Corsica Research Initiative: Research Desiderata

The purpose of the Corsica Research Initiative (CRI) is to investigate and understand the origins, escalation and decline of ethno-nationalist/separatist armed groups on the island of Corsica. In the CARIS categorisation of armed conflict this falls under the category of terrorism and political violence, and this requires further exposition here due to definitional issues with the term 'terrorism'. This is primarily because 'terrorism' is a politically loaded concept, causing problems in academic analysis as it is generally used as a means by which state actors label challengers as the 'bad guys'; challenger groups in return either strongly resist this description, or revel in it. When the term is applied to the state, problems arise in the fact that states frequently have a historical record of doing the very things that the sub-state 'terrorist' actor is accused of, and the historical impact of state terrorism (taking Nationalist-Socialism and Soviet Communism as examples) is far more lethal and damaging.

For academic purposes, the term 'terrorism' becomes useless unless it is clearly categorised and defined, before the researcher or writer then proceeds with their analysis. Additional confusion is created by the substitution of descriptions 'freedom fighters', 'radical nationalists', 'armed groups', 'the resistance', 'insurgents', 'guerrilla's', etc..., thereby either making the 'terrorists' the 'good guys' or miscategorising the armed conflict entirely. The most productive way forward has been to establish typologies of terrorism, so including state and sub-state actors, and treating terrorism as a strategy or tactic, thereby treating terrorism as something that one 'does', rather than 'is'. Here, the descriptions 'armed groups', 'nationalist violence', and 'armed struggle' are used specifically to define actors and actions that fall into the spectrum of terrorism and political violence. These are not euphemisms for 'terrorism', but descriptions of what actors are and what they do. It is down to the individual to make up their own mind as to whether or not the term 'terrorism' applies, and the location on the spectrum of the subject of investigation.

The research desiderata presented below are based on existing scholarship and contributions in English to the understanding of nationalist inspired violence on the island of Corsica. The list of academic disciplines applied to the understanding of what is a unique case of conflict is lengthy. A far from comprehensive list includes: anthropology, criminology, conflict analysis and resolution, cultural studies, ethnography, history, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, and terrorism studies. Within this there is a variety of topics covered and these are frequently in the forms of comparative studies. Again, an incomplete list includes: autonomy and nationalism, elections, ethnicity and culture, the European Union and sub-state nationalism, language, politics (national and regional), and regional development. Finally, there are a small number of articles, books, and book chapters directed at the study of armed struggle on Corsica, and more often than not, on the autonomist and nationalist parties with varying perspectives on the legitimacy of armed struggle. Inevitably, comparative studies of these mostly include the Basque Country and/or Northern Ireland, which are similar cases in terms of being prolonged conflicts

involving ethno-nationalist/separatist armed groups and nationalist political parties with differing views on the utility of violence. Yet, armed struggle on Corsica is unique, principally because of the large number of incidents (or 'events', usually bombs) that have occurred, and the very low number of casualties as a consequence. This is due to the modus operandi of the Corsican groups in having multiple simultaneous explosions occur in empty properties (known as 'blue nights), thus taking great care to avoid casualties. There have been deaths, most of which were assassinations, and 'the Corsican Problem' has had a major impact on French politics.

Corsica makes an interesting and valuable case for study for three reasons. The first, and arguably the most important, is that a prolonged conflict involving armed struggle against the state has come to an end, and the lessons that can be learned from this can contribute to the understanding of how other, more violent conflicts can come to an end. We also get to see the full picture of the emergence, escalation, and decline of nationalist violence, meaning that similar cases, current and future, can be addressed, and potentially resolved, at the stage of the emergence of armed struggle. The second is the breadth of the established knowledge on Corsica and the issues that are addressed. The literature in the English language, as noted above, is diverse and allows us to consider a large number of factors that have impacted on the beginning and end of armed struggle. This is despite the comparatively small amount that has been written when compared to the Basque Country and Northern Ireland. The third is the voluminous material written in French that is readily accessible and can help fill in gaps in knowledge, and primary source documents that are available for translation.

To this end, the CRI is intended to act as a research centre, providing researchers with an introduction to the case, bibliographies and internet sources through which to find materials, and as an archive of documents for analysis. A review of the bibliographies provided in the CRI gives an indication of desiderata that are already covered, and so have established knowledge to build on. It will also indicate areas where sources in French can fill in gaps in knowledge. Four categories, which stand out as needing particular attention, are the consequences of nationalist violence (**5**: 26-30), state responses (**7**: 36-38), linkages (**10**: 47-49) and the role of women (**9**: 43-46). One desiderata in particular, in which there is a serious gap, is the internecine violence between armed groups (**3**: 17).

Categories

1. Theory and Methodology
2. Information storage and retrieval
3. Armed Groups
4. The evolution of armed struggle and nationalist violence
5. The consequences of nationalist violence

6. Politics
7. State responses
8. External Actors
9. The role of women
10. Linkages

1. Theory and Methodology

1 Conceptual, definitional, methodological, and epistemological issues related to the study of terrorism and political violence.

2 The application of theories and methodologies from the fields of conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) and terrorism and political violence (TPV).

3 Categorisation of the academic disciplines applied to the study of Corsica.

4 Literature reviews by academic discipline and implications for the understanding of terrorism and political violence.

5 Quantitative and qualitative studies.

2. Information storage and retrieval

6 Archives of primary sources and translations of materials.

7 The online collation and storage of documents, including books, chapters, articles, papers, and other materials.

8 Bibliographies, general and specific.

9 Internet sources, a comprehensive list and links.

10 Lists of university departments and other institutions in order to enable collaborative research and the exchange of materials and ideas.

11 The development and use of databases to enable quantitative research.

3. Armed Groups

12 Genealogies and histories.

13 Organisation: leadership, structure, characteristics, maintenance, recruitment and training.

14 Strategy and tactics: operations, decision making, target selection, non-violent activities, the nature and variety of demands, and the use of the media and internet.

15 The psychology and sociology of human underground movements.

16 Reactions of armed groups to ceasefires and peace processes.

17 Internecine violence and feuding.

4. The evolution of armed struggle and nationalist violence

18 Case studies on the rise and decline of armed groups.

19 The determinants of the radicalisation, and de-radicalisation of individuals and groups in society.

20 The antecedents of armed struggle: perceived threats to identity, language and culture; inequality, the failure of political activism, the impact of government policies and actions.

21 The influences of other armed organisations and political parties.

22 The end of armed struggle I: why armed groups dissolve, reasons for the declarations of permanent ceasefires and ends to armed struggle.

23 The end of armed struggle II: the transition to non-violent political means, transformation into political mass movements or parties

24 The end of armed struggle III: individual and group disengagement, the impact of reforms on the perception of identity, language and culture and inequality.

25 The end of armed struggle IV: the impact of coercive measures by the state.

5. The consequences of nationalist violence

26 Impacts on victims: psychological impacts on victims and bystanders, impacts on the various segments of the population.

27 Nationalist violence and the tourist industry.

28 Financial and non-monetary costs.

29 Impacts on the lives of the members of armed groups: impacts on the members of armed groups, impacts on family members and associates.

30 The emergence of paramilitary counter-terrorist groups (FRANCIA).

6. Politics

31 Political parties: Autonomist and nationalist parties and their role, other Corsican political parties and national parties.

32 The indivisible French Republic and the regions (The centre and the periphery).

33 Armed struggle and politics: determinants of popular support, the impact on the beginning and end of armed struggle.

34 Elections and the impact on nationalist and autonomist parties and armed groups.

35 Political reform: the impact on Corsican nationalism and armed groups, politics and the end of armed struggle, former members of armed groups and their role in politics.

7. State responses

36 Counterterrorism: state policies and action.

37 Policing and the criminal justice system: investigation, arrests, courts and prisons.

38 Negotiation, conciliation and political reform.

8. External Actors

39 The impact of the EEC and EU in ending armed struggle.

40 The ECMI and other attempts at conflict resolution

41 The influence of politicians and former paramilitaries from Northern Ireland and the Basque Country.

42 Other external actors, individual and group, involved in negotiation and conciliation.

9. The role of women

43 In politics: as members of autonomist and nationalist political parties, as members of other Corsican and French political parties.

44 In the human underground: as members of armed groups, as part of the support network of armed groups.

45 As members of the government, police, or criminal justice system.

46 As activists against violence and/or corruption.

10. Linkages

47 Organised crime and the activities of armed groups: drugs and weapons trafficking, and other activities.

48 Political parties and armed groups: cooperation and division of labour, the influence of political parties on armed groups.

49 Other sources of financing for armed groups.