JOURNAL OF WORLD-SYSTEMS RESEARCH

Northern Ireland:
From Imperial Asset to International Encumbrance

Tommy McKearney

tommymckearney@me.com

Abstract

The Northern Ireland story is more complex than the trite tale of orange versus green or two warring tribes. Current inhabitants are not settling ancient scores. Northern Ireland is the product of colonialism, the plantation of Ulster, machinations of a British state determined to retain a strategic outpost, 50 years of one party discriminatory government and the recent conflict. The Good Friday Agreement facilitated an end to armed conflict but is inherently flawed. Compounding the Stormont Assembly's very limited ability to steer the economy is reluctance by the political parties to accept the rationale of the Agreement. Republicans are unhappy that Northern Ireland will remain British while unionists dislike the fact that republicans are partners in administration. Northern Ireland's two leading parties, The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin (SF,) do not have the power (even if they wanted to use it) to address the social and economic issues affecting constituents' lives. Northern Ireland is changing demographically while also facing economic challenges at a time when both England and Scotland are reassessing the nature of the Union.

Keywords: Colonialism, Northern Ireland, Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein

Northern Ireland is something of an anomaly. An area of deep running antagonisms nurtured by history, masked, apart from occasional spurts of violence, by an air of mundane normality. On the surface this region is much like any other region of the United Kingdom with an ordinary if somewhat modest Western European economy. The area is served by proper airports, decent motorways and by most standards it has efficient basic services. In spite of high rates of unemployment in comparison with other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland or Ulster, as it is sometimes wrongly called, is a part of the industrialized and developed world. Yet, alone among all the British and Irish police forces, every officer in the Police Service of Northern Ireland openly carries a firearm on duty. By itself, this fact underlines the very different nature of this area, and added factors such as the number of former prisoners in the devolved administration make this a place apart.

However mundane or normal Northern Ireland may look to the visiting stranger, it is not just another part of the British state, now in strained economic circumstances. There are significant differences that may be summed up in a stark note from the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) to mark Remembrance Day in November 2014. Britain's armed forces suffered their greatest number of causalities since the ending of the Second World War, in Northern Ireland. Official MoD figures recorded 1441service personnel having lost their lives in several decades of conflict with militant Irish republicans. The armed conflict is over, but its impact remains and reverberates.

The latest Office for National Statistics[1] (ONS) region and country profiles analysis takes a look at the regional characteristics of the UK, exploring aspects such as population, age, employment, crime and house prices. The profile of Northern Ireland shows one of the youngest populations in the UK with a median age of 37.6 years. In 2011, the population stood at 1.8 million with the area's output accounting for 2% of Britain's economic output reflecting the fact that the six Northern Irish counties deliver the lowest added value of any UK region. Unemployment, currently running at 7.5%, is concentrated in a number of deprived or marginalised areas. This has been a feature of life in the region for decades. Setting aside the dry statistics, Northern Ireland shares many of the features found in any other peripheral regions of the United Kingdom or indeed other regions of Western Europe experiencing the impact of de-industrialization in the wake of globalization-induced flight of heavy industry eastwards. Northern Ireland's increasing geopolitical and economic marginalization helped make the current peace process possible, but, at the same time, austerity measures resulting from the global financial crisis are destabilizing political institutions and intergroup relations.

[1] http://bit.ly/1trCNTx

Background

Contemporary Northern Ireland is the product of English-led colonialism, a seventeenth century migration of English and Scottish settlers into Ulster, sectarian machinations by a British state determined until recently to retain a strategically important outpost, one party discriminatory government between 1920 and 1972 and a prolonged violent/bloody conflict through the final years of the twentieth century.[2] History can rarely be used to justify current actions but it certainly offers an insight into how the northern part of Ireland finds itself in its present situation. Late sixteenth century London with its Tudor monarchy viewed Ulster and its Gaelic inhabitants as the most dangerous region in all of Britain[3] and Ireland. In the closing days of that century, Elizabethan England suffered its greatest military defeat, at the hands of northern Irish Gaelic clans. Those who inflicted this reverse on English arms in 1598 were at the time allies of a Spanish monarch who had attempted to invade England with his armada a mere ten years previously.

Faced with this threat to the stability of the kingdom, James 1 on his succession, decided to replace the rebellious population of Ulster with more loyal subjects. Throughout the following decades, a violent campaign was launched to remove the indigenous inhabitants and people the province with loyal communities from Scotland and England. The process became known as the Plantation of Ulster.

Those who came as planters were in many ways indistinguishable from the natives, and but for one of history's great seminal events (the Protestant Reformation) would probably have become assimilated through time. Unfortunately this difference was to remain one of the decisive fault lines in this part of the world for centuries. Festering resentment caused the old inhabitants to launch frequent attacks on the new planters resulting in reprisals, which kept open these divisions through the following two centuries. Governments in London were content for centuries to allow divisions survive in order to maintain a virtual colony of settlers in Ulster. Feeling constantly under siege, the settlers acted as a garrison and thereby guarantor of London's strategic interests in Ireland.

Due to the counter attraction of the Americas as a better destination for emigration in the early part of the seventeenth century, the Ulster Plantation was only a limited success. It drew sufficient numbers to form a garrison population but not enough to entirely displace the surviving

---

[2] For general histories from different stances see; Moody & Martin (2012); Foster (1990), Lee (1989), Rumpf & Hepburn (1977), Ferriter (2000), Coogan (2002a).

[3] See for example how the northern part of Ireland influenced English mindset of the period, Colin Murphy (2013) "How Shakespeare's plays reveal the secret of England's Irish obsession." *Irish Independent*. 11 August 2013 (http://bit.ly/1vqaRVK

indigenous inhabitants who were left to seek a precarious and resentment filled existence in the unwanted wastelands of the north of Ireland (Bardon 2011).

Maintaining a colony where the natives outnumber the colonialists frequently means that position and influence are protected by different and dubious practices. On one hand the colonists require physical military protection of the mother country and secondly they must convince themselves that they have a moral right or indeed duty to rule over the natives. Over the following centuries the planted northern Irish community, with military assistance from London, accepted and carried out the tasks of policing and containing the original inhabitants. As England evolved into Great Britain and grew to become a world superpower, it recognised Ireland as of vital strategic importance. The island occupies the gateway to Britain's western shoreline and was thus a potentially dangerous staging post for an invasion of Britain, if occupied by a hostile power. The settlers or Protestant population were, at base, a military asset to the growing empire.

Problems did arise nevertheless. One of the difficulties frequently faced by colonial powers is that occasionally dependencies rebel and seek independence. Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, Britain's North American colonies were doing just this and simultaneously spreading the gospel of republican democracy abroad. In time the American "disease" spread to France and shortly afterwards the British government was alarmed to see the ideas and ideals of revolutionary France take hold in Ireland. To London's dismay, the anti-monarchist message had its greatest impact among the northern Irish Presbyterians, the very populace Britain had seen as its residential Irish garrison. Worse from a British point of view, this was happening at a time when His Majesty's Government was locked in a bitter war with France.

To counteract republican influence in the north of Ireland, Britain's agents worked diligently to re-ignite religious animosities that were by then becoming less intense. They exploited unrest that had arisen in central Ulster as a result of mechanization having led to the displacement of artisan Protestant weavers by unskilled Catholic workers. Displaced and disgruntled Protestant artisans were encouraged to attack Catholic workers who they saw as rivals taking their employment. To do so, they were organised into a group called "The Peep O'Day Boys" (Smyth 1995) which was to become the Orange Order (Jess 2007). What might otherwise have been a footnote of Luddite activity in Irish labor history therefore became a battleground leading to the founding of the Orange Order as a reactionary counter-weight to the democracy movement led by the republican United Irish movement. In 1798 The United Irishmen rebellion, inspired by the American and French revolutions, and led by the Protestant Wolfe Tone, was crushed (Pakenham 2000). What had been a temporary *sectarian* expediency for Britain in dealing with and dividing revolutionary France's Irish allies did not end after the battle of Waterloo. Divisions cultivated and nurtured during the Napoleonic era lasted to the present day. The famine of 1845-48 scarred and

depopulated Ireland but a land war arose in the later half of the 19th century which eventuated in the 1903 Wyndham Act granting land reform on conservative terms, and was conceived as a means of "killing Home Rule with kindness" (Seth-Jones 1983: 377; Lyons 1972: 320; Warwick-Haller 1990).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Conservatives in Britain still saw Irish demands for a devolved parliament in Dublin as a threat to the integrity of their Empire. To forestall what was becoming politically inevitable, they built upon the old animosities they had cultivated decades earlier and encouraged northern Irish Protestants, who were all too eager for their own reasons to heed them, to establish their own separate state composed ultimately of six (of the nine) Ulster counties partitioned from the rest of Ireland. There was no obvious logic for selecting all the six counties chosen to make up the new state though interesting explanations have since been mooted (Laffan 1983). Two of those counties (Tyrone and Fermanagh) had a pro-republican (or pro-independence) majority and were to bitterly resent inclusion in the partitioned entity. By insisting on including the greater portion of territory, the new Unionist state of Northern Ireland contained a very significant minority of those opposed to its existence. A community who felt isolated, vulnerable and compelled to live within what they feared would be a hostile and unfriendly state. They were soon to learn that they were not mistaken.

In 1920, the newly formed government of Northern Ireland under Sir James Craig feared not only militant Irish Republicanism but also the impact of organised labor. Trade unionists had in 1907 overcome old animosities and challenged the ruling class in Belfast with a city wide work stoppage (Beresford-Ellis 1996). Again in 1919 a mass strike by engineering workers had threatened unionist unity. There was too at that time the distant but real threat of Bolshevik-style revolution that had not only shaken Russia but had frightened the ruling class in every part of Europe. Faced with such a scenario, it was no surprise therefore, that the wealthy industrialists, merchant princes, aristocrats and reactionary military men, who formed the government of Northern Ireland would encourage bitter sectarian divisions in order to divide any potential opposition and maintain their hold on power (Farrell 1980; Bew, Gibbon, Patterson 1996). Indeed, loyalist resistance to Home Rule over 1912-1914 nearly brought the UK to the brink of civil war (Ryan 1956).

When the new state of Northern Ireland was established in 1920, it inherited three centuries of distrust and animosity between its inhabitants. Two aspects of this new creation were clear. In the first instance those supporting the state were not just giving it political approval but were also actively involved in its protection and maintenance by acting in a policing role. The second important feature was that in order to retain the loyalty and support of all its Protestant population,

the new state found it necessary to reward its supporters with privileges that could only come through discriminating against the minority Catholic population.

When after 50 years of such practice, the disgruntled Catholic minority managed to organize to protest in a way that could not be ignored or easily suppressed, there were bound to be problems (McCann 1993; Rose 1971). Supporters of the state were ill-prepared for dealing with significant criticism or objections and found it impossible to make the type and extent of concessions that would have been necessary to prevent civil disturbance. Centuries of living as a protected colonial minority had left the Northern Irish unionist constituency reluctant to deliver a democratic transition, and by this time as well, any such concessions would seem to arch-Loyalists to be tainted with concessions to Irish republicanism (Bell 1976; Bruce 1995). In previous centuries, dissent and agitation for reform had been met with physical suppression, and this tactic was resorted to again when Northern Ireland's Catholic population demanded reform in 1968.

The conflict years 1969-1994

Throughout the Northern Ireland state's first fifty years of existence, its Unionist regime had ruled with absolute authority and brooked neither dissent nor questioning of its right to govern as it saw fit. On a number of occasions during that half-century, the state had been challenged by armed actions carried out by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The various IRA campaigns failed abysmally to undermine the northern state to any significant degree. On the contrary, these sporadic and ineffective efforts had, if anything, reinforced the regime. They demonstrated, by their failures, the power of the Northern Ireland government while simultaneously allowing the regime to use the perceived threat to solidify its support base. By the middle 1960s, it appeared that not only was physical force Irish republicanism a thing of the past, but that it had no further role to play in the Ireland of the twentieth century. Circumstances, however, were to challenge this presumption.

The Provisional IRA did not initiate the Northern Irish conflict of the latter 20th century. Unlike previous IRA campaigns conducted in Northern Ireland, the organization, which had sold off its arms after the 1956-62 border campaign and taken a leftward political turn, was completely unprepared for what broke out around it in August 1969. The outbreak of armed conflict came as much of a surprise to the leadership as it did to the outside world at the time.[4]

The immediate cause for the 1969 outbreak of lethal violence in Ireland was, initially at any rate, a response to events arising out of demands for equality and democratic rights made through the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). Unlike criticisms of the northern

---

[4] This is the consensus view in any serious treatment of the period. See Coogan, 2002b; Bowyer Bell, 1989; Taylor, 1998; McKittrick & McVea, 2012.

state in previous decades, the NICRA critique did not focus on the more esoteric aspects of national self-determination and/or the perceived injustice of partition. Instead, the civil rights movement concentrated its demands on the issues of immediate concern to the disadvantaged Catholic community. "British Rights for British Citizens" was among the prominent placard messages at NICRA rallies and marches (Coulter 2015). As earlier noted, in order to retain support from an often demanding Protestant working class, Northern Ireland governments had awarded them, albeit unofficially, certain crucial privileges, which included preferential treatment in the allocation of employment, housing and cultural rights. To deliver for its supporters, the state's ruling class had to maintain control over local government, through which it was able to regulate the allocation especially of social housing.[5]

With control of local government, it also was possible to award town-hall funded employment to the state's supporters (Protestant, in practice). In rural Northern Ireland, experiencing the consolidation of agriculture resulting from mechanization post-World War Two, such employment, even on a part-time basis, was greatly valued as it helped supplement declining farm incomes. Elsewhere, the northern state facilitated the selective practice of finding jobs for its supporters by either directing government subsidies towards industries where there was a concentration of its voters or by the more direct method of awarding state or local government funded positions to it followers.[6]

Finally, in order to surround its discriminatory practices with a modicum of justification, (in the eyes of its supporters at least) the Unionist ruling class elevated its own cultural predilections to the level to a state religion while curbing those of its opponents. The Irish languages, Gaelic football, traditional Irish music were shunted aside by the state and on occasions some events were banned. Even the state-controlled media (the BBC) often overlooked Irish culture. The 1954 Flags and Emblems Act essentially promoted the Union Flag everywhere while permitting authorities to ban other symbols (Purdie 1990: 30). While this form of inequality did not have a detrimental physical impact, it was a constant reminder to the Catholic population that they were deemed second-class citizens in what they called the Orange State of Northern Ireland (Farrell 1980). The unavoidable outcome of blatant discrimination against one section of society was to generate bitter resentment against the state, its institutions and its supporters. When, in the late 1960s, a civil rights movement, inspired by the American civil rights movement and liberation

---

[5] See: Disturbances in Northern Ireland.Report of the Commission appointed by the Governor of Northern Ireland. Chairman: The Honourable Lord Cameron, D.S.C. Presented to Parliament by Command of His Excellency the Governor of Northern Ireland, September 1969.

[6] See Farrell, 1980; Darby, 1976; Whyte, 1983; and the Cameron Report "Disturbances in Northern Ireland 1969" (Belfast: HMSO Cmd 532).

movements elsewhere, began to agitate around incidents of gross malpractice in housing, employment and electoral fraud, the Catholic community supported the campaign enthusiastically.

The authoritarian Northern Ireland regime was not similar to that of an absolutist monarchy. Society was not divided, as was Bourbon France, into the state against the people but rather government and its supporters against a minority (Catholic) population that could not help but question the legitimacy of the state and challenge its discriminatory practices. Paradoxically, though, an expanding UK welfare state in the context of heightened labor militancy also exerted an impact upon contention in Northern Ireland (most notably an increased presence of Catholic students at Queens University Belfast who became critical figures in the civil rights movement and the Troubles).[7] Therefore, when the civil rights movement began to agitate for an end to structural privileges, many in those communities benefiting from the status quo responded aggressively in defence of their advantageous position. Moreover, since the origins of division lay in the area's colonial past, many among the majority Protestant community believed that they were entitled to defend their position "using all means which may be found necessary" (Ulster's Solemn Oath and Covenant, 1912), which ominously meant armed force. This was a defining feature of the Northern Ireland state: *any* reform of the state was viewed very widely as a Republican attack on the unionist community, and so most likely would spark a violent reaction. Cooler heads, of which there were too few even in the Cabinet, could hardly prevail in this fraught atmosphere (Bloomfied 1994; Faulkner 1978; Bew & Patterson 1985).

This was what happened in response to the Civil Rights Association and violent attacks on the movement increased throughout 1968 and 1969. Before long it became evident that the state was resorting to a long-held strategy of preventing meaningful political reform by deploying all its resources, official and unofficial. Urged on by demagogue Ian Paisley, and condoned in practice by the state, working class Protestants launched physical attacks on civil rights demonstrations. In doing so, they were taking a lead from the state's police force, which had violently attacked one of the first civil rights demonstrations in October 1968 in Derry City. In August 1969 tensions boiled over into bloody two-way conflict. The state's police had launched a punitive attack on the Bogside community of Derry City and were repulsed. As it became evident that the police force was unable to contain the situation through the use of normal riot control techniques, other options were deployed.

From the foundation of the Northern Ireland state there had been an understanding that the Catholic population of Belfast was effectively the Achilles heel of nationalism and republicanism

---

[7] My thanks to a referee for stressing this point.

in Ireland. They were a minority vulnerable to attack surrounded by often, hostile communities. In practice they were treated as hostages to the good behaviour of their co-religionists in the six counties and south of the border. This is not to discount the danger in Republican areas of Derry, where the Battle of the Bogside in August 1969 signalled a major turning point. This minority community, in turn, also was an Achilles heel for the UK in that the community's mistreatment, upon erupting into an international issue, became an embarrassment and encumbrance for Westminster.

So when the state and its unofficial supporters launched an armed offensive against Catholic districts in Belfast in mid-August of 1969 in response to the difficulties the police were experiencing in containing the riots in Derry, it was understood to be just another *sad but unremarkable* chapter in the Northern Ireland story. Once again Belfast's Catholic population was to be punished as an example to others. In a 24-hour period (14th/15th August) six Catholics were shot dead by police and hundreds more made homeless as a result of attacks by mobs carrying incendiary devices.[8]

In previous eras this punitive assault had succeeded in terrorising Belfast's Catholic population into submission, with a ripple effect on their co-religionists elsewhere. It is a matter of speculation in some quarters still why there was such a different response on that occasion. The IRA, and its non-existent arsenal, was not a factor. Perhaps because of widespread identification within the Catholic community with the civil rights movement and its articulation of their grievances, many saw this as a defining moment in their existence. Whatever the reason, many Catholics clearly resolved not to accept what had been their lot for generations.

In spite of the fact that central government in London committed regular British army troops in 1969 to stabilise the situation, Belfast's Catholic population still felt insecure. There was a conviction in working-class areas most affected by the violence that only by acquiring their own arms could they guarantee their security. History had left them with a fundamental suspicion of British Army bona fides and in late 1969 people from Catholic areas of Belfast began a frantic trawl to acquire small arms.

Initially a number of defence groups sprang up in Catholic areas. Very often these groups were built around former British army personnel. While these ex-servicemen were prepared and able to organize and even provide defence structures, they were not equipped with the contacts or knowhow to access the quantity of firearms required. There was no tradition of firearms possession by Northern Ireland's Catholic population, and obtaining guns was a specialist task. In reality there was only one section of society that had the contacts, skills, knowledge and wherewithal to access

---

[8] See: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch69.htm

this type of material, and that was a segment of militant Irish republicans in the IRA, which split in December 1969 into the Official IRA (which would declare a ceasefire in 1972) and the Provisional IRA.

Notwithstanding the perception held by a majority within the Catholic community over the previous decades that the IRA with its physical force school of thought had become redundant, some people with old IRA connections unexpectedly found themselves with a military role to play after all. As had happened at the beginning of the 20th century, unionism had again introduced the gun into Irish politics, engendering the altogether predictable reply from a militant wing of republicanism. The newly formed and revitalised IRA (Provisional) was nevertheless still politically cautious even as it embarked on a campaign of sniping and bombing. Many of its founding members were veterans of previous failed campaigns and were wary of launching an all out assault for which they lacked the resources anyway. They did not, for example, opt for a maximum programme of establishing an all-Ireland Republic for another two years (McKearney 2011: 108). Only after the indiscriminate use of internment in 1971 and the shooting dead of 14 civilians in Derry City in January 1972 on Bloody Sunday did the provisional IRA abandon its limited programme and declare its objective to be that of breaking the political connection with Britain (McGuffin 1973).

What had caused the IRA (Provisional) to opt for a maximum program was not merely a response to popular anger at British army shootings on Bloody Sunday. There had long been a view held within the Catholic community of Northern Ireland that attempting to reform the Northern Ireland state was impossible. Now, however, it seemed that there was no prospect of reform being imposed by London. The early hope that Westminster would force through meaningful change was dashed by the actions of its military as the behaviour of the British Army, sent in "aid of the civil power," since 1969 had managed to thoroughly alienate the Catholic population. A bloody curfew on the Falls Road, internment without trial, Bloody Sunday and retaining Unionist one-party rule in Stormont convinced the Catholic population that the British government's principle interest lay in maintaining the status quo. In reality, the IRA was responding to, rather than creating, a sense of anger and alienation within the Catholic working class.

Committed to overthrowing the Northern Irish state, the Provisional IRA made an analysis of its strength and of the balance of forces it had to contend with. In classical Irish republican thinking and theory, the core of the problem was the presence of the British government and its troops in Ireland. The reasoning was straightforward. The House of Commons was the sovereign parliament with overall responsibility for the area and the British Army was the ultimate agent used by the state to enforce its will.

Drawing on bitter experience from past failures the Provisional IRA, nevertheless, took on board a pertinent fact. The northern Irish state's first line of defence was not, in reality, the regular British Army but its locally recruited police force supported by a part-time regiment of the British Army also recruited locally, the Ulster Defence Regiment. When the British government decided, in the mid-1970s, to give priority to the use of these locally recruited forces, it became inevitable that the conflict in Northern Ireland would assume a different character, *with unavoidable sectarian consequences*, pitting as it did one community against the other rather than conducting a battle *strictly* between the IRA and the regular forces of the British state.

In light of Britain's centuries-long involvement in Ireland, it is difficult to see how London could have been unaware of the consequences of its action. Transferring the focus and primary responsibility for patrolling and securing the area away from the regular British Army and onto locally recruited agencies made a difficult situation much worse. As regular British troops' involvement was downscaled, giving a primary role to the Ulster Defence Regiment[9] and the Royal Ulster Constabulary,[10] it became inevitable that the IRA would concentrate its assault on the locally recruited forces. The predictable result was an ever more bitter communal divide. Imperial and colonial counter-insurgency strategies that concentrate on deploying local forces inevitably comes at the price of exacerbating divisions within that community, society or country, and Northern Ireland was no exception to this rule.

The Good Friday Agreement and how Northern Ireland society has changed

It is useful to reflect on two points when considering an end to any conflict. In the first instance it is important to examine the concrete facts leading to the ending of hostilities and secondly it is worth keeping in mind that very few peace settlements are as neat or all-encompassing as they sometimes appear from a distance. Few battles have ended due to an unexpected and astonishing outbreak of mass enlightenment, and moreover almost every peace settlement leaves a store of unresolved issues. Northern Ireland was not an exception to this general rule either.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA) came about as a result of several converging factors. The local protagonists had come to realise, albeit somewhat reluctantly, that it was unlikely

---

[9] The Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) was raised by Act of Parliament in 1970, and was the largest infantry regiment in the Army with fulltime and parttime soldiers on its strength. http://www.army.mod.uk/infantry/regiments/5952.aspx. See also: Urban, 1992: 15-16, 50, 53.

[10] Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), state police force in Northern Ireland, established in 1922. The RUC had a paramilitary character until 1970, when the force was remodeled along the lines of police forces in Great Britain. In 1970 the security of Northern Ireland became the responsibility of the RUC, the British army, and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/511633/Royal-Ulster-Constabulary-RUC

either would gain a decisive military advantage over the other. Unsurprisingly, there was also a large degree of conflict-weariness across the stressed communities. In a wider context, the British government recognised that with the IRA signalling its willingness to negotiate an arrangement falling within what London considered acceptable, that it was important to take advantage of the opportunity. Moreover, post cold war euphoria had created a view among leading western governments' that it was opportune to address some burdensome legacies of a dated colonialism. There was a belief encouraged by the Clinton White House that at least some of these issues could be resolved through U.S.-sponsored diplomacy as had been attempted with the Oslo Accords in 1993 or in South Africa in 1994.

Prior to the open intervention of these agencies, there had been an extensive series of secret meetings and contacts between Britain's Secret Services and the IRA and between the IRA and the Dublin government through various intermediaries. Margaret Thatcher gave approval for secret talks with the IRA in 1990 though we don't know exactly when exchanges began in earnest and to what extent they spelled out bottom-line positions (Watt 1999). It is clear that the 1994 IRA ceasefire did not come as a surprise to the governments in London or Dublin. What is fair to assume is that the initiative involved a number of confidence building and trust raising measures by both sides.

As a consequence of the preparatory work and the IRA declaration of interest in a permanent ceasefire, external agencies came together in order to broker a settlement with all interested parties in Northern Ireland. In practice this meant that the British Government invited Irish and U.S. government representatives to assist in searching for a settlement. While it appeared on the surface that the facilitators were beginning with a blank page, the reality was that the British government was working to a plan that had been originally set out at the beginning of the 1970s. The "Sunningdale Agreement" (Dixon 2001: 136-150) of 1973, the basis for a failed power-sharing experiment in 1974, was based on an arrangement whereby the major parties in Northern Ireland would again share administrative power. To a large extent this programme dictated what the eventual outcome in the 1990s would be, echoing in practice the colour choice for Henry Ford's motorcar ... any colour you liked so long as it was black.

However pre-determined the outcome, there was a logic underpinning Britain's insistence on imposing power sharing on Northern Ireland's political parties. For a start, it sent an unambiguous message that the six-county state would remain intact, therefore reassuring Northern Irish Unionists and making them more likely to accept an emerging settlement. There was of course, the fact that this arrangement was not inimical to Britain's wider defence interests. Unspoken but of great importance also was that in terms of Irish realpolitik, an internal Northern

Ireland settlement also suited the Dublin government, which paradoxically was probably at least as fearful of Irish unity as were unionists in the North.

Although the external facilitators should not be accused of cynicism or bad faith, there were certain domestic political calculations involved in relation to the government administrations helping broker the deal (Mitchell 1999). U.S. President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern all found it agreeable and politically expedient to portray themselves as skilful arbitrators of a peace process that would undoubtedly be universally admired and applauded if delivered. As such, they were not working to a Northern Irish time scale alone but also had their own periods in office in mind. Wishing to see a conclusion before their administrations ended, the facilitators pressed hard for decisions to be made by the local Northern Irish parties. While there is always a certain tension between the need to get things done on one hand and to do them properly on the other hand, the former generally entails leaving loose ends.

What emerged as the Good Friday Agreement might be summed-up quite simply. The IRA made major ideological concessions in theory and in practice, chief of which was its acceptance of the legitimacy of the six-county state and with it the *de facto* acknowledgement of the unionist veto over ending partition. Furthermore by agreeing to permanently relinquish armed insurrection, verified by decommissioning its weapons, the IRA was signalling a dramatic about turn in what had been militant Irish republican orthodoxy for generations. Unionism, on the other hand, had also made an enormous concession to Republicans. By agreeing to enter government with what were in reality, senior members of the IRA, unionism had abandoned one of its crucial tenets that the Protestant majority alone was entitled to govern what had for long been its exclusive fiefdom.

A basic difficulty arising from the perceived need to force an agreement though was that a considerable amount of creative obfuscation was employed. In short, this took the form of avoiding detailing the hard logic of the agreement in favour of allowing different political communities to draw their own most favourable interpretation from the settlement. Compounding this political smokescreen was the fact that not only were the underlying implications of the agreement not clearly defined and spelled out to the Northern Irish community, but because of this, there was no agreement or consensus around the cause for past disputes. All sides would thereby draw their own interpretation of where the agreement was leading and from where it had come.

This may have been viewed as an enlightened arrangement—possibly even of Solomon-like wisdom—but the two sides nevertheless found it impossible to openly and honestly explain to their supporters what they had agreed to. The IRA described the agreement to its constituency as a stepping-stone to a thirty-two county Irish republic, while unionism attempted to persuade its electorate that the agreement guaranteed the permanency of the union. Obviously both could not be right—at least not in the end—which was conveniently far away.

Unionists also conceded the role of the Irish government in Northern Ireland affairs through the creation of the North/South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The question of how to handle Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom appeared to be settled. The six-county state would remain part of the United Kingdom for so long as a majority of its electorate wished it to do so. This was certainly an answer of sorts, but it failed to address the other question of what might happen in the event that the electorate changed its mind. Moreover, by stating that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland indeed would change when the electorate sought to break the link with Britain, the issue of Irish unity and ending partition remained on the agenda. While some observers detect a trend in Catholics toward becoming less nationalist and more "Northern Irish," the evidence so far is a rather thin reed to lean on (Morrow 2015).

Ominously too, and due to the nature of Northern Irish politics, such a change would possibly come about when the Catholic population outnumbered the Protestant community. This in turn perpetuated not just the ongoing sectarian headcount in light of changing demographics, but it also ensured that communal politics (as distinct from more normal Left-Right or Liberal-Conservative politics) would play an enormous part in any political agenda in the days to come.

However necessary the GFA was in facilitating an end to armed conflict, the institutions created by the treaty had inherent flaws. Under it, devolved government has strictly limited fiscal authority (and therefore little power or ability to address social and economic issues) and both major constituencies have the ability to stymie each other with little incentive to cooperate. Two factors in particular contributed towards stifling the work of the institutions arising from the GFA. The D'Hondt system under which the power sharing assembly's executive is elected and the regulation permitting a legislation-blocking "Petition of Concern" have blunted the effectiveness of the political institutions created by the agreement.[11]

In order to ensure that both communities in Northern Ireland would have representation in the executive and to prevent a return to majority rule, the D'Hondt system guarantees that there is a shared administration in Northern Ireland. There are obvious advantages in this, insofar as it entrenches rights for minorities in a society divided along ethno-religious lines. Without such an arrangement, it would have been impossible to create any type of political administration in the region. However, in the absence of a majority administration with the ability to make and enforce decisions, government is frequently in deadlock. At its best, the D'Hondt system might provide for harmony and agreement allowing party differences to be overcome. In the absence of agreement,

---

[11] The basic idea of the D'Hondt System is that a party's vote total is divided by a certain figure, which increases as it wins more seats. As the divisor becomes bigger, the party's total in succeeding rounds gets smaller, allowing parties with lower initial totals to win seats. On the D'Hondt Rule, see also O'Leary & McGarry,1996: 374-375.

as is the case in Northern Ireland at present, it merely leads to stalemate and that has practically become the default position in Northern Ireland.

Moreover, with the D'Hondt system not providing agreement, the existence of the "Petition of Concern" has added to what has become almost a virtual breakdown in the Northern Ireland assembly. In practice any vote taken by the assembly can be made dependent on cross-community support if a petition of concern is presented to the assembly speaker. In such cases, a vote on proposed legislation will only pass if supported by a weighted majority (sixty percent) of members voting, including at least forty percent of each of the nationalist and unionist designations present and voting. Effectively this means that—provided enough MLAs from a given community agree—that community can exercise a veto over the assembly's decisions. Since the restoration of devolution in 1998, the device has been used a total of sixty three times, and more than half of those were in the past two years.

Over the recent past, petitions of concern have been lodged in order to prevent the scrutiny of a minister's performance when it appeared obvious that, at best, he was guilty of incompetence. In other situations it has been used in an almost table-tennis-like fashion as one veto begets another veto which in turn begets yet another veto.

Northern Ireland's two leading parties, the DUP and SF, are therefore embedded within a dilemma. They do not have the power (even if they wanted to use it) to address the social and economic issues that might enhance their constituents' lives and contentment and encourage people to place more emphasis on life's pleasures and less on its difficulties. Deprived of this option, the parties are obliged to work within a political accommodation that most of their supporters find unappealing at best, giving endless cause for disagreement.

The weakness inherent in not being able to agree to viable and working political structures was initially masked by competition within the two main power blocks. As Sinn Féin battled for hegemony within the Catholic community, it had to play a more conciliatory role in order to sustain the institutions so that it would be able to disadvantage the SDLP. To a similar extent, the DUP had to restrain itself sufficiently in order to enter an administration-sharing accord with Sinn Féin if it were to supplant its unionist rival in the UUP. As the two main parties, Sinn Féin and the DUP, gained the upper hand over their nearest rivals, they then turned more attention towards bickering with each other, and functional weaknesses in the system began to grow more obvious.

In spite of this situation of suspended animation, the Good Friday Agreement cannot be dismissed as having failed. There are many achievements to its credit. Few could dispute the incalculable benefits of having brought an end to a prolonged and bloody conflict. Lives were undoubtedly saved and quality of life rose to a different and better standard. Ultimately, few would argue with Winston Churchill's old observation that jaw jaw, regardless of how acrimonious, is

better than war war, and this is a view still shared by the overwhelming majority in Northern Ireland.

Moreover, the GFA delivered measurable political progress no matter how difficult this may be to see at times. This was a breakthrough that had seemed impossible in earlier generations. The old practice, arising from the area's colonial past, of a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people was definitively laid to rest by the institutions arising out of the GFA. Importantly too, this outcome was clearly underwritten by the British government, sending a clear signal that whatever had remained the same, there was to be no return to the past, and with this went a definitive ending of the Orange state. The genius of the GFA lay in that it allowed itself to be all things to all participants. By giving the IRA an opportunity to enter parliamentary politics and even aspire to share the administration of the area and to do so while being able to tell its supporters that this was an opening to their main objective of an all-Ireland republic, the GFA provided the organization's leadership the space to deliver and then maintain a cessation of armed actions.

By delivering a sustained ceasefire, the GFA, in turn, was able to persuade the unionist population that, no matter how distasteful it might be to have the IRA in Stormont, there was an absence of the violence that had inflicted so much damage on their community. Moreover, the GFA redressed a deficit that had concerned unionism for years after the old Stormont parliament had been prorogued in 1973. Without a local administration acting as a form of breakwater between itself and government in London, unionism felt nervous about London governments' long-term intentions. One of the ironies of Northern Ireland is that unionists distrust London only slightly less than they do Dublin. The over-generous allocation of members to the Northern Ireland Assembly assuaged this fear, for a time at least. At its most basic the GFA provided a most sophisticated, elaborate, and complex fig-leaf to those who wanted an excuse to end a war but who had difficulty agreeing on how to build a shared and integrated society post-conflict.

Factors that have emerged since signing of Good Friday Agreement

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the crucially important establishment of an administration in 2007 under the joint management of the Democratic Unionist Party's Ian Paisley and Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness, there have been significant changes to the political and economic landscape in which Northern Ireland sits. The now largely pacified region no longer receives priority treatment from Westminster, Scotland's brush with independence is causing the format of the union to be reviewed, de-industrialization in peripheral regions coupled with the simultaneous expansion of a London-centric financial sector is altering the economic balance of the UK, changing demographics in the six-county area, and the likelihood of a strategic review by

Westminster in relation to Ireland as a whole are all important factors which will impact on the future of Northern Ireland.

No matter how relieved the population is at an end to political violence, there is the anticlimax of becoming just one other peripheral region of the UK. No longer is the area deemed a special case when assessed by the Treasury in London and no longer can leading politicians in Northern Ireland expect to be received at short notice by the Prime Minister at Downing Street. Following the heady and intoxicating days of being entertained by world leaders and interviewed by the international media, it's back to the dreary steeples for the North's political class.

On the rare occasions when the region features in the London media it is usually to draw unwanted negative coverage arising from riots and civil disturbances. These usually result from disputes over flag flying, marching bands, Irish language speakers or some other issue the British have difficulty understanding. Deprived of the old dangerous nuisance factor, the area and its politicians have now to make their own way in an indifferent and difficult world, which now also includes the rest of the UK.

Nor is it just a matter of being out of the international spotlight. The British Treasury treats Northern Ireland in the same manner as it does any other part of the UK. No longer is the security allocation sacrosanct and when the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne decided to reduce social security provision, there was no exception made for Belfast. In fact, the resultant need to pare annual expenditure caused interminable wrangling between the parties in the Assembly and added to the instability of the local political institutions.

Looming too on the horizon in relation to Northern Ireland's future is the mooted reorganization of the United Kingdom into a more federal, rather than centralised union (Rigby, et al. 2014). The recent Scottish referendum was clearly the catalyst for this initiative and while the Scots voted against independence, the large number seeking to break with London has left the issue an ongoing concern and liable to be resurrected at any time in the future. The implications for Northern Ireland are not only in the uncertainty resulting from the inevitable re-organization of the UK but there is the clear reminder that profound change to the constitutional position of the region is distinctly possible.

Ominously too for the unionist position is the ever-present demographic factor that puts an unnerving question mark over the long-term future of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. The closely monitored sectarian headcount is indicating that the numerical difference between the Catholic and Protestant communities is constantly diminishing, and the numbers will probably level out within the next quarter-century. Whether this will lead to a united Ireland is speculative, and the outcome of any vote remains far from certain. At the same time it would be

naive to believe that long-held political opinions will change dramatically in the next 20 or 30 years.

While Northern Ireland is changing demographically, it is also facing major economic challenges at a time when both England and Scotland are reassessing the nature of the Union. This matters enormously, since many of Northern Ireland's problems stem at least as much from the unequal distribution of wealth and power in a class sense as from a failure to reconcile two (or possibly three) different ethnic identities. The area has one of the highest levels of child poverty in the UK, the highest level of economic inactivity in the UK, reputable voluntary agencies fear for the well-being of the elderly, and there is an ongoing exodus of the young. Neo-liberalism and globalization have not being kind to Northern Ireland, and this is not likely to change anytime soon.

Moreover, deprived of fiscal authority and subsequently left without either the compulsion or incentive to plot an economic course, politics in Northern Ireland tends to descend into promotion of single-identity community issues, which in turn tends to merely highlight those matters that divide the communities such as; flags, emblems, cultural activities, commemorations, and sporting events. Economic and social issues are presenting profound problems that an assembly—obsessing over parades, demolished and disused prisons, and protocols surrounding flags and emblems—is not best equipped to deal with. At present, these questions are widely discussed, but no potential solutions are being offered. In time, this concentration on contentious but *symbolic* issues rather than addressing underlying social, economic and educational issues may prove to be a costly indulgence.

Significantly too in this context is the fact that as far as Northern Ireland is concerned, the economic rationale underpinning the union has been steadily eroded over the past few decades. Paradoxically, this is due in no small measure to the efforts of the strongly pro-unionist Margaret Thatcher and her supporters. As Britain's economy has moved steadily away from manual-labor-dependent coal, steel and heavy industry towards London-centric financial services, peripheral regions have grown less crucial to the needs of the center. In terms of the overall British economy, Northern Ireland is now the least crucial region of all. The nature of the United Kingdom's economy means there is no compelling economic reason for placing real priority on retaining Northern Ireland. The area offers little in the way of profit garnering, either in terms of what it produces or consumes.

Running alongside Northern Ireland's declining economic vitality is a palpable loss of patience by central government with the ineffective political situation in Northern Ireland. Alex Kane, a former adviser to David Trimble, wrote in the Belfast Newsletter (Belfast Newsletter 2014) that he would not vote in the local government elections because, as he said, "... the

Assembly isn't working, the Executive is dysfunctional, we have farce rather than government, the parties don't care; and nothing is being allowed to change." Kane was not just highlighting the stalemate in the Northern Assembly but also echoed in his article the words of Theresa Villiers, the British Conservative Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who had bluntly warned local Northern Irish politicians that if Stormont can not evolve it may well collapse. She pointedly reminded them in her speech that a state that does not have the means to change is also a state without the means of its own preservation.

Ms. Villiers' words carry a more profound meaning than many of her audience realised because they may well reveal a long-term change in Britain's Irish policy. If this is the case—and it looks highly likely—that change is not relating to the North of Ireland alone but is something pointing towards a recalibration of London's policy towards all of Ireland. Over the past few decades, Britain invested considerable political and military capital in the "Ulster Question." Now, while undoubtedly content that it no longer has to contend with frequent bombings and gun battles, there is clearly a sense of frustration in Whitehall with the never-ending political deadlock in Belfast. Moreover, this exasperation has no doubt caused London to view Northern Ireland as unstable or even unmanageable, and therefore not the best possible fit for its wider requirements. Negotiations are currently underway between the parties to try and overcome these differences, but it is far from certain how permanent any agreement, if any, may be (McAdam 2014).

A principal attraction for London in the past was Northern Ireland's role as providing a military base protecting Britain's western flank. While this will always remain a concern for London, the nature of the strategic calculation changes with politics and technology. Old style conventional surface vessel-based sea power is not as crucial in an age of supersonic aircraft and nuclear-armed submarines capable of remaining under the ocean waves for months at a time.

In contrast to the vexatious nature of northern Irish politics, the much more stable Southern Ireland is becoming a more attractive partner for Britain's Irish interests. Dublin is becoming increasingly engaged with Britain and previous hostilities are all but forgotten by most in the Republic of Ireland. Queen Elizabeth made a historic visit to Ireland in 2011 and in return hosted an Irish state visit to Britain in 2014. It appears that London is more anxious to recruit the Southern Irish state as its ally on the island than depend on the more volatile Northerners. Moreover Britain is certainly aware of the potential for changing demographics and it is quite capable of taking the long view that at some time in the not too distant future it will be more advantageous to have the goodwill of Dublin. There is no doubt that these factors will play a major part in determining the future of Northern Ireland. What is in doubt is whether local northern Irish politicians and their parties can cope with the changes that are coming. The Northern Ireland case is exacerbated by dependency upon and control over funding by the British government. British government caps on

the Northern Ireland budget are creating extreme stresses on the Assembly and Executive. These stresses could either become a basis for unity across the ethno-nationalist divide or a further basis of frustration and division.

Conclusion—and a comparison with South Africa and Israel/Palestine.

There is a view held by many who participated in negotiating the Good Friday Agreement that it provides a template for other areas of conflict (Bew, et al. 2009). As with all aspects of human relations, there are some features of the Northern Ireland peace process that may have universal application. However it would be wrong to stretch this point too far. Northern Ireland was not unique but at the same time there were and remain many significant differences between this small six-county state and other zones of international conflict. In the first place Northern Ireland is a small and rather insignificant place in the world, both in terms of its strategic importance and economic muscle. There may have been a time when global politics, geography and the existing state of technology made Northern Ireland a vital part in Britain's projection of power across the north Atlantic. Now, however, Britain depends much more for its national security on the military umbrella provided by the United States than it does on its own indigenous armed forces. Contemporary technology with its nuclear armed submarines; drones, and supersonic aircraft have combined to reduce the importance of Northern Ireland's deepwater harbours and remote airdromes.

Economically, Northern Ireland is a minnow in terms of Britain's annual output. In terms of global output, Northern Ireland is a non-presence. Nor does it control any strategically important natural resources. Changes in the inter-state system and military technologies changed the strategic significance of Northern Ireland to the point of nullity. The change doubtless influenced Britain's willingness to weaken Unionist control in Northern Ireland, particularly in the 1960s when the British government was redefining its role from declining hegemon to diplomatic facilitator (thereby increasing its vulnerability to international moral pressure).[12] Consequently the area does not enjoy leverage in the world's halls of power. Nor does it—if left to its own devices—pose any significant threat to international stability, the balance of power, or the uninterrupted flow of precious or vital commodities. In short, none of the world's superpowers have a vested interest in influencing the governance of Northern Ireland. Undoubtedly, Britain is determined to ensure that Northern Ireland (or any part of Ireland) will not be occupied by a hostile power, but if that were to happen it would be tantamount to a declaration of war on Her Majesty's government. Moreover,

---

[12] My thanks to a referee on this point.

it would require a hard-to-imagine shift in the balance of world power for any state to attempt to do so, considering the difficulties involved in occupying a base so close to Britain.

There are many basic differences between the Northern Ireland situation and that existing in other areas that either have had or are currently experiencing conflict, areas such as the Ukraine, South Africa, or the Middle East. These are areas of significant geopolitical importance and some with the ability to influence the flow of precious natural resources. If there was an international interest in Ireland it was peripheral. The Clinton White House had an interest in the Irish peace process, but it was more like the interest the mayor of New York has in the St Patrick's Day parade rather than the type of interest the CIA has in events in the Middle East. British Prime Minister Tony Blair had a somewhat greater stake resting on the outcome since the IRA had physically attacked his state and its economy and armed forces. Nevertheless, there was for him and his cabinet the potential to be written into history as those who had finally solved the seemingly impossible "Irish Question."

This is very different, for example, from what is happening in present day Ukraine, where battles are taking place within the context of global politics. Sitting as it does between the European Union and the vast Russian State, Kiev is a pivot or a halfway house between East and West. It is no surprise therefore that the conflict in that country is now being described in old Cold War terms. In many ways the Ukraine suffers a double affliction in that its people are in violent disagreement over how the country should be managed on one hand and on the other hand, that they are situated geographically between two superpowers. Ukraine's destiny is not entirely in its own hands.

Look then at South Africa. This country was and remains a commodity-rich land producing much of the world's gold and diamonds. Moreover, its geographical position at the southern tip of Africa gives it a commanding position to control access to both the southern Atlantic and southern Indian oceans, two of the world's most important regions and vital sea routes.

During the apartheid years, the West, led by the United States and supported by its NATO allies, viewed South Africa through the prism of Cold War politics. The African National Congress (ANC) was advised and supported by the Moscow-leaning South African Communist Party, which had members occupying key positions in the leadership of the ANC. Consequently, the West feared an ANC victory, seeing it as a Trojan horse paving the way for a regime in Johannesburg that was influenced if not actually controlled by Moscow. In light of this analysis, the West took the view that the continuation of apartheid was a more tolerable option than a communist South Africa.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War these geopolitical considerations changed. Western powers that had not only tolerated but supported apartheid regimes in South Africa, changed direction almost overnight. No longer fearing the left wing of

the ANC, the apartheid regime became an embarrassment to Western powers, which withdrew their support, forcing the white minority to negotiate with the African majority. The lesson of South Africa is that its place in world super power politics was a determining factor in its history. Ultimately, the world powers that tolerated apartheid, if only reluctantly, played a major role in forcing change and ensuring that there would be a relatively peaceful transition rather than a mutually destructive cataclysm. Interestingly, the western powers that feared communism were also influential in ensuring that while the franchise was extended to all; the free-market South African economy remained essentially the same.

For many of the same reasons, Israel and the Middle East are also quite different from Northern Ireland. Although the U.S. government endeavoured to broker a deal in the Middle East involving the State of Israel and the Palestinian people and had apparently achieved considerable progress with the Oslo accords, the wider political environment worked against a permanent settlement. Unlike South Africa, the Middle East conflict was not simply a Cold War standoff. Whether or not there is a Soviet Union, the Middle East remains the world's principal "swing" supplier of oil, and as such it has a decisive influence on the world's economy. The United States and its allies view the State of Israel as a key component in maintaining a balance of power in the Middle East. Israel's very existence prevents any of the contending currents within the Arab world gaining absolute dominance and thereafter creating turbulence in the world's economy through controlling the flow of oil.

There are, nevertheless, some intriguing parallels between the State of Israel and that of Northern Ireland, although not so much perhaps in the realm of peace-building but more in the make-up of the two states. The modern State of Israel had its origins, as did Northern Ireland, in a migration that displaced the local indigenous inhabitants. Furthermore, both states ultimately depend or have depended for their military survival on significant military support from a single, albeit different, external sources. There is too, in both regions, two communities separated ostensibly by religion but in reality by many other issues which have little to do with theological matters.

Ultimately, that may be where Northern Ireland and its "peace process" may sit in the greater world. The area is no longer an international news story, nor is it a strategically important location or asset in either economic or military terms. Ireland as a whole no longer is the valuable larder that, as Marx observed in the 19th century, shifts cattle, grain and hapless recruits into the factories and armies of the British empire (Marx 1958: 702-703). The details of the Northern Irish conflict and settlement are not of great interest to any but historians of Ireland or specialists in asymmetrical warfare. What relevance Northern Ireland has to an international audience lies in how it once fit into a wider context; that of protecting Britain's flank. As technology advanced and

the empire declined, it became attractive for London to relegate the area's significance and dispense with the ongoing embarrassment it caused. This is the real lesson from Northern Ireland.

About the Author

Tommy McKearney was a senior member of the Provisional IRA from the early 1970s until his arrest in 1977. Sentenced to life imprisonment, he served 16 years during which time he participated in the 1980 hunger strike in the Maze. He is now a freelance journalist and an organiser with the Independent Workers Union.

Disclosure Statement

Any conflicts of interest are reported in the acknowledgments section of the article's text. Otherwise, authors have indicated that they have no conflict of interests upon submission of their article to the journal.

References

Belfast Newsletter. 2014. "Why not voting may be the only way to change things." *Belfast Newsletter*, 21 April 2014.

Bell, Geoffrey. 1976. *The Protestants of Ulster*. London: Pluto.

Beresford Ellis, Peter. 1996. *A History of the Irish Working Class.* London: Pluto.

Bew, John, Martyn Frampton, and Inigo Guruchaga. 2009. *Talking to Terrorists: Making Peace in Northern Ireland and The Basque Country.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bew, Paul and Henry Patterson. 1985. *The British States & The Ulster Crisis.* London: Verso.

Bew, Paul, Peter Gibbon, and Henry Patterson. 1996. *Northern Ireland, 1921-72: Political Forces and Social Classes.* London: Serif.

Bloomfield, Ken. *Stormont in Crisis: A Memoir.* Dublin: Blackstaff

Bowyer Bell, J. 1989. *The Secret Army* (Dublin Poolbeg Press, 3rd edition

Bruce, Steve. 1995. *The Edge of the Union: The Ulster Loyalist Political Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Coogan, Tim Pat. 2002a. *The Troubles.* New York: St Martins.

_____. 2002b. *The IRA*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Coulter, Colin. 2015. "British Rights for British Citizens': The Campaign for 'Equal Citizenship' in Northern Ireland." In: *Contemporary British History,* 29 (4), pp. 486-507

Darby, John. 1976. *Conflict in Northern Ireland.* Dublin: Gill and MacMillan.

Dixon, Paul. 2001. *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Farrell, Michael. 1980. *Northern Ireland The Orange State.* London: Pluto Press.

Faulkner, Brian. 1978. *Memoir of a Statesman.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Ferriter, Diarmaid. 2000. *The Transformation of Ireland*. London: Profile Books

Foster, R.F. 1990. *Modern Ireland 1600-1972.* London: Penguin,

Jess, Mervyn. 2007. *The Orange Order.* Dublin: The O'Brian Press

Laffan, Michael. 1983. *The Partition of Ireland 1913-1925.* Dublin: Historical Association of Ireland.

Lee, J. Joseph. 1989. *Ireland 1912-85: Politics and Society.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, F.S.L. 1972. *Ireland Since the Famine.* Dublin: Gill & MacMillan.

McCann, Eamonn. 1993. *War and an Irish Town.* London: Pluto.

McGuffin, John. 1973. *Internment.* Dublin: Anvil Press.

McKearney, Tommy. 2011. *The Provisional IRA*. *From Insurrection to Parliament*. London: Pluto Press.

McKittrick, David and David McVea. 2012. *Making Sense of the Troubles.* London: Penguin.

McAdam, Noel. 2014. "Changing Stormont: What parties have to say on the issue." *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 September 2014

Mitchell, George. 1999. *Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of The Good Friday Agreement.* New York: Heinemann.

Moody, T.W. and F. X. Martin, eds. 2012. *The Course of Irish History.* New York: Roberts Rinehart.

Morrow, Duncan. 2015. *"Mixed Messages: Community Relations in 2014"* *http://www.ark.ac.uk/publications/updates/update105.pdf*

O'Leary, Brendan and John McGarry. 1996. *Explaining Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pakenham, Thomas. 2000. *The Year of Liberty.* London: Abacus.

Purdie, Bob. 1990. *Politics in The Streets.* Dublin: Blackstaff Press.

Rigby, Elizabeth, Jim Pickard and Kiran Stacey. 2014. "David Cameron promises further devolution for UK after No vote." *Financial Times*, 19 September 2014

Rose, Richard. 1971. *Governing Without Consensus.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Ryan, A.P. 1956. *Mutiny at the Curragh*. London: Macmillan.

Rumpf, Erhard and A. C. Hepburn. 1977. *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland.* New York: Barnes & Noble

Seth-Jones, David. 1983. "The cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle 1890-1910." In: Clarke, Samuel and James S. Donnelly, eds. *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 374-418.

Smyth, Jim. 1995. "The Men of No Popery: the Origins of the Orange Order. In: *History Ireland*, Issue 3, Autumn 1995. (http://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/the-men-of-no-popery-the-origins-of-the-orange-order/)

Taylor, Peter. 1998. *The Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein.* London: Bloomsbury.

Ulster's Solemn Oath and Covenant. 1912. At: *http://www.proni.gov.uk/no.5_-_ulster_s_solemn_league_and_covenant__99kb_.pdf*

Urban, Mark. 1992. *Big Boys Rules.* London: Faber & Faber.

Warwick-Haller, Sally.1990. *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

Watt, Nicholas. 1999. "Thatcher Gave Approval to Talks with IRA." *The Guardian,* 16 October 1999, At: *http://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/oct/16/northernireland.thatcher*

Whyte, John. 1983. "How Much Discrimination Was There Under the Unionist Regime, 1921-1968?" In: Gallagher, Tom and James O'Connell, eds. *Contemporary Irish Studies.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.1-36.