

## PROVING OUR POINTS ON NORTHERN IRELAND (AND GIVING READING LESSONS TO DR. DIXON)

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Paul Dixon is obviously upset by *Explaining Northern Ireland* and *The Politics of Antagonism*. Indeed his imperfectly composed review<sup>1</sup> attempts to throw our books at us, and maintains that our work contains serious problems of 'objectivity, consistency, and interpretation'. In one sense, his review might be construed as a compliment - its length and tone suggest that our work has had an impact, albeit a disagreeable one. In another sense, however, it is a disappointing illustration of the parochial and prejudicial readings of scholarly and comparative work that often mar academic discourse on Northern Ireland. Our rebuttal treats Dixon's accusations in the approximate order in which he presents them: (i) objectivity; (ii) consistency; and (iii) interpretation.

### OBJECTIVITY

Dixon does not accuse us of being inconsistent on everything. He claims that we are 'consistent' in our 'anti-unionist bias', and supports approvingly another academic's claim that we are 'neo-nationalists of the SDLP variety'.<sup>2</sup> Apart from being generally biased, we are charged with four particular thought-crimes. By labelling the Northern Ireland conflict 'colonial' in nature, we imply, according to him, that the solution to the conflict is 'withdrawal by the imperial power - perhaps with its "colons".... It is alleged that we write only about anti-Catholic discrimination, and refuse to take on the 'taboo' question of whether Catholics also discriminated. We are said to justify tacitly the SDLP's unwillingness to compromise by emphasizing the competitive pressures it faces within the nationalist bloc, whilst downplaying similar pressures on the DUP from within the unionist bloc. Lastly, one of us is accused of being a partisan of the Labour party, following its line on Northern Ireland in his and our writings. We will deal with these points in turn before raising some questions about Dixon's own objectivity.

<sup>1</sup> When we quote from Dixon's review in our paper, we are referring to the draft we received from *Irish Political Studies*.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to Terry Eagleton's review of *Explaining Northern Ireland* in the *New Left Review* (Eagleton, 1995). This review, written from a sophisticated position that is normatively sympathetic to republicanism, is selectively quoted by Dixon. He cites Eagleton's criticism that our prescriptions are 'excessively modest', but omits his praise: *Explaining Northern Ireland* is described as an 'eminently judicious, splendidly level-headed study... [and the authors'] lucidity, thoroughness and formidable powers of analysis have put every student of the topic in their debt'.

The premise which has informed our joint publications is that the conflict in Northern Ireland is ethnonational in nature and that, if it is to be resolved, there will have to be a settlement which respects the rights of both national communities. It is difficult to see how this position is anti-unionist any more than it is anti-nationalist. What Dixon seems to mean is that we are anti-unionist because we oppose the current constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland which cater to the national identity of only one of the two national groups, i.e., unionists. We plead guilty to this criticism.

Nationalists 'of the SDLP variety' aspire to a united Ireland and seek to create political arrangements which will bring that about. We do not aspire to creating a united Ireland, or to maintaining the United Kingdom. We wish to see the construction of political institutions which both national communities can accept now, and later. For the foreseeable future, this means structures which involve both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This is why we have supported power-sharing, combined with cross-border co-operation and the Irish dimension embedded in the Anglo-Irish Agreement (McGarry and O'Leary, 1990, 294 ff.) That is why we have also proposed shared sovereignty, not as a transitional arrangement to a united Ireland but as a durable settlement which could be changed only by weighted majorities (O'Leary et al. 1993; O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, Chap. 8). In addition, we have put forward the concept of a 'swing constitution' which would offer substantial national rights to the current Irish nationalist minority in the United Kingdom and the same rights to a unionist minority in a future hypothetical united Ireland (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, Chap. 9). As these sentences, suggest, we are proud of, not embarrassed by, the flexibility we have demonstrated in thinking through, and evaluating the institutional arrangements that might best protect and express both national communities.

In *The Politics of Antagonism*, our historical chapter is entitled 'The Colonial Roots of Antagonism' (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993/96, Chap. 2). We stand by its arguments, and note that Dixon does not mount a challenge to the evidence presented in it. Classifying the present conflict as settler-native in its origins has considerable explanatory value; which is why it is employed by several social scientists from outside the region with no partisan axe to grind (e.g., Lustick, 1985, 1993; Weitzer, 1990). The conflict emerged in settler-native competition. The nature of the initial contact between the two communities helps to explain the current antagonistic cultures, social distance between the communities (including low rates of intermarriage), and socio-economic inequalities. The fact that Northern Ireland's conflict is historically rooted in settler-native competition helps to explain why its ethnic divisions are deeper than some other divided societies like Belgium or the Netherlands, neither of which are settler-native in origin. To label a conflict as 'settler-native' does not mean, as some republicans claim, that the offspring of 'natives' have greater legitimacy than the offspring of 'settlers', never mind that the offspring of settlers should be repatriated. There is a moral statute of limitations which applies to holding a group responsible for expropriations and wrongdoing by its distant ancestors. The Protestant community has been in what is now Northern Ireland for as long as whites have been in North America, and are clearly as 'indigenous' to its soil as Catholics. All of these arguments are sanely and reasonably presented in *Explaining Northern Ireland* (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, 42). Dixon

simply rejects them, without careful argument, because he draws the wrong prescriptive inference from them, an inference that we are careful to reject.

The claim that we are partisan because we allegedly do not report anti-unionist discrimination is a further illustration of Dixon's failure to read our work with care and attention. His apparent myopia, we assume, must be politically rather than physically induced. Dixon writes that we fail to take on the 'taboo' question of Catholic discrimination against Protestants and cites as evidence that this existed a sentence from Smith and Chambers' work: 'Some of the local authorities that practised discrimination were nationalist-controlled, but there were relatively few such authorities because of discriminatory electoral practices'. This evidence, unfortunately for him, is remarkably close to what we ourselves report: '*It should be emphasized*, as it was in the Cameron Report (1969), that some of the few Nationalist-controlled local councils practised a reciprocal discrimination in housing' (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993: 151, our italics). Like Smith and Chambers, we devote the lion's share of our analysis of discrimination to anti-nationalist discrimination. Why? Because this constituted the lion's share of the discrimination which took place.

Contrary to the claim that we stress competitive pressures on nationalist moderates while downplaying those on unionist moderates, we have stressed in every book we have co-written that moderates from *both* sides face outbidding pressures from more extreme elements (McGarry and O'Leary, 1990: 284-85; 1993: 37; 1995: 341-42; O'Leary and McGarry, 1993/96: 304). In fact, we even write about what Dixon cites as a 'little-noted incident - perhaps because it transgresses the stereotype of unionist [leaders'] intransigence'. He is referring to the incident in February 1986 when after appearing to compromise during a meeting with Thatcher, Molyneux and Paisley were forced by their rank and file to re-adopt a hardline position. In 1993 we actually wrote: 'In late February [1986], James Molyneux and Paisley, the *leaders* of the UUP and DUP, were quickly brought back into line by their followers when they returned to Belfast' (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993/96: 252).<sup>3</sup>

The last of the specific accusations of bias is focused on O'Leary's role as an advisor to Kevin McNamara and Dr. Marjorie Mowlam, a position he resigned from in December 1995.<sup>4</sup> Our reply focuses on three points. First, O'Leary did not act as an aide-de-camp for northern nationalists in his time as an advisor. During McNamara's time as Labour's frontbench spokesperson, O'Leary's role was often to defend the interests of unionists in discussions and policy papers. This is why, for example, the IPPR document on shared sovereignty argued for entrenchment in the interests of unionists, a view not shared by all of McNamara's advisors (O'Leary et al. 1993). By contrast, after Mowlam became Labour's Shadow spokesperson, O'Leary's role was often to defend the interests of northern nationalists in discussions, drafts of speeches, and policy papers. It was not Labour's visible tilt towards the unionists under Blair and Mowlam that provoked O'Leary's resignation in December 1995, but rather his knowledge of how Labour

would respond to the likely recommendations of the International Body. In his judgement, Labour's likely posture was going to damage the peace process. It gives him no pleasure that he was proved right.

Second, the consistency in O'Leary's position, throughout his time as an advisor, was straightforward. He advocated balanced constitutional settlements which would respect the rights, aspirations and interests of the two national communities and the two sovereign governments. There was no contradiction between his public academic position and the advice he rendered. And O'Leary regularly criticised the merits of economic explanations of the conflict advanced within the Labour party, and criticised naive economic prescriptions for its resolution, a position not regularly taken by advisors to social democratic parties.<sup>5</sup>

Third, it does not seem to occur to Dixon that there is a natural explanation for variations in McGarry and O'Leary's changes in emphasis on which strategy would be best for resolving Northern Ireland's conflict and changes in policy-emphasis from the Labour party. This is that academics, advisors, and politicians respond to events and changes, and adjust their conceptions of what is feasible and desirable in light of those responses. Pragmatism can take the form of pure opportunism, but it can also be practised within the constraints of normative principles. In the case of McGarry and O'Leary, the academics, the normative principles have been simple - that which best advances the prospects for a stable consociational settlement, at any particular time, is that which is best supported. We have operated with a rider to that principle. If and when we are doubtful that a consociational settlement is possible we have supported whatever makes a consociational settlement more likely in the longer term. In the case of O'Leary, the advisor, the same principles held sway, throughout the time he worked for McNamara and Mowlam.

### Is Dixon Objective?

In our joint work we have argued consistently for a settlement which respects both national groups' identity and interests. By contrast, it seems that Dixon prefers a settlement which favours unionism, and which takes place exclusively within the United Kingdom. Thus he supports the unionist position that 'it is Britain's ambiguity on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland which promotes insecurity among unionists' and claims that British policy 'towards Northern Ireland has given unionists "plenty of grounds for suspicion and "intransigence"'. In its harsher version, this argument is put forward by Paisleyites: the problem in Northern Ireland is Britain's unwillingness to back the Union. Show militant resolve, they argue, and Irish nationalism will melt away. A softer version has been put forward by Dixon's intellectual heroes, Bew and Paterson (1990) - though he plainly doesn't emulate their high scholarly standards. If Britain takes the constitutional question out of Northern Ireland politics, they claim, progressive class-based politics will flourish in place of the current 'sectarian' variety. Neither version of

<sup>3</sup> The relevant sentence reproduces one published in 1987 (O'Leary, 1987, p. 21). (Once again, Dixon has failed to read our work with normal scholarly care.

<sup>4</sup> Dixon is wrong to state that Kevin McNamara 'circulated' the text of 'Options for a Labour Government'. The document was confidential and sent to Charles Clarke and Neil Kinnock. It was approved by Kinnock but was later leaked, presumably from Kinnock's office.

<sup>5</sup> Dixon writes that Labour has been a prime exponent of what McGarry and O'Leary have criticised as liberal materialism yet *ENI* contains no criticism of this party. Yet our book refers explicitly to such thinking within the Labour party, and subjects this type of thinking to a twenty-four page critique (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, pp. 271-2, 282-306)!.

the unionist position, in our judgement, is compatible with granting genuine recognition to the national identity of the Irish minority, and, as we have written at length elsewhere, neither would bring peace and justice to Northern Ireland (See McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, 128-136, 152-161).

While we claim that both parties face pressures from more extreme elements, in Dixon's view, 'the SDLP leadership has had greater room for manoeuvre and compromise than the UUP if not also the DUP'. The evidence for Dixon's position<sup>6</sup>, the SDLP was not punished for its involvement in the power-sharing experiment 1973/74 (sic) at the polls whereas power-sharing unionists were decimated'. In addition, he points to a number of unionists who have compromised only to lose their positions of leadership, including O'Neill, Faulkner and Craig. The lesson, apparently, is that if any compromising is required, it should be done by nationalists.

Dixon's evidence, however, is rather weak: to put it mildly. The fact that the SDLP were able to maintain unity in 1973-74 after winning acceptance of a full-blooded power-sharing agreement *and* an Irish dimension (The Council of Ireland) after 51 years of unionist majority rule should not be surprising. It hardly proves that the SDLP could maintain unity now while agreeing to less than what they were given in 1974. There are grounds for believing that nationalist expectations are higher today, eleven years after the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and as their share of the population increases, than in 1973, a mere year or so after the fall of Stormont. In addition, the SDLP is now faced with something that didn't exist in 1973-74, i.e. Sinn Féin, a more radical nationalist party contesting elections. Just as the UUP faces outbidding from the DUP, the SDLP faces competition from Sinn Féin. Even before Sinn Féin began to contest elections in the early 1980s, those leaders of the SDLP, such as Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin, who tried to take a soft line on the national question found their positions in the party untenable. But let us suppose that Dixon is empirically correct and that the UUP is under more pressure from extremists within the unionist bloc than the SDLP is from republicans - we grant that Dixon may not be empirically wrong about everything.<sup>6</sup> This alleged fact would not, as he implies, justify a settlement favouring the unionists. Indeed that would be bizarre moral reasoning. It would suggest that a constitutional settlement in a divided society must always favour the most extreme and intransigent group. (We shall avoid the minor temptation to explore the extent to which Dixon's empirical claim is inconsistent with his thesis that unionists are more tractable, accommodating and reasonable than he believes we claim!)

#### INCONSISTENCIES

Dixon claims that our writing on the Northern Ireland conflict has been inconsistent. The two most serious points he raises are that: we adopt an inconsistent approach to materialist explanations of the conflict, and: we flip-flop in our prescriptions for the conflict, rejecting joint authority one moment, advocating it the next, and subsequently

<sup>6</sup> The sole error of fact that Dixon has found in our work is one we readily acknowledge. Through an error in note-taking we misattribute an anecdote Patrick Buckland told about the SDLP to the NILP. We stand corrected on this matter but on nothing else.

'very quickly retreating[] from it. The claim is also made that we demonstrate inconsistency by subscribing to the dominant internal-conflict interpretation of Northern Ireland politics while also describing the conflict as 'colonial' in nature, a label which, according to the reviewer, means the conflict is externally-generated.

#### Materialist matters

Dixon writes that when explaining the conflict in *Explaining Northern Ireland*, we are reluctant to 'place any weight on socio-economic variables', and that we play down the importance of countering discrimination as a means of promoting peace. In *The Politics of Antagonism*, however, we put forward an explanation for the development of the civil rights movement that places weight on material factors. Specifically, we write that a growing Catholic middle class, 'while not abandoning their nationalist sentiments, began to seek the reform of Northern Ireland as their first goal, and before long for many, it became the overriding goal' (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993/96, 160). Why, Dixon asks, could material factors reconcile Catholics to the Union in the 1960s, but not in the 1990s?

Our position on materialism in *Explaining Northern Ireland* is straightforward. We are not reluctant to place 'any weight' on material factors and we do not play down the importance of countering discrimination. We have claimed in a number of publications that the British government needs to take more effective action on discrimination than it has currently taken, e.g.: 'The promotion of equality and parity of esteem between the two groups will also require a strengthened commitment to fair employment. This will involve promoting affirmative action, restricted at the moment by the duty not to discriminate included in the Fair Employment Act of 1989. Small employers should no longer be exempted from the Act's provisions, monitoring of the workforce should be extended to include part-time work, and targets or timetables should be adopted for reducing the gap in unemployment rates between the communities' (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, 378). We also write, as Dixon himself acknowledges, that 'an end to discrimination is needed to reduce minority alienation and that British efforts in this regard have not been far-reaching enough' (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, 285).

Ending discrimination, however, will be unlikely to resolve the conflict by itself (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, 286-88). This is because Northern Irish Catholics are not, like U.S. Blacks, a group of individuals banking primarily after individual equality, but, like Palestinians, Chechens, or Sri Lankan Tamils, a national group seeking national rights as well as individual equality. Why do we believe this? Northern Irish Catholics elect nationalists to represent them, and not parties which call for Northern Ireland to be integrated within the United Kingdom on the basis of individual equality for everyone. Parties which espouse the latter goal, such as the Alliance Party or the Conservative party, receive only small-scale support from the minority. Non-party integrationist organizations are overwhelmingly Protestant in support.

Do we contradict ourselves by arguing that materialist explanations reconciled Catholics to the Union in the late 1960s but could not do so in the 1990s? No, for two reasons. First, it is not clear that materialism did reconcile many Catholics to the Union in the late 1960s. We say in the quotation from *The Politics of Antagonism* which Dixon

uses that the Catholic middle class 'while not abandoning their nationalist sentiments began to seek the reform of Northern Ireland as their first goal it is an interesting counterfactual question what would have happened if the unionist government had been more magnanimous in its response to integrate Catholics from the mid to late 1960s (or indeed if unionists had sought to integrate Catholics from the early 1920s). The answer can only be speculative. Our guess is, that given the long-established mobilization of the Catholic population along nationalist lines, it would have followed demands for individual equality rights with demands for collective national rights. This, after all, is what happened after the British government intervened to force reforms on the Stormont government in the 1969-72 period.

Second, and more importantly, whatever opportunity may have existed for the integration of Catholics into the United Kingdom in the late 1960s (or from the early 1920s) was squandered. In the interim the two national communities have been polarised by more than a quarter-century of low-intensity civil war. This period is conveniently wished out of existence by revisionist unionists like Dixon. Just as long campaigns of violence between national groups have ruled out the construction of a common nation, for the foreseeable future, in places like Bosnia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, and Russia/Chechnya, the same is true of Northern Ireland.

#### Changing the Prescription?

Dixon also argues that we have been inconsistent between 1989 and 1995 in our prescriptions. We have already presented a partial defence and explanation of changes in our position when we rebutted Dixon's accusations about O'Leary's role as an advisor to the Labour party. Here we wish to make three points.

First, in our joint work we have been, throughout, consistent in our general normative position: we have wanted if possible a consociational settlement, fair to both national traditions, and if and when we have had doubts about the immediate feasibility of such a settlement we have wanted whatever will promote its longer-run prospects.

Second, after 1989 we explored the idea of pooled sovereignty in greater intellectual, institutional and normative depth, and we became, and remain committed to the argument that shared sovereignty (preferably with a local consociational settlement) provides the most just resolution of competing sovereignty claims and competing national allegiances (O'Leary et al. 1993; O'Leary and McGarry, 1993/6, Chap. 8, Postscript). These changes in part reflected the influences of other academics, notably Anthony Kenny and Frank Wright, and our intellectual work in comparative politics. They also reflected our limited hope about the prospects for a voluntary negotiated all-party settlement. Our present prescriptive position, reflecting our times, is entirely consistent with this pattern. We would like to see a successful negotiated settlement along the lines of the 'Framework' documents of February 1995, not least because such a settlement would contain components of both consociational democracy and shared sovereignty. If that outcome does not materialise, we believe - though we have not always believed this - that the imposition of joint authority by the two governments over Northern Ireland, pending a local consociational settlement, offers a second-best strategy. The principal problems with this position are (i) unionist opposition, which we

acknowledge, and (ii) the lack of willing agents in the British and Irish states, which we also acknowledge (O'Leary and McGarry, 1996 Postscript). In short, our present second-preference, like our first, may not be immediately feasible. That does not make us despair. It is after all part of the task of policy analysts to make feasible in the mind what may later be feasible in institutional design and party politics.

One last point on consistency. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by philosophers, statesmen and divines'. We have never sought to be foolishly consistent, and when we have changed our minds, on small matters, we have reflected these changes in our writings. However, we see no foolish inconsistencies between *The Politics of Antagonism* and *Explaining Northern Ireland*, nor, we think, will any reasonable reader.

#### Are the causes internal or external or both?

Dixon, surprisingly, claims that we subscribe to the dominant internal-conflict interpretation of the conflict in Northern Ireland which sees the most important source of the problem as lying within Northern Ireland itself. At the same time, however, we are said to describe the conflict as 'colonial' in nature, a description which, in the reviewer's mind, implies that the 'biggest source of the problem is external rather than internal to Northern Ireland' (his italics).

Our position is that the conflict has important endogenous and exogenous causes. It is set out at length in the Introduction to *Explaining Northern Ireland*, and in chapter 8. Perhaps Dixon did not read the relevant passages. The crucial endogenous cause of conflict is not, as many commentators claim, economic inequalities, religious differences or cultural abnormalities, but the presence of two competitive ethno-national communities within the same territory. The crucial exogenous dimensions are not those stressed by Irish republicans (British imperialism) or by unionists (Irish irredentism and Britain's indifference), but the constitutional evolution and public policies of the British and Irish states. The Northern Ireland conflict, as one of us explained at length in 1990, is a by-product of British and Irish state- and nation-building failure (O'Leary and Arthur, 1990).

We claim that the Northern Ireland conflict has roots in settler colonialism. Dixon (along with republicans, ironically) glosses over important distinctions between imperial (or economic) colonialism and settler colonialism. In the former case, an imperial metropole extracts profit and controls resources in the 'colony' with a small number of metropolitan personnel aided by co-opted natives. Conflicts which emerge in this scenario are between nations of natives and foreign imperial powers, and the fundamental source of these conflicts may properly be seen as external. The most frequent institutional resolution of such conflicts is imperial withdrawal, as occurred through much of Asia and Africa after World War II. In the latter case, colonisation results in the introduction of significant numbers of settlers, who eventually acquire interests of their own and varying degrees of autonomy from the metropole that sent them. In some instances, as in Israel/Palestine, settlement may take place without metropolitan direction. In cases of conflict, historically occasioned by settler colonialism, such as Northern Ireland, South Africa and Palestine, what was a struggle

between settlers and natives, becomes, over time, a conflict between rival indigenous groups that requires for its democratic resolution political institutions which allow the rival groups to share the relevant zone in peace and justice. The array of feasible resolutions to such conflicts is considerable - partition, consociation and/or confederation are among the best known.

These points are clearly made in *Explaining Northern Ireland*. The book devotes significant space to criticism of the republican view that British imperialism is the key external cause of conflict. Interpreting Northern Ireland as an example of settler colonialism differs from the conventional republican and green Marxist story - in which British imperialism is the source of conflict (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995: 335). Yet Dixon here, as in several other places, misreads us. Whether this reflects malice or incompetence, we leave readers to decide.

#### Is Dixon consistent?

While some inconsistency over several books and articles might be excused, it is much more difficult to defend several inconsistencies in one short review. We have detected at least three in Dixon's piece: (i) He claims we 'avoid' the argument that Britain's unwillingness to embrace the union undermines unionist security, then shows that we do not avoid it; (ii) It is argued that we are reluctant to place 'any weight' on socio-economic variables but then conceded that we do attribute some importance to materialism; (iii) In one paragraph we are told that Arend Lijphart claims socio-economic equality among segments is 'necessary' for power-sharing, and later that he believed it would 'facilitate' power-sharing. (Actually, the latter is the correct interpretation).

#### INTERPRETATION

##### Clarifying Consociationalism

Dixon is not explicit about his own explanation of the Northern Ireland conflict or about his preferred prescription. However, he clearly has a problem with our consociational interpretation. Consociationalists are said to promote 'non-representative' democracy, show 'hostility' to 'increasing points of contact between ethnic groups', and 'prescribe the segregation of the population'. In one of the most absurd passages in his review, Dixon claims that, given the interspersed nature of the ethno national groups in Northern Ireland, segregation would require 'ethnic cleansing' which our 'segregationist perspective could be seen as condoning'.

Consociationalists do not promote non-representative democracy. In fact, the type of democracy most closely associated with consociationalism is the 'representative', as opposed to the delegate variety, and it is astonishing that Dixon does not understand this fact (see e.g. Lijphart, 1989) - he appears to have made the parochial assumption that Westminster democracy and representative democracy are homonyms. Consociationalism depends for its success on elites being representative of the segments which make up a divided society. Recognising which elites are representative is an easy task given free and open elections (as in Northern Ireland) - they are the people who get

elected. Liberal integrationists, eager to oppose group recognition and to construct a common society of unattached individuals, often seek to deny the authenticity of group leaders (and the groups they represent) by mobilizing 'civil society' against them. Such people may have good intentions, but there is little reason to expect 'civil society' in Northern Ireland, or anywhere else, to offer radically different political views from the people it votes into office. To the extent that the unelected advocates of the 'civil society' school do present alternative views to the political elites, it is they who are likely to be non-representative, not the politicians.

Consociationalism is compatible with support for voluntary integration, although consociationalists tend to believe there is less support for it in deeply divided societies than liberal integrationists (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995: 209-210). As we have written about Northern Ireland (and the same could be said for Bosnia, Israel, Sri Lanka): 'The alternative to regarding "mixing and fixing" as a panacea is to encourage it where it is feasible and wanted' (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995b: 856). For good measure we added that *Least we are misinterpreted*, perhaps we should spell out that we believe that sufficient provision must be made for all those who wish to be schooled, live or work with members of the other community' (ibid., 856, our italics).

The only form of social integration consociationalists are hostile to is the forced variety. Forced integration in seriously divided societies produces conflict, or at least a sense of injustice on the part of the coerced. In Northern Ireland, as most educational integrationists recognise, mandatory integrated education would be disastrous. Sizable groups in each community would see it as prejudicial to their culture and/or religion, and would resist it. It would, as Dixon quotes from us, 'provide additional interfaces for conflict to those which already exist'. In this thinking we follow leading commentators on Northern Irish politics, such as Richard Rose and Rosemary Harris (Rose, 1971: 337; Harris, 1972: 137). We are also sceptical of attempts to pressure parents to send their children to the integrated sector by funding it at the expense of the denominational systems. Significant sections from each community would resist such pressure and would be discriminated against by such funding arrangements.<sup>7</sup>

Consociationalists do not 'prescribe segregation' (never mind condone ethnic cleansing!). Consociationalism is not apartheid, although it is true that the South African government tried to legitimise apartheid by saying it was a form of consociationalism. Under apartheid, the South African government unilaterally foisted divisions on the non-white population, and enforced segregation by means of the Population Registration Act (1950) and the Group Areas Act (1950). The policy was designed to exclude the non-white population from any say in the governance of South Africa and from most of its wealth. The overwhelming majority of the non-white population rejected the government's ethnic and tribal classifications and campaigned for full citizenship rights in a common South Africa.

Consociationalism does not involve the unilateral invention of ethnic groups, but rather the recognition of those groups which assert their presence through popular

<sup>7</sup> The fairest way to deal with education in Northern Ireland is to support all three sectors (the integrated and the two denominational) equally while requiring them to preserve a common educational curriculum (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, p. 210).

protest, insurrection, or democratic politics. Consecutionalism, properly understood, is not designed to allow one group to oppress others, as in the old South Africa, but to achieve equality and proportionality between divided communities, i.e., to erode discrimination and untrammelled majority control, and to permit cultural autonomy. These principles are not meant to institutionalize hatred for other communities, but to allow them to live together in peace. They are intended to foster tolerance, mutual recognition, and respect for differences. Moreover, the institutionalization of power-sharing is a route through which communal identifications can (eventually) be eroded peacefully, as has arguably occurred in the Netherlands.

In a scholarly review of political scientists' work one might expect some general appreciation of our wider disciplinary concerns and contributions. We find it frankly bizarre, and not merely offensive, that Dixon can write what he does about consecution, integration and ethnic cleansing without having read our introduction to *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation* (McGarry and O'Leary, 1993). Had he done so he would have avoided some basic howlers, and false insults. We also find it odd that a political scientist can write in such a crass manner about democratic theory without showing any serious appreciation of pluralist and neo-pluralist literature (see e.g. Dunleavy and O'Leary, 1987 (Chaps. 2 and 6)). Unfortunately, the only democratic theory that Dixon appears to know is the soft worded literature now fashionable with ex-Nationalists. Those who comment 'civil society' and 'bottom-up' approaches should not be too surprised if real societies prove less tractable to their soft words than they supposed, and if they end up on their bottoms.

### Lies, Damn Lies and Sincerity

More narrowly, the review questions some of our interpretation of poll-data on the Northern Ireland conflict. Specifically, he writes that we are wrong to claim that the most favoured option of the (Great) British for Northern Ireland is a united Ireland, and that we present misleading poll evidence to support our arguments for joint authority.

Dixon accuses us of being 'disingenuous' and 'misleading' in our reporting of poll-data. To be disingenuous according to the OJID is 'to have secret motives' or to be 'insincere'. The statement that Dixon believes to be incorrect happens to be true: the most favoured option of the (Great) British in opinion polls is most often an all-Ireland state.<sup>8</sup> The statement summed up the evidence of polls since 1971, some of which are presented in *Explaining Northern Ireland*. The charge of being disingenuous is palpably unfair.

Dixon's substantive point is that if you multiply options in a poll the preferences of the public change. This is, in general, fair comment, nor do we deny it. But it is Dixon, not us, who is misleading because he decontextualises our argument, and our use of poll evidence in the relevant section of *Explaining Northern Ireland*. The section in which we report poll data is primarily focused on how the 'Great' British regard Ulster unionists, and vice versa. The data we report show the extent to which the Great British do not regard Northern Ireland, including Ulster unionists, as part of their nation, so much so that straightforward unionist positions are held only by a minority of the British public. Even if the tables we display in *Explaining Northern Ireland* make the points which

Dixon thinks they make, which is contestable, they do not in any way rebut our central argument but confirm it, which is why they are there. The argument is that a majority of the Great British do not support the maintenance of the Union with Northern Ireland. Dixon presumably thinks the sentence which he decontextualises serves a hidden agenda, presumably a nationalist one, but in this respect, as in so many others, it is he who is misleading readers, not us.<sup>8</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Dixon attacks us in terms of our objectivity, consistency, and interpretation. We have attempted to show here that we are more objective and less inconsistent than he is, and that our consecutional interpretation of deeply divided societies like Northern Ireland is more appropriate than the 'civil society' (liberal integrationist) alternative. The tone of Dixon's review is also far more antagonistic than our several volumes; nowhere do we imply that our fellow academics, with whom we often strongly disagree, condone such despicable practices as ethnic cleansing.

The tone might have been excusable had Dixon made any effective arguments against our objectivity, integrity and competence. Sadly for Dixon, clinical reviewing is not a blood-sport; it requires logic, literacy and lucidity. Far from explaining McGarry and O'Leary, his review prompts the question, what explains the passions of Dr Dixon? Whatever the answer might be, we suspect it does not merit consideration in a political science journal.

<sup>8</sup> Dixon nowhere provides evidence to support his claim that O'Leary presented misleading poll-data to make a case for joint authority, though he makes the assertion twice, in a footnote in another article (Dixon, 1995, p. 503, n. 22), and again in the review above. He reports O'Leary accurately, as having said that in a Rowntree Poll, in Great Britain first-preference support for an independent Northern Ireland (20 per cent) comes just behind support for a united Ireland (21 per cent), suggesting widespread British enthusiasm to be rid of Northern Ireland, but indifference as to the means or consequences. He claims that this statement is misleading. Most reasonable readers will consider that 41% support for getting rid of Northern Ireland, suggests widespread enthusiasm to be rid of Northern Ireland amongst British people. Dixon claims that O'Leary's statement is misleading, because the "unionist" options have been segregated. A four point model of British opinion would seem to be more reasonable and revealing. This would have (1) those who favour no diminution of the union (sic) (integrationists, power-sharers and supporters of the status quo) adding up to 28%, (2) joint authority and repartition as a half-way house between separation and integration, accounting for 15%, (3) independence at 20% and (4) Irish unity at 21% (Dixon, 1995, p. 503, n. 22). We are entirely unclear what point Dixon thinks his 'four-point model' conveys. But he should reflect on the following. On his own broad definition of support for unionist positions (integrationists, power-sharers, and supporters of the status quo), the figure of 28% must be seen as significantly less than support for getting rid of Northern Ireland (41%) and much less than the figure for those who support any non-unionist option (72% including 'don't know' and 'won't say'). Perhaps, however, Dixon's real objection is to O'Leary's suggestion that amongst many British people there is indifference as to the means through which Great Britain should be rid of Northern Ireland. If so, his own arguments about polls and options undermines his case. As options are multiplied it is true that the British public expresses more choices, and less support for Irish unification, but what is interesting is the extent to which non-unionist options remain consistently favoured by majorities of the British public.

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## EXPLAINING ANTAGONISM: THE POLITICS OF MCGARRY AND O'LEARY

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Professors McGarry and O'Leary are to be commended for responding to my 'parochial', 'crass', 'prejudicial', 'imperfectly composed review' which lacks 'logic, literacy and lucidity' and contains 'absurd' and 'astounding' views. The abusive tone and the length of their response - longer than the original review article! - are, no doubt, indicative of their intent to discourage future critics. So, they warn (as members of journal committees and advisory boards) that Dixon's work 'does not merit consideration in a political science journal'. Would McGarry and O'Leary have descended into abuse if they believed a cool, generous and professorial, point by point rebuttal of my review was sufficient to refute it? I would like to deal with the substantive points they make and to underline the arguments in my review which they choose not to deal with.

**Red herrings** (there is not space to answer all of these) - I do not claim McGarry and O'Leary are anti-unionist because they do not support the constitutional status quo, nor because they want a settlement which respects the rights of both communities. I do not say that they condone ethnic cleansing.

**Aides-de-camp** - Brendan O'Leary's position on Northern Ireland has shifted in parallel with that of the British Labour Party, to which he has acted as an adviser. Although they are proud of the 'flexibility' of their prescriptions - which just happen to echo shifts in Labour Party policy - they do not accept my challenge to explain the alleged growth in support for the principle of consent since 1993 or present new evidence showing the lack of will in the British and Irish governments to impose changes in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Note, in justifying their 'flip-flops' they cannot cite anything in *ENI*.

**'Settler-native'** - McGarry and O'Leary retreat on this. In their reply they describe the conflict as 'settler-native in its origins' (my emphasis). What I questioned was the utility of this term for describing the conflict during the recent period of 'the troubles'. McGarry and O'Leary have declared 'a moral statute of limitations which applies to holding a group responsible for expropriations and wrongdoing by its distant ancestors.' However, there is evidence, in the revisionist-nationalist debate over Irish history, and the need amongst some unionists to believe they are the indigenous people of Ireland, which suggests that the question of who was here first, and who did what to whom is still important. The term 'settler-native' is misleading, no longer applicable and unhelpful.

McGarry and O'Leary choose not to tell us which of their two descriptions, 'ethnonational' or 'settler-native', is more appropriate for describing the Northern

Ireland conflict. Nor do they tell us why comparing Northern Ireland with 'settler-native' conflicts in South Africa and Palestine is more appropriate than comparing it with 'ethnonational' conflict in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union. The Netherlands neither qualifies as 'settler-native' nor 'ethnonational', yet this is McGarry and O'Leary's consociational model for resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Ironically, McGarry and O'Leary question my claim that they subscribe to the 'internal-conflict' interpretation. In attempting to carve out a distinctive approach for themselves they draw a false distinction between the 'internal conflict approach' and their own (or Lijphart's) 'linkage' approach. As John Whyte points out, the internal conflict approach sees *the most important source* of the problem as lying within Northern Ireland' (my emphasis). The external dimension is still seen as influential - as Guelke's position most starkly illustrates - but it is not seen as the most important. Ironically, McGarry and O'Leary appear to suggest now that the external dimension is *more* important than even Guelke argues.

**Unionist intransigence and nationalist competitive pressures** - In *ENVI* McGarry and O'Leary suggest that the DUP have 'structured elite predominance'. In their reply they do not challenge my evidence which suggests that this is probably not so. I then argue a case, which McGarry and O'Leary challenge, that the SDLP may have greater ability to bring their supporters towards accommodation than the DUP or UIP. My main point here is that this is a debate worth having, like that over civil rights and countless other issues but which is absent from *ENI* and *PA*. As for the SDLP, well are nationalist expectations higher today than in 1974? Then the PIRA believed it was on the verge of a victory and there were those in the SDLP who believed that in Sunningdale they had a settlement which would 'rundle Unionists into a united Ireland'. The Irish Government, meanwhile, was very concerned that the British were about to pull out. McGarry and O'Leary contend that the SDLP 'couldn't maintain its unity if it settled for less than what they were given in 1974' and point to the problems of Sinn Féin competition. First, it is not clear that the SDLP would settle for as 'little' as offered in 1974, even though that settlement appeared to push unionists 'too far' and brought power-sharing down. Second, the party competition between SF and the SDLP has been nothing like as intense as that between the UIP and DUP, which is indicated by the inroads these parties have made into each other's support. Thirdly, although Devlin and Fitt were squeezed out of the SDLP this does not necessarily reflect a shift in the position of SDLP voters.

**Discrimination** - Some argue that addressing issues of discrimination can play a part in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict. McGarry and O'Leary (in *ENVI*) argue that discrimination should be addressed, but that it does not have a part to play in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The redress of discrimination, the eradication of unemployment or deprivation may not *on their own* resolve the Northern Ireland conflict. Yet because *on its own* an end to discrimination is unlikely to resolve the conflict they, at times, suggest that tackling discrimination is not *part* of the solution. McGarry and O'Leary play down materialism

in order to emphasise the importance of their consociational alternatives. The various quotes which were cited show their inconsistency on materialism - sometimes they appear to see dealing with discrimination as important and at other times not. This inconsistency in their analysis is illustrated on civil rights.

**Civil rights** - my original paragraph shows that McGarry and O'Leary do imply that material interests can affect Catholic allegiances - a position inconsistent with their anti-materialist position in *ENVI*.

**Consociationalism** - Firstly, they do not challenge my claim that 'consociationalists prescribe the segregation of the population'. Secondly, McGarry and O'Leary assert: 'Consociationalism depends for its success on elites being representative of the segments which make up a divided society'. This is misleading. Consociationalism requires that elites can bring their followers towards compromise *in spite of* the 'extreme' views of their supporters - not that they 'truly' represent the views of their supporters. Consociationalism is the politics of smoke-filled rooms rather than that of openness, democracy and accountability (van Schendelen, 1984 p. 32). Writing on coercive consociationalism O'Leary argued 'The key political leaders of Northern Ireland do not enjoy... the ability to lead followers in directions which they initially would oppose' (O'Leary, 1989, p. 577).

The intellectual fashion has changed dramatically. The power of ethnicity had been ignored, now it is seen everywhere, and more importantly, often accepted as a given 'fact' of life. Consociationalism gives credence to ideas of the need for the separation of the 'races', 'nations' or 'ethnic groups'. Those who draw inspiration from consociationalism should be careful either to explicitly reject its segregationist assumptions or be prepared to defend themselves from 'multicultural' critics.

**Polls** - McGarry and O'Leary claim their point is 'that a majority of the Great British do not support the maintenance of the Union with Northern Ireland'. Fine, but why do they feel the need to make the misleading statement that: 'For the future of Northern Ireland the most favoured option of the (Great) British in opinion polls is most often an all-Ireland state?' (*ENVI*, p. 114) Perhaps because this allows advocates of joint authority to suggest there is support amongst British public opinion for steps towards Irish unity? O'Leary's presentation of the Rowntree data allows him to understate what, albeit, limited support there is amongst British public opinion for the union by disaggregating unionist options (Dixon, 1995, p. 503, n.22). My suggested four point model is intended to present a clearer understanding of the spread of British public opinion than the picture painted by McGarry and O'Leary.

**'Bias'** - McGarry and O'Leary can only point to one line in *P/4* which deals with anti-Protestant discrimination. The lion's share of the discrimination did take place against Catholics, but they can cite no instance in *ENVI* of anti-Protestant discrimination - surely a sufficiently important consideration in understanding unionism?

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## THE DOG THAT DIDN'T BARK

In spite of the length of McGarry and O'Leary's reply, the following points were among those not challenged.

- \* Joint authority - the paltry support for and the imbalance of such a 'solution'
- \* Constitutional insecurity and political violence - that an appreciation of unionist insecurity over their constitutional position and international isolation might have allowed a more empathetic understanding of unionism than the stereotype of 'intransigence' presented.
- \* The distortion of the N.I.P.'s 'impressive record on civil rights'
- \* Elites and ethnonationalism - Most damagingly, they do not challenge the problem of Northern Ireland's constrained elites. If there is little elites can do in Northern Ireland because they are constrained to follow their voters why direct your prescriptions at those elites?

## CONCLUSION

The abusive response of McGarry and O'Leary to my review article is designed to divert attention away from an informed debate of their work. They start from the assumption that I am some kind of stereotype of unionism and engage with that stereotype rather than with the points made in the review. The polemical, anti-unionist tone of what are designed to be college texts is unfortunate. O'Leary has acted as an aide-de-camp to one of the national causes, the changes of his position do parallel those of the British Labour Party, and he is unable to provide a convincing explanation for his 'flip-flops'. Their analysis is heavily dependent on 'early' Lijphart (1975) and consociationalism's dismissal of materialism and lack of sympathy for 'integration'. In their analysis they echo consociationalism and take no steps to distance themselves from some of its more disturbing normative implications. Furthermore, the elite focus of their analysis seems inappropriate when dealing with the mass phenomenon of ethnonationalism. On top of all this, to berate and insult others for bias, errors of interpretation and fact, and being aides-de-camp snacks of hypocrisy.

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