



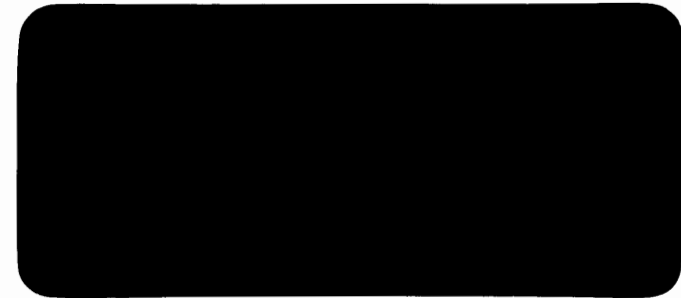
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WROXTON

PAPERS IN POLITICS



Series B: The Changing
Agenda of British Politics
Paper B10

The State of the Union

Dr Brendan O'Leary

Sir Anthony Meyer, MP

This paper contains two separate essays on The State of the Union
by the above authors.

Brendan O'Leary (BA (Oxon), PhD) is Senior Lecturer in Political Science and Public Administration at the LSE. He is the co-editor of The Future of Northern Ireland (1991), author of The Asiatic Mode of Production (1989), and co-author of Theories of the State (1987). He is currently writing The Politics of Antagonism (with John McGarry). His research on the Anglo-Irish Agreement is being supported by the Nuffield Foundation.

RESOLVING NORTHERN IRELAND?

THE OPTIONS FOR BRITISH & IRISH POLICY-MAKERS IN THE 1990s

“To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power, which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change nor falter nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free”

– P.B. Shelley, English poet

“The important thing is never to hope.
It is hope that brings turmoil, destruction.
Acceptance, resignation, stoicism – yes!
But never hope.”

– J. Hewitt, Ulster poet

Peter Brooke, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has been hoping to preside over talks between constitutional parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland ever since he was appointed to his post in 1989.

The declared purpose of such talks is to construct a long-term political settlement which would transcend the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in 1985 (O'Leary, 1987, 1989). The talks would address the four central antagonistic relationships at stake in the conflict: those between nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland; those between the unionist in Northern Ireland and nationalists in all of Ireland; those between Britain and Northern Ireland; and finally, those between Britain and Ireland.

As this paper is being written, there is considerable doubt as to whether the Northern Ireland political parties will agree on an agenda for talks, let alone conduct substantive discussions. Indeed Mr Brooke's skilful diplomatic

SERIES EDITOR: DR. NICHOLAS D.J. BALDWIN
DIRECTOR, WROXTON COLLEGE

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manoeuvring seems to have sown considerable confusion. One leading nationalist MP's political adviser put this riddle to me when I questioned him on the prospects for the Brooke initiative: Question: "What do you get when you cross Peter Brooke with the Mafia?" Answer: "An offer you cannot understand, but cannot refuse." At least two inferences can be drawn from this joke: first, the leaders of Northern Ireland's constitutional political parties feel obliged to demonstrate their willingness to talk, and will endeavour to avoid responsibility for the breakdown of any prospective talks; but, second, none of them presently believe that an agreement is feasible which will command widespread assent. This view is privately and publicly shared by many British political commentators, politicians and civil servants who relish declaring that 'there is no solution to the Northern Ireland problem'. They may be correct: Northern Ireland seems to illustrate Galbraith's maxim that politics "consists in choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable".

Any settlement to the Northern Ireland imbroglio must answer three tough questions:

- (i) To which state should Northern Ireland belong?
- (ii) In which form of state should it be organized?
- (iii) Which is the best way of organizing decision-making within and across its divided communities?

These questions will continue to frame the options available to British and Irish policy-makers in the 1990s (see McGarry and O'Leary, 1991).

1. WHICH STATE?

There are five logical ways in which Northern Ireland's statehood can be arranged. First, Northern Ireland could be incorporated into an all-Ireland state as Irish nationalists have traditionally wanted. However, an all-Ireland state is opposed by a considerable majority of Northern Ireland's electorate, and vehemently and almost unanimously opposed by Ulster's Protestants who believe that they are British, and as a local majority believe their preferences should be 'paramount'. They believe they would be economically impoverished, politically dominated and religiously oppressed in an all-Ireland state.

Whether or not these fears have legitimate foundations in evidence or logical inference is less important than palpable fact that they are widely and deeply held by unionists. Some unionists, especially self-styled loyalists, have regularly demonstrated their willingness to fight to prevent their assimilation into an all-Ireland state. Indeed all unionists agree that the major external cause of the conflict in Northern Ireland is what they call the irredentist claim of the Irish state to the sovereignty of the entire island of Ireland. The major weakness of

Irish nationalism, past and present, has been its signal failure to persuade Ulster Protestants that they are Irish, and that an all-Ireland state is a desirable proposition on economic, cultural or political grounds. The form of persuasion exercised by the Provisional IRA, and other nationalist paramilitary organizations, has been, to put it mildly, counter-productive.

Second, Northern Ireland could remain within the United Kingdom as Ulster unionists insist it should. However, this option is strongly opposed by the nationalist minority within Northern Ireland, who make up most of Northern Ireland's Catholics, and since the early 1970s it has not been supported by a majority in public opinion polls conducted in Great Britain. It is also formally opposed by the majority of the citizens of the Republic of Ireland. Traditional Irish nationalists, self-styled republicans, argue that the Irish people were denied their right to self-determination when the island of Ireland was partitioned, and unjustly and badly partitioned, after the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 and the Treaty between Britain and Ireland signed in 1921. Partition and the treaty in their view was imposed by British imperialist might rather than agreed by the Irish people. For them, like most Irish nationalists, the primary external source of the conflict in Northern Ireland is the past and present actions of the British state, which have served to divide the Irish people. They believe that the Irish state is right to claim sovereignty over Northern Ireland in its 1937 constitution. The current Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Charles Haughey, argues that Northern Ireland has proved to be "a failed political entity" in which systematic sectarian domination and economic discrimination have been endemic since its inception. (I)

Thus far, Ulster unionists have never been able to persuade more than a minority of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland that the British state can treat them as full and equal citizens. The Great British themselves, whether their governments, political parties, or their peoples have also not regarded Northern Ireland as authentically British. Despite Mrs Thatcher's remarkable assertion at the time of the Bobby Sands' hunger strike that Northern Ireland "is as British as Finchley", successive British governments, including her own, have not taken measures to integrate Northern Ireland fully into the United Kingdom. Indeed Northern Ireland is governed differently from the rest of the United Kingdom, and the major Great British political parties do not contest all the elections there. Moreover, not only do the Great British lack enthusiasm to keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, but they also know that as long as Northern Ireland simply remains part of the United Kingdom, the IRA's campaign of violence is likely to continue.

Third, Northern Ireland could be made into an independent state, as the former British Prime Minister James Callaghan, some loyalist paramilitaries, and a few sturdy independent intellectuals have some times suggested (Moore and Crimmins, 1991). However, independence is opposed by most actors within

Northern Ireland. Unionists reject it because it would mean that they would no longer be British, whereas nationalists reject it both because they would not be part of Ireland and because they would be a minority within the new state. British and Irish policy-makers reject this option as unthinkable, primarily because they do not believe such a state could be stable. Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is very revealing on this issue: it allows a majority in Northern Ireland to determine whether the territory is to belong to the UK or to the Republic of Ireland, but it does not permit such a majority to opt for independence.

Fourth, Northern Ireland could be subject to the joint authority of the British and Irish states. However, this option has been consistently rejected by recent British governments: first, because of the Thatcher government's acetose distaste for losing one iota of sovereignty; and second, because it is considered undemocratic – since it would have to be imposed against the wishes of a majority of Northern Ireland's citizens. The furthest the British government has been prepared to go in considering this option is presently embodied in the Anglo-Irish Agreement – which was imposed against the wishes of a majority of the province's electorate. (2) As a result of the Agreement, the British government undertook to consult the Irish government on all matters of public policy affecting Northern Ireland, through the forum of a regular Intergovernmental Conference, and to make "determined efforts ... to resolve any differences" between the two governments (Article 2). The outraged and fulminating reaction of Ulster unionists to this very limited British move in the direction of tacit joint authority, and the difficulties both governments have had in managing the Agreement, suggest that joint authority's prospect of promoting peaceful accommodation would at best be very long term. Nonetheless it is possible that in the 1990s the new Conservative Prime Minister John Major, or a future Labour government might consider exploring the joint authority option with the Irish government in a more vigorous way.

Finally, Northern Ireland could be destroyed, and its territory and people divided between the British and Irish states in a second, and presumably final, partition of Ireland. This solution would work by creating a smaller, more homogeneously unionist and Protestant British Ireland, and a larger Republic of Ireland which would incorporate the majority of Northern Ireland's nationalists and Catholics. (3) However, it is an option not publicly favoured by any British, Irish or Northern Irish political party. Organizing a just and stable re-partition would also be very problematic given the distribution of the relevant populations; and the numerous lives lost in previous British-administered partitions of their former imperial possessions (India, Palestine and Ireland) can hardly inspire confidence in the merits of any proposal to rectify Lloyd George's botched settlement of 1921.

Therefore each of the five logical ways in which Northern Ireland's statehood can be resolved entails obvious and profound costs, and much less obvious and

more intangible benefits. None of the five logical options commands widespread support across all the major actors who would be vital to ensuring a stable settlement. Nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland, British and Irish governments, political parties and public opinion, all have conflicting and deeply held preferences. Note that the status quo, under which Northern Ireland is directly governed from Westminster, also has considerable and predictable costs: continuing violence, and constant strains in British-Irish relations being the most obvious.

However, the question 'To which state should Northern Ireland belong?' is merely the first of a set of further complex and nested questions which must be addressed in any successful resolution of the conflict.

2. WHICH FORM OF STATE?

There are three modes of organizing sovereignty in liberal democratic states: in unitary, federal, or confederal forms. In their turn unitary states, federations and confederations can be more or less centralized or decentralized, depending upon the structures of government, intergovernmental relations and the allocation of powers and functions.

An Irish unitary state, advocated by Fianna Fáil in the Irish Republic, does not appeal to unionists, even if it were accompanied by extensive devolution of authority to the existing region of Northern Ireland. They find it unacceptable since it would vest sovereign power in the hands of the nationalist/Catholic majority in the island of Ireland. The fact that since 1982 it has also been the goal of Sinn Féin and the IRA to obtain a unitary Irish state does nothing to enhance its attractiveness to unionists.

An Irish federation or confederation, by contrast, would either have to be a two-unit federation or confederation, or it would have to be built upon three or more freshly created political provinces throughout the island of Ireland. The problem with a two-unit entity is that the historical track-record of such political institutions in bi-communal societies is universally disastrous. They have proven consistently unstable elsewhere in the world. And the problem with any more than two-unity entity is that it would entail a dramatic disruption of the institutional fabric of the Republic of Ireland, a price which neither its political élite nor its people seem prepared to pay.

The United Kingdom is presently a unitary state. Since 1972 Northern Ireland has been centrally governed, under direct rule from Westminster and the Northern Ireland Office, tempered after November 1985 by the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the workings of the Intergovernmental Conference. The centralization of government within the British unitary state has not proved much more legitimate than the Stormont arrangements it superseded, nor has it

produced successful conflict-regulation. Northern Ireland used to have a devolved government within the UK's decentralized unitary state: the Stormont parliament which presided over institutionalized discrimination against Catholics and nationalists.

Since 1972 all British attempts to establish an agreed form of devolved government within Northern Ireland have failed. The Executive established after the Sunningdale conference in 1973 was brought down within a year. The Constitutional Convention of 1975-6 was wound up without agreement. Negotiations with Northern Ireland's constitutional parties by Secretary of State Humphrey Atkins in 1979-80 proved fruitless. 'Rolling devolution', the scheme devised by Secretary of State James Prior in 1982, foundered on nationalist abstention and the refusal of unionists to advance proposals which might win nationalist consent. Historically informed pessimists therefore have good reasons to suppose that Brooke's round of 'talks about talks' about a new settlement is likely to go the way of its precursors.

The United Kingdom has never formally been a federation or a confederation. However, even if it were to become more like a federation or a confederation, let us say after the establishment of Scottish and Welsh devolution as well as powerful English regions by a radical reforming Labour government in the 1990s, it is not clear what significance this transformation of the UK state would have for solving the problems of Northern Ireland. Ulster unionists would presumably seek a UK federation which gave them control within Northern Ireland and a bulwark against Irish nationalism; whereas a UK federation or confederation would deny Irish nationalists' aspiration for an Irish dimension, and provoke fears that it might become a vehicle for the re-establishment of a new Stormont regime.

What about a federation or confederation of the British Isles or the archipelago of the Celtic Sea, as some utopians are wont to suggest? Would not such an institutional transformation satisfy the dual national aspirations of the peoples in Northern Ireland? Perhaps, but the British and Irish states are unlikely to surrender sovereignty over all their territories to solve the Northern Irish question, if they currently find it so difficult to manage their conflicting sovereignty claims over a region of the island of Ireland. Moreover, Irish nationalists understandably see any proposal for a federated or confederated British Isles as a 'trojan horse' for the re-incorporation of Ireland under British control.

What of the idea that Northern Ireland's problems can be transcended within the framework of an emergent European federation or confederation? Joint membership of the EC has aided the development of neighbourly relations between the London and Dublin governments, but it is not obvious what impact spillovers from increasing European unions will have on intra-communal

relations within Northern Ireland [for a sophisticated discussion see Lyne (1990)]. (4) Key issues surrounding dual national identity, the administration of justice, militarized policing, paramilitary violence, discrimination in employment opportunities and the distribution of local political powers are not likely to be resolved as by-products of 'post-1992 Europe'. The removal of tariff barriers and increased cross-border co-operation between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, if it materializes, will not resolve a conflict centred on ethnic conflict. Moreover, the border across Ireland is likely to remain one of the most heavily policed in the EC whatever the fate of the '1992' project for a single European market. European co-operation is something desirable in its own right, not something to be favoured as a panacea for Northern Ireland.

Unitary, federal or confederal *formulae* for a Northern Ireland which stays in the UK, or becomes part of an all-Ireland state, do not appear to advance the search for a solution, at least upon cursory inspection. The same argument holds true for applying these *formulae* to an independent Northern Ireland or for a Northern Ireland governed under joint authority although I have not the space to defend this assertion. One reason these *formulae* are unhelpful is their imprecision about the nature of their implications for political decision-making.

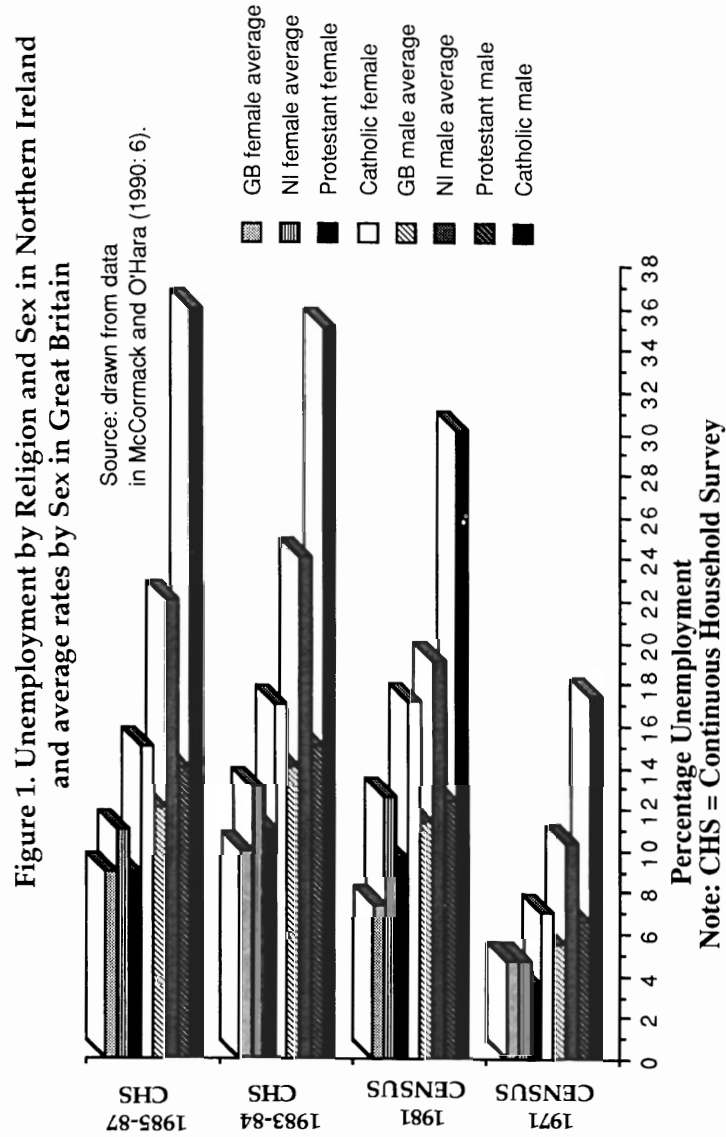
3. WHICH TYPE OF DECISION-MAKING?

The key question for Northern Ireland, whichever state it belongs to, and whatever its constitutional nomenclature, is straightforward: how should political and policy-making power be organised across and within the respective communities? There are basically four ideal typical ways in which this question might be answered: through arbitration, majority-rule, cantonization and power-sharing. Each of these four types could be permed in multiple ways but I have not the space to do so here. (5)

Arbitration: first, an external power might be given the role of arbiter in Northern Ireland, refereeing conflicts and adjudicating disputes in the absence of consensus. This rule has been exercised by Britain since 1972, or at least this has been the way in which successive British governments have presented themselves to the outside world. After the Anglo-Irish Agreement arbitration has been exercised in consultation with the Irish government, providing 'direct rule with a green tinge'. In principle, at some future conjuncture, arbitration might be exercised by both Britain and Ireland in a system of joint authority. More fancifully, arbitration might be exercised by the EC or by the UN.

The most fundamental problem with arbitration as a strategy for resolving Northern Ireland is that the arbitrated do not regard the most likely arbiters, namely Britain and Ireland, as sufficiently disinterested to be neutral. Irish nationalists, with considerable justification, regard direct British rule in Ireland

as responsible for continuing economic discrimination and inequality (see Figure 1), and regular abuses of human rights by the security forces. Unionists, by contrast, constantly fear a British betrayal and appear to find repulsive the mere idea of institutionalized consultation with the Irish Republic. The conditions for successful arbitration, a willingness to trust the arbiter(s), are absent.



Majority-rule: second, power might be exercised according to majority-rule principles. This fundamental norm of the Westminster parliamentary model is, however, problematic in ethnically divided societies. Under the Stormont government there was one-party rule by the Ulster Unionist Party for over fifty years, between 1920 and 1972, and there was no prospect of the nationalist opposition achieving governmental authority through the alternation in power that characterizes functioning liberal democracies (O'Leary and Arthur, 1991). Indeed majority-rule devolution provided a milieu for the systematic abuse of political power; and the application of majority rule decision-making procedures in unitary, federal or confederal *formulae* would create the same threat, whether Northern Ireland was Irish, British, jointly governed or independent.

And in any case in Northern Ireland the question always arises: "Which majority?" Nationalists claim that Northern Ireland is illegitimate because its borders were drawn so as to create an artificial majority. They claim that they are the genuine majority in the island of Ireland as a whole. By contrast most unionists, and all loyalists, claim that since they are a majority within Northern Ireland they should be allowed power commensurate with that status. (6)

British nation-builders, by contrast, argue that the true majority is in the United Kingdom as a whole. They contend that if 'real' British political parties, viz. the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats, were to organize and compete in elections in Northern Ireland, then its ethnically based politics would be transformed. This argument, currently fashionable amongst English Conservatives rests on false foundations. It presupposes that Northern Irish residents will vote for British political parties in large numbers if given the opportunity to do so. The evidence to date is not persuasive. The Conservatives, the solitary British political party to have organized in the province, have lost deposits in both the European Parliamentary election 1989 and the by-election in Upper Bann in May 1990, and have performed adequately in only one very unrepresentative local government district.

Organisations seeking to persuade Labour to stand in the province have received derisory votes. The argument of British nation-builders also rests on the assumption that Northern Irish voters who will vote for British political parties do so for non-sectarian reasons. However, polling evidence suggests that the Conservatives would appeal most to those in favour of the Union, i.e. Protestants; whereas the Labour Party would appeal most to those in favour of Irish unity, i.e. Catholics, because Labour favours achieving Irish unity by consent. Therefore, far from transcending sectarian politics the organization of the major British political parties in the province would directly embroil them in its national and religious conflicts.

Finally, the argument of the British nation-builders erroneously assumes that the major cause of conflict in Northern Ireland since 1920 has been the absence of

British party competition in the province. In fact the Ulster Unionist Party was directly connected to the British Conservative Party until 1972, with UUP Westminster MPs taking the Conservative whip. Indeed the UUP only shed its last institutional ties with the Conservatives after signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The arguments of these British nation-builders, who are also known as electoral integrationists, favour majority rule in the UK as a whole, but they are as wildly idealist about the benefits of the Westminster two-party majority-rule model of government as Gaelic romantics are about Irish unification. Political romanticism is not an exclusively Irish commodity.

Cantonization: Northern Ireland could also be cantonized, in a manner similar to the Swiss mode of government, that is to say the province could be subjected to a micro-partition in which political power would be devolved to new and very small political units – averaging between 20,000 and 40,000 people (although Swiss cantons are in fact much larger). Such political units could be designed either to create religiously and ethnically homogeneous units where majority rule would be practically coterminous with the self-government of all the relevant community or to achieve a very local form of power-sharing government of nationalists/Catholics and unionists/Protestants. Where intra-ethnic conflict is high then the partitioning of units to create homogeneity would be the operating administrative principle; and where such conflict was low, local power-sharing might be encouraged through the design of balanced ‘mixed’ cantons.

This strategy would decompose Northern Ireland into islands of nationalist, unionist, and power-sharing cantons; simultaneously combining majority rule, partitionist and what political scientists call consociational principles. Some areas with high political violence would have to remain under direct rule, and a province-wide anti-terrorist force would obviously still be required. However, under ‘rolling cantonization’ policing and judicial powers could be gradually devolved to those areas where the population expressed a wish to exercise such powers, and where the British and Irish governments judged that the experiment had some prospect of success. Cantonization is fraught with potential difficulties, notably the difficulties in drawing and policing appropriate units of government, winning consent for them, and the ever-present threat that any cantonization of policing and judicial power might be used by paramilitary organizations to seize control of parts of Northern Ireland, and treat them as ‘liberated zones’. However, cantonization is at least as realistic as pushing traditional unionist or nationalist positions, or commending joint authority. Cantonization is also more gradualist in its implications than drastic repartition because it permits both governments freedom to reverse such an experimental process. For these reasons it deserves to be debated more widely.

Power-Sharing: finally, political relationships in Northern Ireland might be organized according to a fourth principle, power-sharing. Known as

consociationalism to political scientists, it is characteristic of some democratic and stable societies which are nonetheless deeply divided by ethnic or religious cleavages.

Consociational democracies usually have four features. First, a grand coalition government incorporates the political parties representing the main segments of the divided society. Second, proportionality rules throughout the public sector: the proportional representation of each segment in political institutions (the electoral system, executive, legislature, judiciary, and the bureaucracy) is matched by the proportional allocation of public expenditure to each segment. Third, ‘segmental autonomy’ norms permit each group self-government over those matters of most profound concern to them: for example, each group may be proportionally and equally funded to run its own educational system. Finally, consociation entrenches constitutional vetoes for minorities (see Lijphart, 1977).

Since 1972, successive British governments (when they have been thinking as opposed to reacting) have been trying to promote a consociational solution to Northern Ireland’s problems, seeking to persuade its constitutional political parties to share political power in a devolved government which recognizes both nationalist and unionist traditions. Under Article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement both the British and Irish governments have re-committed themselves to this solution, and Mr Brooke has been actively seeking to encourage it in recent months.

However, consociational solutions, which are very desirable for divided societies like Northern Ireland, failed to work before 1985 for clear reasons – although British governments took a long time to learn them. Consociational solution cannot work effectively where the rival segments in antagonistic societies are fundamentally divided over their national as opposed to their linguistic or religious identities. “Northern Ireland is not Belgium” as one sage has put it. Nationality conflicts appear to have an irreducibly zero-sum character, a view daily reinforced by paramilitaries who kill for the proposition that ‘one nation = one state’.

The majority of constitutional unionists rejected institutionalized power-sharing as ‘un-British’, i.e. foreign to the Westminster parliamentary tradition, and contended they could not share power with people who wanted Northern Ireland to belong to a foreign country. The majority of constitutional nationalists, by contrast, rejected any consociational proposals if they were not accompanied by an institutionalized linkage between Northern Ireland and the Republic. In any case, political leaders of nationalist and unionist parties who were personally prepared to compromise fundamentally on a consociational settlement rapidly found themselves overthrown by revolts within their parties and their ethnic communities. Finally, since both the nationalist and unionist communities were internally divided into ‘ultras’ and ‘moderates’ the latter were insufficiently free

to negotiate a consociational settlement. The SDLP had to look over its shoulder at Sinn Féin and the IRA, whereas the Official Unionists had to watch out on their extremist flank for fear of being outmanoeuvred by Paisley's Democratic Unionists and loyalist paramilitaries.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was meant to break this stalemate and create the conditions for a power-sharing settlement. By entrenching an Irish dimension, it was intended to weaken Sinn Féin, strengthen the SDLP and make them more disposed towards power-sharing. Sinn Féin have been electorally weakened [see O'Leary, (1991)], but not as much as was hoped, and the SDLP have not shown themselves to be as keen to negotiate on devolution as British governments hoped. The SDLP's spokespersons have emphasised that the party has "no ideological commitment to devolution", even if it is to be based on power-sharing. Moreover SDLP leader John Hume has consistently argued that only when unionists have "sorted out" their relationship with the rest of the people of Ireland, can a general accommodation between nationalists and unionists be reached. Since 1986, Hume seems to have been canvassing pan-Irish solutions to the conflict rather than advocate an internal settlement, contending that any settlement arrived at through negotiation should be put to the Irish people, north and south, in simultaneous referenda. Meanwhile the IRA has continued to create mayhem, supported by Sinn Féin, and to disrupt whatever limited prospects exist for political negotiations.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was also intended to encourage unionists to negotiate a consociational settlement since Article 4 cleverly provided that in certain policy-domains where nationalists and unionists agreed to share power, the role of the Intergovernmental Conference would become less important. However, unionists have been nearly unanimous in entirely rejecting the Agreement, and campaigned particularly vigourously for its abandonment throughout 1986-7 [see Aughey, (1989)]. Enthusiasts for power-sharing within their ranks have remained isolated, while the majority insist that they will only negotiate with nationalists if the Agreement is removed, or at least suspended. Indeed seasoned observers believe that the strategic aim of key unionist leaders remains that of destroying the Agreement rather than a new one which transcends it: negotiating a consociational settlement with an Irish dimension is not their central concern. These unionist leaders remain hopeful that one of a number of scenarios (a change of British policy, a hung parliament at Westminster, or a catastrophic deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations) will accomplish the objective of breaking the Agreement. James Molyneaux, the leader of the Official Unionists, is known to be hostile to devolution in principle (and to favour Northern Ireland's complete integration into the UK) which is why his current involvement in talks with Mr Brooke has provoked scepticism amongst journalists and analysts of Irish politics.

However, both the British and the Irish governments remain committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Only a broader agreement which unionists negotiate

with nationalists could produce change in London and Dublin on the text of the Agreement. Therefore, short of a miracle, which would be desirable even for those of us who are rational atheists, Mr Brooke's current talks to establish a devolutionary consociational settlement cannot succeed in the near future for one simple reason. To get rid of the Agreement, unionists must offer nationalists a new Agreement which transcends the previous one and in which the Irish dimension is at least as significant as the present one, as well as offering nationalists a power-sharing devolutionary settlement within Northern Ireland. If unionists are prepared to do that, and offer it as the united package of both the principal parties, i.e. the Official Unionists and Paisley's DUP, then Mr Brooke will win the Nobel peace prize nomination in 1992, and along with many others I will have to diet on my hat.

CONCLUSION

The constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, and the British and Irish governing parties, are best seen as engaged in a complex war of manoeuvre in which each agent's prime objective is to ensure that they are not held responsible for the breakdown of 'talks about talks'. If and when they get to the negotiating table, the differences between the contending parties are likely to result in a renewed stalemate. Mr Brooke is trying to do the impossible by bridging the impassable.

Consociational solutions, while eminently desirable, seem destined to fall on stony ground in Northern Ireland for the foreseeable future. There are several ways in which the British and Irish governments might react if they recognize this increasingly palpable fact. They may simply opt, as they usually do, to engage in crisis-management. Alternatively, they may agree to play a long term strategy, reforming Northern Ireland's discriminatory economy (see Figure 1) (7) and the administration of justice to win the political confidence of nationalists, isolating the IRA and Sinn Féin, whilst simultaneously gently coaxing unionists out of the cold. The logic of this strategy would be to accomplish all of the institutional features of consociationalism except grand coalition government – which would have to await until a later date. In other words, the two governments would aim to ensure proportional representation of each community in non-elected political institutions (including, eventually, the police), segmental autonomy, a bill of rights guaranteeing equality of citizenship and entrenching some minority rights. Simultaneously they have to ensure their co-operation against paramilitaries stays within the rule of law.

The British and Irish governments might also take the more risky and drastic step of threatening a major new initiative, such as moving towards joint authority or repartition, in order to increase the pressure on unionist and nationalists to arrive at a power-sharing settlement. Professor Arend Lijphart, the pioneering political scientist who has developed the theory of consociational

democracy, argues that partition is the most stable and least undesirable solution when consociationalism fails, and that threatening partition might sometimes bring the relevant actors to the negotiating table. In the concluding chapter of our recent book, *The Future of Northern Ireland*, John McGarry and I sketched a similar argument for Northern Ireland.

No one can be confident of what the future of Northern Ireland will be like in the 1990s. We do know that most prophets of the future do best by predicting the continuation of the present: in this case the weekly grind of political murder would be expected to continue, accompanied by constantly failing political initiatives. However, I believe it is more likely that more radical options will be pursued by British and Irish governments in the coming decade, even though I am well aware that to talk of options, or to consider possibilities for progress, is regarded as a sign of cognitive deficiency by some public policy analysts in Northern Ireland. For the present though, I leave it to the reader to debate the rival poetical perspectives on the merits of hope which form the epigraphs to this paper. Their relevance to the study of Northern Ireland should be obvious.

* * * * *

SIR ANTHONY MEYER, MP, is a former diplomat. He represented Eton & Slough from 1964-66, Flint West from 1970-83 and is currently MP for Clwyd North West, a position he has held since 1983. In 1989 he challenged Mrs Margaret Thatcher for the leadership of the Conservative Party.

For most people Wales still means coal mines, steel works and sheep. The sheep are still there, and the glorious countryside on which they roam, Shangri-Lah within three hours drive from London. But the coal mines are disappearing fast, the steel industry has been drastically rationalised and streamlined; today there are more people employed in financial services in Wales than in both of these great traditional industries of the past.

In no part of the United Kingdom has the Thatcherite treatment, by which I mean the amputation of injured or idle limbs without anaesthetic, been more effective or more brutal. Unemployment in Wales, which had been down to 38,000 in 1974, had doubled under the 1974-9 Labour Government to 80,000. But under the incoming 1979 Conservative Government and the starkly deflationary budget of 1981, Welsh unemployment shot through the 100,000 barrier and came uncomfortably close to 200,000 before it began its downward trend in early 1986.

The likelihood is that after 12 years of Conservative rule, Welsh unemployment will stand at about the same level as it stood when Labour left office in 1979. The Conservatives will be able to claim that the total numbers in work are substantially higher than in 1979; Labour will retort that many of these additional jobs are low paid, part time jobs for women. Behind this battle of statistics lies a profound transformation of the Welsh economy which, in its turn, is transforming attitudes and social structures.

Wales is no longer the country of coal and steel, though it now has one of the most efficient steel plants in Europe. Soon it may also have one of the most productive coal mines, if the South Wales miners can make the final effort to show Arthur Scargill the door. But Wales is above all the home of modern, science based industry; it has a huge, still not fully developed tourist potential, and is becoming a most attractive location for financial and other business services. In this transformation, inward investment, notably from Japan, but also from the United States, and, increasingly from the rest of the European Community, has played a crucial role.

When I came to North Wales in 1970, the area was characterised by very low unemployment, and, with one exception, by excessive dependence on three major employers; British Steel (the former Summers works) at Shotton, Courtaulds at Greenfield and Flint and Hawkers (now British Aerospace) at Broughton. British Aerospace is still very much alive, thanks largely to the vision of its directors, with little encouragement from governments of either party, in participating in the European Airbus project. But Courtaulds has 'struck its tents' and moved away; and British Steel, in Europe's biggest single closure, shut down steel making at Shotton, with the abrupt loss of 12,000 jobs; only a couple of thousand are now employed in its successful steel-coating complex.

The exception was, of course, Wrexham, the 'Slough of North Wales', where diversity of industrial employment enabled the area to survive the closures of its coal mines which had been the mainstay of the town's economy. It is noteworthy that Wrexham, despite its rather inconvenient location and its poor communications, has proved more attractive to inward investment than other parts of North Wales, though they are beginning now to catch-up.

In North Wales today, unemployment is no longer a serious political issue; and the economy is infinitely better placed to withstand the recession than it was for the last one. But the transition has been an extremely painful one.

Industrial development and employment levels are obviously determinant factors in the political scene. But so, almost equally so in Wales, is culture and the Welsh language.