Corsica coincided with the independence of Algeria, a nearby event, which not only shook the French nation and brought about the end of the French Fourth Republic. France resettled pied noirs in Corsica who had been compensated by the French government and had the financial capital and motivation to take advantage of the opportunities offered by SOMIVAC. They promptly took a substantial share of the redeveloped farming land. The first of these pied-noirs had links to Corsica but between 1958 and 1964 17,000 resettled in Corsica, a significant number as the population of the island in 1954 was 150,000. The pied noirs became a focal point for autonomist discontent who argued that they had an advantage over local farmers who could not afford the costs of investment and were emphasising production over quality, thus undermining the quality of wine, as their industrial methods involved the adding of sugar to wine.

Dissatisfaction also arose due to internal concerns over the clans. Despite their competition with each other, clans would co-operate to protect a system that was essentially apolitical and maintained political hegemony via clientelism, electoral fraud and the threat of violence. The combination of corruption and economic decline led to the emergence of Corsican nationalism and regionalism in the early 1960s. Initially, these took the form of ‘local businessmen and politicians who totally rejected any suggestion that Corsica was not ‘French’. In 1960 the Mouvement du 29 Novembre and Defence des Interets economiques de la Corse (DIECO) were formed but these failed to create mass movements. The more radical Union Corse was founded in the same year by Corsican’s studying in Paris and became the Front Regionaliste Corse (FRC) in 1963. The FRC defined Corsica’s problems as being due to capitalism and colonialism and were left-wing in their political orientation. The Comite d’Etudes et de Defense des Interets de la Corse (CEDIC)

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22 Ramsey, op cit.
23 Carrington, op cit.
24 Ramsey, op cit.
27 Ibid.
was also formed and would found the weekly Corsican newspaper *Arritti*! (Arise!). An attempt at unity was attempted in 1966 but was unsuccessful. While the FRC refused to engage in elections, which they saw as a sham, CEDIC put forward Max Simeoni as a candidate in the legislative elections as a regionalist. He was unsuccessful and the group subsequently formed themselves into ‘l’Action Regionaliste Corse (ARC) and moved from a focus on economic problems to minority issues. The ARC was a stronger organisation in terms of public support than the FRC and would continue to grow in strength over the next ten years.\textsuperscript{28} At this stage of analysis the voices of discontent came from businessmen and autonomists who were concerned with political, not clandestine, activity.

*Situation-Attitudes-Behaviour*

The situation for Corsicans in the origins stage was one of political, social and economic inequality, which had existed earlier, but had become a greater problem due to the social stresses of underdevelopment and the repatriation of pied-noirs from Algeria. Corsica was politically and socially ill-equipped to absorb immigration equivalent to over eleven percent of the existing population. There were no clandestine organisations operating during this stage, which was dominated by autonomist political action.

The attitudes of the autonomists became more prevalent when they began to see that the beneficiaries of the economic reform programs were outside investors and the capital advantaged pied noirs. This tied in with discontent over the perceived lack of political representation, corruption and electoral fraud. There was no significant consideration of the application of political violence, but there was a commitment to addressing political issues. This did not mobilise minority group support within the population, nor was there any significant questioning of the Corsica being part of France.

The reaction to the problems besetting Corsica was an increase in the political activity of nationalists and autonomists, of which the latter were more influential. This was driven by local businessmen, politicians and students who were in the vanguard of political action, but failed to achieve popular support. The leading autonomist forces by the end of the origins stage were the ARC who moved to tackling minority issues in an attempt to

\textsuperscript{28} Ramsey, op cit. For the early development of autonomist and nationalist organisations on Corsica see: Pierre Poggioli *FLNC années 70* (DCL editions:2006); Xavier Crettiez *La Question Corse* (Editions Complex:1999).
garner greater public support. Young Corsican’s continued to seek better opportunities outside of Corsica.

Response

The French response to Corsica’s underdevelopment when compared to the mainland was to implement major reform, although it should be noted that there had been reform previously and the regional plan for Corsica was part of a more general project of regional reform within France. The reform targeted two areas of the Corsican economy with the potential for benefits for the island, which would in turn revitalise the economy, these were agriculture and tourism. While the benefits of SETCO for agriculture and SOMIVAC for tourism were realised in a short timescale, these went largely to outsiders, who had the money to invest. Also, the reform was economic, not political, and this meant that the problems of clientilism and corruption were not addressed. The consequences were that social and political forces were invigorated, nationalist and autonomist, these had been present before, but became more focused.

Pre-escalation (1968-1975)

History

In Corsica the ARC began to engage in direct action from 1968. Prior to this there had been a protest movement but this took the form of meetings, seminars, work with youth organisations and protests that while clear indications of widespread discontent were still legal activities. Direct action was illegal enough to provoke a response from the authorities but not damaging or irresponsibly violent and was linked to a popular issue or complaint. As a tactic it was confrontational and led to more publicity for the ARC and the issue involved.29 This was against a background of increasing low level violence. The tipping point for the Corsican Nationalists was the granting of farm land that had been set aside for Corsican farmers to 500 pied noir families in the wake of Algeria’s independence in 1962 and violent clandestine groups emerged in the 1960s who bombed pied noir properties and crops.30

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29 Ramsey, op cit.
30 Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit.
the early 1970s a ‘Liberation Committee’ claimed responsibility for over a dozen fires and explosions, targeting an administrative building, a French owned hotel and a farm belonging to a *pied noir*, and so were symbolic, rather than indiscriminate in nature.\(^{31}\) In 1973 and 1974 two clandestine groups emerged, which would later coalesce into the FLNC when the conflict escalated: the Fronte Paisanu Corsu di Liberazione (FPCL) and Ghjustia Paolina (GP).\(^{32}\)

The violence against pied-noir property was but one part of a more general condition of underlying conflict. Development had occurred on the coast while the more traditional interior continued to depopulate and stagnate and culturally the interior was indigenous and traditional whereas the coast was diverse and cosmopolitan and the young were emigrating leaving a high proportion of elderly people in a native born population that was two thirds of the total. The most divisive underlying conflict was that economic control rested with outsiders and brought little direct benefit to native born Corsicans.\(^{33}\) All of these underlying conflicts informed the mindset of the ARC as they began direct action and the nationalist clandestine groups as they began their attacks, but it is the last which was the catalyst for escalation.

The French reaction to the increasing tensions was one of increasing engagement and recognition of the discontent on the island. When protests took place over the dumping of waste by an Italian company on the Tuscan coast, which caused pollution on Corsica’s north-eastern coast, the French government responded in a limited manner by announcing it would deal with the problem through diplomatic channels. The result was protests, which were put down by riot police and arrests, including that of the ARC leader Edmond Simeoni, resulting in turn in general protests. A minor concession was made to the teaching of the Corsican language, but seen as a short measure as it would be optional on the part of the pupil and the teacher. In response to clandestine violence there was a firm response as he government attempted to show that it would deal strongly with those willing to use violence, undermined by a code of silence, even despite disapproval of actual incidents, and a consequential failure to secure a conviction for any of the more than one hundred

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\(^{31}\) Thompson, op cit.


\(^{33}\) Ibid, p 267.
explosions that had taken place in 1974. As tensions rose the government despatched a representative, Libert Bou, to Corsica in an attempt to resolve the island’s political problems from within. Bou met with consulted with local individuals and groups, and set up working parties, in order to develop a Charter of development. However, his work was undermined by the fact that the constitution was strictly off-limits and would not be changed.34

Situation-Attitudes-Behaviour

The ARC and the clandestine groups were the primary transformative actors of the situation in the pre-escalation stage as they adopted new tactics towards their social, economic and political grievances. The divisions between the developed exterior and the depopulating traditional interior, with the benefits of the earlier CAR reform continuing to benefit outsiders meant that the young continued to leave the island. This threatened Corsican culture and language, alongside existing concerns over economic status and underdevelopment.

The actions of the ARC and clandestine groups indicate action-orientation was present as a psychological trait but they were certainly not radicalised or morally disengaged towards those affected by their actions. The fact that there was organised, if small, clandestine groups meant that riskier actions such as bombing could be undertaken.

More direct behaviour was applied by the autonomist and nationalist protagonists during the escalation stage. This was of two distinct types. The first was the ‘direct action’ of the ARC, which was illegal and political in nature, and so provocative, and due to being non-violent was the communication of discontent to both political forces and the Corsican people. The second was the emergence and escalation of actions by violent clandestine groups against French and pied noir properties but this has to be placed in the Corsican context. The small clandestine groups were intimidating but not lethal and more reflective of the Corsican traditions of rebellion and banditry than terrorism and it is of note that the targets were symbolic of the grievances that they had.

34 Ramsey, op cit.
Response

The French response was a mixture of coercion, conciliation and limited reform. The activities of the clandestine groups and protests of the ARC were subject to a police response, the ARC were engaged by Libert Bou who was careful to rule out political change, and minor attempts at economic reform continued. None of these dealt with the increasing political problems on Corsica and political reform, which would have tackled the problem of the discontent with the political dominance of the clans, was absent.

Escalation (1975-1982)

Within the Action Regionalsiste Corse (ARC) there had been calls for direct action and in 1975 twenty men with hunting guns undertook to occupy a pied noir property in Aleria for a period of three days. They believed that the authorities would sit out what was a largely symbolic protest intended be concluded by a large political meeting questioning the fraudulent practice of repatriation. It was not unusual for men to carry arms openly in a land which had been so intimately linked with the concept and practice of the vendetta. On the second day of the protest a contingent of twelve hundred riot police arrived with back up from armoured personnel carriers and helicopters. In the ensuing shoot out two of the riot police were killed and an ARC member injured before they surrendered. Despite the fact that two policemen were killed, it was the over handedness of the reaction by the authorities that was remembered and protests by Corsicans and violence by nationalist groups escalated.\(^{35}\) The French government swung between statements insensitive to the Corsican senses and a conciliatory air. Their action against the ARC was severe: the organisation was first banned, ten members were arrested to be put before the State Security Court and, finally, the organisation was dissolved. Its replacement organisation, the Associu di i Patrioti Corsi (APC) moved back from the ARC’s stance on direct action. The trial of the ARC leader, Edmund Simeoni, and eight others, resulted in Simeoni’s conviction of having indirectly caused the deaths of the gendarmes and subsequent imprisonment. On his release from prison in 1976 he denounced the use of violence. In 1976 the APC became the

\(^{35}\) Ramsey, op cit; Crettiez, op cit.
Union di u Populu Corse (UPC). As the autonomists moved more towards non-violence many younger members left to join nationalist organisations.\(^{36}\)

During 1974, amid the increasing tensions, the first drafts of Libert Bou’s Charter were ready, having three main sections covering a fairer, more balanced economy, development (specifically: training, the environment and preserving Corsican culture), and a schedule of eleven essential capital projects. The Charter was put before a government committee, who changed its title from a ‘Charter’ to a ‘Programme’, before reversing the decision. As a consequence the impact of the document was reduced, largely because Corsica had experienced ‘programmes’ before, which had failed to deliver.\(^{37}\)

In the wake of the Aleria incident the incumbent President, Giscard d’Estaing, instructed the Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, to deal with four problems relating to Corsica. These were: territorial continuity, an enquiry into wine production, passing an ‘Expansion Fund’ to local representatives, and ensuring the fairness of the electoral system. This was followed by a letter from d’Estaing to the Corsican people, in which he identified with Corsican’s and their concerns, while avoiding discussing political solutions. These conciliatory actions, which at least showed Presidential concern, stopped short, as had been the case previously, of any move towards regionalisation.\(^{38}\)

The FLNC, a merger of FPCL and GP, became the predominant terrorist group on Corsica in 1976 and initially targeted property relating to the French occupation of Corsica. Amongst many early incidents were the blowing up of a French airliner on the ground at Ajaccio airport, the partial destruction of a holiday village at Cargesse in 1977, and the 1978 attack at the Solenzara airbase. In 1981 the sentencing of FLNC members led to forty-six bombings in a single night.\(^{39}\) The early FLNC had a third-world view which would later give way to a more strictly nationalist outlook. The Solenzara base was:

‘an instrument of under-development imposed on Corsica...Solenzara allows western imperialism to threaten the free and progressive countries of the Mediterranean...a base for intervention and aggression against the Palestinian people in 1967, hand in glove with

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Ramsey, op cit.

\(^{38}\) ibid.

fascist and bloody regimes in Iran and South Africa who sent their pilots to train at Solenzara... .The Front will continue the political and military struggle which is the only way the Corsican people can throw of colonialism.'

There had also been anti-autonomist violence prior to the foundation of the FLNC but this increased in 1977 when a new group called the Front d’Action Nouvelle Contre l’independance et ‘Autonomisme (FRANCIA) emerged. The FLNC, having escalated the violence, was caught between a drive by the security forces and the clandestine FRANCIA, but this did not stop the FLNC from carrying out its armed struggle. The organisation had four ‘commissions’ for military, economic, political and propaganda/international affairs and divided itself into six areas of operations. The FLNC’s first campaign had wavered due to the security response and FRANCIA, but a new campaign began in 1979 and widened targets to include mainland France in an effort to emulate the IRA. A hunger strike begun in December 1980 was ended by the forced feeding of prisoners in January 1981. A combination of an autonomist stance against clandestine action and political initiatives by the French government of Giscard d’Estaing was reflected by an increasing gap between the autonomists and nationalists prior to the reforms of 1981. The campaign by the FLNC continued to escalate into the 1980’s with actions by the FLNC occurring at a high and sustained rate and the French security forces, predominantly the Police and CRS, engaged in countering the FLNC. Throughout the 1980’s there was significant activity, with between 600-700 explosions yearly in the 1980s. Two aspects of note are that on Corsica incidents decrease during the summer months as separatists do not wish to drive away tourists, tourism being the chief industry of Corsica, and the prevalence of the ‘blue nights’ in the modus operandi of the Corsican groups, a non-lethal series of coordinated explosions aimed at causing damage rather than death.

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40 FLNC statement, cited in Moxon-Brown, op cit, p 223.
41 Ramsey, op cit; Crettiez, op cit.
42 Crettiez, op cit.
44 Ramsey, op cit.
Situation - Attitudes - Behaviour

The early part of the escalation phase was dominated by the precipitating event at Aleria and the heavy handed security response. The ARC action was commensurate with its commitment to illegal, direct action combined with political issues. The security force response demonstrated no understanding of the nuances of what was a protest grounded in the Corsican habitus of allowing openly carrying firearms and tolerating robust action. The action was inherently political in nature and aimed to draw attention to a political issue, after which the incident would likely have come to a peaceful end.

The leadership of the ARC were committed to drawing attention to Corsican causes and were willing to use intimidation and symbolic action to draw a response from the authorities. However, they also demonstrated with the later renunciation of violence that their motivations were political, not military, and what they were seeking was social, economic and political solutions to Corsican issues. When faced with escalating from protest, and in legal terms, criminal actions, to political violence the autonomists favoured political action. The attitude of the existing members of clandestine groups and dissident autonomists was that violence was acceptable, but stopped short of indiscriminate violence against the person.

Once the situation had escalated and the FLNC emerged they engaged in actions which were very symbolic and spectacular, but were careful to ensure that the damage was to property instead of people. They also set a trend whereby the majority of actions were coordinated explosions, which damaged property but were, again, not lethal. Yet, the danger was always there that people might be harmed. The FLNC were highly organised, benefiting from the experiences of GP and the FLCP, and limited their operations during the summer months.

Response

The French response to the Aleria incident was overwhelmingly coercive, first in the role of the security forces, which turned an occupation into a violent siege, secondly in the legal actions taken against the ARC and thirdly in a counter-terrorist drive against the newly formed FLNC. The first, and second, exacerbating the tensions within the autonomists, with
the autonomist condemnation of violence rejected by younger members who became involved in the more militant nationalist movements. The division between the autonomists and nationalists because greater: on the one hand, the successor political groups to the ARC, the APC and UPC denounce the use of violence, on the other, the nationalist FLNC is formed. It is at this point that the conflict escalates into major actions by the FLNC and a substantial security response. The escalation originated in the events at Aleria and subsequent crippling of the ARC.

There was also conciliation directed at the Corsican population, which stopped short of political reform as it did not reconcile autonomist demands with the unitary French state. This was both an attempt at demonstrating that Corsican concerns were being heard at the highest level and towards presenting a conciliatory face. Corsica had become a national problem, indicated by the Presidential initiative, and, while it did not placate the autonomists, or prevent the emergence of the FLNC, it did appeal to the established politicians and demonstrated to the general population that the highest levels of the French government were listening to their concerns. It should be noted that while support for the ARC had increased, this support was far from a majority. Ultimately, conciliation was overshadowed by the noise of the coercive response.

Normalisation (1981-2013)

History

After the events of the escalation of the conflict through FLNC attacks on mainland France the conflict reached the stage of normalisation in the mid 1980s. Nationalists have continued to use violence while autonomists have not. The distinction between autonomists and separatists is an important one as these two groups account for the strongest political movements aside from the main French parties. The autonomists quickly came to reject the use of violence as a means of achieving their aims, whereas the separatists were represented by the FLNC and political parties with varying attitudes towards the use of violence. The most basic distinction is that the autonomists advocated more powers for

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Corsica along the lines of a regional assembly and the ability to make their own decisions concerning the island and the separatists advocated a complete secession from France and the establishment of the Corsican nation. The two approaches are both nationalist as they focus on the rights of Corsicans as a people and despite the trigger for escalation being related to economic concerns the discontent also took into account matters of history and the inter-related aspects of identity, language and culture.\(^{48}\)

At the beginning of the 1981 election campaign in France the FLNC declared a short lasting ceasefire to ‘see how things developed’. The election of the socialist Francois Mitterrand was greeted with delight by Corsica’s autonomists who celebrated by firing ‘thousands of rounds of ammunition into the air’ in the city centres of Bastia and Ajaccio. The new socialist government had a wider concern with separatism related to the French Basque Country, Brittany, Corsica and Guadeloupe, prompting a move towards regionalism and decentralisation with the aim of promoting diversity while retaining the concept of the unitary French state.\(^{49}\) The 1982 Special Statute for Corsica recognised the distinct geographical and historical character of Corsica and while other regions were allowed a regional council Corsica was granted a regional assembly. However, the special status applied to all on the island, not just Corsicans and the assembly was not to have legislative powers. The administrative competences of the Corsican Assembly gave it a greater remit over regional planning, energy and transport, and education and culture and Corsica was to have two consultative councils on these issues, twice that of the mainland regions.\(^{50}\)

Mitterrand was re-elected in 1988 and the FLNC declared a truce which lasted until 1990 when the nationalist movement fragmented. The splits occurred as a result of government initiatives and proposed institutional reform on Corsica put forward by the minister of the interior, Pierre Joxe. The FLNC declared that it was willing to cooperate with ‘progressive’ forces in Corsica, a major departure from its previous stance of armed struggle. A new group calling itself Resistenza emerged in September 1990, committed to armed struggle it began to make its presence felt with acts of sabotage and occupation. In 1990 the


\(^{49}\) Ramsay, op cit.

\(^{50}\) Daftary, op cit.
FLNC split into two factions, the hardline FLNC-Canal Historique and FLNC-Canal Habituel who suspended military actions in 1991 and this was mirrored by a split in the legal organisation A Cuncolta in 1989.\textsuperscript{51} The fracture of political and military nationalism was linked to political developments on Corsica and in France itself. The Corsican Assembly had adopted a resolution in October 1988 ‘affirming the existence of a living historical community, the Corsican people’.\textsuperscript{52} A new statute for Corsica, passed by the French National Assembly in April 1991 made Corsica a new territorial entity. It still had to work within the confines of the French Constitution but the Joxe statute made further decentralisation possible.\textsuperscript{53} However, ‘the Corsican Assembly still lacked sufficient responsibility and influence’, electoral fraud continued, resulting in the assembly’s dissolution in 1998, and there was no improvement in the economy.\textsuperscript{54}

There was continuing violence, political and otherwise, with nationalist infighting predominant and peaking in the period 1993-96.\textsuperscript{55} The 1990s would see a propensity for division which led to a large number of competing clandestine groups. The causes of these splits lay in political rivalries and personal disputes which had the consequences of being both lethal and preventing a strong unified front being maintained. While the violence put pressure on the French to acknowledge Corsican demands it also affected the willingness of people to identify with or support Corsican nationalism.\textsuperscript{56}

The period 1991 to 2000 was characterised by further splits within the armed groups and internal feuding\textsuperscript{57}, although the killing of ex-activists was also related to private activities. Chronologically the larger have been (with the date of formation): the Fronte Ribellu (1995); FLNC of 5 May 1996 (1996); Sampieru (1997); and Armata Corsa (1999), critical of the mafia links of the FLNC.\textsuperscript{58} Many even smaller groups have also emerged,

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid,
\textsuperscript{54} Daftary, 2008, op cit, p 290.
\textsuperscript{55} Daftary, 2002, op cit.
\textsuperscript{56} Hossay, op cit, p 426.
\textsuperscript{57} Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit; Loughlin & Daftary, op cit.
\textsuperscript{58} Sourced from: http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=Corsica&sa.x=27&sa.y=6 (Global Terrorism Database) and genealogical trees in: Dominci, op cit, pp 42-45; Foster, op cit, p 251; Loughlin & Daftary, op cit, pp 57-59.
carrying out few attacks and then disappearing. It is likely that these related to personal grievances, feuds and criminal activity, all under the cover of a nationalist agenda. The question of how much of the violence on Corsica is due to the activity of criminal gangs working under the cover of nationalism is a difficult one to answer. Extortion and theft have been a characteristic of the armed struggle as they allow armed groups to finance their struggle.\(^59\) The links between criminal gangs and political violence become more pronounced in the period after 2000. In December 1999 four groups merged into the Union des Combatants. These were: the FLNC-historique, Fronte Ribellu, the FLNC-1996 and their successor group Clandestinu. Sampieru announced its own dissolution in 1998 due to the ‘megalomania’ of its leaders and condemned any attack that might take place against ‘certain representatives’ of the French state.\(^60\)

In February 1998 the French prefect, Claude Erignac, was assassinated and suspicion fell on the FLNC-historique who had recently ended a seven month truce\(^61\), although their political wing condemned the killing\(^62\), but the dissolved Sampieru claimed responsibility and provided the manufacturers reference numbers for the handgun used in the assassination.\(^63\) The French reaction was an immediate crackdown by the police and gendarmerie: arrests were swift and frequent and some raids targeted known criminals and nationalist dissidents.\(^64\) There was also a public backlash against violence in the form of protest marches by tens of thousands of people in Ajaccio and Bastia, which were organised by women’s groups opposed to political and criminal violence on Corsica.\(^65\) It was a significant event: having mobilised a large number of the island’s population into protest and a scathing indictment of violence for a population given to a code of silence. The anti-violence movement Manifeste pour la vie had been founded in 1996:

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\(^59\) Sanchez, op cit.
\(^64\) Ibid; The Economist, Feb 12th 1998, op cit.
\(^65\) BBC News Online, Feb 11th 1998 Thousands protest about Corsica violence http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/55759.stm accessed 28/08/11 20:05; The Economist, Feb 12th 1998, op cit. The correct number is difficult to establish as it was reported as 60,000 and the organisers claimed 40,000.
‘Its founders argued that everyone, including ordinary people and politicians, had a role in perpetuating the culture of violence, silence, and lawlessness that pervaded the island because they failed firmly to reject nationalist and other forms of violence and accepted at face value exclusionary, individualistic understandings of Corsican identity. The state also contributed by failing to enforce the law equally and dispassionately, by negotiating with violent nationalists, and by supporting a non-transparent culture of public policymaking on the island.’

While the French had reacted with a strong security response in the longer term the political nature of the Corsican conflict was pushed into the forefront of national politics. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin announced that there would be public and inclusive negotiations with nationalist groups, a major change in the attitude of France to Corsica. Previously, secret negotiations had taken place with separatists and government reports had deemed these a failure: the new negotiations would be public and include Corsican political parties. In December 1999 four of the armed groups announced a ceasefire and said that if their demands were met they would hand in their weapons. The fact that the rump of armed Corsican nationalism declared a ceasefire on the basis of the progress of the negotiations reflected the close links with their political wings.

In response to the murder of Erignac the French had appointed a new prefect, Claude Bonnet, who was tasked with cracking down on the violence on Corsica. The report by the French enquiry on Corsica commissioned after the murder of Erignac was damning: the island was deemed to be rife with corruption, tax fraud and the mismanagement of European Union funds. Despite having only 0.5% of the French population the island accounted for over half of the total of violent attacks within France and the island was described as being in a ‘pre-mafia’ state of lawlessness amid which criminal gangs and...
nationalists operated with impunity. Bonnet’s appointment produced swift results, reducing bomb attacks from hundreds to a relatively low ninety-six. Moreover, illegally built holiday homes and restaurants had been torn down and corruption and fraud tackled. The success was undermined in March and May of 1999 when Bonnet was discredited in a scandal after an elite squad of the gendarmerie had burnt down an illegally built restaurant and one of the men confessed and implicated their commander and Bonnet. It was a major setback but Jospin continued to push through the negotiations with Corsican politicians.

The Matignon Process began on 13th December 1999 and lasted through to the 20th July 2000 and culminated in the ‘Matignon Proposals which were ‘approved by the overwhelming majority of the Corsican Assembly’. In terms of its acceptance by the legally recognised political sphere of Corsican politics it was an unarguable success:

‘The ‘Jospin Method’ of open and transparent talks facilitated the reaching of an agreement. It also signified that there would be no more secret dealings with clandestine groups. Jospin also stressed the need for the Corsican side to reach a consensus before the approaching the government. The high-level meetings in Paris and the intense debates of the Assembly testified to a political will on both sides to find a solution to the ‘Corsican Question’. Nationalists, e.g., placed on hold demands for the recognition of the ‘Corsican People’ and an amnesty for ‘political prisoners’. The broader nationalist movement backed the talks while also using violence (or the threat of it). This led to criticisms that the

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69 BBC News Online, 3rd Mar 1998 *French parliament sets up Corsica enquiry*  

70 The Economist Online, 6th May 1999 *Pluprefect*  

71 BBC News Online 3rd May 1999 *Arson arrest rocks Corsica*  
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/334507.stm accessed 28/08/11 19:30; The Economist Online, 6th May 1999, op cit; The Guardian Online, May 9th 1999 *Corsican flames engulf ministers in corruption crisis*  
http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/may/09/theobserver5?INTCMP=SRCH accessed 03/05/11 19:10.

government was being blackmailed, even though some of the attacks were claimed by groups seeking to derail the Matignon Process.\textsuperscript{73}

The Matignon Process was enabled by the formation of Unita in 1999, an umbrella of nationalist organisations, which the autonomist UPC refused to join on the basis of Unita’s ambiguous stance on the use of violence.\textsuperscript{74} External actors’ also had an influence on events: The autonomists within the UPC had particularly admired the role played by the SDLP’s John Hume in Northern Ireland’s Peace Process\textsuperscript{75} and the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) held a conference which enabled dialogue between Corsicans that was not possible in Corsica. There were rapid and concrete changes in attitudes to negotiation and compromise.\textsuperscript{76} The success of nationalist political parties in elections to the Corsican Assembly in March 1999\textsuperscript{77} and the Aland Island conference was followed by the Fiumorbu Declaration, also in 1999, active involvement in the Matignon Process and aided by the ceasefire declared by armed nationalist groups. The French position can be characterised by Jospin’s willingness to engage in public negotiations in Paris and a compromise by the Jospin government as regards a requirement for participants to condemn the use of violence.\textsuperscript{78} The continuation of violence by groups opposed to the process links in with the use of ‘spoilers’ by groups opposed to a peace process. The majority of bombings that took place around the time of the Matignon Process were carried out by a new group, Armata Corsa, which in 1999 claimed to have 200 members.\textsuperscript{79}

The Matignon Proposals were ambiguous in content and were in fact a compromise document resulting from the negotiations that had taken place between Corsican politicians and the French government and limited by the concept of the French unitary state. There is no mention of the Corsican ‘people’, the ‘general aims of the reforms are to take into account the specificity of Corsica within the French Republic based on its insularity and history.’\textsuperscript{80} Much of the proposals are concerned with implementation, however, Corsica was

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p 293.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, Dominici, op cit.
\textsuperscript{75} Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit. The UPC is a rough equivalent to the SDLP.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit; Daftary, 2008, op cit.
\textsuperscript{79} Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit.
\textsuperscript{80} Daftary, 2002, op cit, p 216.
to become one region instead of two departments, with extended regulatory powers for the Corsican Assembly and the power to adapt national laws. Teaching of the Corsican language would be extended and a fifteen year public investment plan implemented to improve socio-economic conditions.\(^81\)

The implementation of the Matignon Process was not carried through to its fullest extent and there were significant developments which impacted on this. The Socialist party was defeated in the 2002 elections and the FLNC-UC withdrew their support for the process, breaking a two year ceasefire. The new French government consulted Corsican representatives on the outlines of a third statute for Corsica and new talks were boycotted by nationalists over arrests. The Matignon Proposals were watered down and revised and the new Statute did not include the power of the Corsican assembly to adapt national laws. A referendum in July 2003 saw a ‘no’ vote to the new statute returned by Corsicans. After the referendum the Interior Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, announced that there would be no more talks and further implementation of the Matignon Proposals was abandoned. As a consequence Corsica’s political arrangement was merely an amendment of the 1991 Special Statute.\(^82\)

The early 2000s saw further divisions within the armed nationalist movement. The principal groups were the FLNC-UC, FLNC-1976 and FLNC-October 22\(^{nd}\).\(^83\) Armata Corsa had been disbanded after the assassination of two of its leaders, including Jean Michel-Rossi. The attacks have been attributed to the FLNC-historique/FLNC-UC, who at the time were supporters of the Matignon Process\(^84\) but the killings may also have been by a mafia gang and related to non-nationalist activities. It is not always possible to attribute claims made by the three factions to armed actions as many are simply claimed by the ‘FLNC’. The FLNC-1976 refers to the year in which the original FLNC was formed, indicating a commitment to the early goals of the original FLNC. The FLNC-October 22\(^{nd}\) has an evolutionary history from Resistenza (1990-1997), through the FLNC-May 1996 (1996-1999), Clandestinu (1999) to the October 22\(^{nd}\) organisation. Some of these groups were absorbed into the FLNC-UC in 1999

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\(^{81}\) Ibid, Daftary, 2008, op cit.

\(^{82}\) Daftary, 2008, op cit.


\(^{84}\) Daftary, 2008, op cit.
indicating that some members would not have agreed with the FLNC-UC’s acceptance of the Matignon Process as the FLNC-October 22\(^{nd}\) emerges in 2003 when the FLNC-UC splits.\(^{85}\) By the 2000s, the FLNC-habituel and FLNC-historique factions are defunct, their successor organisations from the 2003 split having become the dominant groups. In terms of claims to armed actions and media reports the FLNC-1996 is rarely referred to, leaving the FLNC-UC and their FLNC-2\(^{nd}\) October as the dominant, competing organisations until 2012.\(^{86}\) In 2012, in a six page announcement, a new group came into public existence. It called itself, simply, the FLNC and demanded that a new ‘process’ be begun and the release of ‘prisoners’.\(^{87}\) Of the two main groups, it is the FLNC-UC which has proved more willing to engage in ceasefires: a 2003 ceasefire lasted until 2005\(^{88}\) but both groups are committed to the use of violence in order to achieve their goals. The only clear difference is that The FLNC-UC is willing to stop operations if it benefits the nationalist movement overall but are not beyond the use of violence to influence political developments.\(^{89}\)

In recent years the propensity of factionalism within mafia style gangs, criminal organisations and the armed nationalist groups have combined to make Corsica the region of France with the most murders.\(^{90}\) The murder of the lawyer Antoine Sollacaro who had represented nationalists in the courtroom, including the convicted killer of Claude Erignac, was the fifteenth such ‘hit-style’ murder on Corsica in 2012.\(^{91}\) Likewise, the murders of

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\(^{85}\) Corse Matin (Online), 10\(^{th}\) Aug 2009, op cit; genealogical trees in: Dominci, op cit, pp 42-45; Foster, op cit, p 251; Loughlin & Daftary, op cit, pp 57-59.

\(^{86}\) Corse Matin (Online), 12\(^{th}\) Jun 2012 Le FLNC résumé par le commandant Le Seigle

\(^{87}\) Corse Matin (Online), 11\(^{th}\) Jul 2012 Un nouveau FLNC voit le jour dans le maquis de la clandestinité

\(^{88}\) The Guardian Online, 28 Aug 2006 Welcome to your new holiday home. Please beware of the danger of bombs

\(^{89}\) The website for Unita-Naziunale has online archives concerning clandestine nationalist groups. These sources have been translated and analysed. The FLNC-UC and FLNC 22nd October feature heavily in the post-Matignon period. See: http://www.unita-naziunale.org/portail/index.htm First accessed 03/10/11 20:30.

\(^{90}\) The Guardian Online, 20\(^{th}\) Oct 2012 On Corsica, the intrigue of crime and politics claims another life

\(^{91}\) The Guardian Online, 17\(^{th}\) Oct 2012 Corsica lawyer Antoine Sollacaro assassinated in Ajaccio
former fighters who had turned to politics can be linked to the conflict.\textsuperscript{92} The police have continued to have successes in arresting and charging nationalists and they have undergone due process in the courts.\textsuperscript{93} The effect can be seen in the reduction of activities related to nationalism, but not its elimination, the armed groups remained stoically active but were limited in the number of actions which they could carry out. An analysis of the situation in which the murders have escalated is complicated by the undoubted links between criminal violence and political violence. Moreover, the use of extortion and robbery to fund political violence falls within the blurred boundary which denotes crime and political violence and Corsica is rife with it.\textsuperscript{94} A further complication is the confusion between purely criminal and political activity: murders ascribed to nationalists may include disputes over control, personal loyalties, the use of nationalism as a cover for criminal activity and the settling of scores as the clandestine groups are not the only violent actors on the island.

\textit{Situation-Attitudes-Behaviour}

The end of the escalation phase marked an end of the FLNC’s major actions and the beginning of a prolonged stage of a hurting stalemate, in which the FLNC and successor groups could not be defeated but had no realistic hope of forcing the French to accede to their demands. The FLNC had never entertained the goal of actually defeating the French state, but they did count on the impact of attrition on the targeted groups. As the years of the normalisation stage went on, they, and the successor groups, had increasingly less impact and they saw the political parties grow stronger, while at the same time, anti-violence campaigns were gaining strength. Between 1991 and 2013, the divisions between the successor groups reflected the political changes affecting Corsica and the links of some to criminal gangs undermined their cause. They constantly faced the fact that there was far greater support for greater autonomy than there was for independence: voting patterns consistently demonstrated that the majority wanted to improve the lives of Corsicans, but not at the expense of losing the benefits of being a part of France.
The attitudes of the FLNC and the successor groups varied between maintaining a low level of persisting violence and a minority view of the use of lethal violence. The latter proved to be damaging, particularly in the case of the Erignac assassination. Complementing this was a division between calling ceasefires in order to allow political developments, and countering ceasefires through continuing violence. Alongside these, were very different attitudes to involvement in criminal activity, a natural route for members of a clandestine organisation, possibly along the lines of a division between criminal activity for personal gain, and criminal activity for the purpose of funding political violence. The division due to attitudes over these three key issues of the level of violence, politics versus militarism, and criminal gain versus funding, contributed to the divided nature of the clandestine groups.

The behaviour of the FLNC and the successor groups has been one of utilising predominantly low levels of violence with limited lethal violence. When violence has been used outside of intergroup it has been highly communicative in nature and has reflected the attitudes of the respective group to attempts at reform. The FLNC of 1981 was a unified group, able to anticipate the potential of reform and call a ceasefire to see how the situation developed. This was not the case in 1989 when the organisation was divided to the extent that it split into two major groups with smaller factions also breaking away. Analysis of the successor groups becomes more difficult after 1991 as they become more numerous and a period of infighting takes place over personal grievances, feuds, and links to criminal activity. This then gives way to a broader coalition during the period of the Matignon Process, who in a similar vein to the FLNC of 1981, are willing to call a ceasefire while the Process took place, and smaller groups, including Armata Corsa, who used spoiler violence as a tactic. The failure of reforms and ceasefires to meet nationalist demands consistently led to the renewal of violent activity, meaning that there was demonstrable willingness to allow a political solution to be found, but a willingness to revert back to military action once demands were not met.

Response

During the extensive period of 1981 to 2013, the French applied all types of responses, but the greatest impact came from reform.
French security policy has been consistent across governments in continuously pursuing the memberships of clandestine groups and their successes have undoubtedly inhibited the ability of the clandestine groups to maintain cohesion and carry out operations. The coercive element was most visible in the period immediately following the assassination of Prefect Erignac, a crackdown, which brought immediate results, but was undermined by the arrest of his replacement, Prefect Bonnet.

The 1998 escalation of the coercive response was also followed by the negotiations that were part of the Matignon process. These were the first public attempts at negotiation, but it should be emphasised that these negotiations were with elected representatives from the Corsican Assembly, not the clandestine groups. An indirect link came from the nationalist political party, Corsica Nazione, and the choice of talking to the Corsican Assembly meant that all the divisions within Corsican politics were represented and the Centrist’s in the Assembly were reassured that the government was not talking to militants. A change in government and the end of the Matignon Process meant that the negotiations eventually came to an end, but they were important to the process beginning and continuing.

The clandestine groups were responsive to all three of the major attempts at reforming the political relationship between the Corsican people and the centralist French government. Ceasefires were called in all three instances, the first in 1981 anticipated the impact from the election of the Mitterand government, the second, beginning in 1989 split the FLNC in two, and the third, the Matignon Process, begun in 1999, split the successor groups and also drew the nationalist political parties into discussion and negotiation with other Corsican parties. Overall, the attempts at reform, gave Corsicans more responsibility and recognition, but not autonomy, and so were limited in scope. The principal reason for this is the concept of the indivisible French state, which is intended to guarantee rights to all French citizens and for this to change would require a change in the constitution. The impact on the clandestine groups was that it undermined their already limited minority group support and exacerbated the internal divisions within them. Prior to 1989 there had only been one FLNC, by the end of the normalisation stage the internal divisions between and within factions had contributed to a significant decline in numbers. Most of the attacks in the years between 1998 and 2002, including the Erignac assassination and during the
Matignon Process, were carried out by smaller splinter groups who later disbanded. When the Matignon Process came to an end, the attacks increased and the newest FLNC factions coalesced and continued with their low level violence.

**Permanent ceasefire (2014-2015)**

Corsica does not pass through the de-escalation stage in this analysis and it is not predetermined in the framework of analysis that a conflict will do so. In fact, the preferable trajectory is that the conflict is resolved in the origins stage, prior to the emergence of challenger organisations (conflict prevention), or in the pre-escalation stage, whereby a challenger group has emerged but government intervention has rendered the cause irrelevant (conflict transformation, or resolution). Due to the persistently low level of violence, which is the modus operandi of Corsican groups, and their divisive nature in relation to government initiatives, the willingness by one to call ceasefires is offset by other groups continuing.

On the 25th of June 2014 the FLNC announced that they had put down their weapons and were giving up armed struggle and rejected any further use of violence:

‘[O]ur organisation has decided unilaterally to initiate a process of demilitarization and gradually come out of hiding. In this instance, since the publication of our press release, we reject in advance any paternity of military action on Corsican and French territory.’

The FLNC also stated their future direction:

‘It is not the end of history. On the contrary, by this action today we want to offer new perspectives to our march towards sovereignty...It is time to move to a new phase, that of building a political force to govern Corsica and lead to independence.’

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The press release also cites the reasons for the decision to abandon armed struggle, coming from the adoption of three major separatist demands by the Corsican Assembly in 2013. These were: the consideration of Corsican as a co-official language with French; a move to increasing administrative autonomy via a reference in the French constitution; and, the most influential according to the FLNC statement, a vote that in order to buy property the buyer must have had a permanent five year residency on the island. The FLNC also stated that there was no preconditions in relation to ‘political prisoners’, which can be taken to mean any militants convicted of clandestine activity and political activists convicted of non-violent crimes in relation to the Corsican cause. The status of political prisoners had been a key issue for the newly announced FLNC in 2012, which had argued for a new political process to be begun.

The declaration by the FLNC of an end to armed struggle and commitment to purely political action, one without preconditions, and made on the basis of developments in Corsican politics indicates that armed struggle is at an end. However, such an interpretation must be treated with necessary caution, for three reasons. The first is that ceasefires have been called before, and then later broken, and the current permanent ceasefire is a very recent development and only the passage of time will confirm if it will remain so. The second is the divisive nature of the clandestine groups on Corsica, as a declaration of a ceasefire by a major group does not guarantee that smaller groups will not emerge. The third is the blurred line between criminal violence and political violence. As noted above in the normalisation stage, the clandestine groups are not the only violent actors on the island and the links between criminal activity and clandestine activity are as pervasive as those between the clandestine groups and political activists.

The declaration of an end to armed struggle by the FLNC was met by little fanfare when compared to that of the PIRA in 1998 and ETA in 2011, despite it marking the end of the last ethno/nationalist-separatist terrorist group in Europe. This is no doubt due to the far greater lethality of the Northern Irish and Basque Country cases, in which, respectively,
the PIRA and ETA, were the dominant and most lethal challengers to the state. The vast majority of actions by the Corsican clandestine groups have been non-lethal, involving damage to property, and care has been taken to avoid damaging the tourist industry. The factors indicating that the ceasefire will hold are firstly, that this is the first time the FLNC, or a successor group, has declared an end to armed struggle, and secondly, that there has been progress by the nationalist parties within Corsican politics. These are concrete facts, made clear in the FLNC statement.

The estimated membership of the FLNC is small, numbering approximately fifty people in 2012, but the commitment of Corsicans to nationalist and autonomist political parties and organisations is strong, giving them the all important alternative to violence. The Corsican tolerance of violence does not mean the acceptance of violence, and this has an impact on the clandestine groups, with their claim to represent the Corsican people. The everyday Corsican has had enough of the violence and when this happens a backlash occurs as the tolerance limits of the population towards terrorist violence, including the predominantly low-level of that of the Corsican groups, is exceeded. The most dramatic was the protests after the killing of Prefect Erignac. The clandestine groups, as political actors, are responsive to their political environment have strong links to nationalist parties who are able to compete in elections. The FLNC statement drew on the experiences of Northern Ireland and the Basque Country (without directly naming the ‘brotherly movements’ of the PIRA and ETA), and the Scottish and Catalan referendums, indicating an acceptance that nationalist agendas can be pursued by non-violent political means.

99 Institute for the Study of Violent Groups: National Liberation Front of Corsica  
100 Calle & Fazi, op cit.  
101 Henders, op cit.  
A second problem is the divisions since 1991 within the clandestine groups as despite the positive responses to political change and reforms a splinter group or groups have always been present, carrying out spoiler violence, an example being Armata Corsa during the Matignon Process.\textsuperscript{105} On the 14\textsuperscript{th} September 2014 a Club Med resort at Cargesse was damaged by a bomb attack, which took place in the early hours of the morning but did not cause any casualties as it was unoccupied at the time. There was no claim made for the attack.\textsuperscript{106} Such an attack is characteristic of the FLNC and observers on the island have noted that other factions coexist and the bombing was in a political context.\textsuperscript{107} The potential for a continuation of violence remains, but it should be noted that this is the only such attack to have come to light, and the FLNC had explicitly denounced the use of violence. As no claim has been made the reasons for the bombing are not conclusively for nationalist reasons. Corse Matin cites a total of 10,500 bombings on Corsica since 1976, of which, 4,700 were not claimed\textsuperscript{108}, and it should be noted than some actions may have taken place for reasons other than a nationalist political agenda.

A major problem is the blurred boundary between political violence and criminal activity, posing a unique and complex problem for the analyst in that the distinction between criminal activity by mafia style gangs, internecine violence by clandestine groups, personal grievances and attacks by clandestine groups overlap.\textsuperscript{109} Historically, the clandestine groups have funded themselves through the usual channels of extortion, armed robbery, arms and drug trafficking, and the misappropriation of government funds\textsuperscript{110}, activities which undoubtedly lead to both competition and collusion with criminal organisations. In 2012 the overall violence on Corsica combined to make the island the

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\textsuperscript{105} Loughlin & Letamendia, op cit.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Briquet, op cit; Sanchez, 2008, op cit; The Guardian Online, 20\textsuperscript{th} Oct 2012, op cit.
region of France with the most murders. This points to other problems than the ethno-nationalist/separatists, which need to be resolved, but these are distinctly criminal issues, as opposed to the separatist violence of the FLNC. For the analyst of terrorism, one means of identifying if terrorism has in fact come to an end is to distinguish clearly between political violence and criminal action for financial gain. The only true indicator that political violence has ended is an end to actions against French owned properties, politicians, the police, lawyers and public figures.

Situation-Attitudes-Behaviour

The FLNC’s situation in the permanent ceasefire stage is close to that at the end of the normalisation stage. They had a dwindled membership who was subject to continuing pressure from the police and were being brought before the courts in major trials. They were also witnessing a stronger approach from within the Corsican Assembly towards arguing for key demands regarding issues that had mobilised dissent in their founding years.

The major change in the attitudes of the FLNC, and this bears a close resemblance to that of ETA in 2011, was in the willingness to abandon armed struggle without any concession. The FLNC has stated that they want to pursue a non-violent struggle, building on what has gone before, and has also stated that they see critical demands being pursued within the Corsican Assembly. A key factor in enabling the decision was the emergence of a single, dominant, FLNC faction during the normalisation stage, which allowed for a clear commitment to ending armed struggle.

The FLNC’s behaviour during the short years of the permanent ceasefire was dominated by the decision to end armed struggle, explicitly stating the reasons for the decision, their future political direction, and the influence of events in the Basque Country, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Catalonia. Their commitment to the end goal of Corsican independence remains but there has been a move to political activism over the use of violence.

Response

The French approach, after the end of the FLNC’s armed struggle, was to continue with the establishment of law and order, typified by the three waves of arrest resulting from clandestine activity. This has included members of Corsica Libera, the FLNC’s closest political ally.

The FLNC are unlikely to acknowledge the importance of coercive measures in bringing their conflict to an end, and their stated reasons for ending armed struggle must be subjected to critical evaluation. Yet, it should be observed that the actions taken by the Corsican Assembly in 2013, so important to the FLNC’s exit from violence, came about as a result of reforms which began in 1981 and have progressively, if slowly, enabled greater Corsican representation and expression through political parties of nationalist and autonomist aims. The FLNC successor groups reacted differently to political reforms and proposals by the French, yet there was a trend towards responding positively to attempts at reform, and responding negatively to failure.

Conclusion

The FLNC emerged as a consequence of the French response to the Aleria incident, a result of discontent over concerns about the Corsican economy and culture. The French response to the FLNC and the successor groups included all three of the approaches under analysis. Coercion was evident prior to the emergence of the FLNC, conciliation was the least applied, and reform was utilised prior to the conflicts’ escalation and would form a major part of the governments’ approach to ‘the Corsican Problem’. Overall, the groups were subjected to an unrelenting coercive response, which caused their already small numbers to dwindle. Conciliatory measures proved to be generally unsuccessful. There was limited and unsuccessful direct discussion with the groups, although later talks, which took place with nationalist politicians and representatives, were more successful during the terminated peace process. The French made three separate attempts as political reform, which were initially limited in their success, but overall the reforms have moved the larger clandestine movements in a general direction towards declaring an end to their campaigns. The reforms
gave greater responsibilities to the Corsican Assembly and the adoption of nationalist goals by the Assembly was cited by the FLNC as the reason for their ending armed struggle.
Matrix for Historical Analysis of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Historical Precedents</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Pre-Escalation</th>
<th>Escalation</th>
<th>Normalisation</th>
<th>De-escalation</th>
<th>Permanent Ceasefire</th>
<th>Re-escalation (Returns conflict to stage four)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

1. With the exception of historical precedents each stage is analysed according to the situation-attitude-behaviour of protagonists in the conflict.
2. The Matrix is evolutionary in that it traces a conflict from the Historical Precedents, which have an impact on the evolution of an armed group, through its contemporary Origins to Permanent Ceasefire.
3. Historical Precedents relates to the ethnic group the armed group claims to represent. The incumbent state may have a history of involvement with the ethnic group and it is not until the escalation stage that violence by challenger groups becomes the dominant form of conflict.
4. Progression between stages does not have a specific point where one stage begins and another ends: Conflicts make a transition from one stage to another with some aspects overlapping.
5. A conflict is not pre-ordained to go through each stage: Some may not reach the stage of Permanent Ceasefire and may remain ongoing and others may be resolved early, reaching a state of Permanent Ceasefire without undergoing Normalisation or De-escalation.
6. A primary focus of the thesis is to understand how terrorist conflicts reach the point of Permanent Ceasefire.

Fig 5.12 Matrix for Historical Analysis of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorism
The Stages of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorist Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
<th>Stage 6</th>
<th>Stage 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Precedents</td>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>Pre-Escalation</td>
<td>Escalation</td>
<td>Normalisation</td>
<td>De-escalation</td>
<td>Permanent Ceasefire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic or national groups history prior to the new conflict</td>
<td>Emergence of armed group during new conflict and codification of rules of organisation and operation</td>
<td>Limited armed activities against the security forces and emergence of minority group support</td>
<td>Extensive use of violence: Greater capability to organise operations and increase in minority group support</td>
<td>Strategic move to the ‘long war’ as goals are not met and violence becomes the normal state of affairs</td>
<td>Increased emphasis on political activity over violence and loss of minority group support for violence</td>
<td>Clear and definite cessation of armed struggle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes:

1. There are eight stages. The importance of historical and cultural factors in the origins of a contemporary conflict is indicated by the use of three stages before the Escalation stage.
2. S-A-B Factors indicates the use of Situation-Attitude-Behaviour as a means of analysing the factors in each stage.
3. Conflicts progress through the stages, although it is feasible that stages may be passed over in a given conflict. Should a conflict reach Re-Escalation (and not all will do so), the conflict reverts back to the Escalation stage and passes through the stages again.
4. The model is challenger group centric but the analysis at each stage takes into account other parties, for example: the security forces.

Fig 5.11: The Stages of Ethno/Nationalist-Separatist Terrorist Conflict
## Corsica: Historical Precedents to Escalation

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominance of the coastline by Mediterranean powers leads to a division between a foreign dominated exterior and Corsican culture in the interior of the island. French control begins in the Napoleonic era and the island becomes closely connected to France.</td>
<td>Corsica undeveloped when compared to the rest of France. The clans dominate politics and effectively run the island on Frances behalf. Economic reforms targeting agriculture and tourism are begun. Pied noirs are resettled on Corsica between 1958 and 1964.</td>
<td>Farm land set aside for Corsican farmers is given to pied noir families. Development benefits the coast and younger Corsicans are emigrating. The traditionally orientated interior does not benefit and is depopulated.</td>
<td>Overwhelming security response to the Aleria occupation leads to the formation of the FLNC and the armed struggle begins. Counter violence by FRANCIA. The conflict escalates into a confrontation between the FLNC and the police and CRS.</td>
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### Attitude

Corsica's modern history of Italian then French domination produced an opposition between Italian and French cultures. Increasing identification with France solidified by the Second World War. Domination of politics and economy by the clans. Nationalism develops during a period of intense connection to France.

Discontent over the dominance of the clans and arrival of the pied noirs. Economic reforms seen as benefiting outsiders and not ordinary Corsicans. Strong connection to France remains.

Economic control seen as resting with outsiders. Pronounced division between the cosmopolitan coast and traditional interior. Attacks take place but there is no lethal intent.

Increasing gap between autonomists who oppose clandestine action and nationalists. France treats the violence as a security problem but also considers political initiatives.

### Behaviour

Withdrawal to the interior of the island. Many Corsicans serve abroad in foreign armies and the vendetta is prevalent amongst Corsicans. 1729 war of independence is the first successful revolt in Corsican history. France takes control in 1793 and Corsicans serve disproportionately in the French military and civil service.

Emergence of nationalism and regionalism. Formation of DIECO and CEDIC by businessmen and autonomists. Union Corse formed and becomes the FRC, CEDIC becomes the ARC. FRC and ARC are more political than their predecessors and political concerns begin to overtake the economic.

ARC begins to engage in 'direct action'. First clandestine groups emerge and carry out symbolic attacks against pied noir and French owned property. FPCL and GP are formed.

FLNC carries out major attacks on high profile targets before moving to a modus operandi of 'blue nights', or multiple bombings of empty properties. French approach is primarily coercive in nature.
## Corsica: Normalisation to Re-escalation

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corsica gains more autonomy due to reforms and the FLNC is irrevocably split in 1990 over the utility of violence. Over time separatist violence becomes meshed with non-political criminal activity. The failure of the Matignon process in 2002 terminates a nascent peace process and the security stalemate continues.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>The recently reformed FLNC declares and end to armed struggle in 2014 as the Corsican Assembly has taken on three major separatist demands. FLNC has been weakened by persisting arrests and trials. The Police continue to arrest people suspected of involvement in militant violence.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clandestine groups prove responsive to political reforms and increased autonomy but are divided over their response. Division remains between autonomists and separatists and the nationalist movement becomes fragmented over the use of violence. Corsican population is mobilised into anti-violence protests.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FLNC has not changed its goals, nor has it expressed any concern for its previous actions. They have acknowledged the influence of the political situation of similar organisations and political parties in making their decision.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-lethal attacks remain in the majority but divisions within the FLNC leads to lethal infighting in the 1990s and the fragmentation of the separatist groups. French approach remains coercive but three attempts at political reform are made. Open talks take place between the government and clandestine groups during the Matignon Process. The majority of the clandestine groups declare a ceasefire which breaks down after the Process ends.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FLNC announces that it has ended armed struggle and will pursue independence via politics. They have made no demands regarding prisoners. French Police arrest members of the affiliated political party Corsica Liberia for militant activity.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

APC  Associu d ii Patrioti Corsi
ARC  ‘l’Action Regionaliste Corse
CAR  Plan d’Action Regionale
CEDIC  Comite d’Etudes et de Defense des Interets de la Corse
CRS  Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité
ECMI  European Centre for Minority Issues
EEC  European Economic Community
ETA  Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom)
ETA-m  ETA-Militar
ETA-pm  ETA-Politico-Militar
FLNC  Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale Corsu (National Liberation Front of Corsica)
FLNC-hab  FLNC-Canal Habitual
FLNC-his  FLNC-Canal Historique
FLNC-UC  FLNC-Union des Combatants
FPCL  Fronte Paisanu Corsu di Liberazione
FRANCIA  Front d’Action Nouvelle Contre l’independance et ‘Autonomisme
FRC  Front Regionaliste Corse
GP  Ghustizia Paolina
IRA  Irish Republican Army
PIRA  Provisional Irish Republican Army
SETCO  Societe d’Equipement Touristique de la Corse
SOMIVAC  Societe de la Mise en Valeur Agricole
UPC  Union di u Populu Corse
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Corsican separatists declare ceasefire

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Un nouveau FLNC voit le jour dans le maquis de la clandestinité

Le FLNC résumé par le commandant Le Seigle

Un village du Club Med visé par un attentat à Cargese en Corse-du-Sud

Top lawyer shot in ongoing Corsican gang war

Mafia image of Corsica 'totally divorced from reality'

Corse: le FLNC dépose les armes

Corse : le FLNC annonce qu’il dépose les armes


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