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## The Anglo-Irish Agreement: Folly or Statecraft?

Brendan O'Leary

*This article analyses the significance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and using research and interview material critically assesses explanations as to why it was signed. An interim evaluation of the consequences of the Agreement up to 12 July 1986 is made before considering the prospects of the Agreement's survival. A brief normative defence of the Agreement is also presented.*

Rhetorical reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by the prime ministers of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom on 15 November 1985 was predictable. Irish ultra-nationalists interpreted the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an imperialist manoeuvre, targeted against the self-styled 'armalite and ballot box' school of national liberation. Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein (SF) immediately condemned the agreement for 'copper-fastening partition'.<sup>1</sup> Ulster Unionists, on the other hand, saw the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a victory for the Provisional IRA, the pay-off for a war of sectarian attrition, a milestone in the liquidation of their cherished union. Ian Paisley, at the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) conference, asserted that the Anglo-Irish Agreement 'rode to victory on the back of IRA terrorism'.<sup>2</sup> These polarised interpretations are as incompatible as they are implausible. Understanding the significance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement requires us to bypass the brain-numbing ordinances of Green (colour of Irish nationalism) and Orange (colour of Protestant Unionism) sectarianism.

Five questions provoked by the Anglo-Irish Agreement will be addressed in this article. First, what is its constitutional significance? Second, why was the Agreement signed? This account assesses the value of three models of explanation frequently used by analysts to illuminate major state decisions: the rational actor, the organisational process and the political models respectively.<sup>3</sup> Third, what have been the interim results of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Fourth, will it survive? Finally, the prescriptive question will be answered: should the Anglo-Irish Agreement be supported?

### 1. MEANINGS: WHAT IS THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT?

The Anglo-Irish Agreement is best understood negatively: it is not three things which it is alleged to be. First, it is not 'joint authority', the exactly equal sharing of sovereignty of Northern Ireland by two separate states. Contrary to Unionist rhetoric, Peter Barry, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, has not become joint governor of Northern Ireland.<sup>4</sup> The Anglo-Irish Agreement is not a complete acceptance by the British government of one of the proposals made by the New Ireland Forum which reported in May 1984.<sup>5</sup> The terms of the Agreement do not give London and Dublin equal responsibility for all

aspects of the government of Northern Ireland. As Article 2 states: 'There is no derogation from the sovereignty of the Irish Government or the United Kingdom Government, and each retains responsibility for the decisions and administration of Government within its own jurisdiction'. The United Kingdom has not ceded sovereignty over Northern Ireland. There is no case for those who contend that the UK government's action represents a formal erosion of the Act of Union, as a judge declared when ruling against a Unionist High Court action in January 1986. Second, the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not 'put the Unionists on notice that reunification of Ireland will inevitably be enacted on an as yet undetermined date', as one constitutional lawyer has asserted.<sup>6</sup> The first clause of the agreement simply repeats the often expressed policy of successive British governments since the abrogation of the Stormont Parliament in 1972, and enshrined in Section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, that Irish unification will not take place without the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland (Article 1a). There is nothing new about the 'notice' being given to the Unionists about their constitutional status with regard to the Irish Republic, and indeed the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a formal recognition by the current Irish government of the rectitude of the British constitutional guarantee. If there is a 'notice' of constitutional significance embedded in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, it is that the Unionist identity, while guaranteed preservation, has been downgraded to equality with the Nationalist identity in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. Third, the Anglo-Irish Agreement does not represent the *de jure* abandonment of the Irish Republic's constitutional claim to Northern Ireland, as Sinn Fein and other ultra-nationalists allege. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution read as follows:

ARTICLE 2: The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas.

ARTICLE 3: Pending the re-integration of the national territory and without prejudice to the right of Parliament and Government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction of the whole of that territory, the laws enacted by that Parliament shall have the like area and extent of application as the laws of Saorstát Éireann<sup>7</sup> and the like extra-territorial effect.

As the Anglo-Irish Agreement can legitimately be interpreted as an agreement over how the national territory might be 're-integrated', it is not in violation of the letter of the Irish Constitution. Article 1c of the Anglo-Irish Agreement states that 'If in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland', then the two governments will introduce legislation to convert that wish into reality. However, ultra-nationalists are correct to appreciate that the Anglo-Irish Agreement represents the *de facto* abandonment of Irish unification as a policy goal of Fine Gael (FG) and the Irish Labour Party (ILP) for the foreseeable future, which is not the same as 'in perpetuity' as Tom King, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, bluntly suggested on 3 December 1985 when the ink on the Anglo-Irish Agreement was still fresh.<sup>8</sup>

If the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not formal joint authority, neither a formal

notice to Unionists of eventual reunification, nor the formal abandonment of territorial irredentism by the Irish Republic, then what is its constitutional significance? First, it is the formalisation of inter-state co-operation; second, a formal notice that while the Unionist guarantee remains Unionists have no veto on policy formulation within Northern Ireland; and, third, the formalisation of a strategy which binds the Irish Republic to a constitutional mode of reunification which is known to be practically infeasible, and therefore facilitates the end of the Nationalist monolith in the Republic's politics.

Let us take these points in turn. First, the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the formalisation of inter-state co-operation because the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) which it established is solely a consultative body. The IGC has no executive authority or capacity, no recognisable instruments of state [taxation and coercion], and has no formal policy implementation function. In the crudest possible terms all that the IGC represents is the institutionalisation of the talks which the two governments have been having in the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council established after the Thatcher-Haughey summit in 1980. (In the communiqué which accompanied the Anglo-Irish Agreement it was stated that British and Irish ministers had met on more than 20 occasions in the previous year, a clear sign of the extent of existing collaboration as much as proof of the impending agreement.) The IGC is a policy-formulation forum with which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland can choose to concur, take into consideration, or ignore in the government of Northern Ireland. The policy-arenas open to the two governments in the IGC are spelled out in Article 2a of the Anglo-Irish Agreement: '(i) political matters; (ii) security and related matters; (iii) legal matters, including the administration of justice; (iv) the promotion of cross-border co-operation'. The possible agenda is thus extremely wide-ranging, as the definition of political matters is very elastic. Article 6 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement elaborates these four fields, and specifically entitles the Irish government to discuss the work of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR), the Fair Employment Agency (FEA), the Equal Opportunities Commission (OEC), the Police Authority for Northern Ireland (PANI), and the Police Complaints Board (PCB). These five agencies, the SACHR, FEA, EOC, PANI, and PCB are the fruit of British attempts to reform Northern Ireland, and a direct input for the Irish government is clearly intended as a confidence-building measure for the Catholic population.

Second, the Anglo-Irish Agreement signifies the formal end of Unionist supremacy within Northern Ireland: Unionism without an Ulster Unionist veto on the structure of the union. The Unionists are denied formal access to policy formulation unless they take advantage of the possibilities for devolution which are built into the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Assembly set up under James Prior's rolling devolution proposals in 1982 was not mentioned in the Agreement, and its subsequent demise in June 1986 in the face of continued SDLP abstention and the Unionists' abuse of its facilities for attacking the Agreement has come as no surprise.<sup>9</sup> Unless the Ulster Unionists accept an agreed form of devolution, the British government will speak on behalf of unionism in the IGC. On the other hand, the Northern Ireland minority, that is, the SDLP rather than Sinn Fein, can have their grievances articulated

in the IGC even without substantial devolution. The fact that the Anglo-Irish Agreement gives the Irish Republic a *de jure* interest in the affairs of a minority within another state border<sup>10</sup> is a major symbolic affirmation of the legitimacy of the minority's complaints about the government and politics of Northern Ireland, both before and after 1972. Before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement the official British position blamed all the discreditable features of Northern Ireland upon the Unionist hegemony in the period of devolved government (1920–72). However the British signature affirms that direct rule (1972–85)<sup>11</sup> has not reformed Northern Ireland, and on its own cannot do so – a rare example of a state engaging in self-criticism? The Anglo-Irish Agreement explicitly recognises that an Irish dimension and agreed devolution [Article 4] are necessary to complete the reform of Northern Ireland. As this strategy has been the dominant motif of the SDLP since its inception, it is plain why the Agreement symbolically establishes the constitutional equality of the Northern Ireland minority. Ian Paisley made the point graphically when he suggested that the Agreement has made John Hume the 'uncrowned king of Northern Ireland'.<sup>12</sup>

Third, the Anglo-Irish Agreement signifies the end of a united front among constitutional Irish nationalists. It has brought into relief divisions which have long been apparent. Fine Gael, the ILP, and the new party in the Irish Republic, the Progressive Democrats (PD), all support the Anglo-Irish Agreement, whereas Fianna Fail (FF) opposes it. Within Northern Ireland the SDLP supports the Agreement, whereas the small Irish Independence Party (IIP) rejects it. Since the Agreement was signed FF has shown signs of wanting to support a revamped IIP against the SDLP in Northern Ireland.<sup>13</sup> Consequently FF and the IIP now represent the brand of constitutional nationalism which simply disagrees with the IRA and SF over means rather than ends, whereas most of the SDLP, FG and the ILP are making the reform of Northern Ireland a higher priority than any putative unification. This fissure between constitutional nationalists, if permanent, is of potentially immense significance on both sides of the border. The SDLP has its nationalist flank protected from criticism by SF and the IIP because of the Irish dimension in the Agreement and therefore is freer to bargain for the reform of Northern Ireland, to revitalise, and ensure the implementation of, the civil rights programme of the 1960s. The consequences for the politics of the Irish Republic will also be far-reaching.

Three final points should be made about the constitutional significance of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. First, it is not permanent, and envisages renewal after three years. Second, the Agreement does not form part of the domestic law of the United Kingdom, and thus the manner in which the British government manages the IGC is not amenable to judicial regulation. Third, the Agreement is clearly a framework which permits other constitutional settlements to be built on top of it. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is compatible with substantial, albeit necessarily agreed, devolution (Article 4b & 4c), and it is also the basis upon which joint authority, as envisaged by the New Ireland Forum or the Kilbrandon Inquiry of November 1984,<sup>14</sup> might be erected. However, the Hillsborough agreement does not currently amount to joint authority.

## II. EXPLANATIONS: WHY WAS THE AGREEMENT SIGNED?

The formal communiqué which accompanied the Anglo-Irish Agreement declared that the promotion of reconciliation was its main objective. What are we to make of this claim? Was its signing prompted by more ignoble or Machiavellian intentions? Was it, in the words of disgruntled Unionists, 'a mixture of the vilest cunning on the one hand, and the most enormous stupidity on the other'?<sup>15</sup> There are three modes of explaining the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which are worthy of serious attention.

### 1. RATIONAL ACTOR APPROACHES

First, the rational actor model of foreign policy analysis suggests that we should assume that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a rational decision reached by states in pursuit of mutually acceptable goals. Indeed, we should assume that the Agreement represents the optimal strategy available to both signatories given their interests. These simple assumptions are common to different analyses of the Agreement: first, the imperialist mode of explaining Northern Ireland, second, the Machiavellian reading of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and third, the self-presentations of the British and Irish governments.

#### *Imperialist Manoeuvres?*

The Imperialist School [Sinn Fein and Green Marxists] share the common assumption that the Northern Ireland conflict is caused by British imperialism and will only cease with the latter's termination.<sup>16</sup> According to this school the Agreement must be understood in the context of contemporary British imperialism. Fearful of what James Prior once described as the threat of an Irish Cuba off the British mainland, the Agreement represents an attempt by the British state to re-establish its hegemony in Ireland by obtaining the consent of the 'comprador' government of the 26 counties to the continuation of British rule in Northern Ireland, and indeed to direct British intervention in the affairs of the 26 counties. To these ends the Anglo-Irish Agreement was explicitly conceived to demobilise the radical nationalist movement built by Sinn Fein in the wake of the hunger strikes of 1980–81, to restore the social base and credibility of the SDLP which is much less of an organisational threat to British rule, and to cement the conditions for a military and political counter-offensive against the IRA.

Promises of symbolic gestures towards nationalist sentiment were traded by the British government in return for the Irish government's support for Britain's real objectives: a security agreement on extradition, a Europe-wide offensive against terrorists, and the Irish government's support for an assault on the American havens of support for republicans. Such an account is found in the Sinn Fein press, *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, and is echoed among sections of the British ultra-left. The analysis presupposes clear and well defined objectives for the Anglo-Irish Agreement: the maintenance of British rule in Ireland, the incorporation of the Irish Republic's élites into the NATO ruling class, and the repression of Sinn Fein and the IRA. The circumstantial evidence for the imperialist school includes symbolic British attempts to

appease the SDLP, the Irish government's decision to join the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, EEC defence arrangements which seem to violate the Republic's traditional conceptions of sovereign neutrality, and the co-ordinated efforts by Thatcher and Reagan to ensure that the US Senate passes an extradition treaty against the opposition of a well-organised Anglo-Irish lobby. There can be no doubt about such evidence, only about its significance.

There are fundamental problems with the analysis of the imperialist school. First, the Irish Republic is implausibly portrayed as a marionette rather than as one of the most independent of small capitalist nation-states. Second, there is no rigorous argument why the British state, let alone British capital, should be so concerned to maintain Northern Ireland as part of the UK.<sup>17</sup> Northern Ireland is not a good source of surplus value – which is presumably why it is one of the few parts of the public sector which the government has not considered privatising! It is no longer tied by aristocratic lineage networks to the dominant echelons of British society. Its Unionist political movements no longer form a key component of mainland Conservatism. Its importance as a military training ground is much disputed by army officers, and its geopolitical significance in the era of thermonuclear warfare is negligible. Indeed, Northern Ireland's principal exploitative value seems to be as a guinea-pig for experiments in public and social administration. With the notable exceptions of repressive law and military policing, its use as a guinea-pig is not as detrimental to the general citizenry as one might suspect.<sup>18</sup> Fear of an Irish Cuba exists among the more paranoid sections of the British administrative and political class, but there is little evidence that such paranoia has been paramount in British policy-making. Green Marxists and Sinn Fein have a vested interest in exaggerating the mortal threat which they pose to the British state, but there is no reason why anyone else should accept such claims. The British state exists in Northern Ireland because of past imperialism, and British policy-makers display the customary arrogance and ignorance of their imperialist precursors, but these observations should not delude us into believing that the present conflict in Northern Ireland is an artefact of current British imperialism. Successive British governments have not left Northern Ireland, because they have respected the wish of the overwhelming majority of Northern Irish Protestants to remain British citizens, because the Irish Republic's governments since the 1950s have never seriously wanted the British to withdraw, and because neither state has wanted the submerged civil war to become a full-scale holocaust.

The imperialist school's rational actor explanation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement falls at the first hurdle because it has a wildly implausible notion of British objectives, based on an outmoded and falsely applied theory of imperialism. The school also lacks any well-developed account of the evolution of the Irish state. But its failings are best illustrated by its incomprehension of Ulster Loyalist reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Sinn Feiners believe that the Protestant reaction to it is either wholly irrational, or based upon misperceptions of perfidious Albion. Both these readings are sectarian and false. The Loyalists are not stupid. The Agreement presents them with painful dilemmas, ends their supremacy within Northern Ireland, and threatens their

interpretation of the Union, if not in the way that the IRA would prefer. Outside of Sinn Fein supporters, the only personality to have consistently maintained an interpretation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an imperialist plot is Enoch Powell.<sup>19</sup> It is rather strange that the left takes Powell seriously only when he shares its most far-fetched conspiracy theories.

*Machiavelli: From Voluntary to Coercive Power-sharing?*

The most Machiavellian interpretation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement portrays it as a rational power-game, designed to coerce the Unionists into accepting a new version of the Sunningdale agreement of 1973/4. British policy-making between 1972 and 1975 was in favour of voluntary power-sharing in a devolved regional government in Northern Ireland, and was also marked by a willingness to concede an Irish dimension in order to assuage minority grievances. The Sunningdale agreement had two features of what political scientists call the consociational model of liberal democracy which is considered appropriate for societies with deeply divisive non-class cleavages.<sup>20</sup> First, a power-sharing executive in which a cross-bloc majority government (Faulkner's Unionists, the SDLP and the Alliance (APNI)) was pre-eminent. And second, political representation, civil service composition and the allocation of public funds were to be made on a proportional basis. Why did the Sunningdale settlement fail? Its Irish dimension, the Council of Ireland, created a furore among those Unionists opposed to power-sharing (35.5 per cent of the total electorate of 1973), and left Faulkner without the backing of his party as the experiment began. Then the British general election of February 1974 intervened at a critical stage. The plurality electoral rule meant that anti-Sunningdale Unionists were able to rout Faulkner Unionists, and obtain 51 per cent of the popular vote and 11 of the 12 Northern Ireland seats at Westminster. While poll evidence showed that strong Protestant support for the experiment had dropped after the general election to 28 per cent of their bloc<sup>21</sup> the SDLP's understandable discontent at internment and repression meant that they were neither willing nor able to save Faulkner by making concessions over the Council of Ireland. Finally, the new Labour government proved especially spineless during the Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) strike which led to the collapse of the Executive. More generally, the Sunningdale settlement's fate showed that the conditions for voluntary power-sharing were not present. There was no multiple balance of power among the blocs, and there was asymmetry between the majority of the Unionist bloc's attitudes towards power-sharing and that of the majority of the Nationalist bloc. Moreover, the blocs were fragmenting just when their cohesion was essential to facilitate power-sharing. The political élites of the Nationalist and especially the Unionist bloc were not sufficiently autonomous to bargain and make concessions, even if they wanted to do so, because they had good reason to fear being outflanked by counter-élites favouring their bloc's version of 'no surrender'.<sup>22</sup> These features of Northern Ireland precluded voluntary power-sharing. They were brought into even bolder relief during the failed Constitutional Convention of 1975, and have remained constants of the political system right up until the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.



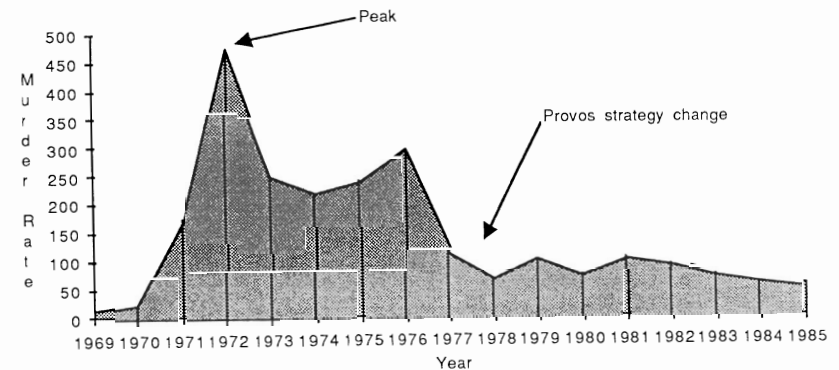
It is possible to understand the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an attempt to create the conditions for power-sharing to work, as a master-plan to coerce key factions of the Unionist bloc to accept some version of the 1973/74 settlement as the least of several evils. On the one hand the Anglo-Irish Agreement confronts the Unionists with an Irish dimension, the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC), which is of far greater political salience than the Council of Ireland proposed in 1973. But, on the other hand, the Agreement offers Unionists devolution as a mechanism for removing the agenda-setting scope of the IGC provided they are prepared to bite the bullet of agreed devolution – which would have to mean power-sharing because the SDLP cannot settle for anything less. The Anglo-Irish Agreement alters the structure of the incentives facing the élites of both blocs. The Irish dimension leaves the SDLP leadership free to negotiate the type of power-sharing which might be acceptable to Unionists precisely because the Agreement has strengthened them against SF. And the unpalatable choices that the Agreement puts before the Unionist bloc (discussed below) look designed to divide them, and to create a faction sufficiently significant and autonomous to do business with the SDLP and the APNI after ultra-loyalism has been tried and defeated. Unlike 1973/4, the Unionist ultras are being given the initiative to do what they will first, in the hope that their defeat will create a new and more stable Faulkner-style grouping. Thatcher's remarks in her famous interview in Belfast certainly lend credence to such an interpretation: 'The people of Northern Ireland can get rid of the inter-Governmental conference by agreeing to devolved Government'.<sup>23</sup> This Machiavellian interpretation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement makes certain sense. The political education of the British and Irish élites since 1973 must have persuaded them that a voluntary internal settlement was impossible as long as salient groupings of Unionists outside the APNI have no selective incentives to induce them to accept power-sharing, and as long as the SDLP have felt threatened on their Green flank.

The Machiavellian story is, unfortunately, implausible if it is understood as a deliberately conceived rational game-plan in which all costs and benefits were calculated and all permutations of possible consequences known in advance. To take one counter-example, the scale and depth of Unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not anticipated by the Northern Ireland Office or the relevant Cabinet ministers in the UK.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Garret Fitzgerald was startled by the intensity of the reaction of moderate Unionists to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. These surprised reactions on the part of both states' officials are not what one might anticipate if they were playing the subtle power-game, and, unless one builds in further assumptions about current dissimulation in both Dublin and London, are incompatible with the Machiavellian story. While the consequences of the Agreement may eventually conform to the pattern expected if the British and Irish policy élites did plan coercive power-sharing, the reasons for signing the Agreement do not wholly conform to the rational actor story.

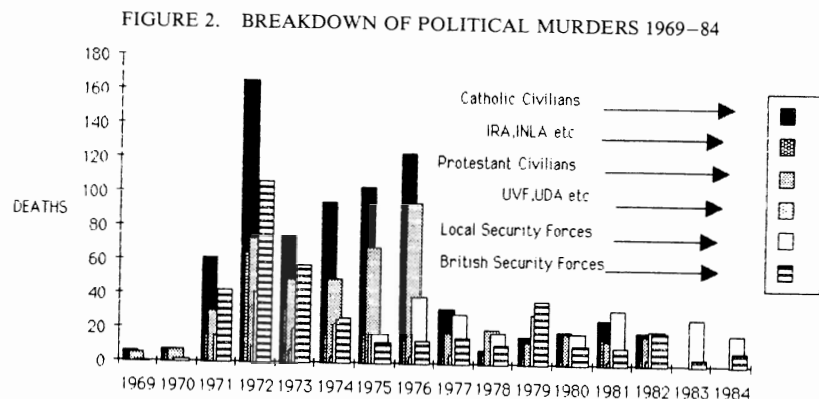
### *State Self-Presentations: Reconciliation and Security?*

The British and Irish states have highlighted peace, reconciliation and security as their principal objectives in presenting the Anglo-Irish Agreement to their respective societies. The British government has constantly highlighted the security dimensions of the Agreement to both dissident Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists. Increased cross-border security liaison, the Republic's accession to the Suppression of Terrorism convention, and the American extradition bill have all figured prominently in British rhetoric. Embarrassing incidents such as the Glenholmes affair<sup>25</sup> and the emergence of the Stalker affair<sup>26</sup> have not stopped both governments claiming early successes from the increased harmonisation of the intelligence and resources of the RUC and the Garda Síochána. However, as a glance at Figure 1 (Political Murder in Northern Ireland 1968–85) and Figure 2 (Breakdown of Political Murders 1968–84) should make apparent, there was no overwhelming case for a security offensive on the part of the British and Irish states before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The most intense phase of political violence was in the early 1970s, during the collapse of Stormont and the failure of the Sunningdale settlement. Since the mid-1970s the IRA has altered its organisation and military strategy. Economic targets have been abandoned to concentrate on attacking local security forces. The reasons for this change were the comparative success of British repression in the mid-1970s, and the Provisionals' need for a strategy less likely to alienate their own social base. A cell structure and attacks on local security forces served both goals. The consequence has been a dramatic fall-off in civilian deaths. The policy of 'Ulsterisation' (the replacement of the British Army by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)) had also led to a considerable reduction in the numbers of army personnel killed since the mid-1970s. True, the brunt of the IRA's strategy is now carried by local security forces (the RUC, the Ulster Defence Regiment, and prison officers), but their fate does not have the same salience to British policy-making élites as those of civilians or army personnel. In other

FIGURE 1. POLITICAL MURDER IN NORTHERN IRELAND 1969–95



Source: *New Ireland Forum*, updated to 1985.



Source: *New Ireland Forum*, updated by the author, from whom detailed figures are available.

words, it is perfectly sensible to suggest that British strategists had achieved their goal of 'acceptable levels of violence' within Northern Ireland before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But the high-risk initiative embarked upon at Hillsborough puts Catholic civilians at risk, has caused ferocious conflicts of loyalty within the RUC and the UDR, and compels the British to increase the army presence. As Figures 1 and 2 graphically illustrate, Catholic civilians are never at greater risk than when Protestants feel that their supremacy is being eroded, as during 1972-76. And the Anglo-Irish Agreement has put the greatest moral and intimidatory pressure on the local security forces who suffered most at the hands of the IRA in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Consequently, it is difficult to believe that the conventional security forces were whole-heartedly behind the Hillsborough agreement.

On the Irish side, the Anglo-Irish Agreement left the Fine Gael-ILP coalition government exposed to Fianna Fail charges of violating the Republic's sovereignty, giving retrospective recognition to RUC cross-border pursuits, and abandoning a well-established constitutional freedom for the protection of political exiles. When one recalls that Haughey's deft playing of the 'green card' over RUC cross-border incursions in the last Irish general election of 1982 caused severe damage to FG, there are also reasons for suggesting that the security dimensions of the Agreement were not in the short-run rational interests of the Irish government. Furthermore, as John Taylor of the Official Unionist Party pointed out with sublime subtlety, the prospects of bombs and carnage on the streets of Dublin have risen greatly since the Agreement was signed.<sup>27</sup> And finally, the Irish government's presence at the Inter-Governmental Conference to some extent binds them against making wholesale criticisms of the RUC and the UDR. Their desire for the RUC to stand firm in the summer of 1986 seems to have restrained them from making political capital over the Stalker affair. King's abuse of the IGC to mislead Barry over whether Stalker's report on RUC conduct in Armagh in 1982 was 'final' or 'interim', resulted in a four-hour ultimatum from the Irish requesting 'clarification'<sup>28</sup> - but the progress of the affair so far shows that the Irish

government is tied to the British style of security/repression management, and has lost its past freedom of action. The Loyalist marches through Catholic areas of Portadown in July 1986 put severe stress on the Irish government, but even this very traditional form of Loyalist provocation led to very sensitive criticism of the British government. Such constraints must have been foreseen.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement did not bring peace and reconciliation instantly with the prime ministerial signatures. No one was naive enough to believe otherwise. However, the prelude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement did not help matters. The exclusion of the Unionists from participation in the negotiation of the agreement, while entirely practical, has made their opposition all the stronger. In the short-run the Anglo-Irish Agreement has undoubtedly exacerbated rather than ameliorated the existing levels of polarisation, raised sectarian attacks on Catholics, induced Protestant assaults on the RUC and encouraged the IRA to reap the whirlwind. There is also evidence that both the British and Irish governments have been - genuinely - surprised by the levels of animosity towards the Anglo-Irish Agreement among the Unionists, and by the apparent intransigence of John Hume to those 'feelers' which some Unionists have made towards the SDLP.<sup>29</sup> If both governments believed their own rhetoric, they have miscalculated the scale of short-run conflict which the Agreement would produce. And at least on the conventional security front it is difficult to believe that their administrators' advice suggested anything other than that it would worsen matters, at least for the time being.

## 2. THE ORGANISATIONAL PROCESS APPROACH

The second standard mode of analysing foreign policy decisions suggests that states or governments should not be assumed to be unitary actors who pursue specified goals and objectives. Rather, any decision will bear the hallmarks of the state agencies involved, their standard operating procedures, their established repertoires for defining problems and their favoured solutions. Unlike the rational actor approach, the organisational process model will not leave us with perfectly lucid explanations of how rational actors reached optimal decisions.

On the British side, the relevant state agencies involved in the prelude to the Anglo-Irish Agreement were the Foreign Office, the Northern Ireland Office [NIO], the Cabinet Office and, judging from the professional role of the civil servants involved in the negotiations, the pertinent intelligence services. While the Northern Irish NIO officials were not influential, the NIO's British officials certainly were. Interviews have established a most interesting NIO jargon for defining their standard repertoires for dealing with Northern Ireland. Since the early 1970s they have developed what they call *internal* and *external* tracks. The former tells them to pursue the broadest possible agreement within Northern Ireland for an internal settlement. The latter tells them to pursue the maximum feasible good relations with the Irish Republic and the USA on the Ulster crisis, and to ensure minimum feasible international embarrassment.<sup>30</sup> These two tracks have often been in conflict or difficult to reconcile, especially given their third track, the maintenance of 'an acceptable level of violence'. However, the jargon of 'internal and external tracks' captures

the basic thrust of British policy-making, or more strictly, the administrative advice of the Northern Ireland Office, since 1972. And the Anglo-Irish Agreement has both standard NIO repertoires clearly built into it (agreed devolution and good relations with the Irish Republic). Consequently, apart from timing and formality, it is feasible to argue that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is consistent with the 'broad thrust' of the developed routines of British policy-making. It made sense to the British because it fitted their existing definitions of the 'problem' and their pre-established routines for managing it. Such an interpretation makes better sense of the facts than the Machiavellian coercive power-sharing story because it does not assume a comprehensive master-plan on the part of the British policy élite.

On the Irish side, it is apparent that since the partial success of the modernisation programmes embarked upon in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the standard modes of defining the Northern Ireland question have altered, among both administrators and the policy élite. The legitimisation of the Irish state is altering from the assertion of national sovereignty through cultural autonomy and separateness from the UK to achieving support through the material prosperity of advanced industrial capitalism. Irish state officials outside the ranks of Fianna Fail have come to define Northern Ireland as a problem for the stability of their state, as a threat to their programmes of modernisation, as an anachronism rather than a question of burning injustice or uncompleted national revolution. These changes in attitude are also reflected in the Republic's citizenry. For Irish state officials the Northern Ireland conflict has generally come to be managed through two strategic routines: playing the role of guardian of the Northern Ireland minority rather than prospective ruler of Ulster Unionists (advocating reform and power-sharing within Northern Ireland and using the international stage to proclaim this guardian role) and increasing co-operation with the British state, through the EEC and other forums, to contain the conflict ('unique relationships among these islands', and 'interdependence is not dependence' provide the bureaucratic codes here). The Anglo-Irish Agreement again fits neatly with these well-established routines, and also makes better sense of the facts than the rational actor models. Fainna Fail, the party which has not yet made the full transition from the party of cultural nationalism to the party of economic nationalism, is the only major organisation yet to accept in its rhetoric these decisive alterations in the foreign policy routines of the Irish state. In practice, in government, FF has both initiated such changes and furthered them, but in opposition has retained the scope to play the Green card for electoral opportunism.

The organisational process story is very plausible. Enscensed in the vacillations of personalities and crisis-episodes, behind the zig-zags in British policy-postures highlighted by Bew and Patterson,<sup>31</sup> buried under the rapid turnover in Irish governments during 1980–82, and indeed behind the aberration of Thatcher's reaction to the New Ireland Forum proposals ('Out! Out! Out!'), compatible strategies for managing the Northern Ireland conflict have developed within the agencies of both states. With the Thatcher and Fitzgerald administrations both in mid-term and both determined to make a symbolic initiative, 1985 was an opportune year for the cementing of the two states' approaches. It was also opportune because memories of the hunger

strikes and the Irish Republic's studied neutrality during the Falklands/Malvinas war were fading.

### 3. THE POLITICAL APPROACH

Politics is never solely a tale of rational state actions or bureaucratic routines. It is also a tale of personalities, symbolism, party manoeuvres and post-hoc rationalisation in an uncertain environment. That the symbolic dimensions of a major initiative and agreement appealed to both prime ministers is on the record. Fitzgerald claims to have entered politics to solve the Northern Ireland problem and to hasten the secularisation and pluralisation of the Irish Republic. The rationality of Thatcher's political project is always greatly exaggerated on the left, but she has displayed a penchant for tackling head-on what are perceived to be the major unresolved crises of the British state as well as a preparedness to break through existing conventional wisdom and inertia.<sup>32</sup> Her narrow escape from death at Brighton also concentrated Thatcher's mind on the Northern Irish question in a way that the IRA did not anticipate. NIO officials describe her commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement as total, and Peter Jay has remarked that when it was suggested that she was prepared to backtrack 'the divine anger was wonderful to behold'. Both leaders not only enjoyed the symbolism of a major initiative but shared a similar resolution to embark upon a 'leap into the dark', a propensity which few of their predecessors have displayed, and their personal beliefs and styles must be taken into account in any complete explanation of the signing of the Agreement.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was good domestic politics in both states. Playing skilled statecraft to their respective electorates during mid-term opinion-poll blues brought rewards. The Irish coalition enjoyed a brief renewal of support and enjoyed overwhelming approval for the Agreement in opinion polls. Such a response could well have been anticipated. A split in FF, their opposition to the Agreement in the Dail, and the formation of the Progressive Democrats amounted to an unexpected, and briefly enjoyed, bonus. The Conservative government counted on, and received, all-party support in the Commons and thrived playing the role of acting in the national interest. However, successive governments have shown Northern Ireland does not matter electorally (unless one MP or TD can affect the stability of the executive), and as the Anglo-Irish Agreement comes under pressure while producing few immediate tangible results, much more radical initiatives might be acceptable to both the British and Irish electorates. As a result, some contend that both leaders have set in train a policy fiasco which will defeat their respective objectives. This story also makes sense, and might be rooted in the activist compulsion of liberal democratic élites to do something rather than nothing, and to blunder in consequence.

There are two sophisticated versions of current left analyses of the character of direct rule since 1972 relevant to explanations of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The first, a rational actor approach, argues that British policy-making has *reproduced* rather than *reformed* sectarian relations in Northern Ireland, and implicitly regards the British state as functionally structured to do so.<sup>33</sup>



This school of thought essentially has a functionalist account of the state, and an auxiliary rational-actor imperialist model which it deploys to 'explain' policy outputs. The second, a political approach, contends that the *unintended* consequences of British policy-making have been to exacerbate sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>34</sup> The second school is both more theoretically and empirically sophisticated, unspoiled by the functionalist fallacies of much Marxist thought<sup>35</sup> and is a good version of political approaches to policy-making. The logical extrapolation of the second school is to suggest that the Agreement may end up reinforcing sectarian relations, but that it must itself be explained by the decisions of politicians and administrators who genuinely thought themselves to be engaged in a process designed to weaken sectarianism. By contrast, this analysis will contend, in conclusion, that the unintended consequences of the Anglo-Irish Agreement could be the playing out of the Machiavellian power-game, and the creation of conditions for the eventual dissolution of sectarianism.

Whatever the truth of these contentions, the decisive actor in the politics of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been the SDLP and its leader John Hume. Content that the British and Irish premiers obtained whatever short-run glory it would bring, the SDLP leader has been reticent about his role. But as the instigator of Anglo-Irish discussions and the New Ireland Forum, as the leader who advocated abstaining from Prior's Assembly on the grounds that a boycott would produce something more, as an actively consulted adviser to the Irish government during the negotiations, Hume has contributed more than any other political leader towards the Agreement. Ulster Unionists are far more aware of this fact than the Republic's or British mainland commentators who have vied to give credit to Cabinet Secretaries, Foreign Affairs or Office staff, ambassadors, Thatcher or Fitzgerald. To Ulster Unionists, Hume is the evil genius behind the Agreement. Hume has always said that agreed devolution is acceptable to the SDLP, provided that it is part of a broader Anglo-Irish process. The SDLP's welcome for the Agreement, its willingness to give both the RUC and the British government some trust, and the distance opening up between the SDLP and FF all confirm both their prior interest in the Agreement and their willingness to exploit it to maximum advantage within the Nationalist bloc. The SDLP is the party with most to gain and lose from the Agreement, and its relations with both governments were critical in its making, and will be crucial to its evolution. These facts explain why Hume has been condemned by the Official Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein and even the Workers' Party as the villain behind the agreement, glorying in his opportunity. There is some plausibility in the SF charge that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was made to save the SDLP from those parties, but there is also truth in the Unionist charge that it was the SDLP's minimum price for abandoning abstentionist politics.

In conclusion, on current evidence, it seems best to conclude that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed because of the confluence of well-established bureaucratic strategies, incremental and exploratory manoeuvres by politicians and administrators interested in symbolic initiatives, and jockeying for position on the part of the SDLP. Hume's description of the Agreement as a 'framework' rather than a solution or Machiavellian master-plan is

correct, but he also knows that it is a framework potentially weighted in favour of SDLP solutions.

### III INTERIM RESULTS

After seven months of existence, the policy-outputs resulting from the deliberations of the IGC could be written on the back of a new pound coin. The most significant result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement so far has been its own survival, the regular inter-ministerial meetings, the institutionalisation of an administrative Secretariat at Maryfield, and striking evidence of attempts to harmonise their statements by both governments. As yet it is quite impossible to assess objectively the consequences of formal increases in police co-operation, which like American 'aid' is difficult to measure, may come in unexpected forms, and indeed may never materialise. The major move on the Irish side has been to sign the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, but that was specifically promised in the communiqué accompanying the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The British have so far reciprocated with two very minor changes: ensuring that Irish citizens will have the same rights in Northern Ireland that they enjoy in the UK, and facilitating the use of the Irish language in street-naming.

The most conflictual items on the policy-agenda of the Inter-Governmental Conference are acknowledged to be the following:

- whether there should be a new code of conduct for the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the 90 per cent Protestant police force;
- the existence and character of the locally recruited and almost entirely Protestant regiment of the British Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment [UDR], whose members have often been involved in sectarian murders and overlapping membership with para-military Loyalist organisations;
- whether there should be a Bill of Rights to protect all traditions from each other and the state;
- whether the Flag and Emblems Act of 1954, which makes the flying of the tricolour of the Irish Republic an offence within Northern Ireland, should be repealed;
- whether the special, emergency legislation introduced by successive British governments, especially the Diplock [no-jury, one judge] courts which have been a major source of the alienation of the Nationalist minority, should be reformed or scrapped;
- and whether 'supergrass' [paid-informers' evidence forming the sole basis for conviction] trials should cease.

In all these items on the agenda, movement so far has been largely confined to chairs, helicopters and press-briefings. The Irish government has promised that major changes in the administration of justice would be forthcoming at the end of 1986 - signalling to the Nationalist minority that they should wait until Unionist civil disobedience ends before they can obtain their just deserts. The British government, while willing to move on the RUC's code of conduct, has remained adamant on the retention of the UDR, has shown little willingness

to make a minor concession on the reform of the Diplock courts (the Irish government has asked for three judges instead of one), and is procrastinating on all dimensions of emergency legislation in the face of Unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. However, 'supergrass' trials, repugnant to both Nationalists and Loyalists, do seem likely to come to an end.

The bind that the British government faces now can be simply expressed: to display to the Unionists that the Inter-Governmental Conference does not amount to joint authority the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland must show himself capable of ignoring Irish representations at its deliberations. But in order to show the Irish government that the IGC is worthwhile he must make concessions to Nationalist feelings. However, he must present any concessions that he does make as measures he would have taken without Irish intervention. The Secretary of State is thus obliged to take a zig-zag course. To date, King has chosen to show that the IGC is operational, and will not be suspended or postponed, but has refused to make rapid reforms in order to ease his most visible task, that is, managing Unionist discontent. Apart from his statement on the Union's perpetual existence and 'misleading' the Irish Foreign Minister over the Stalker inquiry, the Irish government has shown comprehension, even empathy, for the complex logic of King's position – but with an election imminent is likely to become impatient for more tangible results by the end of 1986.

#### IV PROSPECTS: WILL THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT SURVIVE?

The Northern Ireland conflict has both exogenous (outside Northern Ireland) and endogenous (within Northern Ireland) dimensions.<sup>36</sup> The survival of the Anglo-Irish Agreement will depend on how these exogenous and endogenous variables interact.

#### ENDOGENOUS ACTORS

1. *Unionists.* Since December 1985 British media attention has understandably focused upon the most visible threat to its success, the Ulster Unionists. How has the Unionist opposition fared so far? When the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed the OUP and DUP embarked upon a united opposition strategy. The Unionist campaign began constitutionally (if one discounts an attempted mugging of Tom King by DUP councillors). They resigned their Westminster seats, emphasised legitimate opinion-mobilisation, and attempted to challenge the Anglo-Irish Agreement's legality in the courts. This first phase culminated in the January 1986 by-elections. The by-elections backfired, both because the Unionists lost one seat when Seamus Mallon, the deputy leader of the SDLP, and their impressive spokesman on law and order, successfully contested the Newry and Armagh seat, and because the Westland affair overshadowed whatever media attention the by-elections might otherwise have generated on the mainland. Moreover, the evidence of increased electoral support for the SDLP at the expense of Sinn Féin allowed both the Irish and British governments to suggest that the by-elections proved that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was actually working: moderate nationalism was re-establishing

itself.<sup>37</sup> The Unionists then moved their campaign up a gear, and eventually called for a general strike on 3 March, Molyneux and Paisley, the leaders of the OUP and DUP, for a brief moment, looked as if they were prepared to accept some fudge which Thatcher and King were prepared to offer, but were quickly brought back into line by the led when they returned to Belfast. Despite evidence of widespread support among Protestants for the strike, media reports successfully highlighted coercive action and managed to brand the strike as wholly intimidatory in much the same manner as mainland trade-union disputes are usually treated. With the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI) openly bidding for the middle-class Protestant vote, the media presentation of the strike quickly opened up divisions within the Unionist bloc, especially among the OUP. Molyneux felt compelled to dissociate the OUP from the strike organisers. Although an Irish Times/MRBI opinion poll showed 81 per cent of Protestants disapproving of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in February 1986, Unionist leaders, especially those in the OUP hierarchy, obviously felt constrained over what means they could use to attack the British government without opening up divisions within their supporters. Just as the OUP and DUP were trying to restructure their campaign, ultra-loyalist paramilitaries, with the apparent connivance of Peter Robinson, the deputy leader of the DUP, began co-ordinated attacks on RUC officers. They were deliberately capitalising on evidence of hostility to the Anglo-Irish Agreement among the rank-and-file of the RUC – openly articulated by the RUC Federation chairman – and inflammatory rhetoric about 'our police' which elected Unionist politicians had engaged in both before and after the strike. These attacks, which reached a peak between March and May 1986, were accompanied by a renewed spate of sectarian murders against Catholics. As predicted by Andy Tyrie, the leader of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), the largest loyalist para-military organisation, the official Unionist politicians quickly played Pontius Pilate on their para-military brethren, and the first wave of assaults on the RUC has come to an end. The summer marching season, when Protestants traditionally march through Catholic areas to commemorate their past victories, was not as confrontational as some had feared during July, but at the time of writing the Apprentice Boys march in August was yet to come. The history of this century (1911–14, 1920–25, and 1972–76) shows that Loyalists are at their most militaristic and bloodthirsty when they feel under siege.

The local government strategy of the Unionists, like their dual strategy of constitutionalism and civil disobedience, is also misfiring. They had threatened to make local councils ungovernable and not to set rates [the local property tax]. But talk of 'Gideon's army'<sup>38</sup> soon waned as key Unionist politicians folded under the threat of action by auditors in Belfast and elsewhere. Currently (summer 1986), Unionist politicians have embarked upon a campaign in mainland Britain designed to win support for their position. The fate of Boyd Black who stood in the Fulham by-election in April 1986 with the backing of Unionists (he received fewer votes than Screaming Lord Sutch of the Monster Raving Loony Party), and the 100 people who attended the first 'mass-meeting' at Liverpool have given Unionists a sense of their complete isolation from all but the lunatic fringe of the English public. The Unionists'

best hope of significant mainland mobilisation is in the threats that the Scottish Orange Order will pose to a handful of Conservative MPs in Scotland. The Friends of the Union Group, established in late May 1986, to co-ordinate the mainland campaign has so far shown no signs of having an impact upon élite or public opinion. Unionists' opposition has won them nothing more than the postponement for a couple of days of scheduled meetings of the Inter-Governmental Conference, while the assaults on the RUC have lost them the potential sympathy of numerous right-wing Conservatives. But their opposition has severely curtailed the pace and prospects of reforms wanted by Northern Nationalists, as both governments have agreed to ride out the storm of protests.

What is the likelihood that Unionists can be sufficiently effective to bring down the Anglo-Irish Agreement? There are good reasons for supposing that their bloc cannot stay united. First, about 20 per cent of Protestants, judging from poll evidence, are not against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If the Anglo-Irish Agreement pays dividends on the security front against the IRA that figure might grow. Second, unlike 1974, Unionists are not mobilising against an internal power-sharing executive in which some Unionists are participating. They are mobilising against the British government, against Margaret Thatcher and Tom King, not Harold Wilson and Merlyn Rees, which as the British left can testify is a much more daunting prospect. And when one recalls that the second UWC strike in 1977 failed because it had unclear objectives and no internal target to overthrow, Unionists' difficulties become even more apparent. Third, the organisational and strategic requirements for a repeat of 1974 do not seem to be present. The Conservative administration, the army, and the bulk of the RUC's leadership seem to have the motivated leadership to defeat any extended strike. Fourth, among those sections of the Protestant bloc aware that their material prosperity is desperately dependent upon the retention of the British connection there is much frowning of the brow over attacking a British government. The enthusiasm for strike action on 3 March 1986 was undoubtedly damped by high levels of unemployment, and the fact that only a one-day strike was called was significant.

Finally, the stakes for Unionists are strikingly different from those in 1974. Their effective range of options is no longer circumscribed to either internal power-sharing along Sunningdale lines or the continuation of direct rule. Assuming for the moment that the Thatcher administration stands firm and that the coalition government in the Republic does not collapse, Unionist choices seem to be as follows:

1. Go down to defeat and accept the possible evolution of full British-Irish joint authority.
2. After defeats accept power-sharing with an unimportant Irish dimension and thereby reduce the role of the IGC.
3. Go for independence.
4. Stay in a state of permanent rebellion against the British government until the Anglo-Irish Agreement is repudiated.

The first choice is the most ignominious and galling for them. The second choice has the built-in carrot of allowing power-sharing to reduce the salience

of the IGC, but requires sufficient Unionist politicians from the OUP to accept power-sharing, and be confident that they will not be instantly outflanked on their ultra-loyalist flank and meet the fate which befell Brian Faulkner. The third choice would split the Unionists. They are, after all, unionists. They do not seek sovereignty over themselves. They are not nationalists but rather anti-nationalists. Unionists will only contemplate independence if and only if they are coerced into a united Ireland. Most OUP and APNI voters might even balk at considering independence if joint authority were being imposed. The DUP thus stand at the crossroads. Rhetorical demands for a nuclear-strike on the Irish Republic notwithstanding,<sup>39</sup> the DUP are not currently sufficiently cohesive to raise independence as a threat. They know that to raise the option of UDI would split the Unionist bloc. Paisley has cried 'wolf' so often that when the genuine article arrived in the person of Margaret Thatcher he has seemed strangely paralysed. His most radical statements to date have been to repeat the traditional loyalist cry in times of English perfidy: allegiance to Parliament must be withdrawn without ending loyalty to the Crown.<sup>40</sup> This call may well be treason, but so far it is not a declaration of independence: it is a bargaining posture, 'We want our Union on our terms'. During the occupation of the dissolved Assembly chamber at Stormont he increased the scope of his 'call to arms', but whether he will actively lead an armed struggle for independence still remains very dubious.<sup>41</sup>

If the DUP do not raise UDI as a serious alternative, Thatcher and King can call their bluff, see off their counter-mobilisation, and subsequently look out for a power-sharing deal with a reconstituted OUP leadership. If the DUP raises the UDI option prematurely it will not only split the Unionist bloc but also face the threat of a war on two fronts, against the British state and the IRA. The DUP has to build a 'coalition for unreasonableness', prevent the prospect of an OUP sell-out, and yet remain credible to large sections of Protestant opinion. The only way that Unionists opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement can avoid defeat is to follow their fourth option, permanent rebellion on a negative programme of 'Ulster says No!', and to hope that something will turn up. This option, upon which they have been embarked for eight months is very difficult to sustain. The OUP may cut and run when blood flows this summer, and when the British government has remained unmoved. The strategy also threatens to create a decisive impetus for British withdrawal, precisely the outcome all Unionists want least. The success of the fourth option depends, as we shall see, upon critical external variables. The success of Unionist opposition mostly depends upon the future evolution of British and Irish governments.

2. *Nationalists.* How the SDLP can play its cards is somewhat less dependent upon the British and Irish governments, but can critically affect the stability of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Indeed, Northern Catholics have more say in its stability than they had in maintaining the power-sharing executive in 1974. Adams, the clever sectarian leader of SF, was well aware that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had dealt the SDLP an ace. Initially most SF spokesmen filled the air with accusations that the SDLP was selling out the 'Irish [i.e. Northern Catholic] people'. Adams was more subtle when it became plain that the

Unionists were going to force by-elections. He offered the SDLP an electoral pact. His strategy was obvious. He wanted either to prevent the SDLP from benefiting electorally from the Anglo-Irish Agreement through successful negotiation of a pact, or to gain the chance of accusing the SDLP of splitting the Nationalist bloc should the offer of a pact be refused. Adams 'bearing gifts' did not deceive the SDLP's leadership. The by-elections gave them the opportunity to distance themselves from their acts of cowardice during the hunger strikes of 1980-81,<sup>42</sup> and the Anglo-Irish Agreement has given them the opportunity to lead the Nationalist bloc away from the militaristic, sectarian and romantic vices of Irish nationalism, and to re-earn the label 'social democratic and labour'. So far, the SDLP has reaped electoral rewards, revived at the expense of SF, and has used its freedom of manoeuvre to state its willingness to go into talks for devolved government provided the Anglo-Irish Agreement and its Irish dimension remains intact. The SDLP none the less faces two strong sources of pressure. First, the Northern Ireland Office and the Conservative government have not been slow in demanding SDLP support for the forces of law and order, especially the RUC, as a quid pro quo for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The SDLP showed itself willing in the first few months of the agreement. But the RUC's handling of the 3 March 1986 strike and Loyalist Marches in Portadown in July, the failure of the Inter-Governmental Conference to reform Diplock courts, the general maladministration of justice in Northern Ireland and the status of the UDR, and finally the controversy over the Stalker inquiry into the RUC's 'shoot-to-kill' policy in Armagh during 1982, have all compelled the SDLP into its understandable traditional posture on 'law' and 'order' in Northern Ireland. It is unprepared wholeheartedly to endorse the RUC and the legal system until they are seen to be impartial. Until the British government engages in serious reforms of Northern Ireland to add to the symbolic promises in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the SDLP will not feel free to support the RUC without major reservations. If the SDLP is to maintain its newly acquired advantages over SF then the Agreement must be seen to make a difference to the minority population: 'all talk and no action' could quickly bring the IGC into disrepute among the Nationalists who have been prepared to give the Anglo-Irish Agreement the benefit of the doubt. Second, the SDLP still has tensions between its Green and reformist wings, and will remain united only if the Agreement makes a material as well as a symbolic difference to the position of the minority. SDLP support for it over the long run is contingent upon a British willingness to coerce the Unionists into accepting both the Agreement and the reform of Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement cannot work, of course, if the SDLP develops a hard line on eventual reunification, and regards it as a stepping-stone to negotiated unification in the immediate future. It might become tempted to rely on a future British Labour government to execute such a strategy especially in the face of permanent Unionist intransigence, but its primary objective remains power-sharing and reform within the framework of the Agreement.

The success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is not in any way dependent upon the IRA or Sinn Fein for support, but can they damage its chances of success? And can the Agreement, as intended, damage both SF and the IRA?

Several factors are relevant to such questions. First, there is no doubt that SF is more vulnerable than the IRA. Entry into electoral politics has constrained the IRA's military options which SF can freely endorse. Ensnared in the search for electoral legitimacy, it must attempt to defeat the Agreement by pointing up the failure of the IGC to deliver promised reforms, and by suggesting that the SDLP have become trapped into supporting British imperialism. However, Sinn Fein cannot endorse the sorts of actions which might cause hardships to its natural constituencies in West Belfast and Derry. Moreover, if the Anglo-Irish Agreement makes a material difference to the civil liberties and economic welfare of the Catholic working class the social base of SF will be vulnerable. Second, after the Brighton bombings and trial, it will be some time before the IRA will be able to launch a sustained mainland bombing campaign, so that military efforts to cause a dramatic change in British policy are unlikely. Third, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement, like the IRA's own strategy, is a long-term framework rather than a solution, it has the potential to be a far more resilient British initiative than previous quick-fire recipes, and might undermine the credibility of the SF/IRA using a 'wear them down' strategy. Fourth, while it is true that the IRA can survive with minuscule active support among the Catholic minority, loss of support for SF will undoubtedly undermine its morale, and astute use of partial amnesty offers could throw the 'armalite and ballot box' camp into confusion.

#### EXOGENOUS ACTORS

One reason why both British and Irish officials like the Anglo-Irish Agreement is that its survival seems much less dependent upon the actors within Northern Ireland than previous attempted solutions. However, the other side of the coin is that the maintenance of the Agreement is much more dependent upon the stability of the postures of future British and Irish governments. External stability is critical if it is to act as a framework for an internal settlement. The most obvious threat to the Agreement is that within its first three years there have to be general elections in both the UK and the Republic. When we recall the consequences of the 1974 general election upon the Sunningdale settlement, the significance of these forthcoming elections cannot be doubted.

Logically, there are four relevant feasible outcomes which will affect the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. First, the election of British and Irish governments in favour of maintaining it. Second, the election of a British government in favour of the Agreement, but the election of an Irish government wanting to reject it. Third, the election of a British government in favour of repudiating the Agreement, but an Irish government which wants to retain it. Fourth, the election of British and Irish governments in favour of ending it. We can discount the third and fourth of these possibilities. These logical outcomes neglect a more subtle variation: the desire on the part of one or both elected governments to re-negotiate the terms of the Agreement.

### 1. *The Election of Two Governments in Favour of Retaining the Accord*

This outcome remains likely. On the British side a general election must take place by June 1988. All three major party groupings – Labour, Conservative, and the Liberal–SDP Alliance – expressed bi-partisan support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement in its passage through Parliament. The return of a majority Thatcher administration for a third term of office will ensure the survival of the Anglo-Irish Agreement provided a possible Fianna Fail government has not repudiated it. The longer Thatcher delays the calling of a general election the more likely it is that the Unionists will be beaten down by the plenitude of state resources which the Conservatives can wield against them. Whatever their enthusiasm for Thatcher's departure from British political life, no one doubts that she and the Conservatives are far more able to coerce the Unionists into accepting the Anglo-Irish Agreement (and power-sharing) than any other British party, coalition or minority government. The Unionists hope that a new Conservative government might repudiate the Agreement, or not renew it. But the election of a Fianna Fail government in the South, elected on a manifesto committed to ending it, is the only circumstance in which that Unionist hope might be realised.

In July 1986 it seemed that the three most likely outcomes of a British general election are a Labour majority government, a Labour minority government sustained by one or a combination of minor parties, or else, a coalition government of a character impossible to predict with any confidence. In the first case, the current Labour front-bench team who would take over the Northern Ireland Office, are supporters of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Only the election of an overwhelming Labour majority (and therefore a very large swathe of left-wing MPs who look at Irish politics through ultra-left eyes) might produce a thrust in Labour policy-making towards a negotiated withdrawal from Ireland. However, even such an unlikely scenario will not lead to the end of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Labour's manifesto is unlikely to differ from the position agreed by the NEC in 1981, namely, unification by consent, and will therefore put a considerable constraint on even thinking about the withdrawal option. It is also unlikely that any Irish government will want Labour to take such a high-risk strategy. On the other hand, a Labour minority government which repeated the unholy alliance constructed by James Callaghan with Ulster Unionists between 1976 and 1978 seems improbable, although nobody has ever lost money betting on the fecklessness of Labour governments. A minority Kinnock government would be far more likely to be forged through a pact with some permutation of the Scottish or Welsh Nationalists or some dissident Liberals (or indeed the SDLP who could have three seats in the next Parliament – including Adams' seat in West Belfast). Any such Kinnock minority government would maintain the Anglo-Irish Agreement, provided the Irish government were willing.

On the Irish side, the re-election of the Fine Gael–Labour coalition government, or the formation of a FG–Progressive Democrats coalition government, or the election of a FF minority government would bring back an Irish government in favour of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, or unable to repudiate it even if it wanted to do so. However, on current poll evidence<sup>43</sup> the most probable

outcome of the next Irish general election is a FF majority government, which leads us to consider the second scenario.

### 2. *British Government in Favour, Irish Government Against*

Fianna Fail currently opposes the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and is widely considered likely to form the next Irish government by mid-1987. However, the party's record, and the capacity of its leaders to execute policy-cycles is notorious, so their current posture is no guide to their position in office. FF's toughness on the Anglo-Irish Agreement seems to have varied in correlation with the party's place in the opinion polls. Moreover, Haughey would be likely to be forced into stating his position on the Anglo-Irish Agreement before the general election. With the SDLP so strongly in favour, and the Irish electorate approving the Agreement by over 60 per cent, Haughey would have a difficult time explaining the concurrence of his position with that of Sinn Féin. Refraining from maximalist 'oral republicanism' might prove the better part of electoral valour, and Haughey could be expected to raise the option of politicians in difficulties – re-negotiation. Haughey is aware that repudiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement with a Thatcher administration would produce a strongly pro-Unionist response on the part of the British government, or even the forced re-partition which Thatcher has been rumoured to have considered.<sup>44</sup> He would also face the prospect of rupturing the fragile unity of his party. Facing a Labour government, even one committed to unification by consent, would leave Haughey with a painful dilemma: either to go for negotiated independence and face the prospect of a civil war or, while proclaiming unification as a goal, to settle for something less. Like De Valera in 1940,<sup>45</sup> Haughey would choose the security and stability of his own state over reunification: the proclaimed uncompleted task of his party. Even if he wanted to take risks there would be strong voices around him prophesying disaster and urging caution. Haughey's most rational option then would be to call for the re-negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, including ironically, full joint authority, the option least liked by FF during the New Ireland Forum.

The defeat of the Fine Gael–ILP-sponsored referendum to permit civil divorce in the Irish Republic's constitution, held on 26 June 1986, showed dramatically that the levels of tolerance and pluralism in the South are accurately captured by the Loyalist designation 'Rome rule'. The collapse of a component of Fitzgerald's constitutional crusade has been the greatest symbolic blow to the Anglo-Irish Agreement to date, weakening the capacity of any Irish government to argue for minority interests in the North without hypocrisy. The referendum result has been a blow to all forms of republicanism, a demonstration that Catholicism is the dominant ideological component of Irish Nationalism, and has cemented partition much more than the Anglo-Irish Agreement itself. While an abundance of condoms, abortions and divorces will not alter Unionists' attitudes towards unification, the referendum victory for the forces of Catholic reaction shows that the cultural conditions for pluralism are not present. Fianna Fail's studied neutrality (against divorce) during the referendum, while bringing it closer to government, has left the



party incapable of a serious programme for re-unification by consent, and leaves its promises to Protestants in a future New Ireland utterly unconvincing both to Unionists and to all British governments.

This analysis suggests that the accord can survive its first three years, albeit with intermittent tension between the two states. The Agreement will face civil disobedience on a large scale from Unionists, further strikes, divisions within the RUC, especially if the Stalker inquiry were to indict senior officers, sectarian attacks against Catholics, as well as efforts by the IRA to disrupt the settlement. Managing the contradictions of reform and repression will continue to present problems to British governments, but, along with Irish governments, they will be obliged to play the Machiavellian power-game, even if they did not plan to do so. Agreed devolution will be regularly offered to those Unionists prepared to bargain with the SDLP. Naturally, the longer there is no internal settlement, the greater the prospect that Loyalist mobilisation against the Agreement will turn into a half-cocked bid for independence. But, rather than destroy the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a unilateral declaration of independence would produce a panicked rush for a deal with the SDLP and the APNI on the part of the leadership of the OUP. This benign scenario predicts short-run protest and reaction followed by a successful internal settlement incorporating power-sharing and an Irish dimension. The benign scenario is most critically dependent upon the role that a Fianna Fail government would decide to play. The malign scenario, by contrast, predicts that Loyalist rebellion will eventually unite the whole Unionist bloc in an unstoppable drive towards a declaration of independence, and the long-heralded bloodbath of civil war and re-partition. However, the malign scenario is improbable, both because it assumes Unionist cohesion, and because it forgets that both the British and Irish governments can put an end to a Unionist uprising either by force or by repudiating the Agreement. Consequently the risks of allowing the benign scenario the opportunity to play itself out are worthwhile.

#### V. SHOULD THE AGREEMENT BE SUPPORTED?

That the Anglo-Irish Agreement should work, that is, for it to result in an internal power-sharing settlement within Northern Ireland, with an Irish dimension, is plainly the wish of the present author. That objective is shared by both the British Conservative and the Irish coalition governments. But why should democrats of the left, and centre-left support such a policy? After all the standard orthodoxies of the British left are either to support Irish unification and adopt an ultra-nationalist stance which follows Sinn Féin,<sup>46</sup> or to take a class-based line such as the Workers' Party or Militant and adopt a *de facto* Unionist position on the border while arguing for democratic reforms (Workers' Party line) or else take a common economic class-based revolutionary strategy (Militant line). These positions exemplify the two standard faults in socialist analyses of national questions. The first, the romantic nationalist line, is to swallow national self-determination rhetoric, identify the underdog, and support the people so chosen in their national liberation struggle. The second, the class-utopian line, is to ignore nationalist

consciousness, to attempt to bypass it or transcend it through promoting a class-based strategy. It is instructive to refer here to the Austrian social democrats who were exceptional in falling into neither the nationalist nor the class-sectarian traps, and in not accepting the doctrines of sovereignty associated with the rise of the capitalist nation-state, and indeed of the contemporary state-socialist regimes. They argued cogently that socialists must consider questions of national identity without necessarily accepting wholesale 'self-determination' ideologies. National identity cannot simply be dissolved by class-unity or wither away in a prospective socialist paradise. This Austrian tradition is worth re-inventing.

A power-sharing settlement in Northern Ireland, with an Irish dimension, or co-operative devolution on the Kilbrandon lines, tackles head-on the central symbolic grievances of a considerable majority of Northern Nationalists while maintaining the British citizenship of Northern Protestants. It ends Protestant supremacy, not their identity – and those who believe that all Unionists' identity consists solely of triumphal supremacism are deluded. A power-sharing settlement recognises that the central cleavage is between Nationalists and Unionists, but its evolution need not preclude other cleavages, based on socialist and liberal ideology, or class, from making themselves felt. The evidence of other states, such as Belgium or Holland, which have experienced power-sharing coalitions across religious, cultural or ethnic divides, shows not only that they are feasible, but also that they are frequently transitional – their very success eventually leads to the weakening of the non-class based cleavages and permits the evolution of politics around a liberalism/socialism cleavage. Accordingly, if the bulk of British left can stifle its usual impatience and romanticism, and reflect upon its strange and 'unholy' partisanship for Catholic Nationalism against Protestant Unionism, there is every reason why they should come to support the opportunities opened by power-sharing arrangements.

These abstract arguments may seem absurdly optimistic in the face of contemporary realities, but they have been outlined to suggest that there is no reason why socialists and liberals, in common with Fine Gael and British Conservatives, should not consider power-sharing and an Irish dimension as sensible ways of ensuring democratic progress in Northern Ireland. Liberal democrats and democratic socialists should stop analysing Northern Ireland as a set of traffic lights where the choices are green, red or orange. Normative advocacy of power-sharing need not imply naïveté, but rather should be accompanied by determined support for the political defeat of both ultra-loyalists and ultra-nationalists, the institutional recognition of both national identities without supremacism, the end of illiberal and unnecessary repressive legislation and administrative practices. A programme of economic and social policies to end Catholic material disadvantage<sup>47</sup> while improving the aggregate welfare of both the Catholic and Protestant working class is also desirable and feasible. Contrary to Left mythology Northern Ireland is reformable,<sup>48</sup> and contrary to Richard Rose's liberal pessimism<sup>49</sup> the problem is certainly not that there is no solution. There are multiple solutions, many of them close to final solutions: whether the Anglo-Irish Agreement provides the framework for one which democrats can support remains to be seen.

## NOTES

I should like to express my thanks to those public officials who made themselves available for non-attributable interviews, and to George Jones, Michael Hebbert, Lorelei Watson and John Whyte for their helpful criticisms. The usual disclaimers apply.

1. *Guardian*, 16 Nov. 1986.
2. *Irish Times*, 21 April 1986.
3. The assumptions of these models are expounded by Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision*, Little, Brown and Company, 1971.
4. Jim Allister, the DUP Chief Whip in the Northern Ireland Assembly, claims that the Accord has made Northern Ireland a 'shared colony' (*Irish Times*, 11 May 1986). Harold McCusker, Deputy Leader of the Official Unionist Party (OUP), has gone as far as to claim that the British have already conceded sovereignty over Northern Ireland to the Irish Republic (*Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 1986).
5. *New Ireland Forum*, Stationery Office, Dublin, May 1984. The Forum report was agreed by the four major constitutional nationalist parties in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland (Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Irish Labour Party, and the Social Democratic and Labour Party). The Forum deliberated, received evidence and commissioned research for a year. In conclusion it offered three possible models of a new Ireland: a unitary state, a federal/confederal state, and joint authority. FF preferred the first model. FG, the ILP and the SDLP preferred the second, and especially the third models. In order to obtain an agreed report FF's preference was the nominally agreed first choice.
6. Claire Palley, 'When an Iron Hand Can Beckon a Federal Union', Agenda, *Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1986. Palley's article is a perfect specimen of wishful thinking: she assumes into existence what she would like to occur. She starts with the dubious premise that in about 35 years the Protestant and Catholic populations will be about equal, and reasons that a majority would then be forthcoming for 'reunification'. She concludes that once Protestants are aware of their demographic destiny it will then make sense for them to negotiate their best possible position in an Irish federal union. Both her demography and psephology are dubious. Paul Compton, 'The Demographic Background', in D. Watt (ed.), *The Constitution of Northern Ireland* (1981) shows that most assumptions of an inevitable Catholic majority are ill-founded. In any case there are considerably more Catholic Unionists than Protestant Irish Nationalists, so even a future hypothetical Catholic majority would be insufficient for a majority for unification — see Edward Moxon-Browne, *Nation, Class and Creed in Northern Ireland* (Aldershot: Gower, 1983). Breeding for victory, or negotiating federalism because of the other side's fertility rates, are not sound political strategies.
7. Namely the 26 counties of the Irish Free State (1922–37).
8. 'In Northern Ireland now we have signed an agreement in which the Prime Minister of Ireland, notwithstanding the fact that he faces and has to live with a Constitution which has aspirations of sovereignty over Northern Ireland, has in fact accepted that for all practical purposes and unto perpetuity, there will not be a united Ireland because he has accepted the principle of consent that the will of the majority in Northern Ireland must predominate and that Northern Ireland, which is our fervent wish, remains part of the United Kingdom' (*Irish Times*, 4 Dec. 1986). King's message was substantially accurate, but had to be 'clarified' because the gloss 'in perpetuity' is incompatible with the Irish Constitution. King's message, designed to placate Unionists, caused uproar among ultra-Nationalists — the fate of all Northern Ireland Secretaries of State.
9. The Assembly [1982–86] was the ill-starred child of Jim Prior's rolling devolution scheme. It foundered upon a Nationalist boycott by both SF and the SDLP. Since late 1985 it had become simply an agitation-forum against the Accord, prompting the moderate Unionists in the Alliance Party [APNI] to withdraw. King was forced to dissolve the Assembly as he did not want the elections due in the autumn to occur amidst the current levels of polarisation.
10. In this respect the Accord conforms, intentionally or otherwise, with the prescriptions of the *Capotorti Report*, 1979, prepared for the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities: 'Bilateral agreements dealing with minority rights concluded between States where minorities live and the States from which the minorities originate (especially between neighbouring countries) would be extremely

useful. It must be stressed, however, that co-operation with regard to the rights of members of minority groups shall be based on mutual respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States concerned and non-interference in their internal affairs' (cited in Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden, *Ireland: A Positive Proposal* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 47. (However, the Northern Nationalist minority did not originate in the Irish Republic so the conformity is imperfect.)

11. Direct rule has been interrupted only by the brief power-sharing Executive in the first five months of 1974.
12. *Irish Times*, 29 May 1986.
13. *Irish Times*, 8 May 1986.
14. The Kilbrandon Committee, an unofficial all-party body established in 1984 to give a more considered response to the New Ireland Forum than Thatcher's 'Out! Out! Out!', favoured a form of joint authority which they called co-operative devolution. A five-member ministerial executive composed of one Irish Minister, one British Minister and three Northern Ireland representatives elected by proportional representation (i.e. two Unionists and one Nationalist) would make up the Government of Northern Ireland. The idea was to produce two alternating majorities (a British-Unionist majority, or an Irish-British-Northern Ireland Nationalist majority) depending on the line-up of the participants.
15. *The Equal Citizen*, No. 3, 22 Dec. 1986.
16. See for a good example John Martin, 'Marxist Interpretations of Northern Ireland', *Capital and Class*, 18, 1982, and for a bad example the caucus-group journal *Labour and Ireland*.
17. See *inter alia* A. Morgan, 'Socialism in Ireland — Red, Green and Orange', in A. Morgan and B. Purdie (eds.), *Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class* (London: Ink Links, 1980, and P. Bew and W. Patterson, *The British State and the Ulster Crisis* (London: Verso, 1985).
18. The scale of the British subvention for public expenditure on non-security related items, even during the high-tide of monetarism, shows that Northern Ireland has enjoyed more than the full-share of benefits of membership of the British welfare state. Fergus Pyle, 'The Price of the Union', *Irish Times*, 14–16 April 1986, cites a Coopers and Lybrand study which shows that public expenditure accounts for 75 per cent of GNP in Northern Ireland (compared with 45 per cent in the rest of the UK), and that on a per capita basis Northern Ireland citizens benefit 42 per cent more than the average Briton.
19. Enoch Powell, 'Dirty Tricks That Link Dublin', and Westland, Agenda, *Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1986.
20. A. Lijphart, Typologies of Democratic Systems, *Comparative Political Studies* 1 (1968), pp. 3–44. Sue Halpern's essay, 'The Disorderly Universe of Consociational Democracy', *West European Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1986), surveys well the major criticisms of Lijphart's model, but instead of trying to reconstruct it chooses to condemn it to the dustbin of unscientific concepts.
21. NOP Market Research Ltd, *Political Opinion in Northern Ireland* (London, 1974), p. 16.
22. E. Nordlinger, *Conflict Regulation in Divided Societies*, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 29 (Harvard University, 1972) plausibly argues that both elite motivation and autonomy are essential for successful conflict-regulation in open regimes.
23. *Belfast Telegraph*, 17 Dec. 1985.
24. Interview with NIO official.
25. Evelyn Glenholmes, a suspected IRA activist, walked free from a Dublin court in March 1986 largely because the British failed to prepare their extradition papers properly.
26. The Stalker affair, which was still unfolding at the time of writing, centred on whether the RUC, M15, the Home Office, or others, conspired to obtain the suspension from duty, on unclear charges, of the Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester Police, John Stalker. He had been assigned the task of investigating whether or not the RUC had operated an illegal 'shoot-to-kill' policy against suspected terrorists during 1982 in Armagh. If Stalker's findings were affirmative their publication in the summer of 1986 would have been extremely embarrassing for the RUC and the government in the midst of the Loyalist marching season.
27. *Irish Times*, 18 June 1986.
28. *Guardian*, 23 June 1986.
29. Harry West, the former leader of the OUP (1974–79), Austin Ardill and David McNarry are the first group within the OUP to have offered power-sharing to the SDLP. Hume dismissed their informal talks with SDLP leaders because the Unionists still wanted the suspension of the IGC, and because the West group are no longer influential within the OUP (*Irish Times*, 6 March 1986).

30. Paul Arthur, Anglo-Irish relations and the Northern Ireland Problem, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 2,1, 1985, has cogently argued that British policy-making has been characterised by two features: quarantining the Irish issue from mainstream politics, and maintaining international respectability. These features exemplify the NIO's internal and external tracks respectively.
31. Op. cit., pp. 39–131.
32. Talk of Thatcher as the British equivalent of de Gaulle is wildly exaggerated. There are few appropriate parallels between the Irish government and the Algerian national liberation movement, still less in terms of legitimacy between the Provisionals and the FMLN (unless one makes Islam and Catholicism the basis of comparison). The impact of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, with the exception of attempted assassinations of key political figures, has not been anything as dramatic as that of Algeria on French politics in the 1950s. There is also no evidence that Thatcher or the British state are preparing to withdraw – such speculation wholly misreads both the effective administrative integration of Northern Ireland into the UK since 1972 and underestimates the *Realpolitik* of successive Irish governments.
33. Liam O'Dowd, Bill Rolston and Mike Tomlinson, *Northern Ireland, Between Civil Rights and Civil War* (London: CSE Books, 1980).
34. Bew and Patterson, op. cit.
35. J. Elster, Marxism, functionalism and game theory, *Theory and Society*, 11 (1982), pp. 453–82.
36. D. B. O'Leary, Explaining Northern Ireland, *Politics*, 5,1 (1985). See also J. Whyte, 'Interpretations of the Northern Ireland Problem', paper presented at a conference of the British Association for Irish Studies at the University of Keele, 2–4 April 1986.
37. S. Elliott, 'A Post-Mortem on an Unprecedented Poll', *Fortnight*, 10 Feb. 1986, shows that since their high-tide in 1983 there has been a swing from SF to the SDLP in those four constituencies where both SF and SDLP candidates stood. It should be noted that the growth of the SF vote after the hunger-strikes led them to participate in electoral politics was mostly based on a non-voting, militant republican vote, rather than upon inroads into the SDLP's electoral base.
38. The allusion is biblical: Gideon reduced the size of his army to its most valiant core and was more successful in war as a result.
39. *Irish Times*, 21 April 1986. Rev. Ivan Foster, Assembly Member for Fermanagh, made his case at the DUP Conference with strained logic: if Gaddafi's haven for terrorism merited Reagan's raid, then surely a nuclear-strike on the Irish Republic by Britain was in order. The Reverend seemed to be unaware that a nuclear-strike on IRA bases would have considerable fall-out on his Fermanagh electorate ...
40. *Irish Times*, 20 June 1986.
41. *Evening Standard*, 24 June 1986.
42. Notoriously the SDLP did not run a candidate against the IRA prisoner Bobby Sands and thereby ensured his election as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.
43. An Irish Times/MRBI poll gave FF 51 per cent of first preference votes of those who expressed a definite preference (*Irish Times*, 27 June 1986).
44. *Sunday Press*, 4 Nov. 1984.
45. Robert Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality, 1939–45* (London: Granada, 1985), tells how de Valera preferred the maintenance of partition to the abandonment of neutrality, despite Churchill's offer of unification in return for the use of Irish naval bases.
46. G. Bell, *The British in Ireland (Arguments for Socialism). A suitable case for withdrawal* (London: Pluto Press, 1984) articulates the emotions of most Labour constituency activists.
47. Giving teeth to the FEA and the EOA is not beyond the competence of a reform-minded Labour government.
48. M. Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State* (London: Pluto Press, 1976) expounds the unreformability thesis.
49. R. Rose, *Northern Ireland. A Time of Choice* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 139.

## Where Traditional Tories Fear to Tread: Mrs Thatcher's Trade Union Policy

Neil J. Mitchell

*This article examines Conservative trade union policy under Mrs Thatcher. It discusses the policy's origins, aims and successes and draws out the theoretical implications of the discussion for policy analysis in the context of pressure group theory. The article argues that trade union policy provides an illustration of the importance of the intentions and discretion of policy-makers and the dependence of groups on policy rather than the other way around.*

Trade union power, a characteristic feature of British politics which was accepted by earlier Conservative governments, though at times reluctantly, became a key policy problem and political issue with the election of Mrs Thatcher in 1979. By 1985, a Cabinet minister could go so far as to claim that it was action in this policy area that would give the Thatcher government historical significance: 'In the context of a thousand years of British history that [taming the unions] will be seen as a significant event beyond calculation'.<sup>1</sup> So why did trade union power become a policy problem, what is the direction of policy, and what has been its success? These are questions at once interesting and important in themselves and in terms of their theoretical impact. In treating these questions this article argues that recent trade union policy provides an example of the importance of the intentions and discretion of public policy makers in policy formation. Group pressure, the conventional focus for policy analysis, is an ambiguous influence, which, given the policy area and the presumably clear benefits for business groups, is surprising. With respect to policy consequences, and as a further departure from pressure group theory, trade union policy provides an example of how public policy determines the activity of groups as well as the other way around. Eckstein, 25 years ago, anticipated this general proposition by saying that, 'One of the most ancient and more dubious postulates of pressure group theory' is 'that policy is always the result of the interplay of group pressures rather than a determinant of the interplay itself'.<sup>2</sup> A discussion of the ideological framework within which policy makers operate precedes analysis of the policy itself.

### IDEOLOGY AND TRADE UNIONS

Neo-liberal ideology hardened by recent political experience made the reduction of trade union power a priority for Mrs Thatcher's governments. It is difficult to find a place for unions in an ideology which links efficiency and its central value individual freedom to an economic abstraction, the free market. There is a political and economic dimension to the Conservative position which adds up to giving the unions no role in policy-making and at