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Northern Ireland:  
Understanding Conflict 2008  
Student Field Trip to Northern Ireland

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# **Introduction: Northern Ireland Report**

**I William Zartman**

Northern Ireland is a textbook example of conflict management instead of conflict resolution. In the first, the means of carrying out the conflict are demoted from violence to politics; in the second, the basic issues of the conflict are resolved. Violence is not the means of conflict in Northern Ireland (although it is not impossible that it reemerge should the area change sovereignty) but in culture, attitude, education, politics and religion the two populations are still sharply divided and show little signs of overcoming the division in the future.

Seventeen students and a faculty member from the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) took the third Conflict Management Field Trip to Belfast and Derry in search of answers to the basic question, "How to explain the endemic conflict in Northern Ireland?" During the week of 7-13 January 2008, we interviewed some 30 individuals ranging from the leaders of the five major political parties to a local grade-school superintendent and many others who graciously gave their time. These interviews provided a three-dimensional insight into the situation in North Ireland and are the basis of the following report; individual interviews are unattributed but the group owes a strong debt of gratitude to the people we met for their frankness and openness.<sup>1</sup> Each student was asked to address the basic question using a particular term of analysis; the following chapters are the result.

There is no convenient name for Northern Ireland or for its inhabitants. It is only two-thirds of Ulster and its people have no one-word designation. Nor is there any agreed name for its two distinct groups of inhabitants: Republicans, Nationalists, and Catholics are coincident but not synonymous, and the same is true of Unionists, Loyalists and Protestants. For that matter, there is no agreement over what the conflict is about—sovereignty, class, domination, institutions, security, inclusion, equality, identity, among others, as a number of the following chapters explore.

The conflict in Northern Ireland arose out of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Norman invasion, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Wars of Religion and of the Roses in England, and the subsequent colonizing invasions of the island, and has had the unusual characteristic of retaining these moments and keeping

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<sup>1</sup> The full list is given at the end of this report. We are particularly grateful to Dean Edward Baker, Isabelle Talpain-Long, and Helen Lewis, Roisin O'Hagan and their colleagues at INCORE at the University of Ulster for their great support that made the trip possible.

them alive in peoples' minds. It was shaped by the Easter rising of 1916 and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 that gave independence to most of the island. The current conflict broke out in 1969 in an event in Derry whose starkly conflicting images—as a peaceful human rights march or as an armed IRA attempt at rebellion—illustrate the bifurcated nature of the situation.

In that situation, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998 was highly appropriate, and we were pleased to be able to make our Field Trip on its tenth anniversary. It is composed of three strands—internal, east-west and north-south, all of them overlapping and contradictory in their pure state, an arrangement that would not hold up in a term paper and that perfectly blurs the issues among the groups. Not a single one of the above-mentioned issues has been unambiguously resolved. Some crucial provisions hung on contrived wording---“stand down” instead of “disband,” “decommission” for “disarm.” Its institutions are accompanied by a number of commissions, largely powerless and complicated, that deal authoritatively with complex issues. Its principal opponents—Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)—are in charge of the area's government, voted in in not a confidence but a protest vote against the previous GFA government, combining antithetical narratives of the situation and deadlocked on contested decisions, preparing the place—some hope—for a more centrist coalition.

The Good Friday Agreement was the work of fine diplomacy, grounded on a gradually developing mutually hurting stalemate and an awareness that both sides were willing to seek an end to their conflict; this ripeness was continually tested and expanded throughout the process. Two other aspects to the process of negotiating the Agreements are notable: its gradual accretion over the decade, especially since 1991 and the 1993 Downing Street Declaration, and the important role of the mediators, Sen. George Mitchell and his colleagues, especially in regard to adherence to the rules, procedural and substantive, and sensing when to proclaim a deadline. The fact that it took a decade thereafter to see the Agreements settle in is not and should not be troubling. Its provisions had to be tested, the new situation established, the spoilers isolated (with the help of the Real IRA attack in Omagh) and coopted, and the institutions break down and be put back. There is no doubt that it is working and that any inevitable hitches will take place within, not against, the GFA.

So what accounts for the endemic conflict? Putative explanations are numerous and complex. An incredibly deep historical memory that recalls and revives long-dead events is perhaps the deepest and most trivial explanation. A settlement that removes symptoms but not

causes is a tautological one. An imbalance of economic and political power that makes all change seem like a loss is a stronger one. An inability of political leaders to seize their constituents' hopes for a brighter future and run with them is another.

There is also no doubt that while waiting for demography and sovereignty to change, deeper changes are needed to handle such basic causes and concerns. The following chapters make a ream of sound recommendations. One overriding spirit infuses the need for politicians to work for better futures for the whole population rather than facing backward toward the past and its constraints. Another involves the need to pick up the promise of resolution that the conflict management agreement contains, lest the pressure for progress wane, the promise go sour, and the tendency toward frustration and violence turn inward to neighborhoods, homes, and “moping” personalities.<sup>2</sup> A third is to cultivate and actualize public interest in integrated education, cross-community civil society groups, and bread and butter issues so that the coming generation can make its own heritage. It's a beautiful island (probably because of its weather) that deserves a beautiful future.

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<sup>2</sup> “MOPE,” a local buzzword, stands for “the Most Oppressed People Ever,” a common perception.



# 1. Trust-Building in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

Julia Romano

Trust, like mortar between bricks, is absolutely essential in the construction of a relationship; conversely, without trust even the smallest quake can turn negotiations into rubble. The process of negotiation is itself a trust-building exercise; however, in order to be lasting, those represented must be, at some point, brought into the process. Throughout the years preceding, during, and following the negotiation of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA), both the presence and the absence of trust influenced why some elements of the process functioned and why others still seem unworkable. As one player in the post-conflict reconstruction said, trust “fits in everywhere.” The following paper seeks to examine how elements of trust and trust-building measures are both the cause of and the solution to the endemic conflict that is Northern Ireland.

“Centuries of conflict have generated hatreds that make it virtually impossible for the two communities to trust each other,” wrote GFA Mediator George Mitchell (1999, p. 37). Since the country’s first days, a sad dynamic has underpinned the tensions of Northern Ireland, a dynamic one community worker characterized as the “MOPE” syndrome, that is, the “Most Oppressed People Ever,” arising from the situation of “double minority.” While Catholics are the minority in the six Ulster counties of British-ruled Northern Ireland, Protestants are fewer in number on the island as a whole. Therefore, each side feels the part of the underclass, and the classic “asymmetrical” dynamic that connotes a certain kind of trust distribution does not necessarily apply; both sides are inherently distrustful of the other as persecutor, both sides feeling the part of the victim. In fact, while Catholic paramilitary groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) may have roots in combating British and Northern Irish armed forces, Protestant paramilitary groups, according to multiple sources, were born from distrust of the government’s ability to protect them from Catholic paramilitaries.

The Troubles of the late twentieth century stem from the 1960s civil rights movement, seen as armed rebellion, and the British government’s subsequent armed retaliation. By organizing public demonstrations, the protestors (in large part Catholic) challenged the use of public space controlled by (Protestant) unionism throughout the 1900s. Protestants feared challenges to the status quo—that is the British (Protestant) protection of Northern Ireland. The

police, protecting the status quo, fought back the Catholic protesters, but not the reactionary Protestant mobs, thereby reaffirming Catholic sentiments as the underclass, and transforming the civil rights struggle—which originated in housing and unemployment issues—into one of David and Goliath proportions. The conflict then morphed into one between paramilitaries clothed in the vestments of religion. As we will examine, ostensibly religious and cultural expressions have taken on sectarian meanings. Even so, many acknowledge the conflict has never really been religious. Rather, as one Protestant minister said, “churches give a theoretical framework to sectarianism.” Therefore, the terms “Republican” and “Unionist” will now instead be used to identify Catholics and Protestants, respectively.

The consequences of sectarianism have been tangible. On Sunday, January 30, 1972, the British army fired upon civil rights marches in the province of Derry, killing 14. As one Bloody Sunday participant said, “had I not been in the IRA on Bloody Sunday, I certainly would have been in it the day after.” On Friday, July 21, 1972, 17 bombs exploded with no warning in Belfast, killing nine. The IRA claimed responsibility. According to a Belfast cultural anthropologist who studies the use of public space, days like Bloody Friday “inform the Unionist psyche [because] that’s the way their space was being taken on, and they had to defend that.” The violence continued with the commencement of Operation Motorman on July 31, 1972, during which some 20,000 British troops descended on IRA-controlled “No Go” areas throughout Belfast and Derry. Violence spun out of control. “Bloody Sunday, Bloody Friday, every bloody day we’ve had stops us from moving forward,” said one former IRA member. Northern Ireland seemed caught in a vicious, bloody cycle that, with each turn, eroded any chance of building trust between communities. “How can you talk about building peace and trust when for years you’ve shot people in the back?” asked one peace industry worker. Indeed, this historical lack of trust has proved difficult to surmount. Fortunately there were those who believed, as the former-IRA member said, that days like Bloody Sunday “should be the reason that people don’t die.”

The negotiations leading to the 1998 Agreement were an exercise in trust building; back channel, “track 2” negotiations laid the groundwork for the 1994 ceasefires and the formal talks which lasted from 1994-1998. Representatives from each side met in “neutral spaces” and began to build the relationships that would carry them through the tumultuous GFA negotiations.

The success of any negotiation is informed by who is included, and therefore with whom one builds trust. Unlike previous negotiation attempts, the GFA brought into the process parties that had been previously excluded (like the DUP and Sinn Féin), but were integral because of their (unofficial) ties to paramilitary organizations. However, formal clauses stipulated that if paramilitaries broke the ceasefire, their political wings would be ejected from the process and allowed to return only after a resumption of peace and an affirmative all-party vote. Putting resolution of such controversial issues into technical processes was one way through which the GFA process built trust. Though parties initially lacked trust, until that trust was built they could always look to the mutually agreed upon process. Still, such trust-building clauses, to which all participating parties had to sign, were the equivalent of shaking with the hand one uses to draw one's sword—the weapon is only momentarily out of reach. It takes much more trust to totally disarm.

“At the heart of all of the problems in Northern Ireland is mistrust...That means that trust and confidence must be built, over time, by actions in all parts of society” (Mitchell 1999, p. 37). Mitchell wrote these words after the signing of the GFA. This brings to the fore another interesting aspect of the GFA, the question of “what happens if you don't have trust and you do have an agreement?” (posed recently by a representative of Sinn Féin, the IRA's political wing). The GFA negotiation was also an exercise in power-sharing, which, like trust building, demands that parties compromise and trust that the other side will follow suit. Some parties have been unwilling to do so. When, in 1997, the influential representatives of the main Unionist party walked out of the negotiation halls for good (believing the agreement to be “perversely unfair” as the son of one leader said recently), out walked with them many of Northern Ireland's most militant. As one Protestant minister said, “getting to the peace agreement is the easy bit;” putting it into practice is more difficult. It has been the task of the ten years since then to build the trust still absent at the Agreement's signing, both within the power-sharing government, and between the struggle-sharing communities. Which has proved harder, or will prove more important, we shall examine.

The process of trust building cannot be skipped. In 2007, once opposed party leaders Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin and Ian Paisley of the DUP began publicly exchanging smiles and jokes when they became First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland; media have named them “the chuckle brothers.” Arguably, the public animosity between these two

influential leaders once perpetuated the conflict, and so their new relationship has raised questions and tensions in both of their constituencies. Trust is not simply a matter of façade. Trust must be built from the ground up. As one government official said, it's "great that Sinn Féin and DUP are working together...but what did the people on the ground get? People on the ground still have the potential to destabilize because trust has not been built between people on the ground." This is not to say that those at the top do not make a difference, but how depends in large part on those at the bottom. As one peace worker said, "Today, people are still voting on tribal lines. [Northern Ireland] needs to make a transition so voting is for who is going to get you the best healthcare and education."

"There still isn't much trust here," said one Republican reconciliation expert, "you need to take the trust between individuals, and transform that into institutionalized trust." His Unionist colleague, sitting just beside, continued, "There is enough desire for it that it can be created...It's difficult, but it's doable." The task, therefore, is to institutionalize trust, to use process to build trust in institutions, to then eventually build trust directly with the people behind the institutions. In this way the system itself can act as a third-party mediator, through which people will learn to work together. This has been carried out thus far through the establishment of institutions that mediate controversial issues. In this light, we will examine institutions surrounding policing, decommissioning, parading, and schooling, here and in more detailed subsequent chapters.

Policing is a dominant issue in the peace process. The British government established the country's police force to combat insurgency when the island was partitioned in the early twentieth century. It is no surprise then that the force, under the purview of the British government, was hardly seen as a trust worthy, neutral law enforcement body. In the light of the GFA, it became obvious that the structure of the force "had to change," said one Sinn Féin representative. Soon after the 1998 signing, the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland was established, and tasked with providing "a new beginning to policing" (PSNI 2007). The Commission's 1999 Patten Report put forward 175 recommendations for change. Since then, the police force has undergone an almost complete makeover, from its name (Royal Ulster Constable RUC to Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)), to its size, its uniform, its accountability structures, and the kinds of services its officers, and station houses provided; the force has even integrated the fundamentals of the European Commission's 1998 Human Rights Act.

“We are making progress,” said a 21-year veteran of the Northern Ireland police force and riot squad, progress reflected in the fact that people are actually calling the police rather than submitting to the vigilante justice of the neighborhood paramilitaries. The PSNI is working to create a sense of equity in how it polices both communities. The most visible trust building-through-accountability measure the PSNI has implemented has been the change to its riot squad uniforms, he said. Each officer is assigned a specific number, which is printed on his uniform and helmet in multiple places, and can be easily identified. Officers cannot depend on their shield to protect them if they transgress their authority.

The police force is also working with the community rather than against the community, thereby changing the historical “us versus them” dynamic. Today, police officers often call upon community representatives to mediate within their own communities. When past conflicts sparked, the police would build “peace walls” between the sparring communities. Today, said the PSNI officer, they are “building trust,” which represents a major change in the way officers respond to the conflict. The point is, he said, “listening costs me nothing.”

One problem that threatens to undermine trust building is an under-funding of PSNI services. For decades, resources were devoted to equipping officers with armaments fit for the battlefield; the force only adopted computers in 2002. The consequence of under-funding is that while receiving more calls than ever from communities, the PSNI has not the resources to respond to them. To support trust-building efforts, promises must be backed by resources, said the officer. This issue is symptomatic of a larger problem in the Northern Ireland system, one that will take time to address. In order to build a new society, resources must be reallocated to support different kinds of programs than have been historically necessary, but that in turn necessitates an almost psychological change about what people believe Ireland can become—a state that builds trust rather than walls.

Paramilitary groups first armed themselves because of their lack of trust for state law enforcement. The IRA has disarmed since the 1998 Agreement, but, for reasons unclear, Unionist paramilitaries have not been forced to decommission. The fact that Unionist groups still have weapons is one of the issues that makes the Northern Ireland peace so tenuous, and undermines trust-building efforts between communities. It is not about the weapons, as more guns can be readably obtained. It is about what it means to remain armed in the middle of a countrywide peace process; Unionist paramilitaries lack fundamental trust for the system, and for

their Republican counterparts who they feel have been sanctioned by the system. Unionist communities have suffered something of an identity crisis since Republicans gained access to the political process; efforts to build a community, let alone build trust between communities, have been stymied by splintering and intra-community violence. As one official remarked, “there is a lack of leadership on the ground...no one is listening to them...[it] could erupt.” Therefore, preceding disarmament there must be, as one commissioner said, a “decommissioning of mindsets.” The perceived payoffs of continued armed struggle must be changed so that peaceful resolution via power-sharing is more lucrative; in other words, Unionists must gain trust for the idea that they will gain more if they pursue a peaceful, political resolution—a difficult task because so much of Unionist identity is wrapped up in their struggle.

Parading and its problems date back hundreds of years, and today embodies the conflict between tradition and modernity, as well as Republicans and Unionists, as discussed in later chapters. Many parade routes have not changed for centuries, but neighborhoods around them have, and staunchly Unionist orders continue to march through staunchly Republican neighborhoods, and vice-versa. Donning the vestments of their paramilitary struggle, religious orders have marched down streets bearing signage celebrating their martyrs, men who are inevitably the other side’s murderers. Watching the parade is a choice, some might argue, and, as one Unionist representative put it, “some people get up at six-thirty in the morning just to be insulted.” As one parades commissioner said, “parading is an interface where the history of nationalism and the history of loyalism will abut.”

Before the creation of the parade commission in 1997, control of parades rested with police who, as discussed, tended to favor the Unionist-dominant state. Established as part of civil society, the commission is accountable to both Republicans and Unionists. Today, the seven-person commission must, by mandate, be representative of society; its neutrality nurtures a sense of equity between Republicans and Unionists, as both are accountable to and beneficiaries of the same standards.

Parading, that is assembly, is a right of the citizens of Northern Ireland; people do not apply to parade, they “notify,” said one commissioner. The commission mainly mediates disputes that arise between those who wish to parade, and those who claim offense, thereby providing an impartial conduit through which trust can be built. Many Unionists originally protested the commission; in response, trust-building measures, such as the ability to challenge

findings, have been installed. The commission interferes in only a small percentage of parades; in those cases, the commission works to eliminate potential sources of conflict, like offensive imagery, or costumes. Paraders thereby gain official state sanction, and a kind of legitimacy that the Unionist community in particular craves. The successful mediation of Northern Ireland's "shared space" helps people understand that they do not have to abut, as they have historically, but can negotiate even the most difficult of routes when a trust-worthy third party is involved.

However, there's "something wrong with the body politic and parading is a symptom of it," stated one commissioner. The institution of a parading commission is only really a "topical application." While serving an important purpose today, the commissioner said, it "more likely that parade issue will be solved when nationally contentious issues are solved."

"Until young people are integrated there will be no end to this," said one Unionist community school principal. Today, 61 schools in Northern Ireland are designated "integrated," which connotes a 40-40-20 distribution of Protestants, Catholics and "other." A school itself can apply for integration, or parents can request for an integrated school to be established. The ethic is what one educator called "contact plus." Students participate in cultural awareness programs, play both protestant and catholic sports, and are taught each other's histories—notably *not* a neutral history. Integrated schools are, in essence, shared space. While critics of integrated schools might assume the schools are only preaching to the converted, some of Northern Ireland's best examples of integrated schooling are actually in conflict-prone working class neighborhoods. "It's about exposing children to different concepts," said one expert on the subject. "Integration is one means by which the conflict can be addressed" with the ethos of "reconciliation," he said. Students are forced to reconcile their differences, and in doing so, find their commonalities.

The test of integrated schooling is whether students can take what they learn back into their communities on the other sides of the walls, take the trust they've built through playing on the same teams, and eating at the same tables, back into communities still decorated with paramilitary murals. But it is exactly these transitions—from institution, to individual to community—that need to be strengthened, and through which trust will be built. Much of Northern Ireland is still geographically segregated; Republicans live on one side of the wall, Unionists on the other. The integration of schooling represents a graying of those boundaries. Trust, though built in an integrated situation, can dissolve motives behind remaining segregated;

in turn, integrated institutions will be strengthened as even those who not enrolled are exposed to the benefits.

“Integrated education is enabled by ordinary citizens,” and only “facilitated by the government,” said an integrated schooling expert. In this way, integrated schooling is a truly effective trust-building institution because it is inspired by the community, structured by the government, and facilitated by individuals. The institution provides the tools while the individuals do the heavy lifting. Brick by brick the walls can be taken down, and in their place, brick by brick, the foundations for a shared future can be constructed, strengthened with the mortar of trust—and the same bricks can be used in the laying of the foundation. Trust building, rather than a forgetting of the past, necessitates a mutual acknowledgement of each other’s grievances. “It’s not fair to ask people to try and forget this,” said one survivor of Bloody Sunday. Instead, he continued, “we need to share this experience....it’s about reinterpreting that history into something positive.” Fundamentally, “it’s about entering into relationships with people,” said a Protestant who ministers to a Republican community. Each new relationship between communities is one more brick, bonded to another with the mortar of trust. And brick by brick, a new future can be built.

## **2. Spoiler Management and the Good Friday Agreement**

**Sarah Naimark**

The success of negotiation is partially informed by who is excluded, and a peace process can be held up or destroyed entirely by a spoiler. Therefore, external parties hoping to successfully conduct peace negotiations must thoroughly evaluate the nature and goals of spoilers in the peace process. Before the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998, years of round table talks, secret meetings, temporary ceasefires, and seven formal peace initiatives failed to achieve lasting peace. This cycle of negotiation failures can be attributed to the strong influence of spoilers in Northern Ireland. The successful strategies of managing these endemic opposition groups allowed the GFA talks to come to fruition where others had failed. Senator George Mitchell and his team were able to skillfully structure the talks and adeptly react to spoiling behavior, paving the way for the longest lasting peace in Northern Ireland since the Troubles began.

The decade that has passed since the GFA was signed provides time to examine the spoilers within the Northern Irish context as well as the strategies of spoiler management and how they were used to different effect on different spoilers during the course of the GFA talks. Then, moving ten years to the present, the chapter will survey the current situation in Northern Ireland to see if the former spoilers are ‘dormant’ or truly neutralized, and assess the potential danger of future spoilers.

### **Categorizing Spoilers**

Though there were many that opposed the peace process, the most politically relevant and popularly supported spoilers were the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Féin on the Republican/Nationalist side and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) on the Unionist side. Based on Stedman’s (1997) typology, these spoilers can be differentiated according to the goals they seek—limited, total or greedy—and their level of commitment in achieving these goals. Total spoilers pursue total power and hold immutable preferences. Limited spoilers have limited goals, for example a share of power or basic security of followers. A greedy spoiler lies between the two ends of the spectrum, holding goals that change based on cost and risk. The position of the spoiler—either inside or outside of the negotiations—is also relevant. Inside spoilers tend to

use strategies of stealth from their internal position, whereas outside spoilers often use violence to attack the peace process.

The IRA and Sinn Féin began as total spoilers outside the talks but became limited spoilers upon entry into the GFA talks. Conversely, the DUP originated as a limited spoiler inside the talks but transformed itself into a total spoiler and moved outside of the GFA talks process.

### **The IRA/Sinn Féin**

The IRA fits tidily into Stedman's (1997, p. 5) definition of a spoiler: "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it." Historically, the IRA had used violence to attack the peace process. Throughout the GFA talks, the IRA remained an outside spoiler, both excluding itself and being excluded from the Mitchell negotiations. In some senses the IRA began as a limited spoiler in the late 1960s, aiming primarily for Catholic civil rights.<sup>3</sup> But as Stedman points out, limited goals do not imply limited commitment: even limited goals can be "nonnegotiable and hence subject to heavy sacrifice". The internecine and state violence of the 1980s and early 1990s convinced many nationalists that severing ties with the United Kingdom was the only way to escape oppression. In the era before the Mitchell-led peace talks, the IRA evolved to become a total spoiler, demanding nothing less than a single island nation.

Sinn Féin is a less tidy categorization since it denies any connection with the violent acts of the IRA. However, evidence and our interviews suggest that Sinn Féin is the political arm of the IRA, so for the purposes of this paper they will be loosely grouped together. Sinn Féin held the same total goals of the IRA, but the inclusion of Sinn Féin in the GFA talks and legitimization of the Nationalist movement as driven by Gerry Adams allowed for a move from total to limited spoiler. Analysts hold that a change in spoiler type is only possible when the impetus for spoiler behavior comes from the leader rather than the followers. Though the move from violence to ceasefire had many influences, the rise of Adams to Sinn Féin leadership was

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<sup>3</sup> It is problematic to classify the IRA as a spoiler during the Civil Rights period because according to Stedman's typology spoilers only exist within the context of a peace process. A party cannot be a spoiler when there is no peace agreement to spoil. However, I included the terminology in this case because these goals were crucial in the formation of the IRA and the broad popular support it enjoyed for many years.

certainly an important factor in the politicization of the radical Republican movement. The emergence of a more moderate, politically-minded leader helped bring legitimate Republican concerns into the mainstream, and led radical Republicans to support more realistic goals such as socialist reforms and power-sharing instead of an immediate all-island nation.

Sinn Féin's goals may have changed from total to limited once it joined the talks, but it did not bring the whole of the IRA in with it. Serious splits from the mainstream Republican movement occurred when Sinn Féin entered negotiations, producing the Real IRA (RIRA) and the Continuity IRA (CIRA). Another group, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, asked in a statement: "Has the past 27 years of struggle against repression, imprisonment, and death all been aimed at securing seats for Nationalists at a revamped Stormont and the copper fastening of partition?" (Mitchell 1997, p. 108) These groups remained as total spoilers to the talks, repeatedly using violence in an attempt to halt the peace process.

### **The Democratic Unionist Party**

The DUP and its vociferous leader Ian Paisley were also spoilers in the peace process.<sup>4</sup> Though it was an original participant of the talks, the DUP's behavior during the peace process qualifies it as a spoiler. (Appropriate for a spoiler, Paisley's nickname became "Dr. No" because of his repeated disagreement with Catholic proposals.) The party was a spoiler with limited goals: to remain a part of the British Empire, to garner power in the post-agreement political structure and to prevent Sinn Féin from entering the talks. As previously noted, limited goals can be non-negotiable and backed by total dedication towards achieving those goals.

While the DUP had total dedication to its limited goals before Sinn Féin entered the talks, it was not yet a total spoiler since it (at least superficially) supported the peace process. However, the DUP was completely opposed to a peace process that involved Sinn Féin or the IRA in any measure, as if a peace process would have been possible without them. When the nature of the GFA talks changed—that is to say when they became inclusive—the DUP became total spoilers. Their agenda did not change; it was the composition of the participating parties that moved the DUP into the total spoiler category. The party did whatever it could to halt the talks from inside Stormont, using tactics like capricious allegations, constant calls for votes on controversial issues

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<sup>4</sup> The United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP) can be considered a spoiler but its individual political clout was limited. The majority of its spoiling actions were done in conjunction with the more powerful DUP.

and verbal abuse of members of other Unionist parties who did not take their same spoiler stance. Mitchell (2000, p. 85) wrote, “[DUP leader] Paisley and [UKUP leader] McCartney were opposed to the very process in which they were participating; they repeatedly called it a farce and a sham.” When Sinn Féin walked into the negotiations, the DUP walked out and became a total spoiler on the outside of the talks.

### **Strategies for Spoiler Management**

The role played by external “custodians of peace”—in this case Senator George Mitchell and his supporting international actors—is the crucial factor in triumphing over spoilers (Stedman 1997, p. 6). As the custodian, Mitchell had the task of protecting the peace from spoiling behavior. Since the Northern Irish conflict had stretched on for many years, and since the conflicting parties frequently used the media to broadcast their intentions, Mitchell had a great deal of information on the kind of spoilers he was dealing with. This is not always the case in peace negotiations where the ‘fog of peacemaking’ can lead to uncertainties in the goal and intent of spoilers. The ability to accurately diagnose spoilers led to a more accurate selection of spoiler management.

The first step was to construct a neutral framework based on democracy and nonviolence that would be acceptable for many different parties and resistant to acts of spoiling. With the “Mitchell Principles,” Mitchell established a structure consistent with the spoiler management strategy of socialization. Parties had to agree to the Mitchell Principles before they could participate in the talks, which were then consistently applied to all talk participants. For instance, if an allegation was made that one of the parties had violated one of the Mitchell Principles, the accusation would be referred to London and Dublin for decision. By establishing norms, but then putting the compliance with these norms in the hands of external parties, Mitchell deflected accusations of bias. Internal spoilers were less effective in this framework.

After the foundations for the negotiations were laid, the custodians of peace turned Sinn Féin, the key issue. Sinn Féin’s participation in the new talks was essential: a peace process can only weather the threat of outside violence when a sufficient number of those who are able to violently obstruct the process are included. To effectively manage a total outside spoiler, the international actors used a strategy consistent with the “departing train” variation on coercive spoiler management. This strategy was expressed in a public announcement Prime Minister Tony

Blair made to Sinn Féin (Mitchell 2000, p. 6): “The settlement train is leaving. I want you on the train. But it is leaving anyway and I will not allow it to wait for you. You cannot hold the process to ransom any longer. So, the violence ends now.”

This strategy of spoiler management worked. The IRA declared a ceasefire and Sinn Féin moved to an internal position, from where it proved successful in limiting IRA violence. In effect, this was one spoiler managing another: Sinn Féin’s “targeted, restrained, intragroup repression by paramilitary organizations was able to avoid the alienation of average constituents while also preventing dissidents from derailing the process,” (Maney et al. 2006, p. 191). Analysts have compared this to the Oslo process, where neither the Israeli government nor the PLO representatives were able to manage spoiler violence, leading to harsher IDF repression of Palestinians. Both the dissident violence and ensuing reaction decreased support for the Oslo peace process (Maney et al. 2006, p. 191). Sinn Féin’s link to the IRA provided a crucial communication channel between an outside spoiler prone to violence and a negotiation participant. Including spoilers in the negotiation admits them into the common enterprise and applies moral pressure to protect the process against violence. After Sinn Féin climbed aboard the ‘departing train,’ it could begin the process of socialization embedded in the Mitchell Principles’ framework.

However, the strategy a custodian adopts to manage one spoiler will inevitably have implications on relations with other spoilers. The DUP and UKUP were spoilers positioned inside the peace process. Even though they had agreed to the principles of the negotiations, Mitchell (2000, p. 110) noted: “[Paisley’s and McCartney’s] objective was, as they repeatedly insisted, to end this process.” In addition to Republican-Unionist fault lines, an intra-Unionist conflict became a major potential source of spoiling behavior in the talks. Paisley aimed to spoil the talks by threatening to leave if Sinn Féin were included and accusing his fellow Unionist parties of being ‘sell-outs’ if they did not do the same. Mitchell’s tempered and considered reactions to accusations of Principle violations acted as a damper on the internal spoilers’ attempts to create a perception of bias.

But it was not only Mitchell’s actions that neutralized internal spoilers. Paisley and the representatives of his party and the UKUP made good on their threats and walked out when Sinn Féin was included. But this attempt to spoil the talks was undermined by David Trimble’s decision to stay. At the time, his Ulster Unionists Party (UUP) was the largest Unionist party in

Northern Ireland, and his continued participation mitigated the potential spoiling effects of the DUP/UKUP walk out. Mitchell used an *Irish Times* headline covering the walkout to illustrate this point: “A Setback Not A Disaster.”

By moving to an outside position from an inside one, Paisley and his followers struck a blow at the inclusiveness of the process but improved the efficiency of the talks that followed. Mitchell (2000, p. 110) wrote: “Reaching agreement without [the DUP’s and UKUP’s] presence was extremely difficult; it would have been impossible with them in the room.” Essentially, they were more effective as inside spoilers. By giving up their position inside the talks, their spoiling behavior lost influence. Mitchell believes that “had Paisley and McCartney stayed and fought from within, there would have been no agreement.” Paisley continued to attempt to spoil the talks from the outside, by writing letters to Mitchell demanding Sinn Féin be expelled and repeatedly using the press to accuse the UUP of selling out the Union. Even so, the talks continued.

Meanwhile, violence attributed to the IRA aimed at spoiling the talks spiraled. In the murky line between where the Sinn Féin stopped and the IRA began, there was difficulty in holding the political party accountable for the militant group’s actions. Yet the Unionist parties still in the talks claimed that IRA violence meant Sinn Féin should be expelled. Most of the violence was in fact being carried out by Republican splinter groups that opposed the peace process. With the emergence of these splinter groups, Sinn Féin was concerned with keeping their support base large and also with keeping the peace process alive. In a testament to their level of socialization, it was reported that Sinn Féin and the IRA leadership devoted considerable effort to briefing rank-and-file IRA members on the benefits of the peace process.

Nevertheless, spoilers continued to commit violent acts in order to derail the peace process. The Markethill bombing, later attributed to the CIRA, was timed to coincide with Trimble’s UUP deliberation over whether to remain in the talks in light of Sinn Féin’s inclusion. *The Guardian* (17 September 1997) reported: “Ten minutes before the bomb exploded, [Trimble’s] team had made up its mind to attend Stormont Castle for a series of bilateral talks. The party immediately abandoned its plans.” Fortunately for the talks, Trimble eventually chose to stay. Later that year, a leader of the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) was shot by members of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), another Republican splinter group opposed to peace negotiations. The killing reignited tensions, and Mitchell believed it almost killed the peace

process. However, complaints were dealt with within the framework of the talks. Possible spoiling was averted because the process was fair and measured with transparent rules that were applied equally to Republicans and Nationalists.

It was a spoiler action that cemented the fate of the Good Friday Agreement, though not in the way it was intended. The breakaway Republican group RIRA set off a bomb in Omagh in August 1998, killing 29 people. This, the most deadly attack in the course of the Troubles, came just months after the ratification of the GFA, and was intended to goad Unionists into withdrawing from the peace process. Instead, the cross-community outrage it provoked gave greater impetus to the newly minted peace agreement. RIRA announced a ceasefire within a week after the bombing and the CIRA went underground. The most important effect of the RIRA and the Omagh bombing “was not that they ended spoiler violence but that they enabled the middle grounds of Unionism and Nationalism to find their voice at a time when the voice of moderation could make a difference,” (Cox, Guelke and Stephen 2006, p. 223).

### **Spoilers today?**

Two main spoilers, the DUP and Sinn Féin, are now in the two highest political positions in Northern Ireland. Until recently their leaders, Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, shared power as the First Minister and Deputy First Minister respectively in the Northern Irish Assembly, the devolved legislature located in Stormont. Paisley stepped down, but there is no indication that his replacement will turn back to spoiling behavior. In the near term, these former spoilers have no incentive to renege on the agreement that allows them to remain in positions of such influence. Some fear that old rivalries will flare back up to conflict level in the course of a future referendum regarding the political status of Northern Ireland, or that Sinn Féin will no longer be able to control IRA violence. It seems unlikely, however, that the DUP or Sinn Féin would retreat into their former positions as total spoilers now that they have achieved their limited goals and received the benefits of inclusion. The question now is whether the two parties, together, can govern efficiently, abstaining from spoiling the GFA’s implementation.

Other potential candidates for spoiling are the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries and splinter groups that still exist today. However, many of these groups lack the political organization to truly spoil the GFA as it stands. The paramilitaries, though violent and disruptive, are little more than gangs involved in urban crime. The larger context in which these

gangs operate is the continued segregation of Northern Irish society. Almost a decade after the GFA was signed, 70 percent of the population still lives in communities that are almost exclusively Protestant or Catholic, 95 percent of children attend segregated schools and nearly two-thirds of people between 14 and 24 had never had a substantial conversation with someone of the other faith (Sullivan 2007). Left unaddressed, this continuing separation could provide fertile ground for future greedy spoilers seeking to exploit sectarianism. To prevent the creation of future spoilers, or to limit support for current anti-peace groups, three broad recommendations are proposed.

**The devolved Northern Irish government should continue bolstering civil society and human rights.** Transparency and the perception of equal resource distribution are key in preventing the rise of spoilers. To borrow from Maney et al. (2006, p. 181), the government is tasked with “constructing more inclusive identities, grass-roots education regarding manipulative elites, strengthening non-sectarian segments of civil society, and breaking cycles of violence through reconciliation projects.”

**The issue of decommissioning of Loyalist paramilitaries must take priority in joint policy planning.** The thorny issue has remained unresolved for too long, as discussed in later chapters. If only symbolically, the decommissioning of violent groups will limit the potential for future spoiling.

In searching for potential spoilers, observers should keep an eye on Stormont. If the GFA talks have shown anything, it is that inclusion is a powerful antidote to spoiling, yet the current power-sharing political structure makes it difficult for opposition parties to arise or voices to be heard. Frustrated political parties might turn to obstruction, or even to violence, if they feel that their grievances are unaddressed and their issues excluded in a political system dominated by two parties. The function of the Northern Irish Assembly focuses on power-sharing between the DUP and Sinn Féin, leaving little maneuvering room for other parties. Additionally, each Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is currently required to declare themselves as either “Nationalist”, “Unionist” or “non-aligned”. This type of power-sharing structure provides weak incentives for moderates and can harden ethnic identities along party lines (Sisk, p. 789). **In the medium-term, the Assembly voting rules should be restructured to encourage the development of cross-community parties, such as the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, the Green Party or perhaps a reconstituted Women’s Alliance.**

The qualified but continued success of the Good Friday Agreement can be attributed to many things, including timing, violence fatigue of the Northern Irish people, dynamic personalities on all sides, and even the revulsion at terrorism generated by September 11<sup>th</sup>. But within the talks themselves, a significant factor in producing an approved agreement can be attributed to Mitchell and his team's ability to include and neutralize the spoilers who continuously attempted to derail the process. No one can be sure that the GFA will be the final peace agreement for the Northern Irish people. But without the skillful maneuvering of international and community leaders in managing the spoilers of the GFA, today's peace would not have been possible.



### **3. Religion and Identity in Northern Ireland**

**Maryam Ali**

There has been much debate over the role and significance of religion in understanding endemic conflict in Northern Ireland. Interpretations of the conflict as a “holy war,” while providing useful insights have proved unconvincing inasmuch as disputes over theology remain secondary and marginal (although perhaps reinforcing). And yet religion remains a fundamental element in the story if for no other reason than that religious affiliation rather than class, gender or some other marker continues to be the dominant signifier in terms of social and political identification. Tangible issues like economic and political interests have long been embedded within religiously motivated narratives of siege and victimization. Moreover, Catholicism and Protestantism unlike political affiliations like Unionism and Nationalism are accompanied by clear cultural markers, that “provide a rich source of symbolism, ideology and moral evaluations . . . about social and political events” (Mitchell 2006, p. 137). As Claire Mitchell (Mitchell 2006, p. 137) points out, “no other dimension of difference in Northern Ireland has such a wide scope.” Finally, religion continues to play an important role in setting the parameters for relationships and interactions, both at a micro and macro level. Religiously-motivated sectarianism in Northern Ireland helps define to a large extent where people live and socialize, with whom they study and choose to marry, and how they vote. Thus as some scholars have argued, we can say “without any contradiction, that although the Northern Ireland conflict is not about religion, it is, in fact, at every level bound up with religious differences” (Jenkins, Donnan and McFarlane, p. 17).

Problematically, it is precisely the perceived immutability and mutual exclusivity of religious identification which has helped sustain notions of the intractability of the conflict. With traditional national and political reservoirs of identity losing ground, the salience of religion in defining sectarianism and the accompanying sense of pessimism as to the viability of reconciliation efforts have grown. To be sure the multiplicity of issues and their interconnectedness make the Northern Ireland case particularly difficult to analyze in terms of its roots and consequently, in terms of looking forward. Religion and its dynamic role in the past, present and future, provides one thread through which the conflict in Northern Ireland can better be understood. This chapter analyzes the conflict primarily in terms of its sectarian, religious

nature, with the hope that examining religious identification as a fluid and adjustable phenomenon may provide insights into practical measures which may counteract the divisive tendencies undermining political and social stability in Northern Ireland today.

*How has religious identity shaped the conflict and how in turn has the conflict helped shape religious identification?*

In 1921 Ireland was divided into two political entities today known as the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which remained part of the United Kingdom. The creation of Northern Ireland engrained the notion of a “Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People” in the psyches of Nationalists and Unionists alike. While religious affiliation had helped define divisions and foster tensions prior to 1921, partition institutionalized these historic animosities, creating in effect what has been termed the problem of the double minority and a sense of siege among both Protestants and Catholic as vulnerable groups within larger national structures. While the issue before 1921 was primarily a question of whether each community saw itself as British or Irish, following partition a new dimension was added, namely the relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland and Britain’s role vis-à-vis both these newly created entities. This new dimension tended to rigidify religious divisions along social and political lines; Irish became synonymous to a large extent with Nationalist and Catholic and British with Unionist and Protestant. In the context of institutionalized mechanisms for discrimination like the Special Powers Act of 1922, feelings of anxiety and mistrust were in turn institutionalized in a sense. Thus, the threat of violent confrontation remained never far from the surface and had the potential to flare up as both real and perceived threats to each community became more and more articulated.

Ironically, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association’s (NICRA) campaign to bring together “as wide a section of the community as possible” (including Protestant sympathizers) in the name of social reform ultimately only further antagonized and separated each community, leading to ever-more militant expressions of religious identity throughout the early 1970s. The problem as many of our speakers pointed out, were the divergent narratives attached to the events of this period by each community. For more moderate Nationalists the Civil Rights Movement was seen as “an opportunity of breaking the sectarian logjam” (McCann 1995) in advocating equal rights and improved conditions for all members of Northern Ireland, but particularly for the working classes who continued to suffer under conditions of mass

unemployment and substandard housing conditions. However, the historic ties between the NICRA and militant Republicanism and the tendency for Nationalists to couple civil rights with traditional Republican objectives undermined the Movement's more inclusive aspects and was seen by many Unionists as yet another guise for undermining the Northern Irish state and advancing the cause of Irish unity. The Movement to transform the conflict from largely religious to class-based politics proved untenable, inasmuch as each side could not move beyond "a vivid awareness of past attitudes and behavior and the fear that these [would] be replicated in the future" (McCartney 1999).

The Civil Rights Movement was to have a profound impact on changing the nature of the conflict from a political movement to a paramilitary movement increasingly defined in terms of oppositional politics and heightened sectarian attitudes. Significantly, another outcome of the Movement was to take the focus off the national question of Irish unity and into achieving some sort of internal accommodation. While the move to a largely internal paradigm was crucial in paving the way for political negotiations leading up to the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), it also problematically entailed the sharpening and polarization of community divisions along religious lines, both physically (the first "peace walls" were constructed in the early 1970s) and psychologically.

A variety of factors led to the search for a political solution to the cycle of violence and counterviolence plaguing Northern Ireland. For our purposes, one event is particularly relevant. The political emergence of Sinn Féin following the 1981 Hunger Strikes led the British and Irish to initiate what was to become the foundations for the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. The agreement reinforced fears among many Unionists that Britain would no longer be the guarantors of Protestant hegemony in Northern Ireland. While this would ultimately bring more moderate Unionist parties to the negotiating table, it also led to a further turning-inward of the Unionist community to their Protestant rather than British roots as a primary source of legitimization for the Unionist cause. Significantly, rather than alleviating the growing sense of disillusionment among Protestant-Unionists, the GFA has only intensified feelings of alienation. The Good Friday Agreement has in fact played a crucial role in the evolution of religious identification, the repercussions of which resonate strongly today.

*What effects has the Good Friday Agreement had on pre-existing community divisions and tensions?*

In his book *Opposite Religions Still?: Interpreting Northern Ireland After the Conflict*, Dr. B.K Lambkin (1996, p. 5) identified Northern Ireland as a prime example of an intractable conflict, which “has resisted repeated attempts at its resolution, peaceful or otherwise.” The Good Friday Agreement has challenged this long prevailing notion of the intractability of the Northern Ireland conflict, laying the foundation for a political rather than violent solution to “The Troubles.” The restoration of power-sharing under a devolved Northern Ireland Assembly in May 2007 has similarly renewed hope that the disputing parties to the conflict can put aside their fears and animosities in working towards a shared future. Yet, what was so striking from our time in Northern Ireland was how many of the people we spoke with, from all walks of life, retained a seemingly inconsistent sense of ambivalence and to some extent pessimism surrounding prospects for ultimate reconciliation. While important breakthroughs have been made in bringing previously warring factions to the negotiating table, questions linger as to the sustainability of a peace which maintains and arguably promotes rather than tears down the physical and psychological barriers which continue to divide the community into largely-homogenous, antagonistic blocks. As one of our speakers aptly put it, sectarianism remains the elephant in the sitting room, ignored and yet ultimately unavoidable.

The phrase “tyranny of democracy” has been used to describe the political dynamics in Northern Ireland. As Clem McCartney (1999, p. 4) explains, effective opposition and a shift towards class or issue-based politics in Northern Ireland have not occurred, given that politicians will “not challenge the conventional sectarian political attitudes for fear that they [will] be rejected. If politics were to become less sectarian, politicians and the public would have to move at the same time and this has been difficult to achieve.” The close interdependence and mutually-reinforcing nature of macro political developments and micro community-level effects has problematically resulted in a sort of cycling, whereby sectarianism flows both from the top-down and from the bottom-up, polarizing the political and social landscape at the extremes.

The underlying logic of the GFA was that bringing together more moderate members of each side would marginalize the extremists, end their campaigns of violence and thus pave the way for peace, with the hope that reconciliation would subsequently take place organically, as discussed in the previous chapter. The ascendancy to power of parties like Sinn Féin and the DUP, while effective in bringing a decline to paramilitary activity has in fact prevented more moderate parties from bringing new issues to the table and has consequently tended to freeze

divisions along religious lines. As long as each of these parties has an interest in sustaining rather than breaking away at the fault lines solidifying their political bases of support, this trend will likely continue.

The ramifications of the Good Friday Agreement have been costly, both economically and in terms of its social and psychological effects. A current report (Stevens 2008) put the economic costs of the separate but equal formula for peace in Northern Ireland at about £1.5 billion a year, an astonishing £1000 per person annually. Continued segregation in housing and education has similarly contributed to the isolation and insulation of communities along religiously-defined lines, further limiting cross-community contact and reinforcing negative stereotypes and a pervasive “us vs. them” mentality. Significantly, as one of our speakers pointed out, the cost of these barriers may be even higher in the long run, as new generations adopt a more and more narrowly defined identity without the accompanying pragmatism of their elder counterparts, who having lived through the more violent phases of the conflict, are more cautious to prevent their reoccurrence.

Finally, the band-aid approach of the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent problems with implementation have had important implications in intensifying disaffection and disillusionment with the peace process in general and particularly in the case of Protestants have led to a pervasive sense of alienation from the political process. Heightened ambivalence and uncertainty surrounding both national (British) and political (Unionist) markers of identity have in many ways diluted the traditional cohesive base of unionist opposition. This has led some of the community, particularly anti-Agreement Unionists, to seek “political purification” and a strengthening of religious identity as a form of “ideological security” (Mitchell 2003, pp. 618-620).

Hopes that peace through prosperity and through iterated cooperation at a political level would translate into changing dynamics at a community level have failed to materialize inasmuch as no formula was put into place under the Good Friday Agreement for a comprehensive, transformative peace addressing issues of identity and intergroup conflict. In March 2005, such a framework was introduced through a new Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland entitled *A Shared Future*. While *A Shared Future* has worked to bring relationship building to the forefront of reconciliation efforts, a focus on “policy action (what will be supported)” rather than “policy process (how these actions will deliver

change)” and a failure to take into account “the nature of activity that is likely to promote better relations” represent significant barriers to its successful implementation (Hughes 2007, pp. 6-9). In light of these limitations, the following recommendations seek to provide concrete measures which identify how a combination of macro and micro-level initiatives in the short, mid and long term may best forward the vision outlined in *A Shared Future*.

#### *Transitioning towards a Shared Future*

**Single identity work still has an important part to play in current reconciliation efforts.** Traditional versions of the contact hypothesis have argued that intergroup hostility is primarily a function of inaccurate views and prejudices and that contact in itself has the potential to break down these stereotypes and thereby foster greater tolerance of the “other.” However, subsequent scholarship has shown that contact may in fact heighten rather than alleviate feelings of insecurity and mistrust towards outgroups under certain conditions, particularly in situations of real or perceived inequality of status by members of each group (Hughes and Knox 1997, p. 330). There seems to be a clear link between an individual’s self-esteem and his or her perception of group identity. Studies have shown that “the higher the perceived status of the ingroup relative to the out-group, the less anxiety was expected in intergroup interactions” (Tausche et al. 2007, p. 64). Inasmuch as negative visions of the “other” are a way to reinforce positive perceptions of self, building up each community’s confidence from within through single-identity work is needed today to foster and sustain productive interactions and dialogue on a community-wide basis.

Single identity work would be particularly though not exclusively useful in the Protestant community, encouraging a coming to terms with feelings of relative deprivation and abandonment/disillusionment and providing a means for Protestant-Unionists to debate and redefine the salience of religious identity within the context of evolving human rights norms and increased immigration into Protestant-dominated areas. Single identity work may also avoid the problem of “preaching to the choir,” in involving and giving more recalcitrant members of each community a stake in the larger goal of community reconciliation. **Single identity work pursued in tandem with cross-community programs, taking into account the conditions under which inter-community contact is likely to be successful<sup>5</sup> are important steps which can be taken today.** However, the sectarian divide today is not merely a function of

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<sup>5</sup> see Hughes 2007, p.11 for a more detailed discussion of some identified conditions for beneficial contact.

psychological and social pressures, but is rather rooted in real conflicts of interests which must ultimately be tackled at a political level. The lack of ownership in and disaffection with the political process maintained in the current structure of government will have to be addressed in the medium run to complement community level work such that people come to realize that their efforts and voice can in fact have the power to transform the political and social landscape.

**In the near future, reform the Agreement; abolish Assembly designations, amend the voting system and establish collective responsibility within the Executive.** Single-identity and cross-community work by helping communities develop the confidence necessary to address diversity not only within their own group but within an increasingly complex society, as well as movement towards a more accountable, receptive and adaptive political process are important steps in endowing each community with the means and desire to address shared problems and to rethink identity along more pluralist lines. Echoing measures long advocated by the Alliance Party, the United States Institute of Peace has outlined these three measures as key institutional reforms which should be addressed to foster greater accountability and increased ownership among the public over decisions taken at a macro-level. For those in the community increasingly challenging traditional notions of identity on a personal level, the de facto reduction of “other” to a position of little power in the political system leaves little room to voice their concerns and little hope that society as a whole will ever move to a situation of sharing rather than fighting over common resources. Moreover, ensuring greater equality in voting power among Assembly members and subjecting the Executive to a collective vote within the entire Assembly would “signal the expectation that all ministers will work for the common good” making sure decision making is subject to “cross-community control and ownership” (Farry 2006, p. 15). Ultimately, voting should matter so that Protestants and Catholics alike will take a stance and are motivated to challenge party leaders who have personal motivations in maintaining the sectarian divide.

**Foster new reservoirs of identification to supplement rather than suppress traditional notions of identity; emphasize common goals at a macro and micro level.** Viable cross-cutting identities need to be fostered, which acknowledge and accommodate existing religious categories but at the same time redefine them in a way that does not prevent dialogue and cooperation with those whose beliefs differ. One potential path for such a breakthrough is a coming together of the working class community at a micro level through non-formal and formal grassroots projects like the Falls/Ballymacarrett Joint Think Tank Project, which convened

community activists from Nationalist West Belfast and Unionist East Belfast in addressing the “deep anxieties . . . regarding the many problems working-class communities were having to confront” (Hall 2003, p. 3). Such initiatives provide a forum for people to discuss shared goals and to seek cross-community measures which tackle community-wide problems like poverty and unemployment.

However, the success of these initiatives will depend to a large extent on whether such concerns find an adequate forum for expression at a macro level. The institutional reforms we highlighted as well as the establishment of a broad political coalition (possibly between the SDLP, UUP and non-sectarian parties like the Alliance Party) would help transform talks into actions, thus leading to greater optimism and more dialogue, which could in the long run dilute religious identification within a broader class consciousness. Moreover, while there has been a growing tendency for both Catholics and Protestants to identify with a Northern Irish identity, this trend remains marginal and rooted mainly in the middle classes. Additional steps should be taken to encourage the development of a Northern Irish identity, which has the potential to offer “a shared identification. . . without threatening the political and ideological commitments of either [group]” (Bull 2006, p. 11). In achieving this end, education should play a pivotal role.

**Reconcile narratives and create a new vision for the future through education.** A *Shared Future*'s priority of “promoting civic-mindedness through civic education” is an encouraging first step in challenging prevailing sectarian notions and in providing an avenue for more inclusive, cross-cutting identities. Developing a common narrative regarding the causes and consequences of key events in the history of Northern Ireland, as well as promoting a human rights approach within the state curriculum are needed to establish a common understanding of why divisions have become so embedded, what these divisions have entailed in terms of material and human loss and how Northern Ireland can transition towards a more inclusive society, founded upon common values and norms as well as rights and obligations. The goal of education should be to emphasize the similarities of Catholic and Protestant experiences both in the past and in the present, so that future generations will not remain locked into believing that since Protestant-Catholic relations have been historically antagonistic they will inevitably remain so in the future.

**In the longer run, work to take down the “Peace Walls”** While separation barriers may be necessary in the short to medium run in curbing the outbreak of violence as well as in

reducing intra-community fears and anxieties such that the initiatives outlined above can be more effectively undertaken, their ultimate dismantlement will be both a real and symbolic sign that “A Shared Vision” has succeeded in transforming Northern Irish society and in breaking down the psychological barriers of mistrust and hostility which have divided the communities for so many years.

**Expand nation-wide integrated education and mixed housing.** Supporting existing as well as promoting new integrated schools and mixed-housing schemes have become major policy aims of *A Shared Future*. However, inasmuch as segregation has been and continues to be a reinforcing symptom rather than cause of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, a move from *ad hoc* to large-scale mixed housing and schooling will likely be achieved in the long run, as initiatives such as those outlined above break-away at the animosities and distrust institutionalized within Northern Irish society. Ultimately, integration cannot be forced but must rather arise from a desire, whether as a result of economic and social necessity or a psychological opening within and between communities, to move beyond the sectarianism which has stifled Northern Ireland for so long.

## **Conclusion**

In many ways, Northern Ireland today stands on the brink of a new paradigm, one which recognizes and accepts diversity in all its forms. Decentralization and secularization in Ireland and Britain, as well as Northern Ireland’s membership in the European Union, have worked to make sectarianism in Northern Ireland “unfashionable” both on a local and international level. Moreover, increased immigration and heightened working-class consciousness have the potential to cut across the sectarian divide in promoting a more inclusive society. The growth of grass-roots organizations with less church affiliation and greater independence from political leadership has given a voice to disenfranchised members of both communities, helping create a more amenable environment for change. Ultimately, both real and perceived concerns of an unfavorable shift in the balance of power between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland will require Protestants to re-examine how they fit within a socially and economically evolving state and culture. Protestant disaffection in the context of transformative notions of self and other has the potential not only to lead to political purification, but as Mitchell (2003, pp. 619-627)

advances may rather result in “political pluralization” or “political privatization,” which would help foster new forms of identification that would “accommodate diversity” rather than reinforce historic animosities. At the same time, Catholics will need to think more ecumenically and more independently of sectarian identities, to build an overarching Northern Ireland identity and work for common benefits within it. All of the above developments may put into place the conditions necessary for a transition away from sectarianism and into “A Shared Future.” John Wright (in Lambkin 1996, p. 188) has argued that “the only freedom we have in looking at our past is to choose a different angle or vision, to look in the past for things which we believe have healing power in the present.” Opportunities for bridging the sectarian divide are present, if common experiences and compatible goals can be recognized, reinforced and effectively communicated within and between each community.

## **4. Bridging the Civil Society Gap in Northern Ireland**

**Maha Khan**

There is a general consensus that the voluntary and community sector worked tirelessly at bringing peace and conflict resolution during the thirty year Northern Ireland conflict; a conflict that infamously divided its people, their hearts and minds. It is fair to say, however, that the 1998 Belfast Agreement centered on track-one diplomacy, which focused on political elites, former paramilitaries, and the British and Irish governments who may or may not have represented their stakeholders' interests. At the time, the peace process did not pay much attention to the role of the community sector—commonly referred to as civil society. This is counter-intuitive as political elites derive most of their support and authority from their communities, and in fact are a product of their communities.

This brief will demonstrate the positive contribution civil society made to the outcome of the peace process and to the achievement of better relations between the two divided communities. Though their role has been positive, groups within the communities did not have a shared view of how to address the underlying causes of the conflict. To a certain extent this reflects the deep mistrust that still permeates Northern Ireland society. This lack of cohesion led groups to focus more on bonding social capital within a single identity community that ultimately hindered their efforts at reconciliation between communities. Finally, this brief will propose recommendations for both civil society and the newly elected government to work together to bridge social capital in Northern Ireland in order to transform the conflict and create a peaceful and united society.

There are encouraging signs that the importance of track two diplomacy—interventions and efforts by civil society—is increasingly recognized. This is demonstrated by the Northern Ireland Government's March 2005 policy statement *A Shared Future*, which states "Whilst actions to promote good relations will be driven forward by government, it is clear that improving relations in the long-run will require leadership at political, civic and community level."

## **Civil Society's Historical Involvement**

Civil society's role in the political process can be traced back to the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in 1967, when members from all political parties urged the then Protestant Unionist Government to protect the rights of all individuals and address genuine economic grievances of the Roman Catholic minority. However, some in the Unionist community saw this as an effort to destabilize the state and capitalized on the fear of some within their community. In turn, the Catholic community felt victimized, and ultimately paramilitary groups were established—or reactivated in some cases—in both communities.

The conflict took a decisive turn in 1972 when members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the British Parachute Regime shot 13 civil rights protestors during NICRA's civil rights march in the Bogside area of Derry. This event, Bloody Sunday, marked a watershed in Northern Ireland's history and led to direct British Rule and the end of mass marches for NICRA.

This historic event drove a large section of the apolitical masses away from the concept of civil rights and into the arms of violence (NICRA 1978). Different communities developed narratives and, in turn, self-perceptions. To deal with the ensuing violence and upheaval of the Troubles, community groups—mainly consisting of the working class—sprung up at the neighborhood level, mainly to deal with emergency needs and services that the government did not address. Additionally, in neighborhoods with high levels of violence, community groups acted as vigilantes. It is estimated that in 1973 there were 500 community groups and associations (Birrell and Williamson 2001).

## **Bridging the Gap?**

With the escalation of violence during the Troubles, people grew accustomed to inter-community deterrence and many community groups evolved to address the larger issues within their communities such as discrimination and poverty. They developed dedicated leaders that were focused on intra-community and single identity work—seeking to redress social and economic deprivation within their own community as a precursor to engaging with the other community. The conditions were appropriate for single-identity work, as it was difficult to convince people to engage with the perceived enemy, especially after bursts of violence or disorder. Many of these groups were rooted in the neighborhoods with whom and for whom they worked, and in a spatially segregated society they themselves often reflected the wider divisions

(University of Ulster 2006). Consequently, they addressed the *symptoms* of the conflict rather than the *underlying* causes of the conflict. Their work demonstrated that daily life in Northern Ireland between communities was sustained through shared norms that promoted avoidance with each other and limited functional integration (University of Ulster 2006).

Nevertheless, there were those that were not deterred by past experiences and determined to build bridges. By the late 1980s, the level of contact and dialogue between the communities grew as visionary leaders—such as Liam Maskey and Billy Mitchell of Intercomm—took steps in establishing personal relationships with the other community. This went beyond the middle-class rhetoric that had limited direct experience at the working class level where violence was pervasive. These leaders understood that violence was going nowhere and that they had at least one thing in common—a conviction to work together for a shared future, in some shape or form. They realized that without leadership from the government or a framework of civic engagement, leaders had to develop interpersonal relationships to foster trust. They capitalized on their local credibility to take risks for peace.

It is not possible to point to a single event that proves the positive impact the community sector had in the peace process; however the Republican and Loyalist Ceasefire of 1994 was symbolic in that it created a sense of hope for community and international organizations committed to ‘embed the peace process’ and help shape a less sectarian civil society. As a result, The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) received funding to act as an intermediary body for community organizations through the EU’s Peace Program (PEACE I) to promote social inclusion and boost economic growth and advance the social and economic regeneration (CFNI 2002). This initiative created social agendas that led to the establishment of anti-poverty groups and women’s organizations that cut across communities. In fact, the Women’s Coalition has some of its roots here, as discussed in the next chapter. Many members from the Women’s Coalition were drawn from the community sector and played an important role in the 1998 Belfast Agreement. They incorporated their community values of inclusiveness, rehabilitation, and dialogue into the political process representing cross-community concerns.

With organizations focusing on crosscutting themes that affected both communities, they brought Catholics and Protestants together. This was important in developing a sense of trust and unity. However, it is important to remember that the majority of organizations were not engaged at this cross-community level, and were still very much embedded in their communal roots.

Many activists and academics have stated that community leaders' work was the glue that held society together during communal tension (Cochrane and Dunn 2002; personal interviews 2008). Their approach of providing working-class cross-community link, especially involving former paramilitaries and prisoners, provided an inclusive dialogue process between the parties to the conflict, and allowed them to take ownership of problems. In this non-threatening environment, former paramilitaries have said that they came to see that community development is just an extension of their role as defenders of their community and that equality was not a threat. In a broader sense then, their model of open discussions and inclusion provided a platform for the 1998 Belfast Agreement.

Researchers have pointed to the overlap between community and political sectors as central to a slow, incremental, and positive impact exerted by the community sector on the political process. One commentator (Cochrane and Dunn 2002) put it, "There is no way that the old-style politicians could have brokered a deal which could have been sold to those communities, because those communities would not have been part of it if their community leaders had not been part of the talks, and the NGO sector has probably been instrumental in helping that forward."

### **Social Capital Theory: Blessing or Curse?**

Social capital theory, concerning the norms and networks that enable collective action (World Bank), is fiercely debated in Northern Ireland today. Social capital theory constructs a bridge between those who believe that market economics will resolve everything and those who argue that social issues are primarily ethical, about doing what is right (Morrow 2006). Trust is a big component of social capital theory and there are three universally recognized functional forms of social capital; *bonding* social capital where communities are empowered and internally cohesive; *bridging* social capital where communities are building relations with the other; and *linking* social capital where a community attract resources and influence policy and decision-making (Kilmurray 2006).

The community sector mainly took two approaches to community development; bonding (single identity) and bridging social capital (cross-community). Bonding social capital, while positive, can also reinforce ethnic identity, consolidate prejudice and hinder cross-community efforts. It is well known that Northern Ireland has a lot of closely 'bonded' communities, but lags

behind in any sense of ‘bridging’ social capital (Kilmurray 2006).

Bonded communities are indeed an important aspect of peacebuilding as organizations engage members of a community that were deeply involved in the conflict that may not have otherwise made the effort. This approach additionally enables members to address conflicts *within* their own community. Subsequently, these empowered communities have the ability to cross over to the ‘other’ community to develop and foster trust. This, however, has simply not been done as much as necessary.

The question then remains, why have community organizations not been as helpful in transforming the conflict post-peace process as they were before? Why has there been less of a focus on bridging social capital despite the existence of committed inter-communal organizations? The answer lies in a combination of interdependent factors—the lack of political agreement, the lack of a shared vision among community organizations, the lack of shared norms that promote avoidance, and a legacy of suspicion that still resonates among communities today.

In a study conducted by the Northern Ireland Council on Voluntary Action (NICVA), community organizations identified their single identity origins and the segregated nature of living patterns in Northern Ireland as the main barriers to greater cross-community engagement. Many organizations felt they lacked the capacity to address the issue and some specifically identified an unhelpful funding environment. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of the friendship and trust, stating that the driving force lies in the reliability of these relationships for those involved in cross-community work, as discussed more fully in a later chapter. Similarly, studies have found a correlation between interpersonal trust and civic engagement but they found that the path from civic engagement to interpersonal trust was much stronger than the reverse path leading from trust to civic engagement (Morrow 2006).

Varshney (2002) has provided strong evidence from conflict-affected cities in India suggesting exactly this. He argues that there is an integral link between the structure of civic life in multi-ethnic societies and the presence or absence of violence. He places a larger role on inter-communal associational forms of engagement than every day forms of engagement that infiltrate both the divided communities. Communities organized along intra-communal lines, he claims, have very weak interconnections and hence are more prone to ethnic violence. “It is because the utility of everyday engagement declines with size that quotidian civicism may suffice to keep villages in peace but typically fails to prevent violence in cities, making integrated associations

more valuable.” His distinctions are very similar to the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, and although he does not rely on trust mechanisms as much as is needed in Northern Ireland, his argument can still be applied.

Varshney’s argument is supported by John Darby’s research (1986) on three towns with mixed populations in Northern Ireland. Two of the cities experienced high levels of violence and the third did not. All three communities had segregated churches, schools and political parties but there was one stark difference in that the less violent city had mixed Rotary and Lions Clubs, football, bowling, cricket, and other sport clubs. Additionally, there was a very active mixed Single Parents Club. His research found a correlation between the inter-communal organizations and the level of trust and decreased conflict.

Admittedly, India’s conflict and origins of community organizations are very different from Northern Ireland. India has a history of nationalism and active civil society whereas Northern Ireland’s organizations are rooted along communal lines with no shared view of society or solution to the conflict. Many in Northern Ireland are still healing and are vulnerable to political settlements. Politics still dictate social norms and trust (Morrow, 2006) and community organizations are vulnerable to this. Therefore, in the newly established government setting, civic associations must have support from local politicians and institutions to be effective.

There is a lesson to learn from Varhney’s and Darby’s findings. In 2006, 79 percent of the Northern Irish population stated they would prefer to live in a mixed religion neighborhood, and 79 percent thought that better relations between Protestants and Catholics will come about through more mixing (2006 Northern Ireland Life and Time Survey). This is an indication that attitudes are slowly changing.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Bridging social capital to foster trust and cross-community relations is a slow process, but realistic. Following is a framework detailing recommendations.

### **Short Term Recommendations**

**Incorporate social capital theory must be at all levels of public policy.** This must extend beyond the rhetoric in *A Shared Future*. An independent body, such as the Human Rights Commission, should offer scrutiny and provide the link between the state and community

organizations. Support and trust needs to seem real to the people on the ground and this needs to be driven from the higher level. Programs and services aimed at communities must be *bridged*—from healthcare to education, as discussed below in the chapters on education. To ensure feasibility, local governments need to create infrastructure and coordination structures too. Mainstreaming this policy will be a short-term endeavor but developing and implementing programs with local partners will require two to three years.

**Build social networks that include communities** that have faced high levels of violence. It is important to listen to their concerns and provide them a platform to express their grievances and fears. Conditions should be locally determined rather than imposed. Once trust is established, they can move forward to engage with other communities, in a *neutral* location, to slowly express their grievances. Meeting in trust, people can listen to each other and eventually disabuse misunderstanding. This is not an instant fix, but rather a process. Engaging marginalized communities allows them to take ownership of problems and thus develop sustainable solutions. For this to be successful, there must be interaction with community organizations, a stable policy environment and appropriate funding programs.

**Use theater as a tool to target youth.** An intermediary body, such as the CFNI, can manage the overall project and select various community groups to target the youth population. Theater is an effective and appropriate medium to communicate with youth, and one that finds a home in this rich Irish tradition. Each performance forces them to examine stereotypes, ideologies, and issues at hand. Working together on a script and production, they come to rely on each other and this interdependence helps to create more sustainable relationships.

### **Medium Term Recommendations**

**Create associations at the business and university level.** Such an initiative would serve to forge links between communities, ranging from groups such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (India), recreational clubs (film clubs) within a business, to a mixed singles group in a university. These vertical networks serve to build trust. This will be a slow process and the initiative needs to come from the government (such as the Human Rights Commission or Equality Commission) working with an intermediary civil society group.

**Under the leadership of one community organization, such as CFNI, build a database of existing programs.** This database would serve as a reporting and dissemination

strategy. There is a need to systematically collect and present grievances regarding communities' issues to stakeholders. Qualitative and quantitative indicators should be used when appropriate. The database will serve to make the connection between community relations and community development more explicit. Facilitating this process requires a cooperative approach between government and civil society actors. This foundation of information can, in turn, assist legislators in creating appropriate policies. Additionally, this database will serve as a toolkit and best practices guide of all the community intervention programs implemented in Northern Ireland.

### **Long Term Recommendations**

**Social capital and trust can only emerge when there is a sense of a united future emanating from the Government.** A political context of co-existence makes it difficult for trust to come out. Northern Ireland needs to create one new, common national identity in which everyone feels secure and to which everyone relates. This is especially true when there is a history of violence, threat, and division. Governments should tap into community organizations—such as the Healing Through Remembering Project—to understand what communities need.

**Local governments should engage communities in discussions about future interface and social policies in Northern Ireland.** As has been stated time and again, community development processes alone cannot change the relationships between segregated areas. Often times there is a disconnect between politicians and community members, and this gap can be filled with consultative policy processes that enables members to feel invested in the process and hence transform the conflict.

### **Conclusion**

Northern Ireland has made incredible strides in the path toward peace and conflict resolution. However, there is still a legacy of suspicion between the two communities. Community organizations have played a vital role in empowering communities and building trust within them, but need to do more to bridge communities. Cross-community engagement builds trust and a sustainable society that has the propensity to reduce conflict.

Bridging social capital and trust is the only sustainable model for Northern Ireland. This will be a slow process with bumps along the way, but a necessary one. The community sector

alone is not the solution to transforming the conflict, but it does assist in tackling difficult issues and engaging communities in difficult dialogue. Politicians must meet the challenge to work together under a united banner to resolve the conflict, and ensure that future policies include developing social networks across communities. The community sector and political actors can help members of communities realize that they have more in common than they have different. This is sure to provide members of a new generation with a brighter, safer, united future.



## **5. From Bottom Up, From Outside In: Women's role in the Northern Ireland Conflict**

**Sabina Henneberg**

This paper describes women's participation in managing the conflict in Northern Ireland. Women have long played traditional gender roles in Northern Ireland society. Their place has been in the home, not the political sphere. Over the course of the conflict, however, women became engaged in public life. They are now likely to play a more active role in the politics of the conflict, though they continue to face barriers. However, from their own perspective and the perspective of many other participants, women have already made valuable contributions to the peace process.

### **The shift in women's roles**

Traditional gender roles are ingrained in Northern Ireland society, and the sectarian and pervasive nature of the conflict initially preserved ideologies that restricted women's freedom and left little space for them to pursue women's issues. Yet as the conflict increased the level of violence, including domestic violence, and hampered the state's ability to meet many women's social, economic and security needs, women began to play an active role in community work. They established women's centers to provide services such as shelters or emotional support groups (Cockburn, 1999, pp. 61-68). They also organized across communities, bringing together Republican and Unionist women to reduce the conflict at the local level.

Women's involvement at the community level and with rights activists during the early years helped build the momentum towards their entry at the political level. Thus, in 1996 when the leaders of Northern Ireland began to negotiate their future, women had formed a rich network of individuals wanting to end the violence. They saw the opportunity to get their voices heard in what was almost certain to be a male-dominated process. Two women, Monica McWilliams and Avila Kilmurray, whose work continues to contribute to the management of the conflict, called women together in a series of meetings in Belfast, where they decided to form an all-women's caucus as a means of bringing female voices into the talks. The first meeting drew a large crowd of women from both sides of the conflict. "Many women were meeting for the first time, but

many others—from different backgrounds—had previously worked with, or knew of, other women in the room. The upshot...was that since political parties were not going to ensure that a woman's voice would be heard, the women who had navigated and negotiated grassroots politics for many years would go ahead and do it themselves" (Fearon, 2001, p. 9).

They called themselves the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). The electoral system drawn up for the Forum elections allowed increased representation for smaller parties, and much to their surprise, the NIWC received enough votes to send two delegates to the talks.

Over the course of the Troubles, the Good Friday negotiations, and the peace-building process, women in Northern Ireland have played a unique role in overcoming the conflict. The work of the NIWC provides the most visible evidence of these roles. However, women at the community level as well as the national level have simultaneously been working to resolve the conflict. They have helped build peace by advocating effectively for inclusion of all parties, by finding imaginative solutions to overcoming differences, by coming together on common issues, and by listening to every party involved.

## **Inclusion**

Based on three principles—human rights, equality, and inclusion—the NIWC advocated the involvement of every individual in the formulating and the provisions of the Agreement. This included advocating on behalf of parties whose presence at the talks was resisted by their opponents due to connections with paramilitaries. "The NIWC analysis boiled down to this: we're all part of the problem, and we're therefore all part of the solution" (Fearon, 2001, p. 100). Among the NIWC's contributions to the Good Friday Agreement was a Civic Forum, an all-island consultative forum bringing together representatives of civil society and its partners (Fearon, 2001, p. 102). It was also the only party to propose measures for the support and reintegration of victims and ex-prisoners. This ensured that the people experiencing the deepest effects of the conflict had a role in shaping the future.

The importance of inclusion in managing the conflict has become accepted during the years since the Agreement was reached. Bodies such as the Parades Commission, which works to "promote and facilitate mediation as a means of resolving disputes concerning public processions ...and make such recommendations as it thinks fit to the Secretary of State concerning the operation of the [Public Processions] Act" (NIPC, 2008), have come to recognize the importance

of gender parity. Excepting the original commission, the commission was all-male until 2006 when Secretary of State Peter Hain appointed three women. This has demonstrated the importance of balance in the commission and of being reflective of society as a whole as it makes important decisions related to the conflict.

### **Creative Strategies and Solutions**

Many women experience the conflict not as Republicans or Unionists but as members of a group with its own agenda. This has allowed them to find imaginative ways of dealing with difficult issues and overcoming sectarian divides. The NIWC took a “problem-solving approach” to the conflict: “Rather than adhering to any particular ideological dogma...its approach [was] fluid, within the parameters of its core principles...Espousing what, ironically, amounted almost to a helpmate role, the NIWC said it was prepared to ‘work to secure agreement across all interests and all parties for a workable solution’” (Fearon, 2001, p. 14). It was the only political party to take this approach, yet like other parties the NIWC never neglected its own principles or issues.

The NIWC also drew on its extensive worldwide networks of friends to help craft creative proposals during the negotiations which enabled them to put forward imaginative solutions to the many problems that were encountered during the negotiating process. Community groups such as the Women’s Support Network (WSN), which links and supports women’s groups in Belfast, employed a similar strategy to further their goals. The WSN found it could work across sectarian and community barriers by building wide circles of women working in diverse environments (Cockburn, 1998, p. 211).

Women’s contributions to reducing the conflict can also be in part attributed to their shared perspectives and experiences despite different community backgrounds. Since the Troubles, women have been concerned with issues such as gender inequalities and the family effects of violence that unite rather than divide. Although other groups and political parties have also used common issues to overcome differences, shared experiences of exclusion and discrimination continue to provide an especially strong common ground for women on issues related to the conflict. The NIWC was able to operate effectively as a multi-community party because it worked towards the three principles upon which everyone agreed (equality, inclusion and human rights). The Peace People, formed in 1976 by three women, also has worked as a

grassroots protest movement against violence in Northern Ireland by prioritizing the need for peace over community divisions (The Peace People, 2008).

Women in Northern Ireland understand another key to conflict resolution: unless those who feel they have experienced injustice have a chance to be heard and recognized, problems and grievances will remain. The NIWC played an important role in changing the conflict simply by listening to all parties. During the Good Friday talks, the NIWC treated everyone involved, “from secretaries to secretaries of state, as if they had something to offer” (Fearon, 2001, p. 105).

Other women in politics have also demonstrated the effectiveness of listening. Mo Mowlam, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 1997-2001, approached the decision in 1997 on whether to restrict the Orange Order parade, as well as the crisis of Loyalist prisoners threatening to end the ceasefire later that same year, by listening to everyone involved. She shocked and angered many by entering the Maze prison in January 1998 to speak to the prisoners, ultimately protecting the ceasefire and allowing the peace process to move forward. She explains in her memoir (Mowlam, 2001, p. 189) that “being listened to, which afforded status on par with others, was crucial, particularly for the representatives of paramilitary groups.”

Women working at the community level found the strength to overcome the challenges of the conflict by forming personal relationships based on listening. The success of organizations such as the WSN was grounded in the women’s commitment to “judge people by what they do, not who they are;” to “avoid ascribing thoughts or motivations or qualities to others on the basis of their ethnic or national label...To wait to hear the other’s telling of history, her view of the event...rather than making suppositions...” (Cockburn, 1998, p. 205). Given the significance of identity in defining the Northern Ireland conflict, the realization that only through listening can different identities, ideologies and individuals begin to co-exist has made vital contributions.

### **Women’s Future Role in Northern Ireland**

Since 1998 women’s political representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly has remained below 20 percent (CAIN, 2008). Despite the success of women’s organizations and coalitions in affecting change, women’s representation in politics has not been steadily increasing. While women have shown that they, too, can help bring peace, they continue to face barriers to full representation in politics and in their larger peace-building work. However, in

becoming actors in the conflict, women are challenging long-held traditions and deep-rooted identities just as the peace agreement does. Thus they can expect only gradual change.

### **Overcoming Remaining Barriers**

Despite mechanisms in the Belfast Agreement for ensuring gender equality in politics and in the workplace, many analysts (Fearon, 1994) argue that women will not achieve equal representation in politics until obstacles such as inequitable divisions of domestic labor are overcome. Meanwhile, peace itself remains uncertain and incomplete. Challenges such as the devolution of policing and justice issues (scheduled for May 2008) still have a polarizing effect and recall traditional attitudes. These challenges represent existing barriers to women's work as described above.

Yet women's activism has already made substantial headway in "decommissioning attitudes." Candidates from the NIWC re-elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the elections of 1998 lost their two seats in 2003 (CAIN, 2008). In 2006, ten years after its formation, the party disbanded—but the disbanding did not imply failure. The coalition had been formed to ensure that women's voices were included in the negotiations and to insert the three principles of equality, inclusion and human rights into the agreement. When the party disbanded, the members felt that they had made these contributions to the peace talks. Given the political developments at the time, they felt there was little space left for a separate party to pursue the issue of women's inclusion in politics but that this could better be achieved through civil society.

Since then, there is little evidence to suggest that women working to reduce the effects of the conflict are opposed by essentialist attitudes or widespread beliefs that women are unsuited for politics. The varied levels of female representation among the different political parties of Northern Ireland at both the regional and national levels, as well as the changes within each party over time in policies and positions regarding gender representation, suggest that women are generally not viewed as "belonging" only in the private sphere. Evidence shows that the people of Northern Ireland acknowledge the need for women's inclusion in decision-making out of a sense of fairness and justice (Wilford, 1994, p. 2), and the enthusiasm that McWilliams and Kilmurray garnered at the inception of the NIWC "debunks the myth that women are not interested in contesting elections or getting involved in formal politics" (Fearon 1994, p. 8).

Among many women (and likely men), feminism is no longer as divisive as it once was. Today, there are more feminists in Northern Ireland than during the Troubles, when different communities carried different connotations of feminism. Nationalist mythology and imagery has traditionally glorified women more often as symbols of oppression or “freedom fighters,” while Unionist imagery has remained predominantly male, particularly in the Protestant church where worship of the Virgin Mary is strongly condemned (Sales 1997, p. 144). Today, feminists of all shades are more likely to look beyond these traditions.

Other Northern Ireland institutions are also contributing to shifting attitudes around women’s rights and equality. As the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) works to foster a culture of respect for human rights, it counters attitudes that block inclusion, equality and security. For example, the NIHRC holds the government accountable for the law, policy and practice on issues of human rights concern, including issues relating to domestic violence. It is currently undertaking an investigation into the extent of sex trafficking in Northern Ireland. It has also raised concerns about the process by which women obtain non-molestation orders, and has drawn attention to the human rights concerns of women who are unable to afford the legal fees to obtain such orders.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Women’s experiences during the violent conflict were distinct from those of men, and women played a vital role in reaching a political agreement and reconstructing peace. They contributed primarily by promoting inclusion, using innovative solutions and strategies, listening to others, and coming together around common issues. Though women continue to face deeply-entrenched attitudes, there are many positive signs that they will remain active and effective in the political sphere.

Women needed to fight to be included in the official peace talks, but once the door was opened for them they introduced a unique approach to the process. Is women’s ability to listen, to propose non-violent approaches to conflict and to look past their differences an innately female ability? Or were women simply the first marginalized group in Northern Ireland that had the chance to participate in the political sphere? If women’s approach is directly linked to their experiences, then, ironically, gender inequality and exclusion in Northern Ireland may have

helped the Belfast Agreement (and the peace-building that came out of it) take the shape that it did.

## **Recommendations**

Women's work in Northern Ireland has demonstrated that inclusion, fresh ideas from external networks and new participants, partnership formed out of common experiences, and listening all play a critical role in moving past conflict. The leaders of Northern Ireland should continue to use these strategies to build confidence in the future.

**Decision-making bodies must strive to represent the broader society** as they address contentious issues like decommissioning and policing and justice, as well as other issues of policy-making where sectarian attitudes dominate. This means using affirmative action or similar policies to ensure that women and minority groups participate. Current policy-makers must also identify and address social barriers like inequitable divisions of labor in households which prevent full representation in political institutions. They should support existing efforts to overcome these barriers.

**Inclusion of a broad group of representative actors will lead to the entry of new decision-makers into efforts at overcoming sectarian divides.** These new members will generate fresh and creative proposals for allowing the people of Northern Ireland to fully and peacefully govern themselves.

**New decision-making bodies should be encouraged to form and participate at the institutional and community levels,** following the model of women's groups in overcoming community divides. Groups in opposing communities that have shared traumatic experiences should be sought out and encouraged to come together in order to effect change.



## **6. Relationships in Northern Ireland: Symbols and Space**

**Alistair Mackie**

The physical environment has played an important role in the conflict in Northern Ireland. Symbols have been crucial in creating identities and providing links with past. This has been through their deliberate use, such as flags, emblems, monuments, parades, and murals, but has also been less deliberate where objects, such as peace walls, armoured police vans and fortress-like police stations, have taken on important symbolic meanings. Despite the fact that the last ten years have been an unprecedented period of peace since the Troubles began, these symbols make up a landscape imbued with meaning and significance so that the people of Northern Ireland continue to physically live the conflict in their everyday lives.

Drawing upon anthropological and archaeological theories of art and space, this chapter will seek to provide an understanding of how these symbols, and the space in which they form a crucial part, affect and are affected by the people who live in Northern Ireland. While much of the discussion is theoretical, through this understanding some tentative conclusions and recommendations for future policy will be made. In sum, the landscape plays a crucial role in shaping and constructing the lives of the people who live in it, and they in turn continually construct and reconstruct that landscape. People cannot be separated from their surroundings, and together with it form a complex network of relationships that includes people, objects, symbols and the past. Any policy, therefore, that aims to change the use and meaning of symbols has to take into account the totality of relationships of which they form a part. Though it might prove to be helpful, the answer (if indeed there is one) is thus not just a matter of banning flags, pulling down walls and painting over murals. It requires a more nuanced approach that aims to change the relationships between people, between their landscape and between competing symbols within that landscape.

### **Symbols**

Symbols do not have meaning in and of themselves. It is people and their context that give symbols their significance. This significance can be multilayered. One symbol can mean different things to different people, while at the same time mean different things to the same person in different contexts. For example, the Union Jack could be interpreted as a symbol of

oppression or a proud affirmation of one's nationality and heritage, depending on whether somebody is of Republican or Loyalist persuasion. For the same Orangeman, an Orange parade marching through a Loyalist area might simply mean a celebration of The Battle of the Boyne, but when walking through a predominantly Republican area could mean much more—an assertion of their perceived right to use any space in Northern Ireland as they wish. As well as being multilayered, the meaning of symbols can also change over time. For example, the Red Hand of Ulster was originally a crest of the O'Neill family but is now used, amongst other things, as a Loyalist emblem and the symbol of Ulster rugby football club.

The nature of symbols and their importance during the conflict and present peace in Northern Ireland has been addressed most recently in an excellent study conducted by Dominic Bryan and Gordon Gillespie (2005) of Queen's University Belfast. However, this chapter adopts an interpretation of symbols that moves beyond viewing them as depositories of meaning. Using an anthropological theory of art, symbols can instead be seen as playing a much more fundamental role in mediating and facilitating human relations. In doing so, some insight can be provided into the way symbols might be transformed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

For Alfred Gell (1998), an artwork is not important for what it represents in a symbolic way, but rather because it embodies human action and agency. In this way artworks are fundamentally 'indexes of agency'. Because of this, they are able to form relationships with human beings and with other similar objects in the same way that human beings form relationships among themselves.

Artworks, in other words, come in families, lineages, tribes, whole populations, just like people. They have relations with one another as well as with the people who create and circulate them as individual objects. They marry, so to speak, and beget offspring which bear the stamp of their antecedents. Artworks are manifestations of culture as a collective phenomenon, they are, like people, enculturated beings. (Gell 1998, p. 153)

Furthermore, artworks cannot thus be thought of as existing at one moment in time, but need to be considered over a period of time and as part of a wider series of works. For instance, in Maori society the architectural form of a meeting house is not just an example of its immediate precedent, but is the accumulation of the series of precedents that have gone before it.

Each [Maori meeting] house embodies not just the memory of its immediate exemplar, but a cumulative series of memories, memories of memories, and so on. That is to say, it carries with it the whole thickness of *durée*, and belongs not just to a ‘now’—the temporal coordinates of its construction—but to an extended temporal field which reaches back into the past and is drawn up into the present again. (Gell 1998, p. 257)

In addition, because these meeting houses are important communal buildings they are also the physical embodiments of ‘Maoridom’. By incorporating the accumulation of precedents in their design, they are thus an embodiment of a collective Maori historical, cultural, ideological and political experience. They are collective ‘indexes of agency’.

Symbols in Northern Ireland can be thought of in the same way. Instead of just holding symbolic meaning for people, the symbols actually act like people, forming and mediating relationships with and between people and between other symbols (as agents). Taking the case of the Union Jack again, the flag does not symbolically represent the UK, but it embodies the collective agency of the UK—the agency of its government, its armed forces and its population. The inhabitants of Northern Ireland then have different relationships with the flag—as the physical embodiment of the collective agency of the UK—in the same way that they have different relationships with particular people. The type of relationship they have in turn depends on the wider network of relationships of which they form a part. The Union Jack itself is also enmeshed in a wider network of relationships with other symbols, for example with other flags such as the Tricolour or the Stars and Stripes. Both people and symbols, as agents, therefore form part of an unbroken chain of networks of relationships.

Another way of thinking about this would be to consider the flag as a woman. The woman forms part of different networks of relationships. She could be a mother to her children, a sister to her siblings, a wife to her husband, a colleague to her workmates, and a friend or enemy to somebody else. The relationship different people have with her, and she with them, thus depends on the wider social context of which they and she are a part. In this position she also mediates relationships between different groups of people. It is through the woman that the husband has relationships with his in-laws or with his wife’s work colleagues, whom he may or may not have met. In the same way, the Union Jack, the Tricolour or indeed any other emblem or symbol in Northern Ireland, forms part of a network of relationships. As with the woman, this

also means that people can have relationships with one another through these symbols, even when they do not have any direct contact.

Furthermore, the agency that symbols in Northern Ireland embody is not necessarily at a single point in time. In the case of the murals, for example, in depicting a deceased person a mural can act as the medium for a relationship between the deceased person and those still living in the community. In this way people are able to have a relationship with the past. The murals of Bobby Sands in Belfast and in Derry are thus more than just representations of Bobby Sands, they are the physical embodiment of him in the present community. They thereby allow people in those communities to have a living relationship with him and the collective past that he was so crucial a part of. In the same way, the Orange marches can be seen as indexes of agency of William of Orange, and their present day enactments are a way for Protestants (and Catholics) to have a living relationship with him, in their different ways.

More broadly, people have distributive personalities (Strathern 1988). They connect with their world in multiple ways—as mothers, daughters, aunts, Catholics, Protestants and so on. In Northern Ireland the connection with the physical world is in the context of polarising relationships, such as Catholic or Protestant and Loyalist or Republican, as opposed to common relationships, such as mother, daughter, son or father.

## **Space**

The symbols thus described form part of the broader landscape in which people live. The space people inhabit has a fundamental affect on their identity and, in turn, their identity affects how they perceive and understand the world around them (Tilley 1994). Like symbols, space or landscape cannot therefore be separated from the societies, groups and individuals that live within it. The space is socially constructed. Places within that space are more than points or locations; they have meanings and values for the people that live in them, and provide reference points and emotional stimuli for human attachment and involvement. But space is both constitutive and constituted. It acts dialectically with the people who are part of it. It is both something that is constructed by individuals and at the same time limits or constricts that creation. In this way space is never neutral and always political, and the ability to control or manipulate an understanding and use of space is exploited in systems of domination.

As people move through their surroundings they are continually constructing ‘spatial stories’, connecting previous experiences with the present in narrative forms of understanding. These narratives allow people to link themselves and disparate parts of their physical surroundings to different events and previous experiences. Through the landscape they can thus form a connection with the past. It follows that if a person is restricted in how s/he is able to move through that space, it will influence how s/he is able to make that connection. Such restriction will therefore shape the narratives that people are able to form to make sense of themselves within the physical environment.

Applying these ideas to Northern Ireland is instructive in understanding how space affects the people who live there and how they in turn create and change that space. In Derry, for example, the streets in the Bogside are not just physical points in the town but are places that people pass and remember those such as John Duddy and Patrick Doherty who were killed during Bloody Sunday. They are stimuli that connect people with the past and with the wider Republican narrative as they go about their everyday lives.

In terms of the manipulation and control of space, this is most clearly in evidence in Belfast. The peace walls running through the city restrict people’s movement and demarcate different areas of dominance. People are only able to take certain routes through the city. Both Catholics and Protestants are unable, or might feel uncomfortable, moving through the others’ space. In this way the people of Belfast continue to physically live the conflict in their everyday lives.

Perhaps more than in the peace walls, though, the political power over space is evident in the parades, as highlighted in a later chapter. They represent a very visible and noisy control over the use of space (Jarman 1993). Up until 1993, when there was a Sinn Féin march through Belfast, these marches had almost exclusively been Protestant parades. In their physical occupation of space to the exclusion of Catholics, the Protestants make a strong political statement as to their right and their right alone to exclusively use a communal space.

While the people in Northern Ireland almost certainly do not see themselves as having relationships with objects in the same way as they do with other human beings, and may not ascribe to certain ontological philosophies, these ideas can help us to see some of the issues with symbols and space in the conflict and how they might be transformed as part of a stable and permanent peace. The fundamental problem that these ideas highlight is that both the space, and

the symbols that form a part of it, cannot be separated from the wider social context. They are inextricably bound up in the entirety of relationships and narratives that people have in Northern Ireland and any attempt to change them has to take this into account.

The PSNI provides a good example in this respect. While its name has changed from the RUC and it has a new crest to “reflect diversity, hope, parity and inclusiveness,” (PSNI 2008) it is still mistrusted by many, particularly among the Republicans. The point is that, while it might help, it will take more than just changing the symbols of the police force for people to have a different relationship with it. The entirety of relationships within which the police are implicated has to change. The efforts to recruit more Catholics is clearly a step in the right direction as this will undoubtedly help to change the wider network of relationships the police force has.

As part of stories and networks of relationships, space and symbols also have a role in mediating what form the narratives and relationships take. In Northern Ireland, where the two sides do not necessarily have contact with each other, it is through these physical objects that they form relationships. In doing so the physical world not only becomes an interface for the conflict—as with the Orange marches or the peace walls—but by restricting and distorting how the sides have relationships with each other, they also entrench the perceived differences between them. It is such entrenched relationships that facilitate the stone throwing over the peace walls or the obscenities exchanged during parades, between people, who in other parts of their lives, are civic individuals.

## **Policy**

Looking to the future it is clear that the landscape has to change for the endemic conflict to be overcome. Bryan and Gillespie (2005) have suggested a number of policy options relating to the use of symbols in their report on flags and emblems. These include having designated days that certain flags can be flown or banning outright the use of flags in certain circumstances. However, better than solutions involving legislation and enforcement are those that involve coordinated approaches and community involvement, as well as those that involve mediation. **All sides in the conflict have to be brought together in order to come up with shared solutions as to how symbols and space might continue to be legitimately used by the different communities.** If solutions are joint ones, then that in itself will help change the relationship people have with symbols and the way space is used to construct their narratives, without

needing to change the symbols or spaces themselves. Indeed, the success of such approaches can be seen in the continued use of Stormont as the seat of government in Northern Ireland. For over 60 years it was an embodiment of Protestant domination over Catholics. However, since the negotiated agreement with Sinn Féin to use the building for power-sharing, it has been transformed into the embodiment of a joint future for both sides, although this new perception has taken time to displace the old one.

Through joint projects, people can be given space to connect with one another and their past on a personal level, rather than through the distorting and restricting relationships they currently have through symbols and a physical landscape imbued with different meanings for both sides. This way the current context of polarising relationships, such as Catholic or Protestant and Republican or Loyalist, can be transformed into relationships everyone has in common, such as mother, daughter, father or son. A shared space has to be created, which allows all people in Northern Ireland to relate to their different pasts, while at the same time feel they are part of a common future.



## **7. Linfield v. Cliftonville: Sports and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland**

**Rick Lechowick**

The conflict in Northern Ireland is a religious, ethnic, economic, human rights, or constitutional conflict, according to different sources. Contention points between the two sides in the conflict are the parading or the policing or the housing of the two communities. Less frequently examined, though equally important is sport, a microcosmic representation of the divide between the two communities in Northern Ireland. It is from this vantage point that this chapter seeks to understand the conflict and examine the possibilities of using sport to reconcile the two sides in the conflict.

Protestants / Unionists / Loyalists don't play Gaelic football or hurling. Catholics / Republicans / Nationalists don't play rugby or cricket. "Association football," or soccer, is the one sport that now looks like it could cross the divide. As it is now, however, Protestants tend to play and support association football whereas the majority of Catholics continue to prefer the Gaelic version. All children are taught their community's respective sports in grammar school, whether it be rugby at a state school (usually Protestant), or Gaelic football at a private school (usually Catholic). Of the thirty-six politicians, ex-combatants, and social workers we met in our week in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, over half of the speakers mentioned the divide in sport. As many lamented the fact, I came to realize that team sport competition, the main social interaction between children in the rest of the world, appeared nearly impossible between the two communities in Northern Ireland.

As sport is a fundamental human activity of socialization, much of the information lends itself to being researched in public houses and social gathering spots, including sports venues. After so many scholars and experts mentioned the divide in sports, it became a small obsession for me—not because I'm very knowledgeable on the subject, but because I'm a rugby player and I had my longstanding curiosity about the Irish rugby anthem answered the first day in Belfast.

The national rugby team of Ireland is the only team that does not play their national anthem when they compete internationally and I never knew why. Instead, they sing an original, recently-composed song entitled, "Ireland's Call." Why would this alternate song be used when

it didn't invoke nearly the same emotional response as *Amhrán na bhFiann*, or The Soldier's Song? I found out that the Irish rugby team consisted of players not just from the Republic of Ireland (where all people play rugby), but from Northern Ireland as well (where only Protestants play it). Confused about what I had assumed to be an insignificant manifestation of the conflict in Northern Ireland. I explored further.

The GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) was formed in the late 1800s to promote purely Gaelic sports. The impetus was Irish nationalism. The result was a campaign to exclude all sports borne of 'foreign' (read: British) lands. This was at a time when the island of Ireland was whole, but it was still under the control of Great Britain. The GAA was originally associated with the fledgling IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood) that would give rise to the IRA (Irish Republican Army). The GAA still holds a lot of power in the Irish sporting world because it owns the best playing fields in Northern Ireland and the Republic and have traditionally not allowed non-Gaelic sports to be played on these grounds. A significant exception came in 2006 when the Irish rugby team was allowed to play against the English team at Croke Park in Dublin, the site of the original Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920, where British Irregular Black-and-Tan forces killed thirteen spectators and players during the war for Irish independence.

In the 1880s, as the GAA was being formed, the British Government also issued orders that its police and military could not engage in 'foreign' sports. In this context, 'foreign' meant Gaelic. That original military rule became custom. Thus, British police and military, as well as the Protestant Northern Irish, who consider themselves British, eschew Gaelic football or hurling in favor of rugby and cricket.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce wrote about this exact association of sport and nationalism, revivalism, and pride:

The main character heard "the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things.... When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him to be true to his country and help raise up her fallen language and tradition." (88, Penguin Classic Edition)

Sports was directly tied to raising up the country's 'fallen language and tradition.' The key in modern days is to use sport to rise above nationalism instead of using it to support and strengthen it.

Neil Jarman (2006) wrote about the problems faced during the Troubles for those involved with sports. Because the GAA was an Ireland-wide organization, many Catholics in Northern Ireland were fervent supporters of it just as many Protestants loathed it. Tensions were exacerbated when the UDA (Ulster Defence Association), a loyalist paramilitary group, named the GAA as a legitimate target in the Troubles, associating it with the IRA. Numerous GAA members (who might possibly have been members of actual paramilitary groups) were assassinated, the last of whom was the chairman of the GAA, killed in Bellaghy in 1997.

Even now, as the Troubles have quieted, sports can give rise to republican or unionist fervor. Walking into a bar in Belfast, one can tell the political leanings by the different coded symbols around the bar—Israeli flags signify loyalist bars and Palestinian flags mark nationalist bars. Songs can also give evidence as to the tendencies of the clientele, as can simple colors or the red hand, positioned in different ways. If unsure, however, one can always ask which Scottish football team the bar supports: Rangers or Celtic. I tried to disguise the question in one bar but the man I asked immediately backed away as though I had challenged him to a fight. After I explained myself, mentioning that I supported the team that I knew the area to be partial to, he returned the favor by instructing me never to do that again because I might be in the wrong neighborhood next time. Celtic is favored by the Catholics and the Rangers are favored by the Protestants. They are symbols for each side and even though both teams play in Scotland, the communities of Northern Ireland have appropriated their flags and banners, just as they have with the Israeli/Palestinian flags.

Continuing with traditional football, there are sectarian rivalries in Northern Irish football as well—most notably Linfield and Cliftonville. Linfield and Cliftonville are the Belfast equivalent of Rangers and Celtic, respectively. Linfield plays out of a predominantly Protestant neighborhood in south Belfast and Cliftonville plays from a predominantly Catholic area in north Belfast. The first night we arrived in Belfast was the night of the Linfield versus Cliftonville game. I watched the game from what I thought was a partial bar. What I noticed most was not a sectarian rivalry between Catholics and Protestants, but the simple fact that the two communities were playing the same sport, which was the first step forward.

Rugby crosses the sectarian divide as well, but only when the whole island is brought into the picture. However, as rugby is viewed as a game for the elite class, it doesn't garner as much popular support as association football, which is seen as a working class game. The saying that rugby players learn early on is that "rugby is a game for hooligans played by gentlemen and football is a game for gentlemen played by hooligans." This could be why the national rugby team of Ireland has not had as many problems crossing the divide between Northern Ireland and the Republic—most, if not all, of the players come from a well-educated, wealthy suburban background where there is not the same kind of conflict on the ground as there is in the Lower Falls or Shankill sections of Belfast. This mirrors the current lack of support that First Minister Ian Paisley and the DUP have found among many working-class loyalists because few people took note when he unexpectedly lent his vocal support to the All-Ireland rugby team in its campaign a couple years ago. In the past, such a move by the Reverend Paisley would have been unthinkable, but by this time it was barely noticed. But it is rugby, and it is seen as a sport of the out-of-touch elites. And so, as the majority of the populace watches and enjoys association football as opposed to rugby, it is with football that we must start.

Northern Ireland's main international sports team is its football team. Both communities send players to the squad, but it is still predominantly Protestant. However, there is evidence that the attitudes regarding football are changing. One academic we spoke to (who played football on the side) said that his team, when traveling to play teams in the Republic of Ireland, would sing the "The Sash My Father Wore," the main unionist song based on the defeat of (Catholic) James II by (Protestant) William of Orange. Though the song can raise the ire of die-hard republicans, this specific football team was made up of Protestants *and* Catholics, and used the song to rile up their southern rivals. This is a small, if strained, instance of cooperation through the guise of sport in Northern Ireland.

Of course, on a larger scale, there have still been sectarian setbacks amid these signs of hope. Neil Lennon, the captain of the Northern Irish football team, received a death threat in 2002 after he transferred to play for Celtic in Scotland and mentioned that, if such a team were created, he would play for a united Ireland football team. In response to the death threat, Lennon retired from international football. However, the healing and reconciliation processes must start on the small scale, and that is where the positive signs have appeared.

**Grammar schools, both Protestant and Catholic, should engage in sporting rivalries more often**—to help deter the children from the ‘recreational rioting’ so common in Northern Ireland. Knowing that sport can be a (peaceful) substitute for war, the schools should engage in the only common sport that they know: association football. Rugby is only useful across the southern border and even then it still only has limited appeal. Gaelic football, hurling, and cricket are much less-popular sports in both Northern Ireland communities and throughout the world.

The main worry with association football in Northern Ireland is that partisan and sectarian cheering exists when a solely Catholic team plays a solely Protestant. The fear is that the cheering could devolve into rioting. This is a fear throughout the world and countries everywhere battle the hooliganism of football fans. However, the rioting that could occur in Northern Ireland is usually avoided. The most prevalent reason I found for this was the fact that people are ‘tired of fighting’ of any sort, as one bar patron I met said.

The internationalism of football helps propel it past sectarian boundaries. The import of foreign players, be they from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, or wherever, helps both sides understand that football truly can supercede the divide. A well-known example is the French national football team, which has players from all across Africa and the Francophone world, yet has the passionate backing of all of France. To see players not from one of the two communities in Northern Ireland breaks the set sightline of most spectators. They are confronted with the fact that there exist outsiders to what is felt as the quintessential Northern Ireland experience: the Troubles.

But can association football really factor into the healing process? We spoke with one community leader who listed five “aspects of reconciliation.” To paraphrase, they were:

- 1 – Developing a common vision about the future.
- 2 – Dealing with the past with truth and justice.
- 3 – Actively building relationships between groups.
- 4 – Active process of trying to change attitudes.
- 5 – Ensuring social and political equity between the groups.

Competitive team sport fits numbers three and four quite well. Step three is satisfied by inter-community games. **Schools and community centers can organize football matches on a**

**regular basis so that ‘the other’ is no longer imagined, but present.** Because there is very little cross-community interaction, the ideas about the opposing side are often let to stew in the imaginations of the children and thus become worse and more exaggerated than they could possibly be in real life. If the teams were formed and the games were scheduled, the third step would have a good foundation to build from. Step four is born of step three. As the teams slowly become mixed, from Protestant and Protestant v. Catholic and Catholic, to Protestant and Catholic v. Catholic and Protestant, attitudes about ‘the other’ are changed.

The key is to find a new loyalty different from and replacing the sectarian loyalties that children are indoctrinated with. This new loyalty, however brief, tentative, impermanent, is what the children feel when sent out onto a football field. There is a commonality between all those on the same team and for the ninety minutes that they are playing, they are the same. But they are not just casually the same—they are on a team and working toward a single, shared goal. They come to realize that the chances are even better that they reach that goal if they work together. Naturally, the more games the child plays, the more he or she learns to cooperate with and trust his or her supposed ‘real-life’ foes, and the more the child will grow to realize that the other side isn’t as demonic as he or she first believed. UNICEF’s website has a large section extolling these virtues of team sport. They write that sports programs “are helping to build communities and are contributing to a more just and peaceful society.”

This has been put into practice in a few places. Though only six percent of children in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools, some communal programs have helped to create mixed recreational sports teams. It seems unlikely that there will be forced integration of the schools any time soon, so for now, the brunt of the work is placed on community centers, as discussed in an earlier chapter. We visited one such center, the 147-Trust Community Centre, and it had done exactly this: formed a mixed football team of Protestants and Catholics to compete against other mixed or homogenous teams.

Cooperation and selflessness are first learned on the football pitch. And from those lessons arise trust when both the child and his or her teammate are selfless. A loyalty grows amongst the players and supporters, and slowly the sectarian divide can start to fade.

That first night in Belfast—the night of the Linfield versus Cliftonville game—I sat down at the bar in the staunchly republican section of north Belfast. After I made a few friends and noticed the bar decorated with Celtic signs, Palestinian bumper-stickers, and the national

Tricolors, I naïvely asked what ‘kind of bar’ it was. One of the men I had been speaking with said it was a ‘neutral bar.’ This shocked me and I asked about all the different symbols that, to me, marked it as a republican bar. He said that, yes, once this had been a republican bar, but now everyone was welcome. I asked about the Linfield-Cliftonville rivalry, and he said that yes, many people did get passionate about it, but nowadays everyone was tired of fighting and ready to try something different. Instead of throwing rocks or petrol bombs, they just wanted to watch the game. He said he favored Cliftonville but it didn’t matter to him if they lost. It truly did not. The fact that was important, *he said*, was that the two teams were playing without any sectarian violence during or after the game. And to show that the winner of the match was of such little importance to him, we didn’t even watch the last ten minutes, but instead spent time eating small meat pies and talking about American movies.



## **8. Parades in Northern Ireland: Never-ending Troubles?**

**Daniel Kollmann**

Parades play a central role in catholic and protestant tradition and cultural identity. A variety of parades take place in Northern Ireland: Over 3500 times a year people come together to display affiliation to military, cultural, historic, sport or community events or groups—2800 of them Orange (Unionist), 200 Republican, and 500 non-political. In only five percent of the total is there the need for the Police Service of Northern Ireland to interfere with the march. However, some of these cases are accompanied by violence and street battles. The explanation for it is the display of historical references. Over the decades several parades have been upheld which consciously take a provocation of either Catholics or Protestant into account and thus create conflicts. Catholics see Protestant parades as displays of sectarian manifestations of historic victories, especially when held in Catholic areas. Protestants on the other hand regard Catholic resistance as a restriction on their freedom of expression

The majority of parades are organized by the Protestants, of which the Orange Institution, generally called the “Orange Order”, the Royal Black Preceptories and the Apprentice Boys of Derry are the largest ones. They fight for their right to hold parades such as the controversial marches on Garvaghy Road in Portadown or on Belfast’s Ormeau Road. As it is the case with many other parades the argument for marching along a certain track is a historical one. The march has been going along a route for decades or centuries and thus there is no desire to change it. Problems emerge when the apparent reason for parading is not group-autarkic. The case of the memory of the Battle of Boyne is such an example: Every year Protestants wish to celebrate the victory of the Protestant King William III in 1690 over Catholic King James with a traditional parade down Garvaghy Road. However, after decades the demographics around the Road changed and now the Catholic residents rebel against having to witness in their neighborhood the celebration of their religious ancestors’ defeat.

Catholics started their parades for the most part in 1967. Their demand for civil rights marks the beginning of the troubles. Up until the mid 1980s its violence and confrontation adumbrated the unionist parades. In 1985 and 1986 disputes arose between the police and the Orange Order in Portadown. The Unionists accused the police of acting in favor of the Catholic part of society. This put the police even more in a bad position, as it was mainly staffed with

Protestants who lived among those who attacked them. Before, the police were mostly regarded by the Catholics as working hand in hand with Protestants. Their aim of regulating parades made them vulnerable for Protestant attacks as well. The importance of these parades astonishes, as they seem to have no other contemporary relevance, no actual demands, but are there to remind both sides of events in the common history. Only the interpretation differs and can be explained with regard to social memory.

### **Social Memory**

In order for an event to become part of the collective memory it needs in part to be removed from individual experiences. Oversimplified and with a specific “black and white” scheme, it then returns to be part of a group member’s individual identity. History changes its function from giving an attempted objective narration of facts to an important and encases an all-encompassing core part of identity. The importance of a battle 300 years ago can only be understood when seeing that the same rivalry still exists today and that a centuries old spirit is reanimated.

As a social construction, ethnic identity is given form and substance by being situated in time and in space (Jarman 1997). The display of that memory mostly occurs through parades in which certain songs are played and sung; photos and symbols are presented. A specific importance adheres to the location of the parade:

That is the issue we are dealing with tonight and it is a very serious issue because it lies at the very heart and foundation of our heritage. It lies at the very heart and foundation of our spiritual life and it lies at the very foundation of the future of our families and of this Province that we love. If we cannot go to our place of worship and we cannot walk back from our place of worship then all that the Reformation brought to us and all that the martyrs died for and all that our forefathers gave their lives for is lost to us forever. So there can be no turning back. (Ian Paisley, 10 July 1995; in Bryan 2000)

Not only is it important that the parade takes place, as Rev. Paisley noted to his supporters in Portadown in 1995, but where it takes place. There can be no parade if not on historical important grounds. Even more, if it can not happen on these grounds, then according to the party leader the entire collective memory would be destroyed and everything fought for

would be lost. However, in recent history there has been a change of attitude in several cases. Violence at demonstrations held by the Orange Order has led to international and local resistance even within protestant ranks. It “has become harder for the Orange Order to depict itself as the defender of Protestantism in the face of [...] criticism” when even own ministers are rebelling against dogmatic behavior (Bryan 2001).

### **The Parades Commission**

The harmonization between the positions that took place in the 1990s was continuously disturbed by armed hostilities over parades. Up until that time it was up to the police to restore law and order. They had to assure people their right to express their opinion and religion openly and on the other hand perform with their task of upholding security in public space.

In 1996, as result of the disputes in Drumcree, British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Sir Patrick Mayhew announced in the British parliament his idea to establish an independent body to evaluate the divisive issue of parades in Northern Ireland. Its charge was to come up with recommendation on how to deal with the problem in the future. In 1997 the Independent Review of Parades and Marches, called the North Report after its chairman Dr. Peter North, asked for more consistency in the way decisions were made with regards to the parades. The rule of law should be reinforced, the means for accommodation of disputes be enlarged, and a new body should be established to deal with the situation in the future. The massive controversies over parades in Portadown in 1995, 1996 and 1997 made it urgent to implement the North Report. In 1998 the independent Parades Commission was created as an independent and neutral quasi juridical body to make critical decisions if and how parades may be conducted. It consists of seven members appointed by the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for a renewable 3 years term. It is important that the members come from diverse background, thus representing different parts of society, and shall act in an un-biased manner over time to gain trust and support among the people of Northern Ireland. The current members come to the Commission from diverse backgrounds ranging from unions, business, community development and politics. Obviously, they as well include the different faiths.

Under the Public Processions (NI) Act of 1998, which became the founding juridical document for the commission, its duties and functions, are:

- to promote greater understanding by the general public of issues concerning public processions;
- to promote and facilitate mediation as a means of resolving disputes concerning public processions;
- to keep itself generally informed as to the conduct of public processions and protest meetings;
- to keep under review, and make such recommendations as it thinks fit to the Secretary of State concerning the operation of the Act.

In more practical terms this means that the commission has the right to ban parades from taking place in certain areas, to redirect their march to other areas and to ban particular bands from participating and provocative music from being played. Enforcement is provided either by special parades stewards or the police.

In general it is the commission's duty to balance each citizen's right to express his or her own opinion, assembly freely and show religious affection, with the restriction such action imposes on other people's personal freedom. Their aim is to promote trust and thus build relationships between local players involved; in so doing they try to change the conduct and as well the perceptions of the events. So far many Nationalists perceive certain loyalist parades as "simply triumphalist displays by anti-Catholic organizations who conduct their parades with scant regard for the views or concerns of others" (Parades Commission 2006). On the other hand there are disputes over Republican parades which in Protestant eyes glorify terrorist organizations. In both cases there is the challenge for the Parades Commission to promote understanding on the one hand and work with parade organizers on more moderate and less provocative ways to conduct parades. They receive help in their task by six self-employed "Authorized Officers". These officers usually go out in teams of two prior to controversial parades. Their task is to talk to local stakeholders involved and mostly mediate between a range of interest groups. They facilitate discussion and seek ways towards a consensus and general agreements on local level. They provide invaluable services to the Commission and provide a steady link between the Parades Commissions office and the disputes happening in the street.

In the Good Friday Agreement parades were not mentioned.

## **Recommendations on the Future of Parades in Northern Ireland**

The establishment of the Parades Commission was a first good and important step in regulating the conduction of parades in Northern Ireland. It is important for several reasons: First, it relieves the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The role of the police in the Troubles and even in its contemporary setting has been controversial as will be discussed in the next chapter. By bringing decision making authority to a higher, independent level, the police can limit its action enforcing rulings already given—not making the rules itself. Second, the Commission constitutes a single public body which can be consulted. Before the establishment of the Parades Commission there was no exclusive contact for complaints with regards to parades. Third, by giving authority to the Parades Commission, a consistent, traceable and most importantly unbiased decision making process is in place. The public can follow the decisions and members have to justify their action when requested to do so.

However, the disputes over parades did not stop occurring with the establishment of the Parades Commission. Parades are still highly controversial and a public setting for conflicts between unionists and nationals. Thus, the question remains, what can be done about it? As long as parades are used to express common memory in the way in which it is contemporarily happening, as long as people either feel the need to express their identity through marches or people “get up at 7 in the morning to be insulted” (as expressed by a party leader), there will be no complete peace. Thus, the Parades Commission is limited in its means to influence the occupation of space. Nevertheless there are several actions which it can take to improve the situation.

**Increase the number of Authorized Officers.** A lot of conflict prevention can happen prior to the actual events. Having six officers working specially on that task is very agreeable. However, a larger number is need to effectively target the communities involved.

**Target the youth.** A negative development in the future can only be stopped when today’s youth is aware of the problem concerning parades and knows of solutions to it. Officers need to be in universities, schools, even kindergartens to educate the youth about the work the Parades Commission does and possible solutions to the problem.

**Change the nature of parades from a forum in which people express their anger to a more peaceful purpose.** This can happen through two factors:

People may feel less and less the need to engage in and demonstrate against parades when they engage in conflict management programs in their daily lives. This obviously can not be provided by the Parades Commission alone but involves all the stakeholders in Northern Ireland. Through a consolidated education program, for example, people can be led to view historical events as historical events that are not in need of reaffirmation by parades and by spectators. High school bands from both communities parading on the same day can turn the parade into a pageantry contest and bring ownership to both sides

People find different forums in which they can cheer their team and can engage in interaction with the other side. This can be anything from common sports activities and youth clubs to institutionalized intellectual debates and musical events.

**Appeal to party leaders and elected politicians to apprehend their function as public leaders and engage in a moderate dialog.** People, especially in conflict areas such as Northern Ireland, turn to leaders for guidance. Leaders need to set good and moderate example. Although the Commission can not influence electoral behavior, it can increase people's trust in its moderate and unbiased position and than condemn extremist behavior from either side.

To conclude, the issue of parades in Northern Ireland is still very critical. In the future the success of the peace process can as well be measured in the success of the Parades Commission to regulate parades and prevent conflict. Its existence is crucial and its work must be supported by all means.

## **9. Police and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland**

**Thomas Höhne-Sparborth**

There are few aspects of the conflict in Northern Ireland that have proven as consistently and enduringly divisive as the question of police and justice. From an early stage onwards, dating back to at least the Irish war of independence, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) came to form an intrinsic part of the conflict, accused of partisanship and collusion with Loyalist forces. The fact that the police was more often regarded as an active participant than as a neutral arbitrator to the conflict led to an unusually high proportion of police victims: over the course of the period known as the Troubles, police forces officially suffered 302 casualties and thousands wounded (Patten, 1999, p. 50). The grievances produced by the RUC's troubled history have been hard to forget—exacerbated by the Northern Irish affliction of long memory that has continued to haunt the peace process.

It is illustrative of the centrality of the issue of policing that the topic still features prominently on the political agenda. Since police reform was deemed too controversial to be addressed as part of the Belfast Agreement, significant progress has been made only in the last few years—the dividend of gradual confidence-building and of relative stability. Today, while the Stormont assembly is preparing to vote on the devolution of powers over police and justice, the newly established Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is working to establish its legitimacy and improve its relations with the communities it serves. The PSNI faces the task of having to reconcile the past with the hope of a fresh start. As this challenge is common to peace processes everywhere, the experiences of the PSNI offer an illuminating lesson in the difficulties of providing post-conflict security in divided societies.

This paper will first outline the problems of law and order in Northern Ireland that gave rise to the conflicted status of the police. It will then discuss the efforts aimed at police reform, which have only now come to receive serious political support. The final section of the paper will point out a number of outstanding issues that remain to be addressed in order to achieve a lasting return to normality.

## **Paramilitary Policing**

The RUC was formed shortly after the end of the 1919-1921 Irish war of independence that led to the partitioning of Ireland. Following several years of instability and continued unrest, it was understood that the protection of the state, as it had been set up by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, would be one of the primary responsibilities of the new police force. From the very start, therefore, the RUC was perceived to be a Loyalist institution. Nationalists regarded the organization as openly hostile to their cause, while Loyalists viewed police actions against the interests of their own community as an outright betrayal. Selective symbolism, such as the use of Royalist badges, language and flags, reinforced this sentiment. Furthermore, Catholic and Nationalist membership of the force remained far below the intended standard of proportionality throughout the conflict. Once established, the Unionist image of the RUC quickly became self-reinforcing, as Nationalist propaganda depicted the force as part of a hostile political apparatus and violently discouraged the Catholic community from joining the police ranks. By the end of the Troubles, Catholic membership of the RUC had dropped to only 7% (Human Rights Watch 1999).

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the police in Northern Ireland more resembled a quasi-military force more than a regular police force. Early on, the 1920s campaign by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) led to the creation of a special anti-guerilla division recruited from Loyalist paramilitaries and to the introduction of policies such as internment—allowing paramilitary suspects to be detained without trial. Since such measures were perceived to be sectarian and anti-Catholic in their effect, they strengthened Nationalist suspicion to the point that the RUC became a regular IRA target. This tense security environment contributed to the further militarization of the police force, through its acquisition of flak jackets, armored cars and fortified police stations, through its focus on aspects such as riot control and house searches, and through its dependence on large military escorts to guarantee the safety of police patrols. As a result of its lack of surplus resources, training, mobility, and community support, the RUC largely neglected non-sectarian crime and other aspects of regular policing.

Over the course of the conflict, the perceived legitimacy of law and order in Northern Ireland was further undermined by the state response to the civil rights movement and the role of the RUC in policing religious parades. Inspired by Martin Luther King, the civil rights protests that began in 1968 were initially peaceful in nature, and called for an end to discrimination, for

equal rights in housing and voting, and for the dissolution of the special anti-guerilla police branch. The state's response to the protests, however, soon turned violent, culminating in the death of 26 protesters on Bloody Sunday at the hands of the British military. The annual parades that occasionally pass through the other community's territory have been a further source of discontent, as discussed in the previous chapter. During the Troubles, much of the authority to decide on whether and how to allow the parades to proceed still lay with the RUC, which often led the police to get in the middle of a heated debate between Catholics and Protestants. As a result, the RUC's only source of legitimacy often derived solely from its ability "to antagonize both sides of the community in equal measure" (Ellison and Smyth 2000).

As the Troubles progressed, however, the RUC became increasingly attuned to the interests of the Catholic minority and adopted a more professional work ethic. Nonetheless, a series of incidents in the late 1970s and 1980s threatened efforts to improve the RUC's reputation, including allegations of police abuse, evidence of police collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries, and a series of killings hinting at the use of a "shoot-to-kill" policy against Nationalist paramilitaries. Despite these incidents, relations between the police and the Catholic community gradually improved, facilitated by the phasing out of emergency measures such as internment. In fact, polls taken since the mid-1980s suggest that a majority of *both* communities believed the police to be doing a good job, even though roughly half of all Catholics did believe that Protestants were better treated by the RUC than themselves (Mulcahy 2006, pp. 67-8).

Following the 1994 paramilitary ceasefires, rogue organizations like the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA continued their campaign against police officers as part of their attempts to derail the peace process and issues such as the annual parades continued to give rise to occasional tension. Nevertheless, the lower levels of violence permitted the police to begin a process of dressing down and to begin a shift in focus from security to more traditional aspects of policing. The change allowed for a partial shift towards a peacetime model of policing and, in addition, significantly increased the number of Catholics applying to join the RUC (Mac Ginty 1999, p. 107). Meanwhile, the fewer instances that occasioned police controversy contributed to a return to normality in Northern Ireland, which helped lay the groundwork on which the Belfast Agreement was built.

## **Retrospection and Reconciliation**

Given the deep emotions that police actions had stirred over the past decades, one might well have expected the issue of policing to have been near the top of the agenda of any peace agreement. Yet during the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the participants to the negotiations failed to reach agreement on the best way to proceed with police and justice. In many ways, the peace process simply lacked the maturity that was needed to address the topic, since policing controversies were still in very recent memory and remained extraordinarily divisive, while doubts over whether paramilitary nonviolence would endure may have rendered the question of police reform premature.

Instead, therefore, the Belfast Agreement limited itself to a number of general remarks. The wording of the text observed that policing was “a central issue” and “highly emotive”, and expressed that it would be essential for the police service to be professional, impartial, accountable, representative of society, and free from partisan control. The Agreement, furthermore, established an independent Commission to make specific recommendations—a convenient way of lightening the burden on the Belfast negotiations itself while nonetheless moving discussion on the issue forward. Notably, the Agreement, in chapter 9, also stated that the British government was “ready in principle” to devolve powers over police and justice, which since the 1972 introduction of direct rule had come to fall under Westminster’s responsibility.

The Independent Patten Commission established by the Belfast Agreement concluded its work in September 1999, when it published a report containing 175 recommendations. The report produced by the Commission was, of course, not the first such attempt at reform. As far back as 1922, a committee had, for instance, been charged with reviewing the organization of the police and recommended proportional recommended. Later, in 1969, the Hunt Committee had a similar mandate, and proposed a series of measures aimed at the demilitarization of the police. However, while examples of reports and investigations abound throughout the history of the conflict, none of these compared with the work of the Patten Commission. First, the Commission was able to conduct its work in an environment of unprecedented stability that allowed it for a degree of retrospection and a depth of recommendations for reform that would not have been possible in earlier years. Second, the Commission enjoyed broad political support which, to the credit of political leaders, led to the implementation of most of the Commission’s

recommendations. Third, the breadth of the Commission's consultations, which included public meetings and thousands of written submissions, endowed its report with a degree of legitimacy that had long been lacking (Mulcahy 2006).

Key among the Patten recommendations was the proposal of the replacement of the RUC by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), resulting from the Nationalist argument that the RUC had irreparably damaged its reputation. To prevent the PSNI from falling into the same trap as the RUC, the Patten Commission also recommended the use of more neutral symbols, and the adoption of a recruitment policy based on an equal proportion of Catholics and Protestants. Recent numbers now suggest that Catholic membership has increased since the publication of the Commission's report from 8.2% in 2001 to 20.1% in 2006 (Northern Ireland Policing Board 2007). Other recommendations of the Commission included the creation of a Police Ombudsman, greater emphasis on human rights, reliance on a community model of policing, and calls for improved training. Most of the Patten recommendations have now been implemented, and on January 28, 2007, Sinn Féin became the last party to fully accept and endorse the new service.

### **Outstanding Issues**

In 2008, the political debate over policing and justice is likely to focus on the question of devolution. The question is of great symbolic importance, especially to Nationalists for whom the direct rule from Westminster has been seen as a form of oppression, and in no area more so than with respect to policing. Under section 7 of the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement—an agreement that appears to have had as its primary purpose the reinsertion of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Ian Paisley into the peace process—the parties agreed that their agreement “should be sufficient to build the community confidence necessary for the Assembly to request the devolution of criminal justice and policing from the British Government by May 2008”. With this tentative date fast approaching, the Assembly will soon have to decide on exactly what powers over police and justice to devolve, when to do so, and what departmental structures should be adopted to administrate the new responsibilities (Northern Ireland Office 2006, §19.2).

Already, it appears likely that the May 2008 deadline will not be reached. Indeed, Ian Paisley recently stated that devolution was still “a long way off”, arguing that the police and

justice powers can only be devolved when sufficient community confidence has been built to support the move (Belfast Telegraph 2008). According to a 2007 poll, over 43% of the overall population of Northern Ireland, including 39% of Sinn Féin voters, agreed that confidence is a prerequisite for the devolution of powers, and less than a third of respondents in either community favored strict adherence to the May 2008 tentative deadline (News Letter 2007). Sinn Féin party members, on the other hand, in interviews still maintained the opposite view, and were pressing for speedy progress on devolution. The difference between DUP and Sinn Féin appears to derive from a basic difference over the relation between confidence and the peace process between the two parties: for the former, confidence is a necessary precondition to entrusting the powers over police to the local assembly, while the latter views devolution as one of the very tools by which to build such trust. There is, however, no rush, and it should be of little harm if devolution comes a few months late. It has, after all, taken a decade for the Good Friday Agreement to take firm root and it will take considerably more time for it to be fully cultivated.

## **Recommendations**

**Building of safeguards against the politicization of the police and guaranteeing its political independence will be the key to the successful future of the police service.** This goal could be jeopardized by devolution at a time when the executive is still in a formative stage and untested; it would be unwise to allow the police to get caught in between a political argument by pushing forward devolution without taking sufficient time to address community sensitivities. One controversy, for instance, concerns whom to appoint as Minister of Justice. Unionists have balked the suggestion of Gerry Kelly, currently a junior minister for Sinn Féin but previously a known combatant with the IRA. Whoever receives the position, it is of key importance that issues of confidence such as these are handled in such a manner that supports rather than frustrates the attempts of the PSNI to develop its popular support.

**The main test facing the police service over the next decade or so will be its success in developing a supportive relationship with the communities it serves rather than its ability to avoid getting embroiled in sectarian conflict.** Instead of arbitrating *between* communities, by policing so-called interface areas and preventing tensions from spiraling out of control, the PSNI will have to expand the role it plays *within* communities and address local

concerns. In a post-conflict society this task gains special urgency, since traumas leftover from the conflict, the damage to the social fabric, and the demobilization of paramilitaries could well allow the conflict to drag on at a more subtle level through crime, alcohol abuse, family dislocation and other mundane but serious problems. Indeed, new policing priorities are already emerging, including concerns over domestic violence and drugs. That the police now address these ordinary issues is encouraging not only because it suggests a return to normalcy, but also because the fact that these problems are now being reported indicates a higher level of community confidence in the police.

**Adequate financial support, first of all, will be essential;** the responsibility for facilitating the police transition, however, does not lie solely with the PSNI. Although the size of the police force has been vastly reduced as security improved, rebuilding community relationships is a time-intensive endeavor that requires extensive manpower. Similarly, although some of the gear acquired by the police may no longer be appropriate in an environment where personal interaction is a priority, budget constraints currently hinder the acquisition of equipment such as regular police cars to replace the armored land rovers now in use. The availability of sufficient resources for training too, is a key priority that should not be neglected, especially in light of the new composition of the police force and the influx of younger personnel. Finally, it should be noted that party leaders share in the responsibility of integrating the PSNI into the community, and should take care to promote confidence in the service not only from their seats in Stormont but also from the bottom-up at the grassroots level.

With police officers now reaching out to local communities through schools and other public centers, the PSNI is in a better situation than its predecessor ever was. For much of its history, the RUC was a security force more than a police force, and acted as a highly visible thorn in Nationalists' eyes. The force played a central role in the conflict, and lay at the heart of the debate over the perceived legitimacy of the state, the ability to peacefully co-exist, and the question of equality. It is reflective of the controversial status of policing in Northern Ireland that the issue failed to be fully addressed as part of the Belfast Agreement and that it has taken nearly a decade for parties to develop sufficient confidence even to contemplate the issue of devolution. Nonetheless, the demilitarization and professionalization of the police force has been highly successful. Although peacetime policing offers challenges in its own right, police reform has

served to defuse a major cause of sectarian tension and has increased the likelihood that peace will endure.

## **10. The Prisoner's Dilemma: Paramilitary Violence and the Prisoner Release Program**

**Jill Craig**

Violence had long been a part of everyday life in Northern Ireland, but the start of the Troubles in 1969 unleashed a new kind of hostility which would not officially cease until the Good Friday Agreement almost 30 years later. Paramilitary activity became the primary means by which political goals were expressed. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) actively sought retribution against the British occupying power and their Loyalist compatriots through targeted bombings and attacks. In response, the Loyalists organized several paramilitary groups to battle the IRA, which sparked retribution killings commonplace within Northern Irish society. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), perceived by Republicans as an agent of the British, was a frequent target of IRA activity. Prisons became increasingly crowded with political prisoners, who frequently organized riots and attacks. These prisoners, many of whom were paramilitary members, acted as soldiers, philosophers, and politicians from behind bars. Their connections with the outside world were strong, enabling them to direct paramilitary activity from their prison cells.

In the 1960s, the prison population was below 700. The beginning of the Troubles led to a considerable increase in the population, growing steadily until 1979 when it reached a peak of 3,000. In 1972, following a hunger strike and an intense campaign by both Republican and Loyalist prisoners, the Government granted special category status to prisoners convicted of offenses related to civil disturbances. These prisoners were able to wear their own clothes, abstain from working, and be housed within their paramilitary factions. However, the government decided in 1975 that this special status should be phased out, whereby Republican and some Loyalist prisoners wore bedding, instead of prison clothing. This was known as the "Blanket Protest." Tensions continued to increase.

In 1981, Republican prisoners engaged in a sustained hunger strike, resulting in ten deaths. This situation evoked great publicity and led to intense civil disturbances around Northern Ireland. In 1982, Loyalist and Republican prisoners launched a segregation campaign in the Maze prison, leading to the destruction of 200 cells. This event was followed by the "Dirty

Protest,” which resulted in physical segregation of paramilitary associations. Disturbances continued throughout the 1990s, including a bomb detonating in a prison dining hall, serious rioting, more escape attempts, and the 1996 murder of the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) faction leader Billy Wright at the Maze prison (NIPS 2008). One former Republican prisoner said of his time at Maze, “We went in bad terrorists and came out good terrorists. We learned how to strip and handle weapons, how to make booby-trap bombs, how to stand up to interrogation and, basically, how to be a professional terrorist.” (CNN 2008). Clearly, the issue of political prisoners had to be addressed by the Good Friday negotiations.

The citizens of Northern Ireland—Republicans and Loyalists alike—were regularly affected by violence and perhaps worse, the constant *fear* of violence. The Northern Ireland conflict was unlike that of its contemporaries; it involved white Christians fighting each other with guerrilla warfare tactics in post-war Western Europe. The IRA and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) did not need to plant a car bomb every day in order to instill fear in the population. By striking in different locations throughout Northern Ireland and England and against different people, these paramilitary groups maintained widespread fear through sneak attacks.

Therefore, the endemic nature of this conflict can indeed be explained by the sustained use of paramilitary violence by and against both Republicans and Loyalists. The paramilitary groups were responsible for the overt violence, but they were supported by family members, friends, neighbors, politicians, and even clergymen. The violence was sustained by retribution killings and the longevity of peoples’ memories in Northern Ireland, dating back decades and even centuries. Some houses bordering interface areas do not have front windows, because they are frequently broken by rocks and other projectiles. Peace walls divide the two communities in Belfast and Derry because citizens are too frightened to live without them. Murals displaying inflammatory political messages still cover the walls of neighborhoods, serving to both memorialize heroes and intimidate adversaries. Catholic police officers take care not to disclose their true occupation to some family members and neighbors, in fear for their reputations and personal safety. These tangible manifestations of the deep-rooted violence within Northern Ireland remain palpable today, even if the Troubles have officially ended. Paramilitary members—many of whom became political prisoners—created and inspired much of this culture of fear and must continue to be managed.

## **Prisoner Release Program**

The prisoner release program was one of the most hotly debated issues surrounding the Good Friday Agreement, perhaps second to the issue of paramilitary decommissioning. Northern Ireland officials agreed that they had to do it, and they were able to do it. Monica McWilliams, who helped negotiate the Good Friday Agreement, said that officials debated whether prisoners should be released in one, five, or ten years; the compromise was set at two. McWilliams said that it was a difficult provision to negotiate, because there were two sets of paramilitaries involved, complicating matters.

The release program is not amnesty. The prisoners were released on license but if they commit an additional offense, they could be sent back to prison. Prisoners convicted of terrorism-related offenses, and attracting a sentence of five years or more became eligible to apply for early release from the Independent Sentence Review Commissioners. The Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act was introduced in July 1998. The first seven releases took place on September 11, 1998, and to date, 450 prisoners have been released, including 196 Loyalists, 242 Republicans, and 12 non-aligned persons. Twenty individuals have had their licenses suspended for breaches in conduct, including 16 life sentence and four determinate sentence prisoners. Ten of these 20 breaches involved terrorist-offending behavior and ten involved non-terrorist offending behavior. The number may be relatively small, but it does represent the fact that some misfits have been released with other political prisoners. What does this tell us about the release program?

Our interviewees held that the prisoner release program was necessary, but that it did not recognize the true political prisoners from the misfits. The 1993 “Trick or Treat Massacre” at the Rising Sun bar in Greysteel took place when Stephen Irwin and two other Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) shouted “trick or treat” and murdered eight innocent people, both Catholics and Protestants. Later, Irwin claimed that his act was worthwhile since he had killed at least one Catholic. After Irwin was given eight life sentences for his role in the murder, he laughed as he was led from court. Was Irwin really working for UFF political objectives? Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, Irwin and his co-conspirator Torrens Knight were released in 2000 under license. Irwin was later re-incarcerated after stabbing a football fan with a knife during the 2004 Irish Cup final at Windsor Park. This is an unfortunate example of the criminal justice system’s not distinguishing between real political prisoners and misfits; a man who acts upon

this kind of hatred and who laughs as he is led from court should not have been so easily released into society.

The benefits of a release program which seeks to heal the wounds of a deeply-fractured society must be weighed against the notion of public safety. For the men committing horrific crimes in the 1990s, they had only to wait a few years in prison before they were released. For the victims' families, surely this was too small a price to pay. For Northern Ireland, it was perhaps the first step in the healing process.

## **Recommendations**

Trust and relationship-building are the most important means by which to create a sense of normal society, as discussed in the first chapter. The prisoner release program was perhaps the first significant trust-building exercise to take place following the Good Friday Agreement, since the decommissioning issue was not yet settled. Although there is much controversy regarding its fairness, most people agreed that it had to be done. It has been successful in that a relatively small number of released prisoners have been re-incarcerated, yet the criminal justice community needs to be aware that misfits were released with political prisoners and could present a public safety threat. Paramilitary violence affected virtually every facet of everyday life. In order to prevent this violence from re-emerging, **Stormont should make it a priority to keep ex-prisoners/paramilitary members from re-offending, while providing positive alternatives for the next generation.** The following recommendations attempt to assist in this task.

For the short run, **politicians and other officials who mentioned how their constituents really care about “bread and butter” issues (housing, education, taxes, health care, etc.) need to place a greater emphasis on these common concerns,** rather than constantly bringing up the historic problems between the Republicans and Loyalists. If the people can join together to engage in greater dialogue about their taxes or health care, for example, common ground will be established. **Community organizations should coordinate town hall meetings and forums with members of both political persuasions in order to assist in this task.**

Youth programs that send Catholic and Protestant young adults to the United States for a week or a month are usually advanced by the donor community as solid ways in which to bridge sectarian gaps and help young people learn that their similarities are greater than their

differences. However, one community worker commented that sometimes these programs are more useful in making the donor community “feel good” about their contributions than they are in producing solid results. Frequently, these kids return to their separate communities in Northern Ireland after the trip and do not talk to each other again. Instead of sending young people to the United States to see how a society “should” operate, **donors should instead organize programs to places like South Africa, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Cambodia.** The participants would be able to engage in stronger dialogue by learning about conflicts in other parts of the world—and it might demonstrate how similar the citizens of Northern Ireland really are. These conflicts are all different, and they show how others have dealt with their problems. This added perspective would be far more meaningful than a trip to Washington, DC or New York.

The children of paramilitary members suffer from intense emotional, behavioral, and physical problems due to difficulties they face at home. These problems are so severe, teachers and staff members cannot begin to address the children’s learning problems. The principal of an elementary school in Shankill described how the Unionist feud of 2000 dislocated the community through fear, intimidation and burnings, all of which took their toll on schoolchildren. When the law enforcement community is occupied with these sorts of violent events, little attention is paid to the effects on children’s home lives. Therefore, **additional funding should be provided to schools to increase the number of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists.** In some post-conflict societies, law and medical students from different countries are provided fellowships to assist in the country’s reconstruction. A similar program could be implemented in Northern Ireland. Children who are exposed to and are participants in violence at a young age are at a far greater risk of being involved in violent behavior later in life if they do not have access to proper psychological services.

One of the biggest problems facing Northern Ireland is persistent animosity—primarily harbored by the Republican community—toward the police force, according to police officers. Catholics face additional difficulties from their families and neighbors when they consider becoming a police officer because traditionally, the police were considered the enemy. However, a recent police recruitment event held as part of a career fair at a Catholic secondary school in Derry, where police had not previously been asked to attend, was a great success; a large number of students inquired about joining the force. **Holding such recruitment events in more schools**

would allow young people to see that the police strive to protect *all citizens* and can be a career choice for both Catholics and Protestants. A better understanding of the police would be helpful in decreasing traditional animosity.

**In the middle run, the Independent Monitoring Commission, comprised currently of one American, one Englishman, two Irishmen, and two joint secretaries, should be expanded to include additional members from Northern Ireland,** since it is responsible for monitoring paramilitary activity within Northern Ireland. Eventually, the American and the Englishman should be phased out, in order to ease some lingering concerns about the involvement of these parties, especially the latter. Instead, these positions should be established for persons originating from countries with less at stake in the process—for example, from South Africa and from Norway. On the whole, the Independent Monitoring Commission is doing a good job of research and reporting and should continue to do so. It serves a vital role in collecting information from many sources on paramilitary activity.

As emphasized by both the Human Rights and education officials interviewed, **there is a great need to research domestic and inter-community violence in the two communities.** A study on whether the levels of domestic and inter-community violence have increased since the official end of the hostilities would show whether these levels have increased. It is possible that violence in Northern Ireland has simply turned inward, which could lead to significant problems in the future.

The issue of teaching history is problematic in any post-conflict society, and Northern Ireland is no exception. However, **the history curriculum in all schools could be improved by requiring teachers to incorporate human rights principles into their education.** Part of being a good citizen is treating others with respect—requiring a human rights curriculum would be helpful in training people at a young age. It might even be worthwhile to have a pool of teachers trained specifically in this curriculum so they can circulate among schools to present the material to students.

Many of the interviewees laughingly noted that rock throwing is a sport in Northern Ireland, and that many had themselves participated in the game as a child. Even a police officer noted that when kids throw rocks at his police car, he usually just ignores it and keeps on driving. Although this might seem like an innocent pastime, it only teaches children that it is acceptable to disrespect property or other people. Professor James Q. Wilson created the “broken window

theory,” which states that when a window is vandalized and goes unfixed for a length of time, vandals become bolder and intensify their destruction on other targets in the neighborhood, knowing they will likely not be caught. This activity leads to the destruction of the neighborhood. Similarly, when a child is not held responsible for his or her actions, the behavior will only increase. **Activities like rock-throwing should be taken seriously as acts that demonstrate disrespect for community,** and the malignant intentions behind such actions could potentially intensify as the child grows older. Children caught engaging in such activities should be required to attend programs led by community leaders and attended by both Catholic and Protestant peers. An organization such as 174 Trust could provide the space for these trainings, which could even include activities like soccer, chess, crafts, etc. Former paramilitary combatants could lead workshops and activities. The purpose is to teach kids early in their lives that disrespectful behavior is unacceptable.

**In the longer term, the people of Northern Ireland need to be provided opportunities which shift the focus of daily life from the Republican/Loyalist divide to more viable options.** There needs to be an emphasis upon young people attending college or technical school, regardless of religious affiliation, in addition to the creation of new jobs in the country. There should be programs whereby youngsters can job-shadow people of various professions in order to be exposed to different careers at a young age. The Celtic Tiger in the south is doing quite well from increased foreign investment; the people of Northern Ireland can dedicate their energies to enticing such investment and a stronger business culture in their own country. People who feel relatively secure economically—in a non-discriminatory system—are less-likely to resort to violence to express their grievances.

**Schools and housing must become better integrated.** If people do not know one another and/or have never stepped foot into the other’s community, they can never be expected to work together. The people of Northern Ireland must stop thinking of themselves as Catholic, Protestant, Republican, or Loyalist, and start thinking of themselves as Northern Irish. As Abraham Lincoln once said, “a house divided against itself cannot stand.” Although the pain from past injustice still lingers, the people of Northern Ireland must understand that they will be stronger in a globalized world if they work together to find solutions to their common problems.

The plaque outside the legislative chamber at Stormont which refers to Republicans as “terrorists” sends a strong message and should be replaced. **The murals throughout Belfast and**

**Derry which encourage violence and hatred of the opposing community should slowly be replaced with “friendlier” versions.** Symbols affect all of us in both subconscious and conscious ways, and these particularly overt ones do nothing to help people to heal past wounds. Daily signs should serve to unite the people. Museums should be created to help people remember their history in a more constructive manner, such as the one that has been erected to the memory of Bloody Sunday in Derry; these museums could serve as a place for people from both communities to educate and be educated.

These recommendations could assist in preventing former prisoners from becoming re-incarcerated and keeping youngsters from resorting to violence as a means by which to resolve differences. Violence has long been a way of life in Northern Ireland, and although people are now working to solve problems with politics, there is always the chance that the next generation could regress. Smaller steps today will provide greater gains tomorrow.

## **11. Monitoring Bodies in Northern Ireland**

**Talar Kazanjian**

A political system is successful when it has the ability to defuse rising tensions and channel them into the framework of the system. It must enable the participants (whether government, political parties or civil society) to become part of the decision making process. Societies which are not homogenous (constituted by more than one community, ethnicity or other) are the ones most in need of systems with such capacities. The history of Northern Ireland from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that the constructed structure permitted the exclusion of one community while giving the possibility to the other of “owning” the system. In this context it was not only important to “correct” the flaws of the system itself but also create mechanisms that would monitor and regulate the flow of the links and connections between the different parts of the newly built structure.

It would be misleading to say that the absence of monitoring mechanisms has been an important reason for the rise of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the second half of the last century. However, one can state that their existence might have been able, if not to prevent then to at least hinder, the rise of these troubles. Today, monitoring institutions are part of the borderland between the political circles and the communities. It plays the role of an active link between the two worlds. They are also seen as part of the reconciliation process that would have a role to play in the healing of wounds and social scars in different parts of the society.

Monitoring bodies were created as a result of the Belfast Agreement in 1998. Each has a specific role and mandate but together they form the mechanism intended to help regulate the political body in Northern Ireland. The Equality and Human Rights Commissions are assigned the responsibility of following up with the authorities and see that they abide by the laws specific to each. The Parades Commission (described and analyzed in a separate chapter in this volume) is designed to intervene in the strongly contentious social and communitarian issue of parades in Northern Ireland. Finally, the International Monitoring Commission is there to check on the decommissioning process of the paramilitary organizations in addition to the representatives of political parties.

## **The Equality Commission**

The concept of equality being central to the process of developing a devolved government, it was given special attention during the negotiations in 1998. Under the Northern Ireland Act of 1998 the Equality Commission was established as an independent body. Along with the responsibilities for statutory equality duties and disability matters, it assumed the duties and responsibilities of four former organizations: The Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, The Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland and The Northern Ireland Disability Council. According to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (that came into effect in January 2000) public authorities should promote equality and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister are the directly responsible. Since 1999, a number of pieces of legislation have been introduced that put new duties on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and good relations on many grounds. As part of its duties, the commission enforces anti discrimination laws passed in Northern Ireland and also acts as a consultative body working with the government and providing it with recommendations regarding changes needed in the legislation. It has also witnessed an increase in its powers lately especially in regard to the enforcement of the legislation.

The historical roots of the Commission's principles started with the Fair Employment Act of 1976 which was the first incarnation of what was considered at the time to be groundbreaking legislation against discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion. This legislation, which outlawed job discrimination, was the result of a report confirming the existence of discrimination as a basis for the unrest occurring during the civil rights movement and provided the basic framework for its chief successors. There was strong pressure coming from American-Irish lobbyists who urged US companies with investments to increase the number of Catholics in their workplace. The MacBride principles were formulated based on the Sullivan principles developed to manage the workplace equality in South Africa (Mor-Barak 2005). The Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 required employers to monitor the religious composition of their workforce and to present an annual report about it. The objective was to have the proportion of the two communities in employment equal their proportions in the population. The 1998 Act created a broader range of categories and introduced several innovative ideas. As a result of the legislation, the degree of discrimination and inequality has

decreased heavily in the workplace (Dickson & Hargie 2006). It is true though that sectarianism and inequality still persist and are mostly perpetrated by workers on fellow workers (Osborne & Shuttleworth 2005). The concept of tolerable sectarianism is proposed by specialists to characterize this reality. Other studies suggest that while the Catholic labor market disadvantage is falling, it is still far from being eliminated.

Although the Commission has seen its efforts praised and the benefits of its services highlighted in the Northern Ireland reality, several criticisms are directed toward it mainly from the Protestant community. In 2007 the DUP claimed that the Commission has neglected to promote employment opportunities for Protestant workers in the public sector. It also raised the issue of the “brain drain” occurring mostly in the young and educated workforce of the Protestant community. Many believe that these statements against the Commission stem from the Protestants’ fears of reverse discrimination against their own community. These claims continue to be unsupported by statistical evidence. However, the commission’s decision to carefully study the phenomena is well placed because if nothing else it represents the malaise felt recently in this community towards their rights and future prospects.

The workplace has become the place where people of both communities have had a chance to interact, while changes in the schooling system and housing opportunities are still to be implemented. The issue of “tolerable discrimination” must be explicitly challenged although it is but one aspect of the persisting general tensions in Northern Ireland, it represents an issue that falls within the Equality Commission’s responsibilities and must be tackled on a micro level in the workplace while awaiting the improvement of the relations between communities on a macro level.

### **Human Rights Commission**

The Commission was created in March 1999 by section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in compliance with a commitment made by the UK Government in the Belfast Agreement. It is recognized as a member of the worldwide network of National Human Rights Institutions or NHRI, even though it operates at a sub-national level. The Commission’s role is to promote awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland, to review existing law and practice and to advise the Secretary of State and the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly on measures to be taken to protect human rights.

The Commission conducts investigations, and (subject to anticipated legislation) will soon have new powers to enter places of detention, to compel individuals and agencies to give oral testimony and produce documents. The Commission also has the power to assist individuals when they are bringing court proceedings, and to bring court proceedings itself. It receives inquiries from people who believe that their human rights have been violated, and provides training and information on human rights. Lately it has started training the police and priests in an effort to expand a rights-based society.

There was no doubt in the minds of many that such a commission will create a beneficial atmosphere for the growth of human rights ideals for all communities in Northern Ireland. There was a vision also that the Commission might facilitate a “healing process” similar to the one occurring in South Africa. These theoretic notions were soon challenged by the difficulties of changing the mindsets in the society at large and the authorities in particular. Ten years after its creation as an official body, there are still perceptions that human rights are a danger to national interests and stability. On the other hand, Amnesty International stated in 1998 that as the first Human Rights Commission in GB the Commission suffers flaws in its powers to conduct its duties. The Commission consistently complained about the lack of an adequate support from the British government and the Northern Ireland Office. There was dissatisfaction about the difficulties given by the authorities in carrying out advisory, educational and promotional activities in addition to impartial investigatory functions. The international circumstances of the 9/11 attacks also created a situation when the Commission spoke of the erosion of civil liberties through increasingly restrictive counter-terrorism measure.

Another contentious issue that has emerged is the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The need for such a bill was mentioned in the Belfast Agreement with the explicit statement that the Commission will provide advice to the Secretary of State on a future Bill. The St. Andrew’s Agreement established a Bill of Rights Forum charged with making recommendations to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the content of a Bill of Rights by 31 March 2008. According to recently conducted polls by Millward Brown Ulster and the Human Rights Consortium, the population overwhelmingly supports the need to draft such a Bill. However, recent dissatisfaction in the Protestant Community claims that such a Bill would be unnecessary

given the already existing British and EU Human Rights laws<sup>6</sup>. Since the Bill was demanded by the Nationalists in 1998, the Unionist questioning of its motives is derived from the fear that it will be turned into an instrument for closer ties with the Irish Republic. Although there is no unified rejection of the Bill from the Unionist community, the criticisms are yet another demonstration of the malaise about the future of Northern Ireland and their part in it. The role of the Commission at this juncture is to explain specifically to this community that the concept of Human Rights is present in Northern Ireland to protect each individual's rights despite the communitarian affiliation. The fears of the Unionists must be dealt with by organizing special campaigns that target the different social strata groups and establish a trusting relationship with them. The network established during training of religious leaders should be used to penetrate the community in order to "humanize" the Commission and to educate the population both about the Commission in general and the Bill of Rights in particular.

### **The Independent Monitoring Commission**

In the Belfast agreement there were no specific provisions for monitoring either the implementation of the security commitments entered into by the British and Irish governments, or the activities of paramilitary groups. The fact that the paramilitary groups themselves were not parties to the agreement made the decommissioning commitments of the political parties rather meaningless. A separate Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD), chaired by Canadian General John de Chastelain (who had been a co-chair of the negotiations), was set up to deal directly with the paramilitaries. However, questions of progress on decommissioning and whether or not particular paramilitary groups' ceasefires were still intact became increasingly contested. In particular, allegations in October 2002 that the IRA had been using Sinn Féin's offices in the parliamentary buildings at Stormont near Belfast to gather intelligence caused a political crisis which resulted in the suspension of the Assembly.

The IMC was established in 2003 through a joint declaration issued by the British and Irish governments which discussed current political and security issues, including paramilitary activity and security normalization, and mentioned that extra mechanisms were needed to build

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<sup>6</sup> On Jan. 2 2008, the influential *Church of Ireland Gazette* published an editorial slamming the idea of a local Bill of Rights, stating, "There are those in the Stormont establishment who want a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, as opposed to the (United Kingdom) as a whole, because they want Northern Ireland to relate more closely to the Republic of Ireland than to the rest of the UK."

confidence. There was also a special Agreement in monitoring and compliance. Four commissioners are involved: Lord Alderdice—former Speaker of Northern Ireland Assembly and current Peer in the British House of Lords; Joe Brosnan—former Secretary General of the Department of Justice, Republic of Ireland; John Grieve—former Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and former head of the Metropolitan Police Anti-Terror Branch; Dick Kerr—former Deputy Director of the CIA. This mechanism would also deal with claims by political parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly that other such parties in the devolved Executive, were not living up to their commitment to non-violence and democracy. In order to get the necessary information to build the reports, the IMC talks to the police and the governments in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as well as political parties community and other groups, and individual citizens.

The issues involved in monitoring ceasefires and security commitments in post-conflict situations are not new or unique to Northern Ireland. It is, however, relatively unusual to have a body external to the conflicted sides which is charged with both monitoring and recommending sanctions. The powers and range of sanctions available to the IMC have made it more relevant and efficient in its monitoring tasks. Its creation as an independent body and assignment of its role and powers make it an important actor in the wider political scene in Northern Ireland. Thus far the IMC has been able to establish itself as a serious body acting as a deterrent against the return to higher levels of paramilitary activities.

In its latest report the IMC declared that the level of casualties and assaults has sharply declined from the time it first started its monitoring activities. Decommissioning efforts of all paramilitary groups are going forward (sometimes in a slower pace as in the case of the UVF and UDA). Political parties need to give public and private support to the decommissioning process of paramilitary groups with which they may be affiliated.

Following the decommissioning process is the issue of criminality. Most of the paramilitaries have had links with criminality after the decrease in open hostilities. The IMC's 16<sup>th</sup> report had made the distinction between terrorism and other forms of crime so far as paramilitary organizations are concerned with the aim of focusing separately on both having in mind the specificities of each. With the deadline for devolution of justice and policing close it again becomes necessary to consider the nature of the legislation that would be most effective against both. The IMC is keen to work with different governmental institutions and NGO's in

order to provide enough monitoring over criminal activities as well in order to prevent further slippage in decommissioning.

The IMC has been working on a third sphere, the effects and legacy of paramilitarism. There is serious traumatism on the communities that used to support paramilitaries and that has made many observers call the affected groups “the broken people.” These realities have started to craft a new path for the IMC where it will move towards a wider role to play inside these communities trying to find solutions to those disturbances

## **Conclusion**

Chief Commissioner of Human Rights Monica McWilliams mentioned the question that has been lately repeatedly asked. Is there too much monitoring going on in Northern Ireland? The answer she gave was that it is only natural in case of post-conflict societies to have as much monitoring as possible in order to avoid slipping back into the previous period. Northern Ireland is a place where enmities, frictions and clashes have a historic background and are enshrined so much as to become part of the local culture. The efforts that must be put into changing the situation should be broad and that is where the responsibilities of the monitoring bodies become important. If these bodies play the role of a link and guarantor of the free flow of information then their presence should be in constant expansion. These mechanisms will be continuously facing new challenges. They will have to be ready to identify and recognize new occurring problems. In order to be able to be effective they must have well established connections and communication channels with all the segments of the society and political authorities. There is still room to expand their powers in regard to their separate spheres. This means that **their relationship with the authorities should be used to create a partnership that would open more room for them to grow and cover fully the responsibilities assigned to them.** The deepening of their involvement in the communities is also a development that will apparently witness an increase. Monitoring should not only involved irregularities but also the conciliation and healing processes much needed in the society.



## 12. Interactive Teaching: Solidifying Peace in the Classroom

Katie Dalton

The education system in Northern Ireland has an important role to play in shaping the identities and attitudes of its young people. The way the history of the conflict is taught, and the civic identity that is fostered, can either contribute to the peace process or polarize the two communities. A US Institute for Peace report entitled *Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict* found, “Approaches that emphasize students’ critical thinking skills and expose them to multiple historical narratives can reinforce democratic and peaceful tendencies in transitional societies emerging from violent conflict.” (Cole and Barsalou 2006, p. 1) Schools play an important role in child development and are a primary means of transmitting ideas about culture and identity. “Teachers and students in societies emerging from violent conflict often display fear, passivity, fatalism, and pessimism. Teaching history can help students become engaged, responsible citizens, even in societies where ethnic divisions, poverty, mistrust, and low-level violence remain endemic. History should be taught in a way that inspires young people to believe in their own ability to effect positive changes in society and contribute to a more peaceful and just future.” (Cole and Barsalou, 2006, p. 4) The issue of education is only briefly mentioned in the Good Friday Agreement. In order for the agreement to fully take hold, future generations need to be taught both about the conflict and their role in maintaining the peace agreement.

Interestingly enough, teachers are often the ones that are most hesitant about addressing the Troubles in the classroom. “They fear the emotional responses that might occur in their classrooms, and...they believe students’ historical perspectives are so entrenched that little can be done about them.” (Barton and McCully 2005, p. 108) Many teachers have personal connections to the conflict, through family members or friends being involved in, or victims of, the violence. They feel that children are indoctrinated with partisan views at home, and that there is not much they can do to impact those views. “History teachers are generally under enormous pressure in post-conflict societies to play too many roles—from psychologist and guidance counselor to conflict resolution expert and mediator” (Cole and Barsalou 2006, p. 11). They also often do not see their role as one of promoting social change.

It is difficult to teach history in Northern Ireland because each side has a competing narrative of the past. Instead of trying to find an approach acceptable to both sides, the issue is avoided by focusing on the history of other cultures. Children, especially younger children in Northern Ireland, view history as a way of learning about other cultures and the differences between the past and the present. They did not see history as a way of building identity. This is the result of the curriculum where, unlike in the United States where children learn about national development, children in Northern Ireland spend much time learning about other cultures such as the Vikings or the Ancient Egyptians. (Barton 2001, pp. 96-7) Studies have found, however, that students are eager to learn history and feel that school lessons are the most important source of historical information (Conway 2004, p. 75). There is a role for schools in countering the partisan information that students receive in other aspects of their lives. This has implications for the development of children as members of society in Northern Ireland. “The public settings in which children are likely to be encouraged to identify with stories of the national past, on the other hand, are explicitly sectarian—marches, demonstrations, memorials or meetings of overtly or implicitly political organizations.” (Barton 2001, p. 100) In Belfast, communities are divided by peace walls, and within neighborhoods children are bombarded with partisan murals and monuments. While teaching the history of a conflict can be difficult, avoidance of the issue can lead to more serious consequences down the road.

The current standardized curriculum is not able to adapt to the varied experiences that students have had with the conflict. A study conducted in 2000-2001 found that students’ partisan opinions intensify as they move through the history curriculum. They use pieces of information learned in history class to reinforce partisan ideas they were learning elsewhere. The school environment was not challenging the students to go beyond their initial conceptions of the past. There is a need to explicitly link history to current civic issues. “If part of history’s purpose in schools is to develop critical and informed citizens—a controversial goal in itself—educators will need to develop clearer and more explicit links between programmes of history and citizenship. Without closer attention to such issues, school history is unlikely to have a significant impact on the developing political perspectives of young people.” (Barton and McCully 2005, pp. 111)

Not only is history important, but in order to sustain peace, students must be taught how to interact and contribute to society in nonviolent means. Civic education is important in

creating common identities after a conflict. No one expects that Nationalists or Unionists will give up that identity, but they can find common ground on which to build a civic identity committed to creating a peaceful, prosperous Northern Ireland.

Recently, the curriculum in Northern Ireland has gone through a major revision, and new segments on Local and Global Citizenship and Mutual Understanding have been added. (NIC 2008d)

Local and Global Citizenship addresses the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum objective of developing young people as “contributors to society” by nurturing the capacity of young people to participate positively and effectively in society, to influence democratic processes, and to make informed and responsible decisions as local and global citizens throughout their lives. Local and Global Citizenship also provides an opportunity for schools to help young people understand the role of individuals, of society, and of governments in working for a more inclusive, just and democratic society that acknowledges the principles of a human rights culture.

For younger children, the curriculum focuses on approaches to conflict, understanding differences between people, and being members of a community (NIC 2008a). As children get older, the curriculum shifts more towards citizenship and includes the following four concepts: diversity and inclusion; human rights and social responsibility; equality and social justice; and democracy and active participation (NIC 2008c). The lessons focus on how identities are formed and expressed, how to resolve conflict, human rights standards, inequality and discrimination in society, and active participation in one’s community. Teachers are encouraged to include examples from Northern Ireland and to include local NGOs and other organizations in the development of lesson plans. The curriculum also envisions students organizing community projects to reinforce lessons learned in the classroom. The curriculum is still in the process of being introduced, so it is hard to determine exactly what effects it is having on students’ ideas of identity and conflict, but it is a step in the right direction and should be an important tool in implementing the goals of the Good Friday Agreement.

## **Recommendations**

There is still much work to be done to bring a definite end to the conflict in Northern Ireland. An important aspect of this is ensuring that the conflict does not reignite with future generations. It will take time before schools and neighborhoods can become more integrated, but in the meantime several steps can be taken to try and facilitate reconciliation and better understanding between Nationalists and Unionists.

**Make the Mutual Understanding and Local and Global Citizenship curriculum a priority.** Studies have shown that children enjoy learning about history and see it as an important way to learn the facts concerning events. In a recent report on the implementation of the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum, it was noted “In comparison to work seen in other subject areas at KS3 in recent years the inspectors reported generally higher levels of participation by pupils and a greater willingness on their part to take risks by giving more extended comment and showing more of their personal beliefs and opinions .... several pupils commented positively on the more free and open nature of the lessons in Citizenship, they felt that they had in some way now been licensed to comment and one asked the visiting inspector ‘why did we not do this long ago?’” (NIC 2008d) In some cases not enough time was devoted to the subject and concepts are being treated at a cursory level. This curriculum requires that students examine their own identity and learn about those of others. Sufficient time should be allotted to allow for debate and interaction among students.

**Train teachers for the new curriculum.** Teachers have repeatedly expressed concern over teaching controversial topics. The curriculum adds many new concepts and teachers are not always experts in these areas. The Troubles are still very recent, and many students and teachers have very personal connections to the conflict. Teachers need to be given additional training in how to deal with sensitive and personal issues with respect to teaching conflict. The more the peace is solidified, the easier this will get, but in the short term teachers will need extra resources to help them with the new curriculum.

**Install cooperative lessons between schools.** Despite progress that has been made since 1998, there are still many areas in which youth from one community have limited interaction with youth from the other community. In Belfast, where the two communities live in close proximity to each other, it is not common for a Catholic child to have any Protestant friends. In order to have a more complete discussion on issues such as diversity, identity, and conflict

resolution, these lessons should be taught in tandem with schools from the other community. Integrated schools make up only a small percentage of schools in Northern Ireland. Maintained schools and controlled schools should work together and teach lessons together to expose students to a wide range of perspectives and ideas. This would help break down the stereotypes that are fostered by the sectarian images and ideas present throughout society.

**Encourage a broader sense of community.** In Northern Ireland, many people conceive of their community as a small, neighborhood unit. In Belfast, Nationalists are often unfamiliar with Unionist neighborhoods, and vice versa. The Local and Global Citizenship curriculum should try and encourage students to see themselves as parts of larger communities—such as entire cities or Northern Ireland itself. Students should learn that they can contribute to, and are dependent on, larger community units. Part of the curriculum involves learning about the role that NGOs play in society. This is an excellent opportunity for students to learn what is going on in other neighborhoods. Many NGOs are working on cross-community projects that could also be used to bring youth together. Community projects should try and take children out of their own local neighborhood and into another part of their city or county.

The sustainability of any peace agreement depends on future generations accepting its terms and being able to resolve issues without returning to conflict. In Northern Ireland, where sectarian ideas are still ever-present and the two sides have largely decided to coexist side-by-side instead of fully integrate, it is important that schools offer a different perspective. Students are influenced by their immediate families and neighborhoods, but research has also shown that they do absorb what is taught in school. Students need to be given the tools to learn how to affect change in their communities without resorting to violence. They also need an opportunity to explore different perspectives and learn as much as they can about the Troubles and the repercussions that are still being felt today. Education should be used to promote peace and not be allowed to be a source of sectarian divisions.



## **13. Integrated Schooling: A Way Forward**

**Amy Shatsoff**

Education is a vital component for a functioning society, not only for creating a productive working class but also for socializing individuals, teaching them the norms and rules of the state they live in. These ideas are identified by two hypotheses often used when discussing education in post-conflict societies. First, the ‘cultural hypothesis’ argues that being educated in two different settings, children will grow up with different cultural views, which will lead to clashing views of society. Second, the ‘social hypothesis’ states that even if the curriculum of the two schools is similar, the mere separation of students by religion leads to ignorance (Darby 1997, p. 92).

In Northern Ireland the school system has long been separated along religious lines, and has only served to perpetuate ideas and stereotypes about the “other.” Even before the end of the conflict there was a drive towards integration of the education system, although it was met with little support from the state. After the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) the government has shown greater backing for the initiative, but an overarching policy still remains to be established and efforts are haphazard. Upon the tenth anniversary of the GFA, only 5% of children are educated in integrated schools, and coexistence, but not reconciliation, has continued to be the norm. However, as the demographics in Northern Ireland continue to change there are more and more opportunities to offer integrated schooling to a greater number of students. It remains to be seen whether the government will take a more proactive stance in identifying possible channels and opportunities for integration, but there is increasing support for integrated schools to reach a greater number of communities.

### **Education as Part of the Endemic Conflict**

The grounds for segregation under the current education system were set several decades before the conflict even began. Before 1920, when Ireland was unified under the United Kingdom, the Catholic and Protestant Churches were traditionally in charge of education and therefore most schools were respectively divided along religious lines. After 1920, or post-partition, the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education was established under the United Kingdom and Protestant schools were slowly placed under the jurisdiction of the government, therefore

establishing them as the public schools. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church continued to unilaterally support Catholic education creating a network of private schools across Northern Ireland.

In 1923 the First Education Act of Northern Ireland segregated the school system into “controlled” and “voluntary” schools. The premise behind the Act was that those schools over which the government had greater control would receive more funding, which basically amounted to Protestant schools receiving the majority of support. Voluntary schools, or Catholic schools, would only receive funding to cover teachers’ salaries and meet other very basic costs. While Catholics protested upon grounds of discrimination, the official stance by the government was that the choice was up to the school whether or not to be under the government’s jurisdiction, and in turn receive financial backing.

Protest mounted, and reforms slowly took place to calm the objections. Under the 1930 Northern Ireland Education Act, voluntary schools were offered money to cover 50% of their costs. In addition, controlled or Protestant schools were officially permitted to teach religion, further serving to block any separation of church and state within the classroom. Financial support continued to be increased for Catholic education over the next few decades. The Education Act of 1947 raised funding of voluntary schools to 65%, and the Education Act of 1968 increased funding to 80%. It was estimated that in that 21 year period, from 1947 to 1968, private donations worth £20 million were used to pay for the running and maintaining of Catholic schools (NIES 2008).

In the early 1970s, concern increased over segregated schooling, and frequent opinion polls showed support for integration. However, in 1974, when the Minister of Education, Basil McIvor, made a statement in support of “shared education” he was struck down by Loyalist protests. Despite disapproval from many citizens, a privately sponsored bill was passed which provided for the integration of schools. The first integrated school, Lagan College, was opened in 1981 through the use of private donations (and with no financial support from the government). Not until the school had proven successful, could it apply for public funding (Darby 1997, p. 92).

Throughout the 1980s, progress continued to be made. In 1984, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), a non-governmental organization (NGO), was established. In 1987 the Cross-Community Contact Scheme was launched by the Education

Ministry, and increased funding was offered as an incentive for schools taking part. Finally, in 1989 the Education Reform Order was passed, offering full government funding for integrated education. Integrated schooling was finally seen as a vital, and viable, component of Northern Ireland's Education System.

It was during the 1970s, the bloodiest years of the conflict, that the great push for integration began. One can speculate that there was great concern over the violence, and education was seen as a way out. It is also possible that if integrated schooling had begun sooner and with greater support from the government, the conflict might not have lasted quite as long, or at the very least children today would be in a better position to interact with the opposite side.

In a poll conducted in 1990, before formal or even secret negotiations had begun, 67 percent of Catholics and 57 percent of Protestants believed that integrated schooling should be encouraged by the government (Darby 199y, p. 66). It can be argued that some degree of support has always been there at least at the community level, but the government has fallen short in its response. Integrated education was not and is not a product of the GFA, but in fact existed well before many even fathomed the possibility of a peace settlement. It cannot be overlooked that the precedent was there.

### **In Light of an Agreement**

The GFA officially ended the conflict in Northern Ireland, but it was an agreement of coexistence and not reconciliation. For the most part, the two populations rarely live in the same neighborhood and in Belfast many live behind "peace walls" which are composed of cement and barbed wire. One of the main manifestations of violence today is kids throwing stones at each other over these walls. A government official commented that children seem to have more hatred than even the generation before, with no memory of life before the conflict and no means of formal interaction to this day. They grow up with their parents' attitudes which are then magnified by the unknown. The younger generation still plays different sports, goes to their "own" community centers, and lives in different neighborhoods. Their lives remain highly segregated and education is no exception.

There are currently 61 schools in Northern Ireland that are integrated, containing a total of 5% of the eligible population or 20,000 students. Structurally, a school is considered integrated by the Ministry of Education if it has a distribution of 70:30 between the two

communities. The NICIE, which is still in existence and operates outside of the Ministry, looks for a ratio of 40:40:20 (40 percent Protestant, 40 percent Catholic, and 20 percent of “others”), and expects all integrated schools to aspire to this goal. Despite frequent communication between the NICIE and the Ministry, the manifestation of different policies remains a point of discussion.

There are two paths towards integration: planned and transformed. A planned school is brought about through the initiative of parents who desire an integrated school in their community and approach the Ministry with their request. The role of the NICIE at this point is to assist interested parents in making contact with others who are interested in their communities. Subsequently, a Parent Steering Group is formed to advocate integrated education in their district; if they are successful, an integrated school is opened. This process greatly depends on the drive of the parents rather than identification and advocacy by the Ministry or the NICIE. One can easily understand the difficulties that might arise from such a method, as parents might be reluctant to come forward for fear of a negative backlash, or at the very least complete disinterest or disregard.

A second course of action is the integration of an already existing school. This is initiated either by the district’s board of education that decides to begin the process, or by a write-in petition with signatures from 20% of the parents in the district. This progression towards integration then occurs over a ten year period, during which students can actually be turned away to maintain the desired ratio of Protestants to Catholics (NICIE 2008). There is no noticeable difference in the number of requests received for integration from either the Protestant or Catholic communities.

Some are optimistic about the progress that has been made, and there is reason to be so. There is currently a big effort underway by many reconciliation groups to create “shared space,” that is, neutral territory in which both sides can interact. It is the hope that increased contact between both sides will mean the creation of a more unified community with greater mutual understanding, an idea that is also manifested in the ethos of integrated education. In North Belfast, one of the most contentious areas of the conflict, there are two integrated schools that are thriving and these schools are the only “shared space” in the entire district.

In addition, each year approximately 500 potential students are turned away from enrolling in integrated schools because of the effort to reach or maintain the ratio that constitutes

integration. This illustrates, however, that the demand exists for integrated schooling and in fact the demand is greater than the supply (NICIE 2008). This should serve as a positive sign to the Ministry and the NICIE not only to continue, but to intensify their efforts so that all children who desire to attend an integrated school are able to enroll.

Conversely, there still exists passivity, and in some cases opposition, towards integrated education. A leader of a Peace and Reconciliation group, a person which has a great amount of local contact, remarked that at this point in time there does not seem to be any desire for integrated schools or that it should happen naturally. A point of contention raised was that integration should be allowed to develop naturally and not be advocated for or forced by the Ministry.

Another Northern Ireland activist argued that before there is integrated education there must be economic development and integrated neighborhoods to make what is being practiced at school worthwhile. However, one only needs to look at a map of Belfast to realize that there is very little physical separation between groups. The city has been described as a patchwork quilt because even if it is not integrated house by house, it is certainly integrated in many places block by block. In addition, outside of Belfast some students are traveling up to 20 km to attend school, but it is virtually impossible to travel 20 km in any direction in Northern Ireland without crossing through the other community. Superficial integration is therefore happening every moment of everyday, and there is no reason why this should not be made more concrete.

It needs to be said that the ultimate goal of the NICIE is not to have every child in an integrated school, but to give every child the *option* of an integrated education. The primary obstacle at this point is the lack of an overarching policy or framework to bring this about. A recent opinion poll shows that 82% of people surveyed are in support of integrated education, and 55% indicate the reason their children do not attend integrated schools is because there are none in the area (Wardlow 2006). Parents are worried that if children continue to grow up in a society where there is little or no contact between the two sides, and no means to debunk myths about the unknown, then there will not be a new generation to create a united Northern Ireland identity.

One final anecdote: A principal of a primary school in the Shankill, the most underprivileged Protestant neighborhood in Belfast, works everyday with children who were silent witnesses of the conflict. This is frequently translated into the classroom through violent

behavior, learning disabilities, and emotional outbursts that often overshadow the ability to even learn the basics. However, she has aspirations for one day the existence of not just integrated education but simply one education system. If she has reason to still be hopeful and idealistic, there is no reason why others should not be.

## **Recommendations**

**In the short term make the NICIE an official branch of or consultant to the Ministry of Education, and create a united, clear and overarching policy for integrated education.** As a registered charity and not a department within the Ministry, the NICIE often lacks funding and policy implementation tools that would serve to expedite the integration process. In addition, there are mixed signals as to the guidelines for integration. The NICIE should have an official standing with the Ministry, and offered full funding for its activities. In addition, overarching guidelines for identification, monitoring, and evaluation should be established. For example, a ratio should be clearly decided as a benchmark for integration, and performance measures for students and faculty should be established and evaluated throughout the integration process

**Identify schools where enrollment is down, or expected to drop, and where integrated education will prove to a viable alternative to closure in the near future.** At this moment, there are 50,000 spare places in existing schools and birth rates continue to fall in Northern Ireland. The influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe will by no means cover this decline and many schools will be in danger of closing in the near future. As survival becomes more and more of an issue for many schools, the strategic combining of two local schools, particularly of different backgrounds, should be seen as a viable alternative. It is important to identify these communities so they may condition their residents to the possibility of integrating and start rallying support for the process.

**Conduct anonymous polls, identifying communities that desire integrated education.** The plan for integrating schools needs to be strategic rather than completely community driven. Instead of passively waiting for parents and schools to identify themselves, the Ministry and the NICIE should be more active in seeking out individuals and communities. The first step for doing this is conducting anonymous polling through Northern Ireland, identifying areas that are open to integration.

**In the medium term, widely distribute the new policies developed by the NICIE and the Ministry of Education to school boards and parent groups, particularly targeting schools and communities identified through anonymous polling or experiencing declining enrollment.** Building on previously identified communities to approach with the idea of integration, communities most apt to receive integrated schooling can begin the process towards achieving such a goal with new, clearly defined objectives and performance goals.

**Develop a media campaign to advertise the pros of integrated education.** Just as the Good Friday Agreement needed to be sold to the public through a referendum, the NICIE and Ministry should not take a passive stance in advertising the need and benefits of integration. A media campaign should focus on targeting not only adults but children. Pamphlets should be widely distributed, advertisements run on the television and radio, and statistics from opinion polls that show overwhelming support for integration be made widely available. This will serve to provoke interest and action, and in addition make individuals feel as if they are not “alone” in their desire for integration.

**Target immigrant populations as a method to begin integration.** In recent years there has seen a large influx of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly from Poland. This will increasingly change the demographics of Northern Ireland, and this should be capitalized on by the Ministry. These populations could serve to change existing schools, making them more “neutral” in their existence.

**In the long term, offer integrated schooling as an option for every child.** Meeting the demand for integrated education should be a top priority. Ensuring the curriculum exposes children to all aspects of religion and culture reduces the risk of falling into the pre-conflict pattern of self segregation.

**Consolidate existing schools.** Follow through with policies and advertising campaigns by strategically closing empty schools and combining them to create integrated education.

**Create a permanent staff to monitor and evaluate the quality of education and the sensitivity of curriculum.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation should continue for several years to come, and a permanent and properly trained staff should be available for this purpose.



## **14. Moving from Sectarianism to “Bread and Butter Politics” in the Northern Ireland Assembly**

**Matthew P. Walsh**

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998 delineated three layers, or “strands,” of government bringing together the main protagonists of the conflict within Northern Ireland, and also the British and Irish governments. Strand One deals with the democratic institutions in Northern Ireland; Strand Two the North/South Ministerial Council, linking the governments of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic; and Strand Three the British-Irish Council and the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference, linking the two governments in London and Dublin. This chapter focuses on Strand One and the question of how the Northern Ireland Assembly, the seat of all devolved executive and legislative authority in Northern Ireland, can progress from its current state of operations, which is largely defined by sectarianism and is actively contributing to the endemic nature of the conflict, to a more normal *modus operandi* characterized by the discussion and enactment of “bread and butter” social and economic issues.

In 1998, Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) Deputy Leader Seamus Mallon quipped that the Good Friday Agreement was akin to “Sunningdale for slow learners” (Jackson 1999, p. 408) referring to the 1973 peace settlement that lasted for five months. Although it is true that there are structural similarities between the two documents, the Good Friday Agreement is unquestionably more complex. The GFA is “power-sharing plus” (O’Leary 1998, p. 14): it is consociational, or power-sharing, but with elements of confederation and federation; it has elements of co-sovereignty built in; and it promises protection both for Nationalists as minorities within Northern Ireland, and for Unionists as minorities on the Irish isle. According to Lijphart (2004, p. 96), “In deeply divided societies the interests and demands of communal groups can be accommodated only by the establishment of power-sharing,” involving cross-community executive power-sharing, proportionality rules applied throughout the public sector, community self-government or autonomy, and veto rights for minorities.

## **The Shortcomings of the Assembly**

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement was an agreeing formula, not a resolving one. In other words, what it achieved was conflict management, not conflict resolution. With respect to the Assembly, the GFA transitioned the structure of government in Northern Ireland away from a system of majority rule, which since the creation of the Plantation of Ulster in the seventeenth century has meant a government run by the Unionist/Protestant community, to one of extreme power-sharing between the Unionists/Protestants and the Nationalists/Catholics. However, this power-sharing structure, which combines elements of consociationalism with other attributes to form a system of “power-sharing plus,” has also, intentionally or unintentionally, resulted in “the marginalization of those mainstream parties who took the early risks for peace and who were the least ideologically responsible for militancy” (Bew 2007, p. 142). Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the two main parties, the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), echoed these exact sentiments in private conversations.

Whether the “coalition of the extremes” that currently exists in the Assembly—that is, the working relationship, at least in the Executive, between Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)—“will ultimately usher in greater nastiness,” or whether the new system will work in a “reasonably humane way,” remains to be seen (Bew 2007, p. 142). However, as the MLAs interviewed noted, the current institutional design of the Assembly creates a system in which everything is debated within a Nationalist versus Unionist, “us” versus “them,” framework. This transformation of the conflict from one of physical violence and communal separation to one of governmental sectarianism only serves to perpetuate the conflict, to increase its endemic nature, and to delay the discussion and enactment of normal, “bread and butter” social and economic policy issues for which every MLA interviewed seemed to yearn.

For instance, an MLA from the Alliance Party expressed frustration when she commented that the Assembly, in its current form, is “a sectarian government that institutionalizes division.” A member of the Assembly from one of the smaller parties stated that currently, all that takes place is “sectarian squabbling,” and that the Assembly “is not talking about the issues that affect the society.” A member of the UUP stated that “everybody wants bread and butter politics,” defining this as discussion of “normal social and economic issues.” Reinforcing what one would expect to be the party lines from both the DUP and Sinn Féin, the two parties cohabitating the top posts in the Executive, high ranking MLAs from each of these

two parties downplayed questions of sectarianism or dysfunctionality, instead talking about the “trust building” potential of the Assembly in its current form.

However, when one compares what the Assembly has accomplished with what it has the potential to accomplish given the range of its devolved functions and powers, or “transferred matters” as they are referred to in the GFA, the result is rather disappointing. The Good Friday Agreement gave the Assembly the authority to legislate across a field of ten different competencies: education; health; agriculture; enterprise, trade, and investment; environment; regional development, including transportation; employment; finance; social development; and culture, including the arts and leisure. Matters such as policing and criminal justice may soon be transferred to the Assembly as well. Nevertheless, during the 2006-2007 legislative session in the Assembly, only three bills made it to the final stage of the process to be passed or rejected. So far during the 2007-2008 session, only two bills have reached this stage. Of these five bills, one was the 2006-2007 budget legislation (Assembly Legislation 2007). Hence, since devolved powers were restored to the Assembly in May of 2007, only four non-budget related bills have reached the final stage of the legislative process.

In addition to the problems mentioned above, the Assembly as a whole suffers because MLAs feel little pressure to push for legislation that benefits those outside of their own Nationalist or Unionist constituencies since the overwhelming majority of voters in Northern Ireland still vote along sectarian lines. In fact, in some cases Members of the Assembly might actually be incentivized to prevent legislation from getting passed, in order to avoid being seen as supporting the “other side.”

### **“Power-sharing Plus” in the Assembly**

The First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, quasi-presidential figures who are identical in power, are elected together by what is known as the “parallel consent cross-community consent” procedure. This requires anyone vying for either of the two top executive positions to have not only the support of fifty percent of registered Nationalists and Unionists—and all MLAs must register themselves as either a “Unionist,” “Nationalist,” or “other”—but also the support of a majority the Assembly. This gives strong incentives to both Unionists and Nationalists to nominate candidates who will be acceptable to the other side. It also virtually ensures that a Nationalist and a Unionist will share the top two posts in the devolved

government. The other ministerial positions in the Executive, as well as the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the committees responsible for scrutinizing the departments headed up by the Ministers, are allocated to parties based on their proportion of seats in the Assembly.

The GFA created an electoral system in which all 108 members of the Assembly are elected using a proportional representation system, the single transferable vote, in six member constituencies. This is not the party-list proportional representation system of voting that Lijphart recommends for consociational systems in order to breed strong party leaders. However, the single transferable vote system does have the effect of encouraging “vote pooling”: voters can, in theory, use their votes to reward either pro-GFA or moderate parties. As O’Leary (p. 18) notes, “[In 1998] some of the SDLP’s and Sinn Féin’s voters found it rational to reward David Trimble’s UUP by giving its candidates their lower-order preferences, and so helped them against Ian Paisley’s DUP.” More recently, “SDLP voters have been rewarding Sinn Féin for its increased moderation.”

The Assembly also protects minority rights through its cross-community support procedures. Specifically, this is done via its parallel-consent and weighted majority rules. These procedures require the support of both a majority of the Assembly as well as either a majority of both Nationalists and Unionists, or forty percent of both Nationalists and Unionists if a majority of both cannot be obtained, to get any measure passed. Certain subjects, such as the election of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and any changes to the standing rules, require the use of cross-community procedures. However, any vote taken by the Assembly can be made dependent on cross-community support if at least thirty MLAs present the Speaker with a “petition of concern” before the vote is taken.

The confederation and federation aspects of the Good Friday Agreement work to protect minority rights and community autonomy. The North/South Ministerial Council, linking Northern Ireland with the rest of the island, falls outside the jurisdiction of the Assembly; nevertheless, the two bodies are “mutually interdependent” and one cannot function without the other. However, the East-West bodies, such as the British-Irish Council, do not have an equivalent relationship with the Assembly—their formation is completely voluntary and the dissolution of one would not lead to the dissolution of the other.

## **Recommendations**

The Good Friday Agreement and the power-sharing regime that it set-up across Northern Ireland, Britain, and Ireland are undoubtedly giant steps in the right direction. As O’Leary (1998, pp. 29-30) points out, “Most interethnic peace accords represent the victory of one side and the defeat of another. The Good Friday Agreement is different...Both [Nationalists and Unionists] can maintain their central aspirations and their core identities...and there are incentives for each bloc to accommodate the other precisely in order to make its vision of the future more likely.” The DUP, which originally rejected the GFA, and Sinn Féin, which worked hard to convince the Provisional IRA to embrace the political process, have both demonstrated their commitment to making the Assembly work. Interviews in Belfast and Derry suggest that a small minority of voters have begun crossing sectarian lines when voting for MLAs—certainly an encouraging sign no matter how small the phenomenon. However, in operating in such a sectarian manner—which has been legitimized through the parallel-consent and weighted majority rules, as well as through the sectarian registration requirement for MLAs—the Assembly effectively acts not only as an institution divided down community lines, but also as one government without an opposition.

So where does the Northern Ireland Assembly go from here? How can the institution be altered so that it maintains its power-sharing, inclusive formula but gains the ability to act more decisively regarding the “bread and butter” issues?

There are two ways to answer these questions. The first is to look outside of consociationalism. Brian Barry (1975) did just this when he suggested “cooperation without cooptation” for Northern Ireland—majority rule in which both majority and minority would simply promise to behave moderately. This idea has obviously proven not to work. An alternative to Lijphart’s brand of power-sharing, one that uses various electoral mechanisms, such as alternative voting or instant runoffs, which would encourage the election of moderate representatives, has also been proposed (Horowitz, 1991). Northern Ireland currently utilizes such a system in its use of the single transferable vote. This system has worked quite successfully in getting pro-GFA, moderate MLAs into the Assembly in greater numbers than would be elected if an alternative voting system was in place.

The second way to answer these questions is to look within consociationalism, probably a more plausible way for the Assembly to move forward in an effective manner. Clearly, power-

sharing models must be tweaked and adopted to fit each society to which they are applied; there is no “one size fits all” model. The use of the single transferable voting system in Northern Ireland is a great example of this. In fact, since 1960, consociational models of one form or another have been adopted in places as dissimilar as Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa. In all of these states political stability has been maintained, economic growth has taken place, and there has been no widespread relapse back to violence.

**In the short term, the formation of an opposition should be encouraged in the Northern Ireland Assembly.** In private conversations, MLAs from both the SDLP and the UUP mentioned the possibility of joining to form an unofficial opposition to the current DUP-Sinn Féin controlled government. This could be done informally if respected third-party individuals were to encourage the leaders of these two moderate parties to join together. Formally, this could be encouraged by amending the procedural rules of the Assembly so that Ministers and Chairs and Deputy Chairs of committees are selected only from the two parties of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. If either of these steps is taken, it will encourage a system in which there is a power-sharing government, comprised of a Unionist and a Nationalist party, but also an opposition with enough power to wield some influence over the agenda of the Assembly. This would increase transparency, put more pressure on the Executive and Assembly to perform, and would sow the seeds for the growth of a non-sectarian government in Northern Ireland.

**In the medium term, the British government should increase the number and the scope of the “transferred matters” devolved to the Assembly.** Such a move on behalf of the government in London would benefit both Unionists and Nationalists, as both communities would get more say in their own government. A similar step was taken elsewhere in the UK in 1997 when Westminster devolved to the Scottish Parliament much more power over their own local governance than they held previously. Scotland clearly benefited from this decision, and since, there has been no negative backlash.

**In the long term, the Assembly should phase out some of its power-sharing attributes, which would unquestionably allow for greater decisiveness.** This should only happen if Nationalists and Unionists are able to overcome some of their very deep-seated sectarianism. However, the elimination of such procedures as sectarian quotas in casting votes and parallel-consent would certainly be a positive development for the society.

## **15. “Une île derrière une île”: The United Kingdom and Economics in the Northern Ireland Conflict**

**Aaron Thompson**

The Northern Ireland conflict is far from what is often considered the typical case of conflict management. Rather than serving as a proxy war between two enemies, as so many internal conflicts turn out to be, it is a struggle between two sides who identify themselves with liberal democracies—the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom—that are not only at peace but are also economic partners in the European Union. Indeed, this conflict, which is so vivid and real in the minds and the lives of the people of Northern Ireland, has been practically nonexistent in London or Dublin in the ten years following the Good Friday Accords. Despite these good relations between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, however, the root causes of the conflict can be found in the historically unequal economic relationship between the two, which has manifested itself in the plot of land located on the island of Ireland but governed by the United Kingdom. By causing the division and resentment inherent in the relationship between empire and colony, the United Kingdom sowed the seeds for the conflict that has divided Northern Ireland, and only in cooperation with the Republic of Ireland will it be able to put the region back together.

### **The British Economic Presence in Northern Ireland**

The comparison between Great Britain and the entire island of Ireland has long been inevitable due to the geographic position of the two islands as well as the intertwined nature of their populations, both in Ulster and in the South. As Paul Arthur writes, “In any global comparison, both parts of Ireland suffer from the common disadvantage that an obvious reference point will always be Britain.” (Arthur 2000, p. 40) This comparison has always been one characterized by asymmetry, with one island representing the imperial power and the other the colonial subject. As Jean Blanchard wrote in 1982, “*L’Irlande est une île derrière une île* (Ireland is an island behind an island)” —a concept that not only manifested itself geographically, but politically and economically as well, with Great Britain dominating the island of Ireland in both areas up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Following the partition of Ireland in 1922, the southern part of Ireland gradually began to emerge from its role of economic subservience vis-à-vis Westminster; while Eire certainly did not consider itself an economic equal to the British Empire on the world stage, the path to parity was opened through the achievement of independence. Yet in Northern Ireland, a microcosm of this unequal relationship was perpetuated through the nearly uniform coming of Protestants as factory owners and landlords—positions that had been Protestant-held since the conquest of Ireland by Oliver Cromwell in the early 1650s. Meanwhile, the indigenous Catholic population of Northern Ireland faced considerable economic challenges, particularly in finding employment. “Catholics continued to have higher unemployment rates than ethnic-racial minorities in Britain...while Protestant rates were not much different from those of white Britons.” (O’Dowd 1993, p. 18)

During the half-century that followed the partition of Ireland, British Protestants possessed what Paul Collier (2001, p. 158) calls “ethnic dominance” over Northern Ireland, which he defines as a society in which one ethnic group represents between 45 and 90 percent of the population. According to Collier, “Having 45 percent or more of the population is sufficient in a democracy to give the group permanent control...Having less than 90 percent of the population suggests that it may be worth exploiting this power by transferring resources from the minority.” At the time of the 1961 census, Protestants represented approximately 62.5% of the Northern Ireland population, and this dominance was expressed through the exercise of both economic and political power. Protestants not only held the capacity to hire and provide housing, but also commanded a near monopoly of control over the apparatus of the state, as, even up until the mid-1960s, votes were held by households rather than by individuals in Northern Ireland. The possession of voting rights in terms of property rather than in that of population allowed landlords, who were overwhelmingly Protestant, to possess multiple votes, while an entire family of tenants would only possess one.

In 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed for the purposes of addressing these inequalities through the use of nonviolent tactics. However, in a case of ethnic dominance, the minority’s fear of permanent exploitation often provides a strong motivation for the use of violence. On August 12, 1969, following the violent suppression of a NICRA demonstration by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), rioting took place throughout the city of Derry and soon spread throughout Northern Ireland. As the leaders of NICRA and the

people of Northern Ireland discovered, the lingering resentment over the institutionalized inequality between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland proved unable to be confined to the nonviolent methods espoused by the civil rights leaders, eventually leading to the resurrection of the IRA and the start of the armed conflict known as the Troubles.

### **The Economic Role of the UK in the Peace Process**

Throughout the thirty years of the Troubles, the structural inequality based in the ethnic dominance of British Protestants over Northern Ireland was reinforced by the passivity of British economic policy. Much like the UK's security policy, this economic policy treated the symptoms of the problem rather than the root causes. "State intervention was less a coherent strategy than a series of *ad hoc* responses to the changing circumstances in Northern Ireland." (O'Dowd 1993, p. 19) One example of the UK's misguided attempts to reform the Northern Irish economic situation during this period is a law passed by Westminster for the purposes of reducing discrimination in hiring. While the law forbade discrimination on the basis of religion, it left discrimination on the basis of socioeconomic class untouched, thereby allowing employers to discriminate against Catholics because of their low social class.

Only in the 1980s did the British government begin to revise its strategy by choosing to work in conjunction with the Republic of Ireland in pursuit of economic and political reform in Northern Ireland. By the late 1990s, the UK had politically and economically repositioned itself vis-à-vis Northern Ireland, thereby disempowering the Unionists and creating an environment conducive to the political power-sharing institutionalized in the Good Friday Accords. This repositioning was juxtaposed with a policy of investment that would promote cross-community dialogue among the communities in Northern Ireland while attempting to spur the industrial development desperately needed in the region, with the vision of a Northern Ireland that was marked not only by greater equality, but by greater prosperity as well.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the percentage of Catholics in the Northern Irish population jumped from 31.4 percent in 1971 to approximately 43 percent in 1991, thereby reducing the ethnic dominance that Protestants had possessed over the region since partition. This shift towards what soon became known as "parity of esteem" between the two religious groups would provide Catholics with incentives to seek fair treatment through the political process. In doing so, Catholics soon began to move towards achieving their objectives through

peace, as NICRA had originally desired, rather than through the adoption of the violent tactics of the IRA.

### **The British Dilemma**

Today, following the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement as well as the devolution of political control over Northern Ireland to the Assembly, Great Britain faces an important crossroads in its continuing economic relationship with the region. Years of conflict, along with the costs of ending that conflict, have made Northern Ireland one of the most costly regions for Westminster to administer. According to the budget released by the British Treasury in 2007, the British government planned to spend £9,385 per person on public expenditures in Northern Ireland in 2006-2007, as opposed to the £7,121 per head planned for expenditures in England. Faced with this imbalance, Westminster seeks to put Northern Ireland at parity with other regions of a similar size. Now that the Northern Ireland conflict appears to be resolved, other relatively poor regions like Wales and the North of England are clamoring for increased funding. In addition, the British government seeks to encourage Northern Ireland's economic self-sufficiency, which will likely aid in transforming Northern Ireland from a post-conflict state to a stable emerging market open to foreign investment.

However, in reducing public expenditures in Northern Ireland, the British Treasury must walk a fine line between two negative scenarios. First of all, the United Kingdom must avoid cutting too much funding too soon. While the practice of caution is unlikely to be welcomed by those in Scotland and Wales, Westminster must be vigilant as it brings Northern Ireland to parity, as the region relies largely on public spending to continue the economic growth that can be seen as playing a part in the amelioration of the conflict. In addition, the reduction of public expenditures opens the possibility of alarming the Unionists who have long viewed the presence of Westminster as a guard against the loss of their position of economic privilege. Now that political devolution is almost complete, an overly rapid withdrawal of investment may prompt an extreme reaction by Unionists, increasing the possibility of the resumption of violence due to increased feelings of insecurity.

Yet the British also must be cautious of moving funds out of Northern Ireland too slowly, as well. The more money that the British government transfers to Northern Ireland in the form of public expenditures, the more likely will Northern Ireland continue to depend on British funding.

Continued dependence would serve to forestall the Northern Irish economic self-sufficiency eagerly awaited by the British. More importantly, continued economic support for Northern Ireland is likely to provide Unionists with a false sense of security, giving them less incentive to compromise in the Assembly due to the continued economic presence of the British in Ireland. These Unionists, particularly those like Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), view a relationship with Great Britain as being the only means to economic viability and a connection with the outside world, and it must be demonstrated to them that growth and stability is possible without Westminster's constant economic assistance. Finally, the continuation of high levels of funding to Northern Ireland will perpetuate the view of Northern Ireland as a post-conflict society rather than a region of the United Kingdom on par with peaceful regions like Scotland and Wales. In this sense, a reduction in public expenditures will help the people of Northern Ireland emerge psychologically from their self-perception as inhabitants of a land torn by conflict.

Finally, the British must also be vigilant regarding the distribution of funds once they reach Ulster, particularly in ensuring that internal investment is used to encourage the creation of permanent institutions rather than be used as a transient quick-fix to attempt to lower unemployment rates in the short term. Some measures could include investment in education and training, which would create labor conditions more conducive to embedded indigenous company growth. (Shirlow and Shuttleworth 1995, p. 79) In addition, some have claimed that much of the recent investment from the "Peace Dividend" has mostly gone into the hands of Catholics thanks to their independent capacity to organize relative to Protestant Unionists, caused in turn by the historical reliance of Unionists on the British government's assistance. Since perceptions of inequality provided the fuel for the conflict, a continuation of those feelings of injustice threatens the foundation of the peace agreement itself, making the equitable distribution of investment funds an imperative.

### **Encouraging Foreign Investment**

**In addition to continuing its own investment in Northern Ireland in conjunction with that of the EU and the Republic of Ireland, the UK should also look to encourage greater investment from abroad.** Foreign investment will be particularly beneficial for the Northern Irish economy and for reducing tensions over distribution in Northern Ireland due to its

emphasis on profitability rather than political power as a justification. Through the use of its diplomatic and business contacts to promote the emerging market that is the post-conflict Northern Ireland economy, the UK may be able to reduce the pain of its economic withdrawal for the people of Northern Ireland. It can also use this investment as a tool to encourage the continued “parity of esteem” between the communities, in which projects are judged by the soundness of their capital structure rather than by sectarian connections to local authorities. In particular, a strong relationship with the United States will be of great benefit to the Northern Ireland economy, and a US/Northern Ireland investment conference is already planned for May 2008. It falls to the UK government, within the limits of its regional policy, to facilitate such cooperation through tax and other advantages.

**When budgeting for public-sector expenditures in Northern Ireland, the British Treasury should emphasize the development of public infrastructure, which will positively impact all communities in Northern Irish society.** The British government must demonstrate that it has learned from the mistakes that it made during the years of the Troubles by avoiding makeshift solutions that only address the symptoms of the ills of Northern Irish society. By directing public expenditures towards the development of infrastructure projects like roads, telecommunications, and public transportation, the British government will create conditions amenable to a self-sufficient Northern Ireland that attracts investment, experiences high levels of growth and employment, and provides a profit for the United Kingdom rather than a loss. Development of infrastructure in Northern Ireland will also serve as a point of pride for the Northern Irish people, many of whom are well aware that their roads and other public utilities pale in comparison to those in the Republic.

**The United Kingdom should encourage an “all-island” solution for Ireland through continued economic cooperation and interaction with the Republic of Ireland, particularly in cross-border enterprises.** While peace within a Northern Ireland located within the United Kingdom appears to be the short- and medium-term goal for the UK, the demographic tide is turning, as an influx of Catholics from Poland along with Hindus and Muslims from South Asia has the potential to leave Protestants in the minority in Northern Ireland in the near future. In addition, a Republic that includes Northern Ireland is seen as inevitable and is actually welcomed by some Northern Irish Protestants, including those who identify themselves as, in the words of one of our speakers, “Emotional Nationalists”, Protestants who view a united Ireland as a

common-sense solution to the issue. One of the primary benefits of increased economic cooperation would be through its influence on the Unionist community, many of whom continue to view the Republic of Ireland as a poor backwater compared to Great Britain's globally oriented economy. Continued economic partnership between the two countries would not only demonstrate the potency of the Irish economy to these Unionists, but would also make them more amenable to cooperation and possible unification due to the material benefits that would come from a closer North-South economic relationship. However, the UK must be careful to ensure that this move towards increased integration of the two economies is gradual enough to allow Unionists the time to psychologically adjust to the concept of joining the Republic—a key consideration in a conflict that continues to rage in the hearts of many who lived through it.



## **16: Economics and the North-South relationship**

**Rossa FitzGerald**

Unequal access to scarce economic resources underlies the political/constitutional and sectarian features of the Northern Ireland conflict. Inferior access to economic resources is an important and frequently cited source of grievance among Catholics while preferential access to those same resources underpinned Protestant political power in Ulster from the time of the Ulster Plantation in 1603 until cracks began to show in Protestant ascendancy during the 1970s. Following the partition of the island of Ireland in 1920, Northern Ireland's first prime minister, James Craig, boasted that Northern Ireland was "a Protestant state for a Protestant people". During the first half century of devolved government in the region (1921-1972), Protestants dominated the private sector, industry, finance, local resource distribution, agriculture and professional and business associations. They enjoyed markedly higher levels of educational attainment and training than Catholics (Ruane and Todd, 1996, p. 153).

By the same token, Catholics suffered overt and covert forms of discrimination in employment, alongside inequities in the allocation of public housing and in political representation. Overtly, employers routinely favored Protestant hires over Catholic ones, on the basis that Catholics were presumed untrustworthy, idle and disloyal. Covertly, public sector employers, such as the Northern Ireland Civil Service, adopted casual quotas whereby at most two Catholics were hired for every eight Protestants. These sectarian practices were reflected in the disproportionate rate of emigration amongst Catholics. While Catholics amounted to one third of the population, they accounted for over 50% of emigrants from Northern Ireland during the period of Protestant rule.

During Northern Ireland's first forty years (1921-1960), Protestant economic advantage was secured by strong shipbuilding, engineering, textile and agricultural industries, whose produce was exported to Britain for British consumption and beyond to the wider British Empire. Many Protestants whom we met in Belfast referred proudly to the pre-1960s era as something of a halcyon age of Protestant prosperity compared to the ravages of intra-community violence, drug-addiction and antisocial behavior which have come to stalk their streets. An elementary school headmistress in the Protestant Shankhill area of Belfast referred to her locality in those days as a "decent hardworking loyal community", but "we are the victims now", she went on.

The crucial change following the Second World War was the decline of the large industrial employers and the rise of economic subvention from the London government. As the Northern Irish economy stagnated, control over its economy was transferred over the 1960-1972 period from an increasingly precarious Protestant private sector and professional elite to British civil servants in London. At first, the rolling out of the educational, healthcare and housing provisions of the British welfare state were entrusted to the Protestant government in Belfast. However, it became clear with the outbreak of violence and rioting in Derry and Belfast in 1968/9 that the ‘universal’ provisions of the British welfare state were not being applied universally in Northern Ireland. Instead, they were being implemented on a calculatedly sectarian basis by the Protestant government, hence the civil rights movement’s demand not for Irish rights for Irish citizens, but for “British rights for British citizens”. They wanted their fair share of British welfare; it was being denied to them.

As a member of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland had benefited from the economic parity principle established in 1938. This principle guaranteed an equal level of per capita government spending on public services throughout the constituent countries of the UK. This commitment became far more burdensome on the UK exchequer following the outbreak of the Troubles, the contraction of the private sector and the expansion of public sector employment. Against the background of economic stagnation in mainland Britain and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), or Provisional IRA’s violent campaign, UK governments beginning with that of Edward Heath (1970-1974) were called on to bridge the widening gap between tax revenues raised in Northern Ireland and the demand for public sector employment, services and infrastructure. Having once been an economic and industrial jewel in Britain’s crown, Northern Ireland had become a costly place to govern by 1970. As a result, London looked increasingly to the Republic of Ireland to share the growing political, security and financial burden of governing Northern Ireland.

### **North-South Cooperation: “never, never, never, never”**

An expanded role for the Republic in the Northern Ireland economy carried clear strategic implications in the 1970s that were felt immediately but differently by all parties to the conflict. As Avila Kilmurray (2008) points out, Northern Ireland exhibits a ‘double minority’ problem. Sinn Féin and the broader Republican cast themselves as the MOPEs (the Most

Oppressed People Ever). Their outrage is almost wholly directed at the British government, whom they see as having usurped the right of the Irish people to self-determination. At the same time, the Loyalist and Unionist communities see themselves as a threatened minority on the island of Ireland. Their mistrust is focused on the Republic, which they perceive to be scheming in the direction of Irish unity, but also on the UK, whose commitment to the Union they doubt.

Accordingly, enhanced North-South economic cooperation in fields ranging from trade, telecommunications, electricity, roads and inland waterways tended to register as an opportunity for advancement among Catholics, a mortal threat among Protestants and as a welcome relief in London. One of the less obvious aspects is how early the UK government sought to divest itself of Northern Ireland altogether. Following the rise in PIRA violence from 1970, the collapse of the Sunningdale executive in 1974, and the failure of internment to bring concrete security gains, the Wilson government (1974-77), much to Dublin's unease, carefully considered withdrawing British troops from Northern Ireland. Such an action, many believe, would have plunged Northern Ireland, and perhaps the entire island into an outright Green-Orange civil war.

To understand the resistance to North-South economic cooperation among Unionists, it is useful to note those aspects of the Republic's political, economic and social institutions that Unionists regarded with hostility. The roots of Unionist mistrust of the Republic were Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution of 1937. Article 2 stated that the 'national territory' consisted of the entire island. Article 3 stated that the laws enacted under the Constitution were valid for the twenty-six counties of the Republic, "pending the re-integration of the national territory" and "without prejudice to the right of the parliament and government established by this Constitution to exercise jurisdiction over the whole territory". Taken together, the articles amounted to an irredentist claim on Northern Ireland and were viewed with outright hostility by Unionists. They were particularly objectionable given the perception that PIRA units planned their operations from locations in the Republic.

Economically, the Republic performed exceptionally poorly relative to the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, prompting officials and commentators to question the merits of independence. Unionists were not disposed to cooperate with what they considered to be a protectionist, agrarian and ultimately failed economy. Socially, the Catholic Church dominated independent Ireland. Its pervasive influence on government policy—in areas ranging from

media censorship to the education and healthcare—made the Republic a deeply unappealing place for Northern Protestants.

North-South economic schemes offered a way for the Republic to improve living conditions for Nationalist communities in border regions such as South Armagh, Fermanagh, Tyrone and Derry. They connected the aspirations of Northern nationalists to be part of the Republic with the reality of their business, commercial and familial ties with the South. Moreover, they suggested a way to ease the fiscal burden on the British government, and so they were amenable in principle to London. However, they were effectively blocked by the leaders of Unionism. Budding North-South economic cooperation during the tenure of Northern Ireland's reformist Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill (1963-69), was ambushed by fellow Unionists. In 1973, the UUP along with the Alliance Party and the Nationalist SDLP agreed to share power under the terms of the Sunningdale Agreement. It failed in major part due to its inclusion of the "Council of Ireland", which was seen by Paisley and hard-line UUP members as a stalking horse for Irish unity. Similarly, the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 evoked Unionist wrath because of the role accorded to the Republic and its civil service in promoting cross-border cooperation. As Ian Paisley orated famously: "Mrs. Thatcher tells us that [the] Republic must have some say in our Province. We say never, never, never, never."

### **Managing the Conflict over Economic Resources**

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) is the framework within which the conflict over economic resources in Northern Ireland has been managed since 1998. By asserting that the province remains part of the UK until such time as a majority of citizens in both jurisdictions on the island voted democratically for Irish unity, the agreement met Unionism's primary political objective. The principle of consent was reinforced by amendments to Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution, which affirmed the principle and removed the Republic's territorial claim to Northern Ireland. It was in this changed context that North-South cooperation, or Strand 2 of the agreement, became politically feasible. The major feature of Strand 2 was the establishment of the North-South Ministerial Council, which brings together ministers from Northern Ireland and the Republic in sectoral formats "to reach agreement on the adoption of common policies, in areas where there is a mutual cross-border and all-island benefit".

Rapid social and economic developments in the Republic led to greater Unionist acceptance and acceleration of North-South economic cooperation. The Republic earned the 'Celtic Tiger' title in 1996, with economic growth over the following decade averaging 9% per annum. Moreover, the economic expansion coincided with reports of sexual and physical abuse of children by priests and nuns of the Catholic Church over several decades, triggering a very rapid process of secularization. The Republic appeared to be becoming a more 'protestant' country, and this appearance made North-South cooperation more palatable to Unionism.

The Good Friday Agreement and transformation of social and economic patterns in the Republic of Ireland were enabling factors for North-South cooperation. Three compelling factors are the growing cost of providing public services to the people of Northern Ireland on a divisional basis, the unwillingness of the UK government to meet that cost in the long term, and the economic costs to Northern Ireland of peripheral status within the UK. The *Shared Future* document of 2005 states that allocating resources in Northern Ireland through a lens of 'separate but equal' communities is neither economically nor morally sustainable. At the administrative level, the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland arrived at a similar conclusion.

At first glance, Northern Ireland's macroeconomic performance from 1990 to 2008 has been relatively good. Over this period, Northern Ireland has benefited from low unemployment (4.7% in 2004-5), sustained growth in GDP and poverty levels that are very similar to other parts of the UK. The principle difference is that in Northern Ireland government spending accounts for most of this growth, not private sector investment. Indeed, public expenditure in Northern Ireland as a percentage of GDP was 71.3% in 2005-6, compared with a figure of 43% for the rest of the UK. Private households in Northern Ireland are far more reliant on income- and other state-supports than in the rest of the UK. This difference is a result of the Troubles, which saw a sharp decline in private capital formation. This in turn led to a ballooning of public sector employment (eg in the security forces), which became a surrogate for the private sector.

These high costs hide some interesting statistics. Deloitte (2007) has estimated that annual savings of £6.4m could be made if Northern Ireland rationalized its complicated segregated schooling system, which does a very poor job of matching pupils to school places. Similarly, it attaches a cost of £21m to inefficiencies related to segregation and interfaces when it comes to the allocation of public housing. The duplication cost that arises from bussing Catholic pupils to Catholic schools on Catholic busses and Protestant pupils to Protestant schools on

Protestant busses stands at £2.5m each year. The British government has begun to signal very clearly that it is not prepared to bankroll this 'separate but equal' model of Northern Irish community. Indeed, many have pointed out the danger of entrenching, by financial means, a 'pro-sectarian' society. Public expenditure per capita in Northern Ireland is likely to be reduced to a level comparable with that of England, Scotland and Wales. To mark this change, one observer remarked that instead of memorializing their fallen heroes, communities in Northern Ireland should erect monuments to the 'unknown English taxpayer'.

"In the case of Northern Ireland, a market of 1.7 million people is simply too small to provide a base for growth". That was the stark conclusion of Deloitte on the need for Northern Ireland to pursue a strategy of export-led growth, effectively arguing that province should emulate the low-tax FDI-led economic model espoused by the Republic if it is to achieve long-term GDP growth. The UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, echoed this sentiment in November 2005, noting that the Northern Irish economy was "not sustainable in the long term". Both Hain and Deloitte reflect a widely held opinion that Northern Ireland is disadvantaged by having high rates of corporation tax relative to the South and by its membership of the Sterling currency area. Historically, the Bank of England has favored high interest rates and a strong pound over lower interest rates and a lower priced currency. As Keynes pointed out in the 1920s, this attracts financial capital to the City of London while penalizing goods exporters in peripheral parts of the UK, such as the North of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland by making their goods more expensive. Furthermore, companies investing in Northern Ireland pay corporation tax at a rate of 30%, while in the Republic they pay just 12.5%. Recognition of these cost disadvantages has led to an (unsuccessful) campaign by Sinn Féin and the DUP to institute a preferential corporation tax rate for Northern Ireland, and has lent fresh impetus to North-South economic initiatives.

On 27 October 2006, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the UK Secretary of State published a *Comprehensive Study on the All-Island Economy*. It made the case for an all-island approach to economic planning in the case of market failures that are attributable to the existence of the border or in cases where public goods could be more efficiently provided on a coordinated basis. In addition, it outlined the following areas for North-South cooperation: research and development; education and training; health services; energy, transport and telecommunications infrastructure; trade and investment promotion; business and enterprise development; and

regulatory improvements. This provides the Irish government the ability to improve public services, infrastructure and the business environment in border communities. Private sector development eases the burden on the British treasury. Moreover, it permits the development of all-island industry-level economies of scale, which increase welfare for both Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and for citizens of the Republic.

The Irish government's financial package for Northern Ireland amounts to £400 over four years. Its main features are an upgrade of the Dublin-Derry road to assist residents of border communities; a North-South research and innovation fund; an upgrade of Derry airport; the development of a single electricity market; and a commitment to coordinate education and health services in border communities. Importantly, the features of the financial package have been agreed with the Northern Ireland Executive. This allows the DUP to wield effective veto power over types of development projects that it deems politically motivated. Although individual Unionist politicians have depicted various initiatives as "an attempt to transform Northern Ireland into an economic colony of the Irish Republic", Unionists in general have become willing to accept Irish money for strictly developmental aims. The Irish Government's Peace and Reconciliation Fund has helped to secure this acceptance by funding various Protestant community organizations, such as the Orange Order.

## **Recommendations**

In the short run, **the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government should set to work promptly on their agenda for the integration of the transport, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure on the island.** This will allow Northern Ireland to eliminate the direct and indirect economic costs to trade and enterprise that currently inhibit private sector growth in the province.

In the middle run, **the Northern Ireland Executive must effectively address the social development challenges facing the province.** There is widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of public services and civil service responsiveness to community needs. According to the Life and Times survey of 2006, nearly 70% of Northern Ireland residents either agreed or strongly agreed that "things go on much the same whichever party is in power". To counter public skepticism surrounding the ability of the new executive to deliver, pressing cross-

community concerns in areas such as the availability of public housing, underage substance abuse, anti-social behavior, and urban decay must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

**There is a persuasive case to be made for closer integration of third-level education and public health services in Northern Ireland and the Republic.** Duplication of health services because the Irish and Northern Irish health executives are not talking to one another is costly and wasteful. Similarly, a collaborative rather than a competitive approach amongst third-level institutions, particularly in the research and development field, will result in benefits to both parts of the island.

In the long run, **mutually beneficial, apolitical and pragmatic cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic is a goal worth striving for.** The Republic of Ireland must resist the pressure to turn that cooperation into discrimination against Unionists in favor of Nationalists/Republicans. There is a danger that in righting the historic wrongs done to the Catholic community, the Irish and UK governments will add to the siege mentality that is currently very strong in Unionist and particularly Loyalist areas. The bewilderment that comes from demotion among sections of the Protestant community may morph into resistance if the Irish government tries to force the pace of North-South cooperation. Moreover, there is a danger that the Irish government will embrace a policy of “constructive Nationalism”: lavishing money on Unionism in order to soften, dissipate and eventually efface it. “Killing Unionism with kindness” is not a strategy for conflict resolution because it treats Unionism as contingent on economic wellbeing rather than as the ingrained identity that it is. Development economists Ricardo Hausmann and Dani Rodrik (2003) have argued that economic development is a process of ‘self-discovery’. In that same spirit, the people of Northern Ireland—not Dublin or London—must, though their representatives, be free to determine the province’s economic future.

## Acronyms

CFNI	Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
CIRA	Continuity IRA
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
IICD	Independent International Commission on Decommissioning
IMC	Independent Monitoring Commission
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LVF	Loyalist Volunteer Force
MLA	Members of the Legislative Assembly
MOPE	Most Oppressed People Ever
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
NICIE	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council on Voluntary Action
NIHRC	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women' Coalition
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RIRA	Real IRA
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WSN	Women's Support Network



## List of Interviews

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Democratic Unionist Party

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Alan McFarland  
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