

Shared authority	The sharing of constitutional and governmental authority by peoples and states – as opposed to joint authority (q.v.) in which authority is solely possessed by states. It is compatible with consociation (q.v.).
STV	Single Transferable Vote.
TD	Teachta Dála, deputy elected to Dáil Éireann.
Republic of Ireland	The formal political unit established in 1949 as the successor state to the Irish Free State
UDA	Ulster Defence Association, illegal loyalist paramilitary organization.
UDP	Ulster Democratic Party, loyalist political party close to the UDA (q.v.).
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment, former regiment of the British Army recruited in Northern Ireland, with an almost exclusively Protestant composition.
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters, illegal loyalist paramilitary organization, believed to be component of the UDA.
Ulster	Properly speaking 'historic Ulster' is the province which encompassed nine counties of pre-1920 Ireland; it is not a synonym for Northern Ireland except in the mouths of Ulster unionists.
Unionist	With a capital 'U' the term designates a member of one of the parties which bears this name, with a lower case 'u' it refers to anybody who believes in preserving the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party (also known as the Official Unionist Party (OUP)), governed Northern Ireland from 1920 until 1972, still the largest unionist party.
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force, illegal loyalist paramilitary organization which takes its name from the body recruited to oppose Irish Home Rule in the early twentieth century.
VUP	Vanguard Unionist Party, hard-line loyalist political party formed and led by William Craig in the 1970s.
WP	Workers' Party, Marxist-Leninist party formed from Sinn Féin the Workers' Party – previously OSF.

## Introduction: Reflections on a cold peace

Brendan O'Leary

### Abstract

The complete cessation of armed violence by the major paramilitary organizations in Northern Ireland provides an opportunity for academic reflection on the past twenty-five years of ethnic conflict. This article introduces a special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. It provides a brief account of how the shooting stopped, reflects on the quietist nature of much recent academic commentary on the region, explains the contents of the special issue, and considers three relatively benign prognoses about the future of ethnic conflict and cooperation in the region.

### Keywords

Northern Ireland; cease-fires; prospects for peace

'You may track Ireland through the statute-book of England, as a wounded man in a crowd is tracked by his blood.'

Thomas Moore, Irish poet (1824, p. 368)

At the stroke of midnight 31 August 1994 the Irish Republican Army [IRA] unilaterally announced a complete cessation of all its military operations. It did so because of the 'potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic peace process'. However, it noted that the Downing Street Declaration, made by the British and Irish governments on 15 December 1993, was not a solution.<sup>1</sup> Some six weeks later, on 13 October 1994, a reciprocal cessation of violence was announced by the Combined Loyalist Military Command acting on behalf of the Ulster Volunteer Force [UVF] and the Ulster Defence Association [UDA]. The loyalists' announcement of their cessation of violence made it plain that it was entirely dependent upon the continuation of the IRA's cessation of violence. Both announcements were fronted by the political parties of republicanism and loyalism, Sinn Féin on the one hand, and the much smaller Ulster Democratic and Progressive Unionist parties respectively.

In the interval between the two cessations of armed violence<sup>2</sup> the airwaves and newspapers in Britain, Ireland and North America

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focused on the absence of the word 'permanent' from the IRA's 'complete cessation' of military operations. Though the President of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, described the Irish prime minister's interpretation of the cease-fire as permanent as 'correct', most British politicians, taken by surprise, remained uncertain in their response, as did most unionist politicians. Indeed, the Reverend Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party [DUP] warned it was a ruse, a view shared by Ireland's best known intellectual, Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien. Small but significant transformations in the nature of the British military presence in Northern Ireland, and in the operations of the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary [RUC], were soon visible. A week after the IRA's announcement Adams of Sinn Féin and John Hume of the constitutionally nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party [SDLP] shook hands in public with the Irish prime minister in Dublin. On the same day the British prime minister, John Major, effectively ejected Paisley from 10 Downing Street after their minds failed to meet. The following day the American Vice President, Al Gore, indicated that Washington accepted that the IRA's cease-fire was permanent. Three weeks after the IRA's cessation of violence the British government lifted its broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin, promised the population of Northern Ireland a referendum on any widely agreed constitutional settlement, and announced the opening of multiple small roads across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which had been sealed for years by the military and the police. Meanwhile, the Irish justice minister announced that she was considering the early release of republican prisoners held in Irish jails. The Irish prime minister stated on 17 September that a united Ireland was at least twenty years away – just before Adams embarked upon a tour of the USA, during which he warned that a new generation of republicans could resume 'armed struggle' if the peace process faltered.

Because they had received public and private reassurances that neither the British nor Irish government had agreed a secret deal to terminate the Union, loyalist paramilitaries were persuaded to announce their own cease-fire. Just over a week after they had obliged, John Major went to Belfast to announce that the British government was making the 'working assumption' that the IRA's cease-fire was permanent, that exploratory talks between governmental officials and Sinn Féin would start before Christmas, that all cross-border roads would be re-opened and that the exclusion orders preventing Adams and McGuinness from travelling to Great Britain would be lifted. Thus far the peace process had developed remarkably smoothly, though tensions had arisen between the Irish government's desire to bring republicans quickly in from the cold and into normal constitutional

politics, and the British government's wish to reassure unionists that they were not being sold out to Dublin through secret deals.

Two serious hiccoughs threatened to derail developments. In November a postal worker was shot dead by IRA personnel during an armed robbery in Newry, prompting the Irish government to delay its planned release of prisoners until later in the year. The incident suggested dissident or undisciplined activity within the IRA but reassurances from republicans eventually satisfied both governments. Then a week later the Irish prime minister, Albert Reynolds, who had been in the driving seat of the peace process, was forced to resign for misleading the Irish national assembly in a complex affair involving his choice of candidate for Attorney General and the latter's role in an extradition case involving a paedophile Catholic priest. The coalition government in the Republic of Ireland between Fianna Fáil and Labour broke up in acrimony and a month of frenetic political activity in Dublin ensued before the formation of a new three-party coalition government composed of Fine Gael, Labour and Democratic Left. The governmental crisis endangered the peace process because the Fine Gael leader John Bruton had previously displayed little sympathy for republicans or northern nationalists, while both Sinn Féin [SF] and the SDLP had been very happy with the role played by Reynolds whom they could rely upon as a tough and skilled negotiator with the British government. Nevertheless, Bruton made plain his determination to continue the work of his predecessor, and spokespersons from Sinn Féin, after some initial wavering, indicated their willingness to work with whoever was in charge of the Dublin and London governments. The crisis had delayed the planned release of two framework documents, drawn up by the two governments, for discussion and negotiation by constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, but the British government's determination to sustain momentum became evident during the Irish governmental crisis. On 9 December a Sinn Féin delegation, led by Martin McGuinness, opened exploratory discussion with senior British civil servants, followed within a week by representatives from the UDP and the PUP. As the year ended Northern Ireland was experiencing its longest period of calm since the late 1960s. Though the exploratory talks with republicans and loyalists were just beginning – and looking as if they might stall over the decommissioning of weapons, demilitarization and the early release of prisoners – an eventual negotiated end to the conflict appeared feasible. As the new year began the publication of the framework document by the two governments was eagerly and fearfully anticipated. Its publication was promised for February 1995 as this issue was being finalized.

### How the shooting stopped

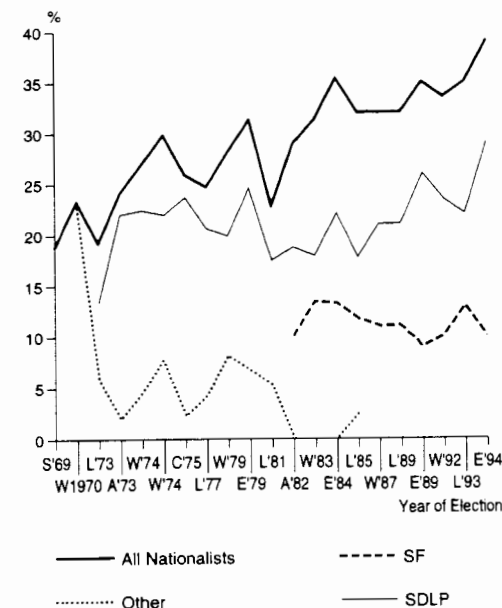
The roots of this unfinished drama lie in four immediate sources: political and military developments within both the republican and loyalist movements; the 'second track' diplomatic activities of the leader of the SDLP, John Hume, and numerous other third-parties, including an Irish-American peace delegation; clandestine discussions or negotiations, depending upon whom one chooses to believe, between the British government and the IRA; and the cooperative course followed by the British and Irish governments following the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, an agreement which gave the Irish government a right to be consulted on all aspects of public policy in Northern Ireland in a joint British and Irish Inter-Governmental Conference (O'Leary and McGarry 1993, chs 6-7).

After the Anglo-Irish Agreement the leadership of the militant republican movement took stock of its position. Its core objective, to establish a united Ireland by military and political means, had not been met. Its ambition to see Sinn Féin expand as an electoral force throughout Ireland had been defeated. The party's share of the vote was stagnant, and though the northern nationalist share of the vote in Northern Ireland was growing it was the SDLP rather than Sinn Féin which was the prime beneficiary of this long-term shift in electoral strength (see Figure 1).

Though not beaten, republicanism was not winning – militarily or politically. The population of the Republic was hostile to 'the long war' which the IRA had settled down to wage in the 1970s, and this hostility threatened a complete distancing between Irish co-nationals across the island. In short, the strategy of seeking power through the 'armalite and ballot box' was paying no obvious dividends, despite its initial successes in the early 1980s. Sinn Féin's active electoral participation had, however, obliged it to develop greater political sophistication. Republicans started to consider the place of unionists and Protestants in a new, and they hoped, united Ireland; and a more sensitive political language began to creep into their documents (Sinn Féin 1987; 1992). In 1988 the SDLP and Sinn Féin exchanged rival interpretations of the conflict, and though the talks broke up in acrimony they apparently shifted the thinking of key republicans.

British and Irish ministers and officials took notice and put out indirect feelers to republicans. In a November 1990 speech Peter Brooke, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, directly addressed republican explanations of the conflict in an overt attempt to portray the British identity of Ulster unionists, rather than the British state or British imperialism, as the major obstacle to a united Ireland. He declared that Britain had no selfish strategic or economic interest for being in Ireland. And, as we now know, a secret meeting

**Figure 1.** *The growing northern nationalist vote, 1969-94*

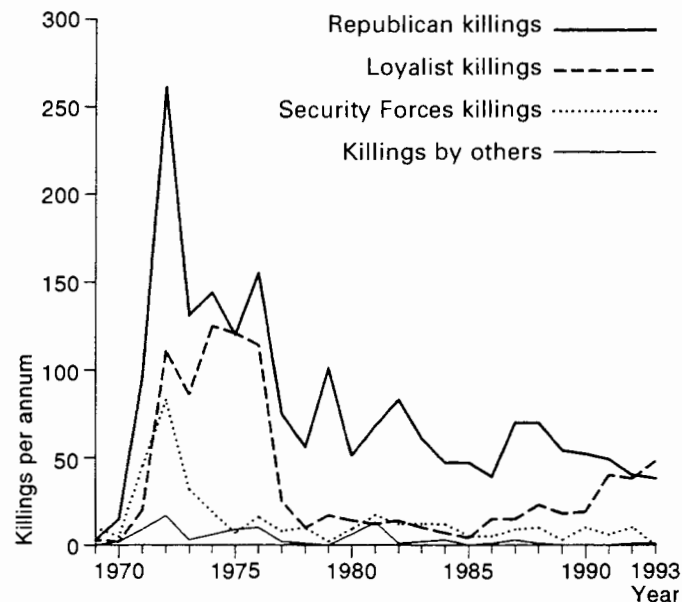


**Key:** Letters refer to the type of election (S = Stormont, W = Westminster, L = Local Government, A = Assembly, C = Constitutional Convention and E = European); numbers following the letters refer to the year of the elections (e.g. '69 = 1969).

**Source:** McGarry and O'Leary (1995; Figure 10.2)

took place between Martin McGuinness, a senior member of Sinn Féin, and a representative of the British government in October 1990. It was followed by an intermittent but continuous series of exchanges between the government and the IRA until the winter of 1993.

However, the thaw in the republican and British political positions was not very publicly visible. The early 1990s were marked by the revival of active killing by loyalist paramilitaries, prompted in part by the negative unionist reaction to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and by the clearing out of informers from their ranks. As Figure 2 demonstrates, loyalist killings actually exceeded those of republicans in the run-up to the cease-fire. These years also saw the apparent collapse of constitutional talks sponsored by the two governments in 1991-92, even though the two governments thought they had had 'a soft landing' (O'Leary and McGarry 1993, ch. 9). Northern Ireland appeared locked in stalemate. The IRA had renewed extensive urban bombing in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain, while loyalists had increased

**Figure 2.** Killings in Northern Ireland, 1969–93

Source of data: (Sutton 1994)

their attacks on real and alleged republicans. Having lost Adams' House of Commons seat in West Belfast in the 1992 British general election Sinn Féin's political morale was at a low ebb. The stalemate was hurting. Sinn Féin and the IRA considered a change in strategy. In April 1993 a journalist reported that Hume and Adams had resumed discussions. They subsequently issued a joint statement in which the concept of 'self-determination' was prominent, and in September 1993 announced they had reached an agreement which they refused to publish (it remains unpublished). Hume insisted that the agreement threatened 'no section of the people of Ireland' and that it held out the prospects of peace, but when he announced he was presenting the agreement to Dublin the Irish government at first reacted coldly, while the British prime minister, whose government was then engaged in secret dialogue with the IRA, declared in the House of Commons that talking to Adams would turn his stomach.

In October 1993 the IRA sent a team to kill the leadership of loyalist paramilitaries who were known to meet in the Shankill Road. Ten Protestant civilians but no loyalist paramilitaries died in the carnage. Loyalists responded by killing thirteen Catholics within a short period – machine-gunning six to death in a bar in Greysteel in the 'trick or treat' massacre. Most thought that Hume, ill and isolated, was politically finished. However, nationalist public opinion, north and south,

obliged the Irish government to take the Hume-Adams' initiative seriously, and Albert Reynolds dedicated himself to the task, slowly winning the agreement of John Major that a statement incorporating a commitment to Irish national self-determination and the recognition that Sinn Féin's electoral mandate entitled them to a place at the negotiating table could produce a republican termination of violence. The result was the Joint Declaration for Peace, also known as the Downing Street Declaration, of 15 December 1993.

The Declaration reiterated sections of Brooke's 1990 speech, acknowledged the right of the Irish people to self-determination, but specified that if exercised to achieve Irish unification it required the consent of majorities in the two political units in Ireland. Republicans did not reject the Declaration outright, but called for its 'clarification'. The Irish government obliged, the British government refused. The Irish government also lifted its broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin. The latter initiated a series of 'peace commissions' at the end of January 1994. The American administration, lobbied by influential Irish-Americans, and with the goodwill of the Irish government, granted Adams a visa to go to New York to address a peace conference.<sup>3</sup> Further steps towards a cessation of violence were slow in coming – indeed, the IRA mortar-bombed Heathrow airport on 9 March and in the summer killed a leading figure in the UDP. However, on 12 April the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, said that a republican termination of violence would not be judged a surrender, and in the following month the British government clarified the Declaration in a response to questions sent by Sinn Féin. In June the Irish prime minister reciprocated by clarifying the Joint Declaration for Peace for the UDP, but in July when Sinn Féin definitely rejected the Declaration at a special conference in Letterkenny renewed gloom was widespread. However, at the end of August, after another visit from the Irish-American peace delegation, and another meeting between Hume and Adams, the IRA made its announcement, opening an historic opportunity for peace.

#### Quietism and the (mis)interpretation of Northern Ireland

Intellectual quietism was a terrible failing of much, but not all, social scientific research on Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1994. Instead of speaking truth or vision to power many social scientists in Ireland and Britain allowed their minds to be imprisoned by the conflict, while others acted as *aides-de-camp* to the respective national causes. It became a commonplace to insist that the conflict was insoluble, incapable of constructive resolution through negotiation, dialogue and constitutional innovation; alternatively it was insisted that the conflict was zero-sum. This bleak reasoning sometimes recognized the ethno-

national traits of the antagonism – unlike the many liberals and Marxists who interpreted them as epiphenomena (of a transient kind), or those sociologists of religion who portrayed them as twentieth-century replays of the theological warfare of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. A more vulgar failing, also commonplace, was to insist that the conflict was not political or ethno-national, but rooted in criminal terrorism, which meant that vigorous repression of paramilitaries was the appropriate public policy response. This passivity, quietism and occasional outright cynicism within sections of the social scientific world abetted the long-term maintenance of a policy framework in which politicians refused to think the unthinkable.

The mainstream consensus was that it was unthinkable for governments to talk with ethno-national paramilitaries, let alone negotiate with them. The task of government was to build the moderate centre rather than to address the concerns of the respective extremists. In the language of political science, voluntary 'consociation' amongst moderates was the ambition of the successive British governments which took direct responsibility for governing Northern Ireland after 1972 (Lijphart 1975; 1977; 1982; O'Leary 1989; McGarry 1990). They generally considered it unrealistic to consider all-inclusive dialogues, and irrelevant or destabilizing to suggest major constitutional changes in British public law and in the Irish Constitution, i.e. significant modifications of the structures of the two patron states, as ways of resolving the conflict. Northern Ireland had to be either British or Irish; the choice was dichotomous. One majority had to prevail, that was democracy. Policy analysts who suggested otherwise were considered idealistic fools or fellow-travellers of the paramilitaries. Thankfully this consensus, to which the contributors to this special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* did not subscribe, has passed away.

### **Contributions to a cold peace**

Our contributors address explanations of the conflict and prescriptions for conflict-resolution after a twenty-five-year war which made Northern Ireland the most politically violent region (per capita) of any liberal democracy in the world (O'Leary and McGarry 1993, ch. 1). Political philosopher Jennifer Todd's essay demonstrates that rethinking the normative and institutional means through which ethno-national communities can live together without threatening one another's security, or denying one another mutual and equal recognition, is the key task of political architecture in the years ahead. Her article confirms that the critical examination of concepts such as sovereignty, pluralism and equality are not merely the playthings of political theorists but have decisive consequences for the prospects of managing ethno-national conflicts.

Those who desire to make peace must first understand the causes of war (Nicolson 1944, p. vii). With this in mind four of the essays below address the causation of conflict in and over Northern Ireland. Michael Gallagher asks 'How many nations exist in Ireland?' His answer is complicated, and cannot be stereotyped as either a nationalist (there is only one), or a unionist (there are two) response. Readers will understand that national conflict has motored antagonism in Northern Ireland but Gallagher demonstrates that diagnoses of the lines of national identity are not easy, and are often misleading.

The same goes for readings of the warfare of the last twenty-five years.<sup>4</sup> Brendan O'Duffy analyses, in depth, the agents responsible for killings in the region since 1969, and who their victims have been. His central purpose is to interrogate and refute the facile labelling of the political violence as 'sectarian'. He shows the merits of an alternative thesis, that the violence has been politically, nationally and instrumentally motivated, a thesis which successive British and Irish governments publicly (if not privately) chose to avoid until the recent reciprocal cessations of violence.

Paul Mitchell, by contrast, examines the logic and instrumental rationality of party competition in an ethno-nationally divided region with formally liberal democratic institutions. The analysis of political parties and electoral systems, and their roles in promoting or ameliorating ethno-national antagonisms, must be the special focus of political scientists engaged in the analysis of ethnic and national conflicts in open regimes, and Mitchell explains how and why the logic of party competition has, so far, made conflict-management, let alone conflict-resolution, so difficult.

John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary seek to identify five fallacies which they believe have been widespread in the interpretation and explanation of Northern Ireland. Their purpose is to name the flaws in liberal thinking which social scientific approaches to ethnic and national conflicts often display, and which are obstacles to successful policy analysis and prescription.

Northern Ireland has a special poignancy for liberal democratic regimes. Protracted ethno-national antagonism, leading to war waged between rival ethnic communities and their political organizations, as well as their respective paramilitaries, is demonstrably possible in conditions of modernization. It is our collective contention that conflict has been occasioned and exacerbated by British and Irish political institutions, both past and present. The respective states, especially the UK state, remain majoritarian, and bear the hallmarks and crudities of their respective democratic formations, and of their past attempts to construct nationally homogeneous political cultures. The consequences of the national sovereignty trap and the logic of nation-state building which oblige people to believe that their states must have

exclusive sovereignty over their national territories, and that nation-states must be nationally homogeneous, are seen with stark clarity in Northern Ireland. It does not follow, of course, as the *bienpensants* frequently imagine, that the resolution of conflict must be found through a European federalism which has allegedly transcended the national sovereignty trap and the political logic of the nation-state. However, many have promoted Euro-federalism as a panacea for all ethno-national conflicts in contemporary Europe, not just in Northern Ireland. Etain Tannam's careful article indicates the constructive but limited consequences which Europeanization has had on political parties and their attitudes to resolving ethno-national antagonism in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the most constructive role of European integration has been to encourage greater cooperation between the British and Irish states – which in turn has gradually eased the dilution of their respective national sovereignty preoccupations with Northern Ireland and aided their path to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and the jointly managed peace process of 1993–95.

What is explicit in some but implicit in all of our contributions is that the conflict has been underpinned by both external and internal dynamics. It follows that a purely internal constitutional settlement, confined to the UK's jurisdiction, cannot work. Equally, no one in this collection maintains that obliging unionists to accept a united Ireland without the consent of at least a majority in Northern Ireland can work any better. Moreover, no one suggests that external interventions can supersede the need for any internal reconstructions of Northern Ireland's political institutions. But what our contributors share is the bias of their professional discipline, political science, the bias which suggests that political institutions matter and have an autonomous significance in explaining and managing ethno-national conflict.

The centrality of the national question, the linkages of northern nationalists to the Irish state, and of Ulster unionists to the UK state, cannot be bypassed by institutional designers. The national conflict has motivated republican and loyalist paramilitaries. It accounts for the major cleavage between the political parties. The secondary cleavage in the party system is also ethno-national in character – between the moderates [SDLP and UUP] and the ultras [SF and DUP] in the respective national traditions – and support for the minor political parties which attract significant numbers of both cultural Catholics and cultural Protestants has fallen since the late 1960s. If renewed conflict is to be avoided then, as Todd suggests, each national community must identify with whatever new political institutions are devised.

In these institutions each community must have:

- *security*, that is constitutional security, legal security and policing security;

- *recognition*, that is respect for its national identity, culture, allegiances and insignia;
- *autonomy*, that is communal self-government in education, religion, civil association and in the use of their chosen languages; and finally
- *equality*, equal civil individual, and collective rights, secured from interference by potentially tyrannous majorities.

### Three relatively benign futures

There are multiple ways in which these goals can be met – and unique arrangements may eventually flow from negotiations between all the parties in Northern Ireland and the two governments. Two broad models arguably best meet the task-requirements of conflict-management in Northern Ireland: on the one hand a formal system of shared sovereignty (O'Leary *et al.* 1993), and on the other a set of constitutional 'double protection' mechanisms which are probably more feasible (McGarry and O'Leary 1995). Negotiations must move in the direction of one of these models if the renewal of any armed conflict is to be avoided. However, a third less democratic future is also possible, namely direct rule with 'green guidance'.

Before sketching these futures it must be emphasized that 're-inventing Northern Ireland' is not going to be easy. A return to the status quo ante, paramilitary combat and political stalemate is possible. The respective paramilitaries have the capacity to resume the long war. Alternatively, it is possible that negotiations may get nowhere, but that there will be no immediate resumption of active armed combat. Instead, Northern Ireland may persist in its present condition – a state of armed truce between the two antagonistic peoples, a state of tranquillity rather than peace, a condition in which a return to conflict is always immanent (Wright 1987). These vistas should be kept in mind as long negotiations begin to replace the long war. There are numerous dangers and difficulties ahead, and there are those so fearful that they have lost that small sparks might send them back to war. There are traditions of political violence in Ireland, which is not to be confused with the cultural argument that the Irish are politically violent, and there is a tradition of 'outflanking' in both the nationalist and unionist communities, in which those who make compromises are condemned by rivals in the leadership stakes. Therefore no one can sensibly be starry-eyed about the peace process. In the next two years expect a world of negotiating musical chairs, in which some parties walk in and out of conference chambers, threatening either never to come, or never to return; expect attempts by disgruntled republicans and loyalists to disrupt the peace process; and anticipate attempts to disrupt progress by those in the security sector who must expect to lose their jobs if there is sustained peace. Moreover, mismanagement by either the Brit-

ish or Irish government (especially British dilatoriness or Irish overkill), or intransigence amongst unionist or nationalist parties, may mean that the best that occurs is drift, tranquillity without peace, order without legitimacy, an unresolved stalemate without war.

However, relatively benign futures *are* possible. Besides the vital, thorny, but relatively mundane questions of the long-term decommissioning and safe disposal of the arms of paramilitary organizations, the return of British troops to barracks, the early release (if not general amnesty) of those convicted of paramilitary offences, the termination of emergency legislation and the establishment of normal and reformed unarmed civilian policing, successful negotiations must culminate in agreed institution-building. What possibilities exist?

### 1. A double protection model: what the Framework Documents will propose

The two governments are scheduled to propose a joint framework document addressing relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic and between the Republic and the UK, while the British government is scheduled to propose a negotiating text addressing internal relationships within Northern Ireland. These texts will propose a double protection model, that is, protections for both ethno-national communities that will apply whatever state they happen to be in.

They will contain five core ideas:

1. An agreement to establish *consent on sovereignty* and how sovereignty over Northern Ireland might change, which will require amendments to the 1937 Irish Constitution and to the British Government of Ireland Act of 1920, amendments which will make it plain that Irish unification will occur only if there is majority consent for it in Northern Ireland;
2. An agreement to establish *proportional representation* arrangements for the internal government of Northern Ireland; based on a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers these arrangements will have a consociational character, i.e. even though they will not require formal cross-ethnic coalition governments they will require weighted majorities for controversial legislation and will provide the present minority with effective powers of veto;
3. An agreement to establish full *parity of esteem* for both national communities, through a Bill of Rights which protects collective (religious, cultural and linguistic) rights, and through fair employment and a reconstructed Northern Ireland police service with which both communities will be able to identify;
4. An agreement to establish democratic and accountable *cross-border institutions* within Irish, British and European frameworks, insti-

tutions which can have consultative, harmonizing and executive functions; and which *may, but need not*, lead to deeper confederal or federal arrangements within an all-Ireland framework, or an all-British Isles framework or within the European Union, or within permutations of all these possibilities; and

5. An agreement to establish *double protection mechanisms* which will guarantee any grand constitutional settlement, by making the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference a site of political appeal, and providing effective protection of collective and individual rights for both unionists and nationalists whether Northern Ireland remains within the Union or in the longer term becomes part of the Republic. The idea here is that Ulster unionists should be guaranteed the same rights in a united Ireland which northern nationalists should have in a reconstructed Northern Ireland.

A settlement built around these five elements would mark an improvement upon the status quo for northern nationalists, and enable them to accept the legitimacy of a settlement which does not mean an immediate united Ireland. And it would reassure unionists that if they become a minority they would receive the same protections to which northern nationalists should now be entitled. The construction of a just and lasting peace will be possible in so far as these elements are present in the framework document to be published by the two governments early in 1995, and to the extent that they can command assent at the negotiating tables and subsequent referenda. The framework documents may not materialize in exactly this form, but expect variations on these five inter-related elements to be at the heart of their design and subsequent negotiations.

It is not difficult to imagine the stumbling blocks ahead of this model. Unionists may vehemently reject any double protection mechanism being built into a settlement, or the Inter-Governmental Conference acting as its ultimate guarantor. They may also refuse to be involved in the design of 'swing constitution'. If so, they will weaken their own long-term collective insurance at the price of not satisfying nationalists. It is likely that some unionists will reject any significant all-Ireland cross-border agencies, arguing that they are the Trojan Horse, a federal Ireland in embryo. But to the extent that they are successful in preventing their construction northern nationalists (and the Irish government) are less likely to consent to any re-invented Northern Ireland. It is possible that unionists will reject the radical public policy implications of 'parity of esteem' – so far the debate on reforming policing since the dual cease-fires has not been marked by a spirit of imaginative reconciliation. However, without the entrenchment of 'parity of esteem' the reignition of conflict becomes more likely. Northern Ireland cannot be democratically stable if it is purely British

or purely Irish, and its policing and legal institutions must be adapted to this dual reality. Some unionists may hold out against a collective Presidency which must act unanimously (or against any elements of government by consensus). Some unionists and some nationalists may reject any agreement based on majority consent within Northern Ireland for any change in sovereignty: loyalists may insist that Northern Ireland should never be allowed to become part of an Irish Republic, even with local majority consent; while some republicans may insist that majority consent within Northern Ireland is tantamount to granting unionists a veto, and a denial of the Irish people's right to self-determination. Provided such objections take the form of constitutional anti-constitutionalism there need not be disaster here. Pluralist democracies can and should flourish despite the presence of anti-system parties. What is wanted is a world in which republicans and loyalists work to change the constitution by constitutional means, i.e. through democratic dialogue and persuasion. Nevertheless, crunch issues lie buried here.

Lastly, any such outline settlement, modified by inter-party negotiations, must now pass the hurdle of two referenda, in the Republic and Northern Ireland. These hurdles are significant, and policy-makers need to beware the fallacy that electorates are necessarily more moderate than their leaders. A referendum in the Republic to amend the Irish Constitution will need the support of most northern nationalists and Fianna Fáil – no previous amendment has passed without the active support of the latter party. A referendum in Northern Ireland will have to pass by more than a mere majority; what is required is majority-consent in both the unionist and nationalist communities if the referendum is to legitimate an agreed settlement. This means that any settlement must be balanced, and have something in it for everybody, which in turn suggests that no referendum should be risked before a sufficient consensus exists, or before both governments have agreed a coordinated and sustained public relations campaign.

## **2. Shared sovereignty**

A second possible future, presently denied by the two governments, is that their cooperative relations may spill over into formal shared sovereignty arrangements. Indeed, the failure of the parties to agree on negotiating the contents of the framework documents may eventually drive the two governments down this road. In the period preceding the cessations of violence some of us recommended this policy option to break the stalemate (O'Leary *et al.* 1993).

Shared sovereignty arrangements would seek to divide and share governmental authority between two jointly sovereign states and the population of Northern Ireland. In one proposal they could contain a

separation of powers with internal arrangements of a consociational character (*ibid.*). Shared sovereignty arrangements would provide durable protections for both ethno-national communities. Indeed, their durability would have to be the secret of their success. To be justified if introduced now, or soon, when unionists are a majority, they would also have to stay in place if unionists became a minority in Northern Ireland. Otherwise shared sovereignty would be seen by unionists as a simple stepping-stone to a united Ireland and produce a correspondingly vehement response. However, since unionists are likely to see the proposals in the framework documents as tantamount to shared sovereignty we can safely assume that the two governments will be loath to move precipitously towards formal shared sovereignty – though this possibility will remain a latent threat which may encourage unionists to negotiate a better deal while they can.

## **3. British direct rule with green guidance**

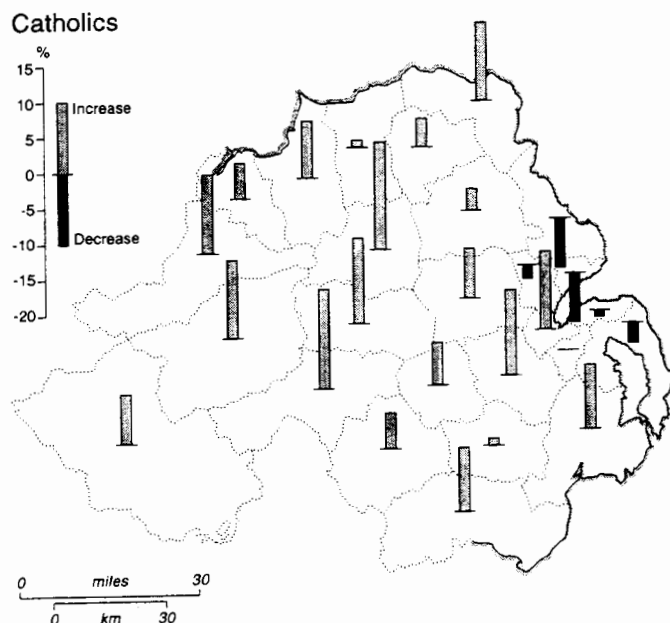
This leaves open a more likely scenario. Imagine a failure to arrive at a constitutional settlement, despite years of protracted negotiations. Imagine also no sustained return of paramilitary violence. In these circumstances, to avoid a simple return to the status quo, the British government is likely to reshape its public policy orientation towards what I shall call 'direct rule with green guidance'. In this future the British government will renew its commitment to impartial administration and fully implement the policy-implications of 'parity of esteem' – in fair employment and acceptable policing. It will also, not least because of its commitments in the Joint Declaration of Peace, be obliged to develop cross-border institutions even if there is no widespread unionist consent for such arrangements. Providing it sustains a constitutional path Sinn Féin as well as the SDLP will have access to the ear of the Irish government which will vigorously represent northern nationalist interests in the Inter-Governmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In short, the influence of northern nationalists over the nature of British rule will become increasingly apparent. The reform of Northern Ireland in non-violent conditions will not only be feasible but will also make sense to a British state keen to avoid the re-eruption of a costly conflict. Yet the very plausibility of this scenario must surely give unionists strategic reasons for negotiating something better within the logic established by the forthcoming framework documents.

## **Final forecasts**

Let me conclude with three long-term forecasts related to the prospects of a successful constitutional settlement.



**Figure 3.** *The expanding size of the Catholic population in most regions of Northern Ireland, 1971–91*



First, expect a continuing growth in the cultural Catholic population – palpably evident in the inter-censal shift between 1971 and 1991 (see Figure 3).

There remains some controversy as to the present size of the cultural Catholic population. The minimum size is 38.4 per cent, the figure recorded for declared Catholics in the 1991 Census (see Table 1). The Catholic share of declared Christians, by contrast, is 43.5 per cent, but what is the size of the ‘cultural Catholic’ population? A persuasive answer requires us to allocate the categories ‘not stated’ and ‘none’ to the total numbers of declared Catholics and Protestants. The ‘not stated’ category is best distributed proportionately between Catholics and Protestants because there is no compelling reason to do otherwise. By contrast it is reasonable to assume that a higher absolute number and relative proportion of cultural Protestants are more likely to answer ‘none’ than cultural or ‘cradle’ Catholics. Throughout the world Protestants are less likely than Catholics to retain their childhood religious beliefs. For instance, North Down, which is highly Protestant, has over twice the proportion declaring ‘no religion’ as the proportion in the census as a whole. One should therefore distribute the ‘nones’ disproportionately to the cultural Protestant category. On these assumptions – and excluding the tiny non-Christian population – I

estimate the cultural Catholic population to comprise 42.9 per cent of the population and cultural Protestants to comprise 56.9 per cent.

**Table 1.** *Religious Denominations in the 1991 Northern Ireland Census of Population*

All denominations and none		All Christians	
Religion	Per Cent	Religion	Per Cent
Roman Catholics	38.4	Roman Catholics	43.55
All Protestants	50.2	Protestants	56.65
Non-Christians	.2		
Not stated	7.3		
None	4.0		
Total	100.1	Total	100

**Source:** Re-worked from Table 8 of the Northern Ireland Census of Population.

The growth of the Catholic population has geographic and political implications: western, southern and rural Northern Ireland will increasingly have Catholic demographic majorities, and Catholic electoral majorities. Belfast is likely to be a city with a cultural Catholic (and possibly a nationalist) majority in the first decade of the next millennium. This growth in the cultural Catholic population throughout most of Northern Ireland may be enhanced by protracted peace. Stability and possibilities of prosperity at home may stem the relative rate of Catholic out-migration, while fair employment, delivered by law and parity of esteem, will also provide Catholics with stronger incentives to stay. The full political implications of this growth in the cultural Catholic population are not straightforward, but on balance they might be beneficial. The growth of the cultural Catholic population may beckon a united (presumably confederal or federal) Ireland within three decades – which may generate unionist anxieties. However, that is neither demographically nor politically certain, and three decades is a long time. What is important in the medium term is that the demographic shift presages practical equality between the two communities, and therefore creates incentives for bargained cooperation. In moderately democratic conditions when two communities are relatively matched in size and political and economic resources one community cannot very easily politically dominate the other. Though it will be some time before reform feeds through to economic equality, political equality will follow from a weightier cultural Catholic population and provide a demographic impetus for power-sharing, proportionality and parity of esteem. This shift presages the completion of a century-long shift from ‘stratified’ to ‘segmentary’ relations (Esman 1994, p. 21) between cultural Protestants and cultural Catholics. Moreover, in a world in which northern nationalists could conceivably win majority

consent for Irish unification the case for armed violence by the IRA will be further eroded, even within its core constituency. Correspondingly, any return to the hegemonic control unionists exercised between 1920 and 1972 is increasingly less likely. The chances of the two major unionist parties winning over 50 per cent of the regional vote are progressively receding. The prospects of small inter-ethnic or non-ethnic parties holding the balance of power in a Northern Ireland Assembly must increase by the end of the century.

A second prediction, which relies on the first, is that the *northern nationalist vote will continue to grow*, at least for the time being. More precisely, the combined Sinn Féin and SDLP vote will continue to rise – though there will be variations depending on the nature of the election and the electoral formula. Such growth would be consistent with electoral trajectories since 1969 (see Figure 1). In the 1994 European parliamentary elections the combined SDLP and Sinn Féin vote was the highest nationalist share of the regional vote since the inception of Northern Ireland. This growth in the nationalist bloc will affect any future Assembly elections, where vote-transfers by nationalist voters under the single transferable vote [STV] system would consolidate a strong nationalist presence even without a formal coalition arrangement between Sinn Féin and the SDLP. Growth in the aggregate northern nationalist vote will occur if it rides the demographic Catholic tide, but it may also be boosted for political reasons. In conditions of peace, prosperous and ambitious Catholics may find it more comfortable to align fully with their own ethnic bloc, especially if the SDLP becomes a major arbiter of public policy. An expanding and confident nationalist electorate will see great merit in the ballot box rather than the armalite. Sinn Féin can also grow electorally provided a vote for the party is no longer a vote for war – and furnished with American money and greater democratic experience, it is capable of building beyond its present 10 per cent threshold in Northern Ireland.

A third forecast concerns the political destiny of the unionist bloc. For the time being *the unionist bloc will continue to shrink, albeit slowly, but, what is more important, it may fragment in peacetime conditions* – especially if the sense of being besieged is reduced by a constitutional settlement and the constitutional reconstruction of the Republic. The degree to which the unionist bloc fragments naturally will be dependent upon the degree of competition between the SDLP and Sinn Féin. The unionist bloc will not fragment because of electoral integration through the organization of British political parties in the region. The Conservative Party will remain organized in Northern Ireland, but is unlikely to prosper; while the British Labour Party is unlikely to organize in the region. The UUP will experience pressure from those who would like to modernize the party – for example, by breaking its links with the Orange Order – but it will survive, and for the time being

remain the largest party and the major player in unionist politics. Its leaders and members may become more accommodating to the degree that there is an agreed settlement and may find it more congenial to work with the Alliance Party and the SDLP in an Assembly rather than with the DUP.

The unionist party most threatened by long-term peace is therefore the DUP. Its electoral base, crudely speaking, consists of rural evangelical Protestants and urban secular working-class 'Protestants', while its leadership derives almost exclusively from evangelical Protestants who have thrived on a politics of fear. In conditions of peace, and in which proportional representation applies in all elections, there is no compelling reason why the DUP's electoral bloc should hold together.<sup>5</sup> It will require skilled party management by Dr Paisley and effective fear-mongering about the prospects of a nationalist victory at the ballot box and an imminent shift towards a united Ireland to hold the DUP's base together. There is electoral space for a populist secular unionist party which can articulate the interests of poor working-class cultural Protestants. The cadres of the demobilized loyalist paramilitaries, and their political representatives in the PUP and the UDP, may be capable of organizing such a movement, but here I enter the realm of speculation.

The speculation is, however, rooted in the comparative analysis of national and ethnic conflicts. To the degree that nationality or ethnicity are politicized the more they dominate other expressions of identity, be they rooted in class, religion, gender or ideological affiliation. Conversely, when ethno-national communities feel secure, the pressure to sustain solidarity is reduced and the greater the likelihood that a more pluralist politics can emerge within them. There is some prospect that this pattern can occur within Northern Ireland, within both communities, especially if it is accompanied by the constitutional reconstruction of both the UK and the Republic within a wider European confederation. However, one must not exaggerate these possibilities. Communal tensions, territorial segregation, and endogamous social and sexual relations will remain dominant features of social and political life in Northern Ireland, with or without a definitive constitutional settlement. Ethno-national cleavages and politics can be managed; and they can be managed equitably and democratically; but they cannot be wished away (McGarry and O'Leary 1993; Connor 1994). The Irish can be expected to make peace without having to make love.

#### Notes

1. The Downing Street Declaration is discussed by Jennifer Todd in her article below. The text, and an exegesis of its meaning, can also be found in McGarry and O'Leary (1995, Appendices A and B).

2. Routine paramilitary punishments of those accused of anti-social behaviour in both loyalist and republican districts continue, but without the use of guns and apparently at a lower rate (confidential sources).
3. A group of Irish-Americans, with the unofficial support of the American administration, known as the Morrison peace delegation, acted as third-parties during 1993-94. They also ensured that unionists were subsequently invited to make their case in America. They became, in effect, the peace envoy that President Clinton promised to send to Northern Ireland.
4. For a defence of the description of the conflict as a war see O'Leary and McGarry (1993, ch. 1).
5. Electoral deals between the UUP and the DUP might still apply in Westminster elections – as long as the system of plurality rule is preserved for UK elections.

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# How many nations are there in Ireland?

Michael Gallagher

## Abstract

In answer to the question 'How many nations are there in Ireland?', the Irish nationalist tradition has long argued for a 'one-nation' view, which has sometimes been challenged by a unionist 'two-nations' perspective. It is argued here that these views are flawed and, moreover, that the imprecision of existing terminology confuses the picture further. The 'two-nations' label is employed here to apply to the perspective according to which the island of Ireland contains both an Irish nation and an Ulster nation, while the view that sees it containing an Irish nation and part of the British nation is better summed up as a 'nation and a bit' theory. A 'no-nation' view, according to which no nations at all have yet come into existence in Ireland, is also identified. It is argued here that all these answers to the question are inadequate. One common shortcoming is that they ascribe to Ulster Protestants a uniformity that does not exist in reality and thus they fail to take adequate account of the depth of the intra-Protestant cleavage, which is more than merely a tactical disagreement about short-term political aims. A 'three-nations' (or 'two nations and part of another nation') perspective, identifying an Irish nation, an Ulster Protestant nation and a part of the British nation, is the most appropriate.

## Keywords

Nations; nationalism; Northern Ireland; Ulster nationalism; British identity; Protestants.

## Introduction

The question of how many nations are embraced by the island of Ireland has sometimes been a focal point for political controversy, with a nationalist 'one-nation' perspective challenged by a unionist 'two-nations' theory. In fact, quite a number of possible answers to the question are plausible, depending on exactly how a nation is defined and on how we choose to label particular senses of identity. In this article, I shall first discuss the idea of 'the nation', and then move on to consider six answers that have been given to the question of how many nations there are in Ireland.

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