

<b>Institution:</b> Liverpool Hope University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience
<b>Title of case study:</b> Psychology of Terrorism and Politically Motivated Violence
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Terrorism and political violence are one of the most significant threats facing contemporary society. Building on over twenty years of research into the political situation in Northern Ireland, the research team have explored the impact political violence has on individuals and communities; in particular, they have explored the antecedent factors which lead to people choosing to engage and disengage in politically motivated violence, commonly termed 'terrorism'. This knowledge has been utilised to inform policy and improve military practice across various branches of the UK government, UK and overseas military services, police and security services, NATO and a number of faith and NGO groups.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The two key researchers in this activity were Professor Neil Ferguson, who led the research team for the duration of this research activity and who has been at Liverpool Hope University since 1996, and Dr Mark Burgess, formerly of Liverpool Hope University (from 2001 to 2005), now Reader at Oxford Brookes University. Ian Hollywood and Ross McGarry, then Hope postgraduate students, also contributed.</p> <p>The UK Government views terrorism as a substantial threat, and the counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, aims to '<i>Prevent</i>' people from engaging in terrorism and to '<i>Channel</i>' people out of terrorist activities. NATO also aims to deter terrorism and defend Alliance member states from the security challenges posed by terrorism, while NGO and Charity groups, such as the Foundation for Peace or St Ethelburga's, aim to create practical and sustainable support for peace building and the reduction of political conflict. Our research focuses on these core issues through our innovative approach of conducting face-to-face interviews with perpetrators of terrorism and victims of political violence. This approach is unusual in a field of study where most researchers analyse secondary sources (e.g. governmental reports, media sources) and keep perpetrators of political violence at a 'safe' distance. Therefore, we have produced research which is uniquely positioned to impact on policy and strategy, as it provides unadulterated accounts of politically motivated violence and the impact of strategies which aim to counter such activity. The research explores a number of themes: firstly, why some individuals engage in politically motivated violence and others in their peer group do not; secondly, what impact does engaging in violent or peaceful action have on the individual protagonist; and thirdly, what are the routes and processes involved in leading perpetrators of violence to consider disengaging from politically motivated violence and engaging in non-violent action.</p> <p>The insight provided through our research approach has challenged the dominant account, which viewed engagement in terrorist activity as the preserve of psychologically 'mad' and/or 'bad' individuals whose involvement in acts of terror was due to personality disorders or other psychological malaise. Instead, our work indicates how 'ordinary' people can be drawn into engagement due to a combination of social circumstances and internal decision making processes. The research exploring why people engage in violence (Burgess, Ferguson, &amp; Hollywood, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Ferguson &amp; Burgess, 2008; Ferguson, Burgess &amp; Hollywood, 2006) charts a number of antecedent factors which influence how and why people engage in political protest, both violent and non-violent, or join armed illegal organisations. In particular, this work demonstrates the role of 'critical incidents' or events which challenge previously held world views and propel individuals into new modes of thinking and action. The second studies (Burgess, Ferguson &amp; Hollywood, 2008; Ferguson &amp; Burgess, 2009; McGarry &amp; Ferguson, 2012) explore what impact taking this route into violent and non-violent activism has for the protagonist and illustrates the positive and negative psychological and physical impact this activity. The third set of papers (Ferguson, 2010a,</p>

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2010b) explore the routes out of armed groups and examine how organizational and individual level processes interact in pushing or pulling members out of armed groups and into other non-violent pursuits, such as solely political or community focused projects, or political inactivity. Our research has provided firm evidence of the antecedent factors which precipitate engagement and motivate disengagement in violent political activity and this has informed key governmental, international and non-governmental organizations: for example, the Home Office Counter Terrorism Unit (2004), for advice around changes to the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, which fed into a ruling in the Houses of Parliament, consultancy around links between terrorism and organized crime organizations with NATO in Turkey (2007), ad-hoc advice to the then Shadow Secretary for State for Northern Ireland (2007), advice to various governmental departments, NGOs and political parties in Sri Lanka about post-conflict reconstruction at the invitation of the UK Sri Lanka Trauma Group (2007) and Defence Technology and Science Laboratory (DTSL) around issues of terrorism and countering the threat of terrorism in the UK and elsewhere (2006). The specifics of impact activity within the latest REF cycle will be detailed in section 4.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- Ferguson, N., Burgess, M., & Hollywood, I. (2010). Who are the Victims? Victimhood Experiences in Post Agreement Northern Ireland. *Political Psychology*, 31, 6, 857-886.
- Ferguson, N., & Burgess, M., & Hollywood, I. (2008). Crossing the Rubicon: Deciding to Become a Paramilitary in Northern Ireland. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*. 2, 1, 130-137.
- Burgess, M., & Ferguson, N., & Hollywood, I. (2007). Rebels' Perspectives of the Legacy of Past Violence and of the Current Peace in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *Political Psychology*, 28, 1, 69-88.
- Ferguson, N. (2010). Disarmament, Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration: The Northern Ireland Experience. In N. Ferguson (Ed.), *Post Conflict Reconstruction* (p. 151-164). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Ferguson, N. (2010). Disengaging from Terrorism. In Silke, A (Ed.), *The Psychology Of Counter-terrorism* (p. 111-123). London: Routledge.
- Ferguson, N., & Burgess, M. (2009). From Naivety to Insurgency: The Causes and Consequences of Joining a Northern Irish Paramilitary Group. In D. Canter (Ed.), *Faces of Terrorism: Cross-Disciplinary Explorations* (pp.19 – 33). Chichester, England: Wiley.

This research has been part-funded by the British Academy via a grant for £6,221 titled “*Former Loyalist Paramilitary Members’ Perspectives of Their Involvement in Past Violence and of the Current Peace in Northern Ireland: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*” awarded to Mark Burgess and Neil Ferguson in 2006 for 8 months. This programme of research has been also been funded through PhD bursaries from charitable trusts for students working in this area under Prof Ferguson’s supervision, namely, £10,000 from the W. F Southall Trust awarded in 2007, £40,000 from the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust awarded in 2006 and £6,000 from the Lantern Project awarded in 2013. In addition, the British Academy provided Prof Ferguson with two overseas travel grants worth £500 and £200 to support dissemination of this research in 2006 and 2007.

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

During the latest REF cycle the research has prompted engagement with a range of individuals and groups interested in terrorism and political violence. The research has been presented to members of all branches of the British military, the MOD, UK Defence Academy, DTSL, NGO’s such as the Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Foundation for Peace. Members of the research team have also been consulted by the Commander of Psychological Operations for the British Army, and members of the North West Counter Terrorism Unit, Department for International Development (DIFID) and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) on issues arising directly from the research findings on routes in and out of terror organizations, and the changes individual go through during their involvement in terror related activities.

The research has reached a range of beneficiaries, from victims of political conflict and terrorism in the UK, to government officials from within and beyond the UK, and has been well received. For example, we have presented the research to a range of policy makers and victims of violence through work with the Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Foundation for Peace and, as well as enlightening policy makers from across Europe, it was well received from the victims which the charity aims to serve. In particular, feedback demonstrated that the former British soldiers and victims of UK terror attacks found my research “very positive and people found the opportunity to talk about the conflict and recent events a really valuable opportunity. People especially appreciated the chance to hear about often unreported peacebuilding initiatives happening in Northern Ireland”<sup>4</sup>.

Our research led to an invitation to Dr Burgess to address senior officers enrolled in Master’s programmes at the UK Defence Academy from 2011 to 2014 (which was rated the best and most useful presentation of the 2011 programme) and an invitation by the Commander of Psychological Operations to liaise over research and possible strategies for counter-insurgency in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, while Prof Ferguson also liaised with the FCO and DFID in 2007 about issues related to UK activity in Helmand. During 2008 our research was published as part of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Series (SPS Reference 982906), based on a NATO advanced workshop held in Ankara in September 2007 which explored issues around youth and terrorism. The workshop brought together academics, security forces, government officials and diplomats from both sides of the Atlantic to contribute to NATO’s core goals and priorities<sup>5</sup>.

The research has also contributed to NGO consultations on political violence and peace building; in 2010 Prof Ferguson was invited to a consultation on Effective and Sustainable Reconciliation held at St Georges House, in Windsor Castle. The consultation aimed to evaluate different practical approaches to build sustainable peace and brought 30 religious leaders together with academics and practitioners to find “action-focused solutions to problems that effect change for the better in our society”<sup>3</sup>. In 2011 the research team were approached by the North West Counter Terrorism Unit to advise on issues related to the rise of dissident republican terrorism and the use of Liverpool as a potential base for striking London in future attacks<sup>2</sup>.

The research team have also been invited to present their research to a wider international audience, which has included members of other military and policing organizations from across the globe. For example: in Barcelona (2011) Prof Ferguson was invited to speak to an audience of counter terrorism police officers and members of the Spanish government at the Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals as part of a an international event to explore how to diminish terrorism; in Chicago (2011 & 2013) members of the research team were invited to speak at the Inter University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society; the presentation was attend by US military personnel from all arms, government officials and policy makers from Washington, D.C., the paper received exceptional feedback and drew follow-up interest from the Centre for Complex Operations at the NDU at Fort Lesley McNair in Washington, D.C.; Prof Ferguson was involved in a symposium at Portsmouth West organized by DSTL (2013) which explored historical analysis to improve future defence planning, the symposium involved a range of UK, Canadian and US military personnel; there have been repeated invitations to lecture on the Chevening Senior Fellows Programme (2006-2010), which is an FCO programme which selects participants based on their existing and potential contributions to peace and development in their respective countries, and are all civil society leaders, senior civil servants or senior military officers.

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Defence Technology and Science Laboratory (DTSL) – Letters and documents available from HEI. Senior Analyst can be contacted.
2. North West Counter Terrorism Unit – contact details and copies of communications with the lead Detective Superintendent are available from the HEI.
3. Effective and Sustainable Reconciliation Consultation Report (2010) produced by St George’s House, Winchester Centre of Religions for Reconciliation and Peace, St Ethelburga’s

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Centre for Reconciliation and Peace and Camino Foundation – the report is available from HEI.

4. Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Foundation for Peace – letters, reports and newsletters detailing beneficiary feedback available from HEI; Programme Manager can be contacted.

5. NATO – Letters available from HEI, also see <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/78209.htm>  
- a private report was published for policy makers and security services based on closed discussions which is unavailable, while the public proceedings were published as part of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Series in 2008 (SPS Reference 982906) based on the advanced workshop in September 2007 – see Ulusoy, M. D. (2008). *Political Violence, Organized Crime, Terrorism and Youth*. Amsterdam: IOS.

6. Chevening Senior Fellows – letters of invitation and feedback are available from HEI.