

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

**Defying Moderation?  
The Transformation of Radical  
Irish Republicanism, 1969-2010**

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Government of the London School of  
Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London, May 2013.**

## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the causal pathways underpinning the moderation of radical ethno-nationalism using the case of Irish republicanism (Sinn Féin and the IRA) between 1969 and 2010. Through the application of the 'inclusion-moderation' framework, I argue that a strong macro-institutional framework is central to the process of moderation. Existing explanations that emphasise the role of interplay, exchange and leadership choices typically neglect the importance of this wider institutional framework in enabling and shaping the decisions made. In the case of Irish republicanism, the processes of electoral participation, bargaining to design stable democratic institutions, and securing credible guarantees to protect their interests from the United States, all combined and reinforced each other to create a scenario whereby republicans moderated. These processes hinged upon stable democratic institutions that were perceived by republicans as embodying relatively low risks for participation, providing a stable basis for future competition, and rendering the future of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom potentially uncertain. Moderation was a gradual and path-dependent process of increasing returns whereby contact with the stable institutions imposed constraints against radicalism and incentives towards moderation.

Republicanism's transformation is best understood as moving through a series of phases, beginning with absolute radicalism, moving to relative radicalism, before becoming moderate. Crucial to this process was the decision to participate in institutions, which changed and regulated their relationships with other actors, requiring them to build alliances with potential supporters and political opponents. However, moderation was a layered process with some aspects of their policies and beliefs becoming moderate while others remained radical, albeit over time their remaining radicalism became completely accommodating. This was about acquiescing to a system of political order rather than core value change. Republicans continue to assert an alternative claim to sovereignty, reject the legitimacy of British ruling institutions, and continue to assert the legitimacy of their right to armed struggle, albeit they have put the use of violence in their past. As such, rather than thinking of ethno-national radicalism as entailing value change to prove the sincerity of their moderation, it is preferable to look to the ways they demonstrated a commitment to their new moderate path, such as through the process of decommissioning, their endorsement of policing in Northern Ireland, and their response to ongoing threats of violence from former dissident comrades. In short, the inclusion-moderation theory is a powerful approach for explaining ethno-national moderation but it needs some modification for the ethno-national context.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My biggest academic debt is undoubtedly owed to Bill Kissane, who supervised this thesis. He provided expert input and advice throughout, striking an ideal balance between giving me freedom to explore my own ideas while always encouraging me to explore these in a rigorous academic fashion. I am very grateful for the interest, guidance and enthusiasm he consistently showed in my work as well as to my academic life in general.

A number of other academics in the Government Department of the LSE provided me with support at various stages. Simon Hix was always available and willing to provide useful advice and support, not just for my thesis but for my academic career as a whole. Denisa Kostovicova provided valuable comments on an earlier draft of this thesis, while Jim Hughes, Chun Lin and Jonathan Hopkin also gave their support and advice along the way.

Studying for a thesis can be a lonely affair, especially when it takes more than six years to complete, but I was lucky to have a wonderful cohort of friends who supported me throughout. Johannes Wolff not only helped me to get married, get a cat, and move home (twice), but he also provided great friendship, even if he did manage to finish before me. Mike Seiferling was an ideal (but dirty) flat-mate and the living embodiment of a philosopher king – many important academic debates were solved in deep intellectual discussion in our kitchen. Stefan Bauchowitz's unwavering lack of enthusiasm for life was always inspirational and his friendship is greatly appreciated. José Javier Olivas was the social glue that held us all together, while David Marshall was a pillar of support and always on hand with his ready wit. Uli Theuerkauf has been a fantastic colleague to work with and will be much missed when I leave. Others who have kept me sane throughout with advice and friendship at various stages of my time at the LSE are Anar Ahmadov, Guy Burton, Micheál Ó'Keefe, Nick Vivyan, and Eric Woods.

Without support from my family I would certainly not have been able to start, let alone complete, this PhD. I couldn't ask for a better sister than Sinéad and her love and support has been hugely important throughout, as has that of Niall, Orla, Cillian and Jonathan. Zeynep is entirely wonderful and stupendously clever, and provided feedback on all my work, always making it better. I love her very much and she is undoubtedly the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm also hugely lucky that Elif came into my life and she has brought more laughter and enjoyment (and a decided lack of political science) than I ever imagined.

My mum and dad encouraged me all through my time at university (all 12 years of it!), always helping me to pursue my academic ambitions. They supported me financially, but much more importantly, emotionally too, unconditionally believing in what I was doing. I could never repay all that they have done for me and I will always appreciate their love and support enormously.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ANIA	<i>Americans for a New Ireland Agenda</i>
AIA	<i>Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985)</i>
AP	<i>An Phoblacht (The Republic)</i>
DUP	<i>Democratic Unionist Party</i>
IICD	<i>Independent International Commission on Decommissioning</i>
INC	<i>Irish National Caucus</i>
IPP	<i>Irish Parliamentary Party</i>
IRA	<i>Irish Republican Army</i>
MP	<i>Member of Parliament (UK)</i>
NA	<i>National Archives, UK</i>
NAI	<i>National Archives of Ireland</i>
NORAID	<i>Irish Northern Aid Committee</i>
PRONI	<i>Public Records Office of Northern Ireland</i>
PSNI	<i>Police Service of Northern Ireland</i>
RN	<i>Republican News</i>
RUC	<i>Royal Ulster Constabulary</i>
SDLP	<i>Social Democratic and Labour Party</i>
TD	<i>Teachta Dála (Member of Parliament in Ireland)</i>
UUP	<i>Ulster Unionist Party</i>

## CHAPTER 1

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF IRISH REPUBLICANISM AS A FORM OF MODERATION

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Two contrasting speeches, both assessments of republicanism<sup>1</sup> by British Prime Ministers but made 25 years apart, highlight the scope of the transformation it has undergone. On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1984, Margaret Thatcher, surrounded by security officers, declared to the Conservative Party faithful ‘This government will not weaken. This nation will meet that challenge. Democracy will prevail’. The challenge she was referring to was that posed by the Irish Republican Army’s (IRA) armed campaign and Sinn Féin’s anti-system politics, groups she clearly viewed as posing an anti-democratic challenge to the legitimate existing political order. The reason for a particularly visible security presence that day was that she was speaking just hours after the IRA had come close to assassinating her at the Grand Hotel in Brighton during a Conservative Party Annual Conference. Some days later, Thatcher reiterated this same sentiment, stating that ‘all attempts to destroy democracy by terrorism will fail’ and she viewed the bombing as an attempt to ‘destroy the fundamental freedom that is the birth-right of every British citizen: freedom, justice and democracy’.<sup>2</sup> By 2010, a British Prime Minister was making a very different speech. Instead of accusing Sinn Féin and the IRA of attempting to destroy democracy, Gordon Brown praised their co-leadership of Northern Ireland’s power-sharing executive and their constructive role in all-party talks to devolve policing and justice powers. After securing an all-party agreement Brown stated that ‘This is the last chapter of a long and troubled story and the beginning of a new chapter after decades of violence, years of talks, weeks of stalemate’.<sup>3</sup>

For many, as for Gordon Brown, this moment represented the completion of the implementation of the Northern Irish peace process, a process that had begun 16 years earlier. This peace process had ended one of the most intractable post-World War II conflicts in the developed world: a 25-year ethno-nationalist war between Irish republicans fighting to unify Ireland on the one side, and the British army fighting to quell the rebellion

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis I use the term ‘republicanism’ as a short hand for the collective grouping of Provisional Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> Thatcher, M. ‘Speech to Finchley Conservatives. 25 Years as MP’, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1984.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Brown hails “new chapter” in Northern Ireland as end to years of violence.’ *Guardian*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

along with British loyalists fighting to remain part of the United Kingdom on the other side. Licklider has noted that ‘ending a civil war involves a policy change by at least one side’,<sup>4</sup> but very few people could have imagined the overwhelmingly dramatic nature of the policy change that was to occur within republicanism. In less than three decades they turned away from their initial starting point of advocating and using violence, rejecting the existing ruling institutions, and making revolutionary claims to an alternative sovereignty. Today this has been replaced with non-violent political participation, acquiescence to be governed by reformed institutions still under British sovereignty, and accommodation with former political rivals. They still retain an alternative claim to sovereignty, but this is now a reformist rather than a revolutionary claim, an aspiration to be reached gradually through consensus rather than a pre-political right to be seized violently.

Understanding the transformation of such ethno-national radicalism is not fully explicable within existing political science frameworks. For example, the transformation of radical political actors and organisations is related to, but distinct from transitions to democracy. The democratic transitions framework assumes that a process of democratisation should reach an ideal end-point, typically a form of democratic consolidation that closely resembles that of a Western liberal democracy.<sup>5</sup> Transitions that stop short of this stage are seen as stalled or failed, rather than analysed as possible alternative forms of a democratic path. The focus on a failure to reach a pre-defined ultimate goal often leads to overlooking a myriad of changes that might occur within a political unit, even if a consolidated liberal democracy never emerges along the expected path. A standard transitions framework fails to capture adequately this complexity or ‘grey area’ that arises when states and political groups do not develop through a standard set of stages whereby everything becomes ‘normalised’.<sup>6</sup>

We cannot assume that a moderating party will necessarily ever come to embody the values of tolerance or pluralism that are seen as hallmarks of a consolidated liberal democracy, but this should not necessarily imply that their transformation is incomplete. In the case of an ethno-nationalist party with a violent history, they may never be able to accept a plurality of sovereignty and expecting them to do so is illusory. Republicanism’s final position entailed

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<sup>4</sup> Licklider, R. ‘How Civil Wars End: Questions and Methods’. In R. Licklider. (ed.) *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*. (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Carothers, T. ‘The End of the Transition Paradigm’. *Journal of Democracy* 13(1) 2002, p. 5-21.

<sup>6</sup> Such a stages approach is most clearly evident in the seminal article, Rustow, D. ‘Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Comparative Model’. *Comparative Politics* 2(3) 1970, pp. 337-363.

acquiescing to the ruling institutions and becoming wholly accommodating, but this disguises their singular lack of willingness to tolerate alternative claims to sovereignty over Northern Ireland or view them as possessing any legitimacy. An editorial in the official Republican newspaper in 2005, *An Phoblacht*, stated that IRA decommissioning represented a change in strategy but that republicans must still ‘continue to weaken the union with Britain, maximise broad-based national and international support for Irish re-unification and implement practical steps towards All-Ireland integration’.<sup>7</sup> One week later Martin McGuinness offered the traditional republican interpretation of the conflict as emanating solely from British attempts to maintain an illegitimate colonial presence in Northern Ireland, stating that ‘Britain’s role in Ireland has historically been negative and divisive. We have seen the consequences of this in every generation particularly since the partition of the island, against the wishes of the Irish people, 80 years ago’.<sup>8</sup> In their disbandment the IRA reaffirmed their historical right to armed struggle and republicanism today continues to celebrate its history of armed resistance. When announcing the final decommissioning of their weapons, the IRA declared that ‘we reiterate our view that the armed struggle was entirely legitimate’. In short, there is a difference between accommodating to a political order and accepting that political order as normatively legitimate.<sup>9</sup> It is precisely for this reason that conflicts over symbolic issues have taken on such prominence in Northern Ireland, more so than conflicts over the social order.

Other concepts such as de-radicalisation and demilitarisation also fail to capture the transformation of republicanism adequately. Della Porta and LaFree argue that ‘radicalization may be understood as a process leading towards the increased use of political violence, while de-radicalization, by contrast, implies reduction in the use of political violence’.<sup>10</sup> This is not the sole definition of de-radicalisation, but in general de-radicalisation emphasises the reduction of violence as the key aspect of the process.<sup>11</sup> In this

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<sup>7</sup> AP, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> AP, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2005, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Przeworski, A. ‘Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy’. In G. O’Donnell, P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead. (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Della Porta, D. and G. LaFree. ‘Guest Editorial: Processes of Radicalization and De-Radicalization’. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 6(1) 2012, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> There are some exceptions. For example, Kissane, B. ‘Electing Not to Fight: Elections as a Mechanism of Deradicalisation after the Irish Civil War 1922-1938’. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 6(1) 2012, pp. 41-54, which is part of the Della Porta and LaFree special issue, actually defines de-radicalisation in the Irish Civil War context as entailing four dimensions: a de-intensification of some previously held political ideals; an increasing resolution of conflict within the political arena; a blurring of the boundary between constitutional and violent politics; and the revolutionary elite becoming more reliant on a less radical electorate. This, to me, is more akin to moderation and represents a stretching of typical definitions of de-radicalisation.

regard, it is similar to the notion of demilitarisation, which is akin to a society-wide process of reducing and eliminating violence from politics. Lyons describes demilitarisation as ‘creating and reinforcing the incentives and opportunities for the institutions of wartime based on violence, insecurity and fear to transform themselves into institutions of peacetime based on security and trust that can sustain peace and democracy’.<sup>12</sup> The notions of de-radicalisation and demilitarisation have a generally narrow focus and short-term time horizon looking at the events that immediately precede and proceed the rejection of violence. Much de-radicalisation research has been at the individual level, looking at social-psychological influences and opportunity structures for radicalising individuals into violence, often at the expense of wider political processes.<sup>13</sup> Studies of de-radicalisation largely emanate from the literature examining radical social movements, where violence is understood in terms of key concepts, such as collective action, resource availability, interplay with the state and strategic choices within certain opportunity structures.<sup>14</sup> According to these approaches, de-radicalisation is a product of the shutting down of available avenues of political contestation and incentivising the pursuit of democratic politics to co-opt radical groups. The politics of such groups may remain confrontational and anti-establishment, but if there are limited opportunities to pursue this through extra-constitutional methods and sufficient incentives to pursue this through established political channels, then a group will divert their means. It is within this framework that Tilly argues there is no real difference between paramilitary anti-state violence and mildly confrontational protest movements – rather the distinction hinges on opportunity structures.<sup>15</sup>

While undoubtedly valuable, and indeed these ideas have been well applied to the case of Sinn Féin as I shall shortly discuss, they run the risk of overlooking the role of stable institutions in favour of examining factors such as interplay, stalemates and ripe moments. Della Porta and LaFree distinguish between the micro, meso and macro levels of de-radicalisation, arguing that each level is driven by different causal mechanisms.<sup>16</sup> Briefly, the

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<sup>12</sup> Lyons, T. *Demilitarizing Politics. Elections on the Uncertain Road to Peace*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005), p. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> Della Porta and LaFree; Sedgwick, M. ‘The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion’. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22(4) 2010, p. 480-1. One such example that looks at individual process of (de-)radicalisation in the republican case is Alonso, R. *The IRA and Armed Struggle*. (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> One of the most widely cited examples of such an approach is Della Porta, D. *Social Movements Political Violence and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See also McAdam, D., J.D. McCarthy and M.N. Zald. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilising Structures and Cultural Framings*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Tilly, C. *The Politics of Collective Violence*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Della Porta and LaFree.

micro level refers to the level of the individual; the meso level refers to the level of the organisation; and, the macro level refers to the level of the state and its institutions. Clearly these overlap but it is equally clear that explanations will focus on causal factors that sit more at one level than another. Social movement approaches tend to look at the meso and micro level, focusing on organisational dynamics and perceived opportunity structures, or the interactions between the organs of the state and the organisation's capacity. However, the macro-level also needs to be acknowledged. Institutions need not only be seen as the contingent effects of strategic interaction between actors, but rather then can also provide predictable bases for political development.<sup>17</sup> If institutions are understood as providing a stable base to political competition then they can potentially regulate conflict because radical actors may perceive an opportunity for relatively low risk political gains through this system. In short, the inclusion of radicals within stable and strong institutions can produce moderation by systematically inhibiting radicalism.

## **The Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis**

It is precisely this macro level and the idea that institutions provide stable bases of political competition that the theory of 'moderation through political inclusion' attempts to capture. Much work has been done in recent years to define the concept of moderation precisely. The distinction between radicalism and moderation is often assumed to reflect the distinction between actors and organisations that recognise existing institutions as an appropriate forum for political contestation and those who refuse to do so and instead choose to work outside them, often but not necessarily using political violence. In other words, the radical-moderate distinction is related to whether a group attempts to overthrow the existing political status quo (revolution) or whether it attempts to work through the existing institutions in order to achieve its goals (reform). Importantly, this is distinct from whether a group is democratic or not as some revolutionary groups may be revolutionary democrats opposing an authoritarian status quo. For Schwedler, this form of moderation is best understood as multi-dimensional whereby a party can become moderate in some issues and policies while retaining or even hardening their stance on other issues.<sup>18</sup> As such, it

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander, G. 'Institutions, Path Dependence and Democratic Consolidation'. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13(3) 2001, pp. 249-70.

<sup>18</sup> Schwedler, J. 'Can Islamists Become Moderates? Rethinking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis'. *World Politics* 63(2) 2011, pp. 347-76; Schwedler, J. 'Democratization, Inclusion and the Moderation of Islamists

would be a mistake to think of institutional contact as leading teleologically to a moderate end-point but rather some aspects or dimensions can remain immune and rigidly radical.

This distinction between revolution and reform is indeed valuable but it is not clear that political participation is actually enough to classify a group as moderate. There are ongoing debates about whether some anti-system groups may attempt to use existing political institutions to undermine or challenge those institutions. In the most extreme version, this may entail a party looking for a democratic mandate in order to dismantle democracy permanently. There are also less extreme versions: an Islamist group looking to impose a form of Shari'a law but choosing to pursue an electoral mandate to do so may still be considered radical; or more pertinently to the case of Irish republicanism, sub-state nationalist groups looking to secede from a nation may pursue an electoral mandate but still be radical in their goals. This brings us to the heart of one of the main issues that has taken centre stage in debates about moderation – the need to distinguish between behaviour and ideology in order to separate 'genuine' moderates from those radical groups who merely present a facade of moderation.<sup>19</sup> For authors such as Schwedler, Wickham and Tezcür, moderation must necessarily entail ideological moderation, which can be considered as discrete from behavioural moderation.<sup>20</sup> According to this perspective, changing behaviour to become more accommodating and accept existing ruling structures is one thing, but changing goals and beliefs to become more tolerant of opposition is entirely another. It is for this reason that Schwedler gives a substantive definition of what it means to moderate, with an emphasis upon value change. She defines moderation as 'movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives'.<sup>21</sup>

Schwedler explains the causes of moderation by reference to what she labels an 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis.<sup>22</sup> This builds on key ideas from the party politics and democratisation literatures that were developed in the context of class and religious politics. For example, Przeworski and Sprague in their analysis of the transformation of socialist

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Parties'. *Development* 50(1) 2007, pp. 56-61; Schwedler, J. *Faith in Moderation. Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that a similar distinction has been pursued in the concept of de-radicalisation and the distinction between attitudes and behaviour. See Della Porta, D. and G. LaFree, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Schwedler, 2011; Tezcür, G.M. *The Paradox of Moderation: Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Wickham, C.R. 'The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party'. *Comparative Politics* 36(2), 2004: p. 205-228.

<sup>21</sup> Schwedler 2006, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Schwedler, 2011.

parties in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe argue that the decision to participate in elections imposed new institutional constraints upon socialist party elites.<sup>23</sup> Participation enforced a situation where the party needed to moderate their radical platform to secure more votes or else remain radical but face political marginalisation. In a somewhat similar vein, Kalyvas in his analysis of Christian Democracy in Europe argues that electoral participation changed the organisational structure of these parties, leading to the emergence of a non-theological party elite who were more willing to moderate their position in return for votes.<sup>24</sup> The democratisation literature also informs the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis. Huntington, for example, argues that in return for greater political inclusion, radical groups agree to ‘abandon violence and any commitment to revolution, to accept existing basic social, economic, and political institutions...and to work through elections and parliamentary procedures in order to achieve power and put through their policies’.<sup>25</sup> This is a similar viewpoint to the literature that finds that rebellious masses may strike mutually beneficial bargains with elites that entail abandoning revolution in return for gradual and relatively stable transitions.<sup>26</sup>

### **Does Inclusion Work in the Case of Ethno-National Radicalism?<sup>27</sup>**

Theories developed in one specific context do not always travel smoothly to another context. McGarry and O’Leary discuss the challenges of deploying consociational theory in an ethno-national setting characterised by contestation over self-determination, given that the theory was originally developed in the context of countries divided over class or religion.<sup>28</sup> In a highly pertinent parallel, they argue that ‘the emphasis in traditional

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<sup>23</sup> Przeworski, A. and J.D. Sprague. *Paper Stones. A History of Electoral Socialism*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986).

<sup>24</sup> Kalyvas, S.N. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Huntington, S.P. *The Third Wave. Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) p. 170.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Di Palma, G. *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> In this study I take one of the main political science understandings of ‘ethno-national’. Nationalism ‘seeks to defend and promote the interests of the nation’ and nationalist behaviour is based on ‘the feeling of belonging to a community which is seen as the nation’. The ethno element implies that the nation is defined in narrow ethnic terms based on essentially exclusive or ascriptive criteria. Ethno-nationalists are often drawn to ethno-centrism, which entails a high degree of bias by individuals towards their own ethnic group and against other ethnic groups. Kellas, J.G. *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, second edition), p. 4-6.

<sup>28</sup> McGarry, J. and B.O’Leary. ‘Consociation and its critics. Northern Ireland after the Belfast Agreement’. In S. Choudhry. (ed.) *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 369-408.

consociational theory is on who should exercise power at the level of the central government. However, self-determination disputes are often about the legitimacy of the central government itself.<sup>29</sup> This does not imply that consociationalism is of no use to analysing ethno-national disputes. Indeed, McGarry and O'Leary show how it can be modified to become a useful theoretical and practical tool for managing ethno-national conflict. Similarly, the inclusion-moderation approach embodies the assumptions of the class and religious contexts in which it was developed, but with some modification it can become a useful tool in the ethno-national context.

The inclusion-moderation approach assumes that the legitimacy of a central government is not disputed, albeit deep tensions may exist over the direction of policies passed by that central government. The socialist and Christian Democratic parties of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century competed within recognised states and the political units were not disputed, albeit who should control the power of the state was disputed. What is more, these were large mass parties rather than smaller, niche parties like ethno-national parties often are. Similarly, in countries such as Jordan and Egypt, Islamist radicals accept the state as a legitimate political unit, albeit again control over that state is hotly contested.<sup>30</sup>

Ethno-national divisions and contestation over self-determination lead to particularly intractable conflicts that often tend to be less negotiable than more economic based conflict.<sup>31</sup> The ideological distance between opposing class interests is typically not as great as that between competing nationalist claims. Indeed it is the rigidity of the ethno-national cleavage that led Kitschelt to argue that ethno-national parties may not respond to the same incentives and disincentives as other mainstream parties.<sup>32</sup> While ethno-national parties may pursue changes to cultural laws, such as devolved educational policies or recognition of minority languages, this is generally not sufficient to satisfy their ethno-national demands. It is important to examine in-depth how and why a radical ethno-nationalist movement goes through the process of moderation and if its ethno-nationalist dimension prevents any expected moderation from occurring due to its visceral nature. Additionally, the moderation of religious and class based radicalism focuses on parties with no history of institutional

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, p. 374.

<sup>30</sup> See Schwedler 2006 and Wickham 2004 respectively.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Gurr, T.R. and B. Harff. *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003, second edition).

<sup>32</sup> Kitschelt, H. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 294-5.

violence. While early socialists may have engaged in street protests or rioting, this was never institutionalised into a quasi-military form within the socialist movement. The same is true of the Christian Democratic parties. There are obvious examples of violent Islamist movements around the world today, however, the studies of moderation and Islamist parties have been concerned with parties without a violent history, such as the Islamic Action Front in Jordan or the Wasat Party in Egypt. That is not to say that the transformation of violent groups has not been dealt with in the political science literature. There are many such case studies and these too emphasise reforms of governing institutions in a more inclusive direction as a way of facilitating the transformation of rebel soldiers into politicians.<sup>33</sup> There has also been a highly influential debate around institutional design and the management of violence.<sup>34</sup> Yet in these instances, moderation is not the dependent variable but something more akin to demilitarization or political participation tends to be what is examined. Yet as I have already discussed, demilitarization and participation are not synonymous with moderation, and purely restricting the focus to violence overlooks the totality of the transformation. Instead it is more informative to adopt the breadth of the notion of moderation but explore how this applies to the ethno-national context.

Existing explanations of moderation emphasise the path-dependent nature of the process. This in itself indicates that the context in which moderation occurs is all important. If moderation is path-dependent, then we cannot assume the same destination for all journeys nor that the causal pathways work in the same way. In fact, upon close inspection, there are a number of reasons why a violent ethno-national party may require a modified understanding of moderation due to the restricted context in which dominant understandings have been developed and refined. Key processes of moderation, such as electoral participation or democratic bargaining, pre-suppose a generally recognised state

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<sup>33</sup> There are many examples of studies looking at rebel to politician transformations, such as De Zeeuw, J. (ed.) *From Soldiers to Politicians. Transforming Rebel Movements After Civil War*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008); Söderberg Kovacs, M. 'When Rebels Change Their Stripes: Armed Insurgents in Post-War Politics'. In A. Jarstad and T. Sisk. (eds.) *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 134-156; Van Engeland, A. and R.M. Rudolph. (eds.) *From Terrorism to Politics*. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008); Deonandan, K., D. Close and G. Prevost. *From Revolutionary Movements to Political Parties. Cases from Latin America and Africa*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Manning, C. 'Armed Opposition Groups into Political Parties: Comparing Bosnia, Kosovo, and Mozambique'. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 39(1) 2004, pp. 54-76.

<sup>34</sup> Hartzell, C.A. and M. Hoddie. *Crafting Peace. Power Sharing Institutions and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007); Horowitz, D.L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Lijphart, A. *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

over which parties compete for electoral control or a democratic bargain in which the entity to be democratised is largely accepted. However, should such a legitimate entity be absent, then we cannot assume that these causal mechanisms will operate in the same fashion. So while it is clear that the theory of moderation could *potentially* be a powerful tool in explaining the moderation of a violent ethno-nationalist party, it is not actually clear or self-evident that this theory is currently applicable without some modification to take account of the ethno-national context.

## **The Limits to Existing Understandings of the Transformation of Irish Republicanism**

Republicans throughout their entire history from 1969 to the present day, even in the midst of the most intense and violent IRA campaigns, always considered themselves to be the only true democrats on the island of Ireland and they consistently used the language of democracy and liberal rights to present their viewpoint. According to republicans, their struggle was necessarily an armed one because the structures and institutions of British democracy as administered in Northern Ireland systematically disadvantaged Irish nationalists, leaving them with no other choice but to pursue violence in order to achieve change and secure political freedom and equality for everyone on the island of Ireland. In short, violence was justified as being necessary to create a just democracy. Of course, from the unionist and British point of view, Northern Ireland throughout the entire conflict period held regular inclusive elections which could be freely contested, a competitive party system, and civil and political liberties. In other words, many of the criteria of a procedural definition of democracy, such as Dahl's,<sup>35</sup> were met. As such, republican violence was seen as an atavistic and primordial response to an historical political settlement with which they did not agree. What is more, militant Irish nationalism was tyrannical in its persistent denial of the right of the unionist community to be British and in its desire to impose what it claimed to be the will of the whole island of Ireland upon its Northeast corner.

Bourke has highlighted that there is a distinction between a functioning democratic process and a functioning democratic state,<sup>36</sup> and republicans most certainly rejected Northern Ireland as being an example of the latter. The partition of Ireland was seen as an outrageous

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<sup>35</sup> Dahl, R.A. *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

<sup>36</sup> Bourke, R. *Peace in Ireland. The War of Ideas*. (Random House: London, 2003) p. 4-5.

gerrymander imposed under the threat of British war, which gave what should be the minority unionist community a numerical majority in the Northeast corner of Ireland purely in order to elevate them to a position of privilege based on the exploitation of Irish nationalists. The British imposed conception of democracy was seen as a centralising and imperialist one that concentrated power in the hands of the manufactured majority without due consideration for the position and preferences of the sizeable minority of Irish nationalists. A majoritarian system of government allowed unionist politicians to create effectively a 'one-party state' and use the institutions of that state to favour unionist communities while nationalist communities were relegated to second-class citizens.<sup>37</sup> Discrimination in the field of public employment, public housing and policing were all cited as evidence of the veracity of this perspective. What is more, the British security forces and Northern Irish police were seen as discriminating against the nationalist community and utilised by the unionist community to prop up an illegitimate regime. Jim Gibney, a former IRA prisoner, current Sinn Féin executive member and key party strategist, described living in Northern Ireland as being 'at the mercy of an unbridled Orange administration who had inflicted terror, poverty, second class citizenship and oppression on nationalists down through the decades'.<sup>38</sup> This view was also pervasive at the mass level with one local republican activist arguing that 'as the unionist majority is in-built, the elections are sheer farce, the opposition being removed by the bullet...The election has been won by the massacre of the opposing party. So please stop thinking of Ulster as a democracy. It is an insult to the theory of free elections, which will never be allowed in this military dictatorship which is the most repressive regime in the present uncivilised world'.<sup>39</sup> Northern Ireland was seen as irreformable and instead violent revolutionary change was required because the British along with British loyalists would not willingly agree to revolutionary change that threatened their privileged position.

In spite of such trenchant views, almost 30 years later republicans engaged in the very reformism they had previously denigrated and they began to work with the British and Irish governments and with the unionist community to design new ruling institutions for Northern Ireland. Revolutionary action was put behind them, even if at times revolutionary rhetoric remained. In 1994 the IRA embarked upon what was to become a permanent ceasefire and subsequently decommissioned all their weapons some protracted 11 years

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<sup>37</sup> Farrell, M. *Northern Ireland. The Orange State*. (London: Pluto Press, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1994, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *AP*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1993, p. 13

later. The Belfast Agreement of 1998 established a power-sharing settlement from which Sinn Féin were seen to be big winners. By adopting more moderate positions whilst still retaining their historical hard-line image,<sup>40</sup> Sinn Féin rose to become the largest nationalist party in Northern Ireland, the second largest political party overall, and co-leaders of the Northern Ireland Executive. Their fortunes also increased in the Republic of Ireland, rising from marginal outsiders to become the fourth largest party at the 2011 general election. In recent years Sinn Féin in their capacity as co-leaders of the Northern Ireland Executive responded to the threat of ‘dissident’ terrorist attacks on the Northern Irish state by disillusioned republicans by utilising the justice and policing powers at their disposal to pursue and capture those responsible, even though in some cases these were their former comrades-in-arms.<sup>41</sup> The personification of this transformation comes in the figure of Martin McGuinness, a former commander of the IRA in Derry who in 2007 was elected the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland and polled extremely well in a failed bid to become the President of the Republic of Ireland in 2011. In this figure, the transition from solidier to statesman can be seen as a metaphor for the journey from anti-system and violent republicanism to mainstream and reformist republicanism.

Throughout all this, republicanism itself claimed that it had not fundamentally changed but rather it merely entered a ‘new phase’ of the struggle and it had not lost sight of its original agenda in a post-conflict age.<sup>42</sup> The right to armed struggle to achieve Irish freedom remains but this right does not need to be exercised because post-Belfast Agreement Northern Ireland opened a path for legitimate and equal political contestation between the competing nationalisms, removing the element of systematic discrimination that was in-built into Northern Ireland’s earlier incarnation. Accepting the new institutional arrangements, however, certainly did not imply accepting the legitimacy of the political unit itself and in republican eyes Northern Ireland remains illegitimate and a reminder of the need for territorial unification in order to realise self-determination and ‘true’ Irish democracy. Nonetheless, the doctrine is now Irish unity through consent rather than through force. This confusion and sophistry is at the heart of much of republican politics today.

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<sup>40</sup> Mitchell, P., G. Evans and B. O’Leary. ‘Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland’, *Political Studies* 57(2) 2009, p. 416.

<sup>41</sup> Frampton, M. *The Legion of the Rearguard. Dissident Irish Republicanism*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010) p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, speech given by Gerry Adams on 1 March 1994. <http://www.sinnFéin.ie/contents/15190> Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

An extensive number of valuable and insightful studies have been undertaken that attempt to tackle republicanism's seemingly *volte-face*. Initial contributions came from the field of journalism and these focused on presenting the main changes that republicans went through and their consequences.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, many historical studies also focused upon piecing together the main events and key players in the transformation of the movement and deconstructing some of its complexities and contradictions.<sup>44</sup> Using these studies it is possible to identify a consensus regarding the key events in republicanism's journey. This generally sees their conversion beginning with the IRA prisoners' hunger strikes of 1981/2, which opened the eyes of the movement to the possibility of electoral politics, followed by leadership changes, changing internal priorities (most notably, the ending of abstentionism), and subsequently engaging in talks with the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), which predisposed them to more extensive peace talks. The main shortcoming of these works is the lack of the use of comparative theories to understand this transformation. They tend to understand change as rooted in a 'pragmatic' tendency which has historically permeated republicanism and which also explains the moderation of earlier incarnations. Explaining change with reference to pragmatism may just be using a vague label for a theoretical process that could be specified much more precisely. This has contributed to an overall situation in which developments in republicanism have not been placed in a wider comparative perspective.

Political science approaches have also made some valuable contributions but they have primarily relied, either explicitly or implicitly, upon a social movement framework that draws on ideas of interplay between British state strategies and republicans to explain their moderation. The best of these works comes from Bean who uses social movement theory to argue that the British used funding channelled through civil society to draw republicans into contact with the soft power of the state. Republicans, although aware of the tactic that Britain was pursuing, had no choice but to increase their engagement with the state but they

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<sup>43</sup> Moloney, E. *A Secret History of the IRA*. (London: Allen Lane, 2002); McKittrick, D. and D. McVea. *Marking Sense of the Troubles*. (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2000); Taylor, P. *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Féin*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1997).

<sup>44</sup> Frampton, M. *The Long March: The Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Bourke, 2003; English, R. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. (London: Pan, 2004); Feeney, B. *Sinn Féin: A Hundred Turbulent Years*. (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2002); Patterson, H. *The Politics of Illusion. A Political History of the IRA*. (London: Serif, second edition, 1997).

did so by establishing this as a new arena of political confrontation.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, McIntyre sees republicanism's changing goals as a response to British strategies of co-option. As Britain adopted less militant and more political strategies, this defined the space in which republicanism competed and they responded by becoming more political too.<sup>46</sup> Murray and Tonge have emphasised how interplay between republicans and their nationalist political rivals, the SDLP, led to the adoption of a constitutional and non-violent conception of nationalism, marginalising the traditional republican viewpoint. Ironically, republicans became the electoral victors by adopting the SDLP's non-violent stance for themselves.<sup>47</sup> In another argument by Tonge *et al*, again interplay between key political elites in the British and Irish states and republicans is emphasised as producing the transformation.<sup>48</sup> The idea of interplay also underpins much of the work that looks at the peace process in general and not just specifically at the transformation of Irish republicanism. Dixon has argued that the transformation of politics in Northern Ireland is best analysed in terms of the marketing and choreography of the Belfast Agreement which slowly shifted the ground on which republicans were competing, rather than necessarily deriving from any substantial change within republicanism.<sup>49</sup> Other studies of the peace process adopt explanations that focus on leadership choices and how these played out to produce the moderate outcome.<sup>50</sup>

Although there is much to commend the dominant literature in this field to date, most notably in terms of identifying key events and time periods worthy of close attention, two salient problems with how this topic has been tackled so far are evident. Firstly, many of the existing explanations overlook the role of macro political institutions as providing stable bases of political competition. The existing debates have failed to tackle head-on how institutions gradually drew in radical republicanism and imposed a series of constraints and incentives to adopt more moderate positions. A gradualist macro-political institutional approach helps to correct the tendency in the literature that sees the evolution of

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<sup>45</sup> Bean K. 'The Economic and Social War Against Violence'. British Social and Economic Strategy and the Evolution of Provisionalism'. In A. Edwards and S. Bloomer. (eds.) *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland. From Terrorism to Democratic Politics*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), pp. 163-174; Bean, K. *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> McIntyre, A. 'Modern Irish Republicanism: The Product of British State Strategies', *Irish Political Studies* 10(1) 1995, pp. 97-121;

<sup>47</sup> Murray, G. and J. Tonge. *Sinn Féin and the SDLP. From Alienation to Participation*. (London: C. Hurst, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> Tonge, J., P. Shirlow and J. McAuley. 'So Why Did the Guns Fall Silent? How Interplay, not Stalemate, Explains the Northern Ireland Peace Process'. *Irish Political Studies* 26(1) 2011, pp. 1-18.

<sup>49</sup> Dixon, P. *Northern Ireland. The Politics of War and Peace*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, second edition).

<sup>50</sup> McGrattan, C. *Northern Ireland. 1968-2008. The Politics of Entrenchment*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); Gormley-Heenan, C. *Political Leadership and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

republicanism as composed of two broadly dichotomous periods of radicalism and moderation, when in reality it is necessary to specify how these periods overlapped and some aspects remained immune to moderation. These complexities are much better captured and understood through the ‘inclusion-moderation’ framework.

Secondly, many of the existing approaches have allowed an implicitly non-comparative focus to proliferate in studies of Northern Ireland. There are of course notable and valuable exceptions to this, not least Bean’s work mentioned above,<sup>51</sup> but in general explanations are offered that fail to look to broader comparative theories and processes. Explanations that focus on the interplay of key actors or interplay between the British strategies and republicans often fail to draw on theoretical explanations that find similar processes elsewhere or to demonstrate fully the lessons from this case for other instances. In general the vast majority of work fails to make any use of wider comparative theories to illuminate republicanism’s journey, thus continuing to propagate the questionable notion that Northern Irish politics is *sui generis*.<sup>52</sup>

## The Contribution of This Thesis

This study applies the ‘inclusion-moderation’ thesis to the case of Irish republicanism to answer a number of related questions:

1. What does it mean to be radical or moderate in Irish republicanism’s ethno-national context?
2. What was the role of stable and predictable macro-institutions in the moderation of Irish republicanism?

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<sup>51</sup> Both McGarry, J. and B. O’Leary. *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), and O’Leary, B. and J. McGarry. *The Politics of Antagonism. Understanding Northern Ireland*. (London: The Athlone Press, 1996, second edition), were crucial to bringing a more comparative dimension to studies of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Other comparative studies of Northern Ireland are referred to and drawn upon throughout this study.

<sup>52</sup> For example, in 2011, David Trimble (leader of the Ulster Unionist Party during the Belfast Agreement negotiations), Martin Mansergh (Special Advisor on Northern Ireland to the Fianna Fáil party and key negotiator for the Irish government during the Belfast Agreement) and Jonathan Powell (Chief of Staff to Tony Blair and key negotiator for the British government during the Belfast Agreement) all argued that there were no strong comparative lessons from the Northern Irish case for other conflicts and that it was unique, with Powell even stating that ‘Northern Ireland is *sui generis*, the conflict is *sui generis*, the solution is *sui generis*’. ‘The Lessons of Northern Ireland for Contemporary Counterterrorism and Conflict Resolution Policy’. *London School of Economics and Political Science Public Lecture*, 23 May 2011. Richard English, the other speaker, was the sole dissenting voice.

3. Is the ‘inclusion-moderation’ thesis a useful approach to explain the moderation of a violent ethno-national party?

I answer these questions by applying the ‘inclusion-moderation’ approach to the case of Irish republicanism, albeit supplementing this to include an international dimension which has been identified as important in this case. My dependent variable is ‘political moderation’ (and part of this study deals with what exactly that means in this case) and my three independent variables are ‘electoral participation’, ‘democratic bargaining’ and ‘international intervention’, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** *The Variables Explaining the Process of Moderation Used in this Study*

<b>Pathway Case</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Dependent Variable</b>
Irish Republicanism, 1969-2010	Electoral Participation	Democratic Bargaining	American International Intervention	Multi-dimensional moderation

My central argument is that at a small number of critical junctures, republican elites made important decisions which set the organisation on a path-dependent route to moderation caused by the predictable and stable effect of key institutions. In other words, the ideas and interests of actors in interaction with a wider institutional setting explain moderation. In spite of the fact that republicans did not view the British state and its institutions as legitimate, contact with these institutions over a prolonged period of time still induced moderation. Republicans did not need a prior normative commitment to the state in order to fall under the moderating effect of the constraints and incentives created by elections and democratic bargaining. In this respect, the inclusion-moderation thesis is useful in explaining ethno-national moderation.

However, it needs to be tailored for this distinct context. Firstly, given the nature of republican radicalism which had an international dimension in the form of the diaspora and irredentist claims, exclusively internal causal explanations must be supplemented with an international dimension. The role of Irish-America and the American government were vital in encouraging republican moderation by acting as a guarantor of their interests and giving them confidence to pursue alternative paths to their goals. Secondly, moderation in an ethno-national context is inherently more ambiguous than existing explanations allow

for. Republicans did not change their long-term values. They continue to assert an alternative claim to sovereignty and the legitimacy of armed struggle and they reject suggestions that Northern Ireland can now be considered as a bi-national state. The power-sharing deal was only accepted instrumentally and it is conditional upon serving their goal of achieving a united Ireland. According to existing substantive definitions, this would fall short of ideological moderation because values such as tolerance and pluralism have not been embraced. Yet republican moderation is also more than strategic, even if this is how it originally started. They repeatedly demonstrated a commitment to defending the new Northern Irish institutions from dissident threats from disgruntled former comrades-in-arms who reject the peace process. Additionally, agreeing to decommissioning and endorsing the Police Service of Northern Ireland embody ideological changes as well as behavioural ones, given the distance that republicanism had to travel to agree to this. Therefore, I offer an alternative understanding of moderation to capture the inherent ambiguity between behaviour and values that exists in this ethno-national case.

It is important to note that my contribution is exclusively to the study of moderation and not to the party politics literature, democratic bargaining literature and international arena literature *per se*. Due to the need to focus my area of study I cannot discuss the implications of this case for theories of electoral participation or what implications this might have for wider debates about democratic transitions. Rather while I certainly use the ideas from these bodies of literature extensively, I do so in order to gain insights about moderation and it is to the concept of moderation that I restrict my critical appraisals.

## **Irish Republicanism as a Pathway Case**

This study uses the ‘pathway case’ of Irish republicanism to examine moderation in the case of a violent ethno-national party. I am treating Irish republicanism as one example of the broader universe of violent ethno-national organisations that have moderated. Thus, in line with Gerring’s definition of case study research, I treat republicanism as a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units.<sup>53</sup> Gerring refined the concept of a pathway case as an alternative to Ekstein’s notion of a crucial case, which he argued was of limited analytical use given that it is difficult to find a crucial case that definitively proves or

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<sup>53</sup> Gerring, J. ‘What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?’. *American Political Science Review* 98(2) 2004, p. 342.

disproves a social science theory.<sup>54</sup> However, in many instances the links between a dependent and independent variable may already be established in a theory, but the causal mechanisms between these variables may be underspecified or ambiguous. As such, using Irish republicanism as a pathway case allows me to explore in-depth the causal mechanisms underpinning an already established relationship between an independent and a dependent variable.

Using a single case study to explore the issues addressed in this thesis can be seen as a strength rather than a shortcoming. Case study approaches have long since moved beyond the traditional criticism that small or single-N studies that are selected according to the dependent variable are of limited value.<sup>55</sup> It has been persuasively argued that as long as researchers do not attempt to over-generalise their findings, then a single-site case study can be very valuable for understanding complex causal processes in a manner that is neglected when purely observing what correlates with variations in an outcome.<sup>56</sup> Case study research is particularly useful for refining the clarity of key concepts by taking into account the importance of context, thus avoiding Sartori's well documented pitfall of 'conceptual stretching'.<sup>57</sup> Through 'hoop' and 'smoking gun' tests complex causality can be established using a single case.<sup>58</sup> Hoop tests ensure that the case demonstrates that the exploratory theories provide necessary conditions but this does not necessarily imply that they are sufficient to ensure an outcome. Smoking gun tests find a clear causal link between an independent and a dependent variable, thus demonstrating that the theory provides sufficient conditions to explain the outcome being examined. Importantly, it is crucial that the theory being examined can be falsified so that it is not accepted deterministically, through methods such as process tracing and critical junctures.

The nature of organisational and institutional change is best understood in path-dependent terms. Here I distinguish between the macro stable institutions that I view as independent

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<sup>54</sup> Gerring, J. 'Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?'. *Comparative Political Studies* 40(3) 2007, pp. 231-253.

<sup>55</sup> This claim was most prominently made by King, G., R.O. Keohane and S. Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 208-211.

<sup>56</sup> George, A.L. and A. Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> Sartori, G. 'Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics'. *American Political Science Review* 64(4) 1970, pp. 1033-1053.

<sup>58</sup> Bennett, A. and C. Elman. 'Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods'. *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 2006, pp. 455-76. See also D. Collier, H.E. Brady and J. Seawright. 'Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology'. In Brady and Collier, pp. 229-266.

variables and the meso level party institution that I view as dependent.<sup>59</sup> The change in republicanism can be understood as the outcome of a path-dependent process of the interaction of these stable macro institutions. Pierson argues that path dependence is a process of ‘increasing returns’, whereby a decision made at a critical juncture sets events along a specific path from which it is very difficult to return because of the increasing returns that are accumulated by staying on the same path and the high costs associated with changing paths.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Mahoney defines path dependence as ‘those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns of event chains that have deterministic properties’.<sup>61</sup> In this way, path-dependent approaches draw our attention to identifying the causal processes that take place early in the stages of a historical sequence, acknowledging their contingent nature at the moment of their occurrence and then understanding how they have deterministic consequences by greatly increasing the likelihood of staying on the chosen path going into the future.

There is a vibrant debate within the field of historical institutionalism about how and why institutions change and this debate has important implications for my approach to studying the transformation of republicanism. There are two differing approaches to understanding institutional change. The first is the idea of punctuated equilibria.<sup>62</sup> This viewpoint argues that institutions are highly continuous bodies and that institutional change is difficult. Given their stickiness, change only comes through exogenous crises, such as economic depression or wars, which have a dramatic impact on institutions. However, this impact is only episodic and soon a new institutional equilibrium arises which in turn becomes highly sticky until the next major crisis hits. In other words, institutions are characterised by long periods of self-reinforcing stability punctuated by dramatic change derived from exogenous factors. The other model of institutional change sees this as much more gradual and incremental. The institutions themselves create opportunities for actors to embark upon

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<sup>59</sup> See Hall, P.A. and R.C.R. Taylor. ‘Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms’. *Political Studies* 44(5) 1996, pp. 936-957, for an overview of the three main forms of ‘new institutionalisms’ in the social sciences, namely historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Where rational-choice institutionalism tends to see agents as being influenced by exogenous preferences for the course of action that will deliver them the maximum gains, historical institutionalism tends to see preferences as being constructed through the process of institutional development itself, thus providing a more complete understanding of institutional change.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*; also, P. Pierson. *Politics in Time. History, Institutions and Social Analysis*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Pierson, P. ‘Increasing Returns, Path Dependency, and the Study of Politics’. *American Political Science Review* 94(2) 2000, p. 251.

<sup>61</sup> Mahoney, J. ‘Path dependence in historical sociology’. *Theory and Society* 29(4) 2000, p. 507.

<sup>62</sup> Krasner, S.D. ‘Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics’. *Comparative Politics* 16(2) 1984, pp. 223-244.

institutional change as adaptation is required.<sup>63</sup> Even if institutions do not change, then the configuration of institutions may change gradually, thus producing different outcomes.

In some respects we need no longer choose between these two models. Recently there has been a move to acknowledge that institutional change can derive from both processes. Cortell and Peterson have refined an explanation that accounts for both dramatic, episodic change and incremental change.<sup>64</sup> They argue that international and domestic events open a window of opportunity for key actors. If their preferences are such that they want change, they will move to exploit this opportunity. Their preferences emerge from a complex interaction of external pressures derived from the trigger as well as ideology and political calculation. The success and extent of efforts to change institutions depends upon the extent to which existing institutional configurations allow for actors to implement their goals. Streeck and Thelen have put forward a somewhat similar framework for understanding how incremental change can actually lead to dramatic change without the need for a precipitating crisis.<sup>65</sup> Whilst they acknowledge that some circumstances, such as wars or civil wars, generate crucial moments that cause major institutional change, they argue that most change is in fact incremental and endogenous to the polity rather than derived from an external shock. Using a series of key case studies they show that gradual transformation through processes such as displacing some institutions with other institutions or adding new institutional layers to existing institutions rather than wholesale replacement, can lead to major transformations.

When looking at republicanism it is clear that much of the change occurred in a gradual fashion as a result of the stable and predictable effect of institutions on elite choices. Yet we cannot dismiss completely key decisions at crucial turning points when explaining the moderation of republicanism, such as the hunger strikers' decision to contest elections or the decision to call a ceasefire. These few key decisions are best seen as critical junctures that set republicanism down the road of predictable path-dependent change. Critical junctures are 'situations in which the structural (that is economic, cultural, ideological,

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<sup>63</sup> Thelen, K. and S. Steinmo. 'Historical institutionalism in comparative politics'. In S. Steinmo and K. Thelen. (eds). *Structuring Politics. Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Cortell, A.P. and S. Peterson. 'Altered States: Explaining Domestic Institutional Change'. *British Journal of Political Science* 29(1) 1999, pp. 177-203.

<sup>65</sup> Streeck, W. and K. Thelen. 'Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies' in W. Streeck and K. Thelen. (eds). *Beyond Continuity. Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1-39.

organizational) influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a relatively short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choices open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous'.<sup>66</sup> These junctures represent the opportunities for contingent agency that derive from some exogenous crisis or structural change and whose consequences lock-in an institutional pattern along a deterministic path.<sup>67</sup>

To tease out the path-dependent determinism, I use process tracing. This is an ideal method to test moderation in this case given its suitability in tracing complex causality, path-dependent patterns, and both dramatic and gradual institutional change.<sup>68</sup> The usefulness of process tracing for this type of research is evident from George and Bennett's summation of the strengths of the method as entailing an 'insistence on providing [a] continuous and theoretically based historical explanation of a case, in which each significant step toward the outcome is explained by reference to a theory'.<sup>69</sup> Its strength lies in testing a specific historically contextualised outcome against a set of theoretical assumptions and enabling the research to pick this apart in order to untie complex causal processes. Given the aims of this thesis, this makes it an ideal approach to adopt. The danger with such a method, particularly given its insistence on the contingency and contextualisation of outcomes, is that a theory is always accepted. In reality, much evidence that is discovered may be useful for many alternative explanations while only some evidence will be supportive of just one explanation. Therefore, 'process tracing is more persuasive to the extent that the researcher has guarded against confirmation bias. It is important in this respect to look within a case for the observable implications of a wide range of alternative explanations, to give these explanations a "fair shake" vis-a-vis the evidence, and to develop sufficient diverse, detailed and probative evidence to elevate one explanation'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Capoccia, G. and R.D. Kelemen. 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism'. *World Politics* 59(3) 2007, p. 343.

<sup>67</sup> Mahoney defines contingency as 'the inability of theory to predict or explain, either deterministically or probabilistically, the occurrence of a specific outcome. A contingent event is therefore an occurrence that was not expected to take place, given certain theoretical understandings of how causal processes work', p. 513.

<sup>68</sup> Capoccia and Kelemen have also suggested the possibility of using 'analytical narratives' for examining the impact of critical junctures, however, given its tendency towards a more rational-choice institutionalism approach I have opted for process tracing, which is more widely used in historical institutional studies.

<sup>69</sup> George and Benett, 2005, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid*, p. 460.

To understand the impact of macro-institutions upon republicanism, I drew on a range of archival data sources from a number of different perspectives. I consulted the National Archives (NA) in Kew, London; the National Archives of Ireland (NAI); and, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Through this process I was able to understand the transformation of republicanism from the perspective of the three main state-actors in the domestic context. The main limitation of this data is that the 30-year rule restricts access to files relating to events after 1982 (final data collection was undertaken in January 2013). To understand the transformation from the republican perspective I examined all policy documents produced by Sinn Féin, key announcements by the IRA, and important speeches by senior republicans. This included the annual address by the President of Sinn Féin at the Party Conference for every year between 1970 and 2010 and the annual address by a nominated senior republican at Bodenstown for every year between 1970 and 2010. In addition, republicans produced two regular newspapers, *An Phoblacht* (AP), meaning ‘The Republic’, and *Republican News* (RN). AP was initially a monthly publication from 1970, but by 1973 it was produced weekly until returning to a monthly format in 2010. RN was a weekly periodical in existence until 1979, when the two newspapers were merged. These were reviewed for the entire 40 year period. Finally, I also consulted the Linen Hall Library Northern Ireland Political Collection.

As I will argue, this archival material revealed a number of important trends within republicanism. Firstly, it is clear that stable institutions had a profound moderating effect upon republicanism. Republicans repeatedly emphasised the need to perform well in elections and secure significant levels of support, which they noted required more participation and reduced IRA violence. This was not just about interplay with the British government, but rather it was that the institutions of elections, the relationships with other parties in the party system, the process of bargaining to secure a new democratic ruling framework, the organizational structure of Sinn Féin, international incentives and pressure, all facilitated and encouraged the moderation of republicanism. Republicans themselves emphasised the role of these stable institutions just as much, if not more, than they emphasised their evolving relationship with different British governments.

Secondly, an important reason why republicans came into contact with the moderating effect of macro-institutions was that successive British governments from 1973 onwards were highly tolerant of the politicisation of Sinn Féin. Even while simultaneously clamping

down on the IRA and denying the democratic credentials of republicans in general, there was a general tendency to tolerate Sinn Féin's increasing participation in political life. The British government de-proscribed Sinn Féin in 1974 and it resisted calls to re-proscribe it in the early 1980s when they began to compete in elections. Similarly, Sinn Féin's political participation was accepted even while the IRA was running a parallel campaign of violence. The British government also accepted Sinn Féin's goals as acceptable political goals provided they secured a democratic mandate and they agreed that the future of Northern Ireland could be decided by the people of Northern Ireland, even if that entailed opting for a united Ireland. This was echoed in evolving British-Irish relations and mirrored in policies from Dublin. This level of tolerance greatly reduced the risks republicans perceived in solely pursuing democratic politics. Therefore, republicans were able to choose to come into contact with the moderating macro-institutional framework because they saw it as a possible route to achieving their long-standing goals which offered low risks and a reasonable probability of success. British tolerance was not undertaken for a single coherent reason nor was it clear that this was an explicit strategy to capture republicanism, but it did have the consistent (even if, at times, unintended) effect of exposing republicans to macro-institutional incentives.

Thirdly, republican understandings of their transformation are typically very different than the understandings of non-republicans. Where unionists and the British government saw the peace process as a process of democratising republicanism, republicans saw themselves as long-standing democrats engaged in a process of democratising Northern Ireland. Violence was not necessarily anti-democratic as it was resistance to colonial oppression and undertaken in an effort to achieve Irish self-determination. This is why, even after the ceasefire, violence was never rejected in principle and republicans had such difficulty overcoming their defenderist militant dimensions (more so than their willingness to compromise on issues of institutional design). This taps into another recurring theme in the empirical evidence – there is clearly important change within republicanism from their starting point in 1969 to today, but there is also deep continuity. Republicans moderated not necessarily because they felt the need to change their goals or they feared marginalisation (although this latter aspect was partly important), but the main force for moderation was an effort to implement their long-standing goals on their own terms using an alternative means. The move away from violence and non-participation was acceptable

to republicanism as a whole as long as they were perceived as bringing Irish self-determination based on the entire island of Ireland closer to realisation.

The original contribution of this thesis lies in framing these empirical patterns within an important conceptual and theoretical framework that allows me to understand the nature and meaning of republican moderation in an important and unexplored way. Of course there are limits to how much scholars can know about elite decisions at critical junctures. Reconstructing these processes is fraught and may inadvertently impose certain decisions with a degree of strategic thinking that was absent in reality. What is more, given that this topic covers very recent history of immensely sensitive events, and that most of the key elites are still alive and many are in positions of power, this makes it harder to uncover all the key causes and evidence behind republican moderation. Therefore, at no point do I discount existing explanations that emphasise leadership choices and interplay, but rather I aim to show that the macro-institutional context shaped this decision-making. The empirical evidence supports this interpretation and there are important parallels between the transformation of radical republicanism and that of the moderation of other radicals in other contexts due to macro-institutional influences. There are also clear parallels with the phased and layered nature of republican moderation which justifies my theoretical framing of the empirical evidence.

This thesis proceeds as follows. **Chapter 2** looks at the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis and provides a critique of this from an ethno-national perspective, arguing that while it offers a lot of potential in the study of ethno-national radicalism it also needs to be explored in depth to see if it needs to be modified for this context. **Chapter 3** examines the meaning of radicalism and moderation in the context of Irish republicanism. I compare two phases in the moderation of republican history, namely 1916-1937 and 1969-2010, to identify commonalities and differences. This allows me to root republicanism today in its full historical context in Irish history and it allows me to identify what constitutes radicalism and moderation in this context.

Next I turn to examining the three causal factors in the Irish case. **Chapter 4** looks at the role of elections and demonstrates how republicanism only explored elections after the failure of their alternative revolutionary strategy of parallel state building. Once the decision to participate was made at the critical juncture of the hunger strikes, republicans were

incrementally drawn into more moderate positions through the fractionalising of their goals into short-term aims and the need to build electoral alliances. **Chapter 5** argues that the transformation of republicanism can be understood as a form of democratisation, moving through the phases of liberalisation, transition and consolidation (although consolidation has a distinct meaning for republicans). This process was about agreeing to rein in radicalism in return for securing a set of new institutions that provided a stable and low-risk basis for political competition in Northern Ireland while simultaneously rendering the future of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom uncertain. This process also entailed changing their relationships with other actors, which had an important effect upon republican radicalism. **Chapter 6** examines the role of Irish-America and the US government both in providing incentives for republicanism to moderate and in acting as a guarantor of republican interests throughout the peace process, thus giving them confidence to moderate in spite of this rendering them more vulnerable. A common theme through all these chapters is that moderation was initially strategic but once this path was chosen it became embedded. 'Embedded' in this context means that their moderate behaviour became institutionalised and reinforced because moderation was associated with increasing returns and the cost of changing path back to radicalism was high. A key part of the transition process was republicanism's changing relationships with other actors which facilitated their shift from radical outsiders to, at most, accommodating anti-system insiders. The other key theme is that republican moderation did not entail giving up many of their long-standing values, such as an alternative claim to sovereignty, a belief in the legitimacy of armed struggle and a rejection of the legitimacy of Northern Ireland as a bi-national state. Yet this was also more than just behavioural moderation and some of the changes they went through were ideologically profound ones.

**Chapter 7** teases out the lessons from this case for wider debates about ethno-national moderation. I argue in favour of a modified understanding of moderation, one that reconceptualises the difference between behaviour and ideology and instead show how key ideas from anti-system parties (ideological vs relational anti-systemness) can be tailored to this debate to enhance our understanding of ethno-national moderation. I also consider some of the unique aspects of Northern Ireland and how these might inhibit comparison, such as the fact that Northern Ireland had a history of strong and stable institutions, even though its sovereignty was contested.

The concept of moderation has not been deployed in the ethno-national context and using the case of Provisional Irish republicanism shows that it can be a powerful and useful approach, but that it needs some adaptation when navigating from the class/religious context to the ethno-national one. In the ethno-national context moderation is ambivalent and may not include value change, but this does not imply that moderating ethno-nationalists do not display a strong commitment to the moderate path. Moderation is a process of accommodation to a system of political order, even while rejecting its legitimacy, and demonstrating a commitment to this accommodation even when challenged by former loyalties or interests. This conceptual framework brings an important degree of illumination to Irish republicanism's transformation, which is typically reduced to the product of interplay with British state strategies, by highlighting the complementary role of macro-institutional incentives. These provided a stable and low-risk basis to political competition while also offering the possibility for republicans to achieve their goal of territorial reunification, thus securing their moderation. As such, this thesis brings refinement to an important theoretical approach in the ethno-national context and thus offers a significant framework for future comparative research in this area.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ETHNO-NATIONAL CHALLENGE TO EXISTING THEORIES OF MODERATION

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Existing understandings of political moderation were refined in a context that assumed a nation-state was accepted by all actors, regardless of whether they were radical or moderate. The causal explanation for moderation, namely that it derives from increased political inclusion, was refined in the party politics literature and in the comparative democratisation literature where it was assumed that all actors accepted the state as the appropriate site of authority, albeit they were often in fierce contestation over the political direction of that state. However, ethno-national radicals may well reject the legitimacy of the state *in toto*, believing that no amount of increased participation or representation can solve the inherent injustice of being included within the borders of a state that they reject as a legitimate site of rule. They seek self-determination or secession and asking them to endorse the authority of the state, even a reformed state, may be beyond their realm of possibilities. It is not clear how this impacts upon what constitutes moderation in such cases or the impact upon the causal processes underpinning moderation. It is precisely for this reason that it is important to apply the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis within an ethno-national context to explore if its explanatory power holds with this set of actors and what aspects of the theory may need to be reconsidered in light of this challenge.

This chapter begins by initially tracing the meaning of political science usages of moderation by looking at three different bodies of literature, namely the party politics literature, the democratisation literature and the Islamist studies literature. The purpose is to understand what the process of moderation entails before providing a critique of this from an ethno-national perspective. I argue that while many aspects of existing understandings are insightful and analytically useful, particularly in terms of defining moderation as multi-dimensional, aspects of the dominant understandings of moderation can be questioned. Existing understandings fail to take into account the distinct nature of ethno-national radicalism, which potentially embodies beliefs that are more indivisible and less negotiable than political-economic issues. This presents a challenge to existing debates not only because it may make moderation through institutional contact harder to achieve, but also because recent definitions of moderation have come to embody a certain normative

dimension that assumes moderation should entail ideological commitments to liberal democratic values such as tolerance and pluralism. However, it cannot be assumed that moderation will always result in a context where dissent becomes ‘normalised’ within a liberal democratic framework and that pluralistic acceptance will emerge. Asking an ethno-national party to accept a plurality of claims to what they see as their homeland or to forsake their aspirations to secession in favour of a more pluri-national state may be highly unrealistic. In such an instance, highly substantive definitions of moderation which emerged in order to explore the distinction between moderate behaviour and moderate beliefs, would not classify an ethno-national group as moderate even if it had gone through various other moderating processes such as ending armed conflict and accepting reformist politics as a route to achieve their goals of secession. A more reasonable assumption is that a party that undergoes a moderate transformation may still retain some aspects of radicalism or emerge in a grey area between radicalism and liberal democratic pluralism.

## **Party Politics and Moderation**

Although there was some prior general thinking around the idea of moderation,<sup>1</sup> the starting point for systematic political science studies began with analyses of how radical socialist parties transformed into moderate social democratic parties in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably the work of Przeworski and Sprague.<sup>2</sup> Yet, while Przeworski and Sprague certainly refer to the idea of moderation and this permeates their thinking, they never explicitly defined what they understood moderation to mean. Instead this needs to be inferred. For them, moderation is understood as the opposite of radicalism and a rigid commitment to implementing socialist ideals and it is indicated by a willingness to work within liberal democratic political institutions rather than attempting to challenge or overthrow these through more revolutionary tactics.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Kalyvas in his study of Christian Democracy used the notion of moderation without defining what he meant by this. However, inferring from his analysis it is clear that he understood moderation in a similar fashion to Przeworski and Sprague in terms of participation in liberal democratic institutions, albeit contextualised for a religious party. He implied that moderation is the

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<sup>1</sup> Berki, R.N. ‘The Distinction between Moderation and Extremism’. In B. Parekh and R.N. Berki. (eds.) *The Morality of Politics*. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972), pp. 66-80.

<sup>2</sup> Przeworski and Sprague; also Przeworski, A. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 184.

opposite of proselytising and theological fervour and that moderation was crucial to paving the way for the Christian Democratic movement to enter and dominate mainstream politics in Northern Europe.<sup>4</sup> A clear implication of these works is that moderation is best understood in terms of the demobilization of radicals and an acceptance of, or compliance with, existing liberal democratic structures.

There are important lessons in these studies regarding the causes of moderation, where moderation is understood in terms of institutional participation. These studies argue that the logic of elections slowly permeated both movements, leading to significant changes in party strategies and policies in a more accommodating and moderate direction. In fact, we can combine elements of both these arguments together to create a loosely defined 'model' of moderation that hinges upon the effect of electoral participation.

The initial approach of both socialists and Christian Democrats was to pursue the revolutionary and utopian tactic of building a parallel state. The aim behind this strategy was to create mass organizations that could duplicate the functions of the state, thus bypassing the liberal state, isolating their supporters from its potentially 'harmful' influence, and ultimately facilitating a conquest of the politics of a society from the bottom up. Yet in both cases, (and inevitably according to Przeworski and Sprague) the parallel institutions never gained widespread acceptance and were ineffective compared to their more formal counterparts, necessitating a rethink from political leaders. It was only after the failure of this initial strategy of resistance that these organisations then considered the prospect of electoral participation. Przeworski and Sprague argue that following the expansion of the suffrage there was an acceptance that elections were a potential weapon for the working class and democracy began to be viewed instrumentally for the benefits it could deliver to workers. Similarly, Kalyvas argues that political leaders opted for a participation strategy only when they thought this would deliver them the highest pay-off compared to other strategies. In other words, participation is best understood as a rational and strategic calculation by political leaders after other alternative strategies failed.

In both cases initial participation was decidedly ambivalent but in spite of this, elections possessed an ineluctable logic that pushed both movements away from their original rigid ideology. Socialists retained a mistrust that ruling privileged elites would ever let them

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<sup>4</sup> Kalyvas, 1996, *passim*.

transform society even if they won an electoral mandate to do so, and Christian Democrats were sceptical because participation was seen as reducing theological issues concerning absolute truths to the level of political issues that could be debated or compromised. Thus there were some fundamental misgivings towards democracy that lingered within both movements after the decision to participate was made. Regardless, the act of participation meant that the parties' long-term goals were fractionalised into a multitude of smaller political struggles. In order to generate support, parties needed to deliver immediate benefits to their supporters and this meant subordinating some long-term goals to more short-term deliverable aims. This inevitably introduced reformism alongside the hitherto revolutionary tendencies of socialism and the rejectionist stance of Christian Democracy. Additionally, electioneering involved building alliances beyond a party's core supporters in order to win as many votes or secure as much office as possible. While there were many issues on which there was broad agreement between core supporters and potential allies, widespread appeals also required tempering certain hardline policies that alienated potential new supporters. A further important development of electoral participation was that it required a new organizational structure, typically a professional and middle-class one, to run and win elections. In the case of socialist parties this 'embourgeoised' the working class roots of the movement while in the case of Christian Democrats it created a new layer of elites within the organisation that developed an independent power base to that of the hitherto authoritarian and hierarchical organization. Either way, the organizational changes required to compete in elections challenged the 'purity' of the pre-existing movement. Although these parties may have emerged from a pre-existing and naturally occurring cleavage, once established the parties no longer solely operated within this cleavage.

Although these are powerful explanations of the moderating impact of elections, they are not without criticism and some suggested refinements. Kitschelt challenged Przeworski and Sprague's emphasis solely upon leadership choices and argued that voter preferences needed to be taken into account.<sup>5</sup> He argued that thinking in terms of a single left-right economic dimension is no longer satisfactory because the political space in which socialist parties competed was complicated by a new cross-cutting libertarian-authoritarian dimension. This shifted the political landscape within which parties competed for votes. As a result, there were new forms of preference formation which required new strategies to secure votes and this necessitated moving away from traditional and rigid socialist policies if

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<sup>5</sup> Kitschelt, 1994.

a party wished to be electorally successful. Those parties that failed to tailor their strategic appeals to reflect this by moving beyond the traditional class conception of politics, typically fell into a state of electoral marginalisation. So while Przeworski and Sprague emphasised that party leaders' strategies were the key reason for more moderate stances, they viewed these strategies devoid of the context of voters' preferences. Instead Kitschelt emphasised how a changing social structure created new voter preferences which in turn forced parties to change their traditional and often hardline appeals.

What is being discussed in these studies is how political leaders make hard choices and whether they pursue votes at the cost of their pure policy stances or if they retain their pure policy stances but accept fewer votes than they could otherwise potentially secure. In other words, does institutional participation also lead to policy moderation? Müller and Strøm argue that whether a party's leadership pursues a vote-seeking, office-seeking or a policy-seeking strategy depends on the institutional and organizational constraints within the party.<sup>6</sup> They assume that all leaders want to pursue the strategy that gives them the greatest chance of securing the most votes or office, but the extent to which they are able to do so depends on institutional constraints, such as: leaders' accountability to party activists; the extent to which policy-making is decentralised within the party; whether the party is reliant on activist funding or public funding; the extent to which electoral results depend upon policy positions; and potential coalition outcomes. In addition, the endogenous characteristics of the leadership, such as their personality traits and their time horizons, and exogenous factors that are beyond the control of anyone in the party, can be important in shaping the choices leaders make when it comes to the office vs. policy trade-off. This is not to suggest that all party leaders are unalloyed vote seekers. After all, there is important evidence that ideological rigidity, or the extent to which certain beliefs are embedded within the ideology of an organisation, can lead to resistance to moderating incentives.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a clear finding that the greater the freedom that leaders have to decide the strategic direction of the party, the more likely they are to pursue a moderate path and become vote maximisers.

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<sup>6</sup> Müller, W.C. and K. Strøm. (eds.) *Policy, Office or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Sánchez-Cuenca, I. 'Party Moderation and Politicians' Ideological Rigidity'. *Party Politics* 10(3) 2008, p. 325-342.

## Democratisation and Moderation

The notion of moderation has also recurred in the democratisation literature. Although, once again, the term is not defined explicitly in this body of literature, it is clear that it is also understood as a move away from rejection and towards participation. However, some studies also draw attention to the idea of accommodation of the existing status quo as an important element of moderation, notably in terms of an acceptance of the ruling elites' position of privilege in the short-term. For example, Huntington sees moderation in terms of leaders' and elites' decisions to forgo the radicalism of revolution and engage in reformist politics instead, often following the reform of the ruling institutions.<sup>8</sup> Bermeo, looking at the moderation of the masses rather than the elites, sees moderation in terms of the agreement of mobilised masses to limit the demands they make of any democratising state and accommodate themselves to the existing system.<sup>9</sup>

The transitions framework typically dominates causal explanations of moderation in this body of literature. As already mentioned, Huntington sees moderation as the by-product of democratic reforms in which radicals are willing to forgo their commitment to revolution in return for increased political inclusion and the opportunity to influence the politics of a system.<sup>10</sup> Huntington is walking in a well-trodden tradition which sees concessions by rebel groups as emanating from an agreement by the ruling elites to reform the ruling system. Contributions to the transitions approach to democratisation typically draw attention towards the role of the decision-making of the ruling and rebel elites.<sup>11</sup> It is in this context that rebels, or those pushing for a radical overhaul of the existing ruling system, will replace revolutionary goals and tactics with more accommodating ones on condition that political reforms are put in place which offer the perceived potential for achieving greater reforms at a later date. In other words the revolutionary and ruling elites engage in *quid pro quo* exchanges which result in the moderation of radicalism for increased political inclusion. This perspective reaches its strongest expression in the work of Di Palma, who argues that democratisation is ultimately a matter of political crafting and, with suitably skilled elites,

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<sup>8</sup> Huntington, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Bermeo, N. 'Myths of Moderation. Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions'. *Comparative Politics* 29(3) 1997, pp. 305-22.

<sup>10</sup> Huntington, p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> Linz, J. and A. Stepan. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); O'Donnell, G., P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Linz, J. and A. Stepan. *The Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

disadvantageous social or economic circumstances can be overcome and a successful democratic transition can be achieved.<sup>12</sup> Incentives and disincentives influence the degree to which elites are committed to the bargaining process. These include the possibility of staving off a crisis in a regime; ensuring that coexistence has a lower cost than adversarial existence; pressure from allies to find agreement; demonstrating the potential rewards of new institutional rules; material or political gains for the elites; and tackling the grievances and injustices that led to the attempted revolution in the first instance. It is also important to note that this perspective frequently argues that a pre-existing genuine commitment to democracy is not necessary prior to engaging in a democratic bargain and this may only emerge through the process of democratisation itself.<sup>13</sup> In other words, bargains can be strategic rather than normative. In contrast to the argument that a pre-existing commitment to democracy is not necessary for democratisation, Mainwaring argues that successful democratic transitions may be a result of elites with a normative commitment to democracy above and beyond their strategic interests, and this explains why democratic bargains were struck and why groups accommodate each other.<sup>14</sup>

While the bargaining approach to explaining moderation is undoubtedly useful, it can be criticised for not necessarily being able to explain why groups would engage in bargaining at that specific moment in time, nor the circumstances in which an elite bargain will be accepted by the population at large. Acemoglu and Robinson agree that stable democratic outcomes are typically the product of bargains between a small group of elites within a country who wish to preserve the status quo and the masses who wish to change the status quo. However, they argue that the demand for change comes because the masses are aware of the economic benefits they will gain from democratisation, most notably through a redistribution of wealth which inevitably follows a democratic transition.<sup>15</sup> High levels of inequality incentivise ruling elites to resist democratisation because they have more to lose (especially if coupled with low costs of repression) while low levels of inequality dampen the masses' demands for democratisation. Therefore, enough inequality to lead to mass demands for democratisation, but not enough to prevent reforms, influences whether a

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<sup>12</sup> Di Palma.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Mainwaring, S. 'Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues'. In S. Mainwaring, G. O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela. (eds.) *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1992), pp. 294-341.

<sup>15</sup> Acemoglu, D. and J.A. Robinson. *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

bargain is entered into. Where these circumstances occur, democratic institutions are the outcome because they offer a way for the ruling elite to make a credible commitment to reform without being able to renege at a future date. This is an important contribution because Acemoglu and Robinson bring us back to the literature that emerged from the second wave of democratisation and which emphasised the role of economic and social structures in creating pressure for democracy, especially the rise of a more liberal and socially demanding middle class.<sup>16</sup> However, they do so in a way that offers a much clearer causal path than many of the transitions' bargaining approaches offer.

## **The New Wave of Moderation**

Recently studies of Islamist actors and organisations have begun to emerge that define moderation explicitly and operationalise ways to examine this. These studies have strived to provide a much more explicit and rigorous consideration of moderation that builds on prior understandings but also offers a significant critique of these viewpoints. Key scholars in these debates have established definitions of moderation in direct opposition to reductionist definitions of movement towards the median voter.<sup>17</sup> Wickham has argued that moderation is uneven across issue areas whereby 'a single group may espouse moderate positions on some issues and radical positions on others and may undergo uneven moderation'.<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, Schwedler has labelled moderation 'multi-dimensional'.<sup>19</sup> As such, it is important to breakdown an organisation's radicalism into its different dimensions and then to assess changes in policy compared to their positions in the past and understand how these different dimensions interact.

Typically moderation is straight-forwardly equated with accepting democracy over extra-constitutional methods and accepting reformism over revolution, but these dichotomies are more complicated than may be initially assumed. Schwedler distinguishes between the concepts of 'a moderate', 'a radical' and 'the process of moderation'. A moderate usually refers to 'those who don't rock the boat: moderates may advocate for democratization, for

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<sup>16</sup> Most famously, Moore, B. *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy. Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (London: Allen Lane, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Sanchez-Cuenca defines moderation as 'just another name for convergence to the position of the median voter' and this perspective typically underpins those who use the term moderate and centrist interchangeably.

<sup>18</sup> Wickham, 2004, p. 206.

<sup>19</sup> Schwedler, 2006, p.6.

example, but ultimately they accept limited reforms that protect the power bases of the current elites'. In contrast, a radical 'is typically used to label those who demand more substantive systemic change and strongly oppose the power configurations of the status quo'.<sup>20</sup> As such, while moderation may always entail a belief in democracy and pluralism, a moderate may actually accept a situation that is somewhat short of a complete liberal democracy if this is the outcome of gradual reforms. Similarly, radicals are not necessarily anti-democratic. Rather, if the status quo in a polity is an authoritarian one, then the radicals may be radical democrats demanding its complete overhaul. 'Moderates are conventionally those who seek gradual change by working within the existing political system; radicals, by contrast, seek to overthrow the system in its entirety'.<sup>21</sup> From this perspective, the process of moderation mainly entails a shift away from a position that advocates radical change towards one that accepts reformism. However, common sense also tells us that moderate change must be in a liberalising direction – the idea of an authoritarian leader gradually reforming their country towards a totalitarian state and being labelled 'moderate' is unsustainable, just as no serious political commentator would describe Vladimir Putin as moderate merely for avoiding the use of an outright coup against Russian democracy. Moderation will always entail some shift in thinking towards accepting more liberal democratic norms, but this does not mean that radicalism implies an acceptance of non-democratic norms.

For these scholars, a focus on participation and accommodation are certainly central to their understanding but they alone are not enough to define moderation. Both Schwedler and Wickham have emphasised a value-based element to moderation. For these authors, moderation entails an embrace of core liberal democratic values beyond mere participation. Moderation for Schwedler is understood as 'movement from a relatively closed and rigid worldview to one more open and tolerant of alternative perspectives'.<sup>22</sup> Wickham offers a similarly maximalist definition and it entails 'a shift toward a substantive commitment to democratic principles, including the peaceful alternation of power, ideological and political pluralism, and citizenship rights'.<sup>23</sup> In both these instances, a substantive value-based element to the process of moderation is pushed to the fore in order to capture those elements of moderation beyond mere participation in democratic processes.

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<sup>20</sup> Schwedler, 2011, p. 350.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Schwedler, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Wickham, 2004, p. 206.

These studies caution us against assuming that actors who embrace participation are always normative democrats. Debates about the sincerity of Islamist actors who participate in democratic processes, such as elections, are well established.<sup>24</sup> The debates draw our attention to the possibility that a party may seek a democratic mandate for their radical goals, such as aiming to win office in order to limit democracy and impose an authoritarian order upon society. In other words, some actors may behave in a moderate way while still retaining radical beliefs or a desire to achieve a radical goal. To capture this distinction, current thinking typically understands moderation in either behavioural or ideological terms or as some interaction of the two.<sup>25</sup> The meaning of behavioural moderation is intuitively grasped but the meaning of ideological moderation is somewhat trickier. Wickham defines ideological moderation as ‘the abandonment, postponement, or revision of radical goals that enables an opposition movement to accommodate itself to the give and take of “normal” competitive politics’.<sup>26</sup> She argues that radical parties may undertake behavioural moderation as a political strategy in order to increase their appeal or influence within a system but over time and through habituation this can become embedded as ideological moderation. Another similar definition comes from Tezcür who states that ideological moderation ‘can be defined as a *process* through which political actors espouse ideas that do not contradict the principles of popular sovereignty, political pluralism, and limits on arbitrary state authority’.<sup>27</sup>

It is this understanding of moderation that has risen to dominate debates today – moderation is seen as built upon the idea of participation, accommodation and also value change towards embracing liberal democratic norms, especially tolerance and pluralism. Moderation is seen as multi-dimensional and the internal heterogeneity of the party’s policy positions needs to be acknowledged. The disaggregation of this concept has also led to the emergence of a distinction between behavioural and ideological moderation, which is seen to imply a distinction between the depth of the commitment by a formerly radical actor to pursuing moderation. The causes of moderation are largely agreed and broadly speaking it is widely accepted that increased opportunities for political participation can potentially lead

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to the studies of Schwedler and Wickham, see also Nasr, S.V.R. ‘The Rise of “Muslim Democracy”’. *Journal of Democracy* 16(2) 2005, pp. 13-27; Langohr, V. ‘Of Islamists and Ballot Boxes: Rethinking the Relationship between Islamisms and Electoral Politics’. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33(4) 2001, pp. 591-610.

<sup>25</sup> Schwedler, 2011, p. 352.

<sup>26</sup> Wickham, 2004, p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> Tezcür, 2010, p. 10, emphasis in original.

to the moderate path, albeit the exact details of how this occurs are disputed. For some, the emphasis is upon the rational decision of party elites to win elections; for others it is voters' preferences that lead to a change in party policy; elite democratic bargaining has also been suggested for moderation; or even bargaining without any actual democratisation.

## **An Ethno-National Critique of the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis**

An implicit assumption underpinning the inclusion-moderation hypothesis is that the nation-state is accepted and that this provides a framework which structures political competition. Theories of moderation through electoral participation assume that actors competing in elections accept the state as the legitimate site for contestation, even if they are challenging its political direction. European socialist parties did not wish to dismantle the borders of France or the United Kingdom, but rather they wished to gain control of the state's apparatus in order to transform society within those states. Similarly, Christian Democrats in Germany and Belgium entered the political arena to roll back the state's incursion upon what they saw as the rightful remit of private individuals and the Church, but they did not aspire to redraw or contest the territorial boundaries of a country or the citizenry over which the state claimed jurisdiction. Although theories of democratisation come somewhat closer to acknowledging that the state itself may be contested, again these approaches typically assume that the nation-state is accepted and the revolutionary challenge is concerned with whether autocratic or democratic rule within that nation-state should be pursued. The founding theories of democratisation were interested in the causes that led to democracy and did not question the borders of states or the fact that certain groups may contest the right to be ruled by that state.<sup>28</sup> As a result there are two assumptions underpinning the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis that are potentially challenged by an ethno-national context. Firstly, there is an assumption that institutional design to encourage participation and representation will lead to increased moderation and this approach does not focus on whether concerns about the very legitimacy of those institutions to rule over a cohort of citizens need to be addressed for moderation. Secondly, there is an assumption that moderation is achieved through domestic and internal reforms of institutions and whether an international dimension is necessary is not examined.

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<sup>28</sup> This is true of many of the key democratisation theories that inform the 'inclusion-moderation' approach, such as O'Donnell et al. and Huntington as well as being true of some of the theories that focus on the structural conditions required for democracy, such as Lipset, Moore, Przeworski and Acemoglu and Robinson.

Studies of ethno-nationalism and civil wars pose a decided challenge to these assumptions. The radicalism at the heart of ethnic conflict is very often based on a rejection by an ethnic group that their homeland or the territory they associate with their ethnic group should reside within the boundaries of a particular state. Ethnic civil wars, which are acknowledged to be more challenging to resolve than civil wars over more negotiable political-economic issues,<sup>29</sup> often focus around alternative claims to sovereignty, such as a desire for self-determination, secession or irredentism. In these instances, securing moderation through institutional contact may be inherently more challenging and unlikely where the legitimacy of those institutions to rule over the radical group is rejected *in toto*. Why would a minority ethnic group consent to democratic rule in a state that they reject as a legitimate source of authority? Securing minority ethnic losers' consent may be more challenging in this instance than the context in which the inclusion-moderation theory was developed and refined. Lijphart's theories have been used to argue that competing nationalist aspirations can be accommodated through power-sharing to rein in conflict,<sup>30</sup> but crucially some scholars view his consociational solution as transitional or limited to the level of managing conflict but without actually resolving these tensions.<sup>31</sup> Some scholars are more pessimistic still and Horowitz argues that in some cases of ethnic conflict, partition into more homogenous states is required to resolve conflict.<sup>32</sup> These studies imply that negotiating an end to ethno-national conflict may be more challenging than negotiating an end to other types of conflict and it is not even guaranteed that institutional design will secure acceptance within adversaries, let alone actually lead to an increase in pluralism and tolerance.

However, there are many instances of the successful negotiation of an end to ethno-national civil wars and these can be informative for studies of ethno-national moderation.

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<sup>29</sup> Horowitz, 1985, especially chapter 14. Of course, some of the most intractable civil wars are those where political-economic differences emerge around ethnic divisions, as in Northern Ireland. It should be noted that while Hartzell et al. found that whether a civil war was fought over ethnic or political-economic issues made no difference to its chances of being resolved, this study looked specifically at the likelihood of implementing an agreement rather than issues of mobilisation or the decision to negotiate an agreement in the first place. Hartzell, C., M. Hoddie and D. Rothchild. 'Stabilizing the Peace after Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables'. *International Organisation* 55(1) 2001, pp. 183-208.

<sup>30</sup> Lijphart; McGarry and O'Leary, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> In the Northern Irish context, see Reynolds for an approach that sees power-sharing as transitional and Kerr for an argument that consociationalism manages but does not resolve conflict. Reynolds, A. 'A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Northern Irish Good Friday Agreement'. *Political Science Quarterly* 114(4) 1999-2000, pp. 613-637; M. *Imposing Power-Sharing. Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Horowitz, p. 588. Another influential statement of this position comes from Kaufmann, C. 'Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars'. *International Security* 20(4) 1996, pp. 136-175.

Central to the negotiated ending of any civil war is a transformation of militant rebels into political actors.<sup>33</sup> Such a transformation is typically explained in terms of increasing the political inclusion of the rebel group (in other words, an inclusion-moderation approach) or in tackling the underlying grievances of the group. Walter argues that the biggest difficulty preventing an end to civil war violence is designing a treaty that persuades warring adversaries to demilitarise even though this will increase their vulnerability and limit their ability to enforce the treaty's other terms.<sup>34</sup> This is especially important when the possibility of 'spoilers', or those who seek to use violence to undermine settlements, are taken into account. Spoilers may well enter negotiations strategically or even deceptively in order to try and gain an advantage over an adversary. What is more, even if this is not the case, such suspicions will be part of the negotiation process, which is inevitably opaque.<sup>35</sup> As such, spoilers render it even more difficult for parties to demilitarise without credible guarantees to protect their interests. The solution to overcoming this is to 'obtain third-party security guarantees for the treacherous demobilization period that follows the signing of an agreement, and obtain power-sharing guarantees in the first postwar government'.<sup>36</sup> Here, power-sharing is more than a method of ensuring representation in a previously illegitimate system. It is also about building in a credible commitment to help overcome the collective action challenge of demilitarisation by all sides.<sup>37</sup> In order to build power-sharing institutions and ensure that these serve as an adequate credible guarantee, a strong state is necessary. Hartzell *et al* note that the role and capacity of the state is a critical element in mediating the interactions between civil war adversaries. High levels of poverty, unemployment, land pressures, an inadequate tax base, poor education and literacy, and a lack of human skills all greatly weaken the ability of a state's institutions to perform their functions. 'State weakness heightens insecurity because there is no effective agency present that is capable of ensuring implementation of the society's agreed upon rules'.<sup>38</sup> As such, a weak state is unable to contain the predatory behaviour of elites, rendering it much harder to provide groups who are attempting to moderate through a negotiated peace settlement

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<sup>33</sup> See De Zeeuw; Deonandan et al; Manning; Söderberg Kovacs.

<sup>34</sup> Walter, B.F. *Committing to Peace. The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Stedman, S.J. 'Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes'. *International Security* 22(2) 1997, pp. 5-53.

<sup>36</sup> Walter, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*; Hartzell and Hoddie; Mattest, M. and B. Savun. 'Fostering Peace After Civil War: Commitment Problems and Agreement Design'. *International Studies Quarterly* 53(3) 2009, pp. 737-759.

<sup>38</sup> Hartzell et al, 2001, p. 184.

with credible guarantees that their interests will be protected by an impartial set of institutional rules after they demilitarise.<sup>39</sup>

The other important factor in ending civil wars beyond the strength of the state and the need for power-sharing guarantees is the support or pressure of international outside actors.<sup>40</sup> De Zeeuw, in his study of rebel-to-party transformations, found that international actors were crucial to this process, especially in facilitating disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes. He also argued that international actors can be highly influential in putting pressure upon radical leaders to enter and remain engaged with peace negotiations.<sup>41</sup> Once again Walter sees the role of international actors in terms of their ability to help overcome the reservations radical groups might have to commit to a peace process by providing outside assurances that their interests will be protected and represented throughout the negotiations and beyond.<sup>42</sup> Stedman goes slightly further than this and argues not only that outside intervention is central to ending a civil war and allowing for a peace agreement to be implemented without becoming undone by spoilers, but he also argues that difficult civil wars require intervention by a major power willing to commit attention, resources and coercive capabilities.<sup>43</sup>

Examining the literature concerning the negotiated settlements of ethnic civil wars is relevant to understandings of moderation because it highlights the fact that ending civil wars and rebel-to-politician transformations are often primarily concerned about the politics of accommodation, not substantive value change. The end point in these journeys is not necessarily an inculcation of pluralist values but rather it is about accepting a specific form of democratic institutions as a system of political order (incidentally, a set of institutions which are often criticised for their limited degree of liberal democracy).<sup>44</sup> It does not necessarily entail abandoning exclusivist previous beliefs about a group's ethnic rights or rejecting previously held principles. Rather it is about ending violence, rejectionism and

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<sup>39</sup> Walter, B.F. and J.L.Snyder. (eds.) *Civil Wars, Insecurity and Intervention*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> A particularly notable early example of this is evident in the chapters in Licklider, 1993. A more recent argument of the centrality of the international dimension in ending civil conflict comes from Devin, G. (ed.) *Making Peace. The Contribution of International Institutions*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> De Zeeuw, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Walter, 2002, chapter 4.

<sup>43</sup> Downs, G and S.J. Stedman. 'Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation'. In S.J. Stedman, D. Rothchild and E.M. Cousens. (eds.) *Ending Civil Wars. The Implementation of Peace Agreements*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), pp. 43-69.

<sup>44</sup> Barry, B. 'Review Article: Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy'. *British Journal of Political Science* 1975 5(4), pp. 477-505.

outright revolution and replacing these with a form of contestation that is channelled through political participation. Moderation is certainly undertaken at the behavioural level but it would be rash to state that there is no ideological moderation. Warring parties need to demonstrate clear commitments to the moderate path to defeat spoilers and persuade adversaries of their commitment to ending violence. However, this ideological moderation does not necessarily entail abandoning core policy goals around indivisible ethno-national issues, like embracing a plurality of identities for a homeland.

This gets to the core of one of the main limitations of theories of moderation. It is never clear what authors such as Tezcür quoted earlier or others actually understand ideology to mean in this context. The meaning of ideology is itself a contested term,<sup>45</sup> and these definitions of ideological moderation say little about the ‘ideology’ element. As long as all this is left implicit by scholars of moderation, it remains unclear what exactly these authors view as changing or how any changes become embedded ideologically when a radical group moderates. Instead ‘ideology’ seems to be used a short-hand for the depth of commitment a group demonstrates to moderation. The main consequence of this reduction of ‘ideological moderation’ to short-hand for the depth of a party’s commitment to moderation is that it has led to a very normative definition of moderation emerging, based around the notion of value change. According to this conception, if a party is to be considered ‘truly’ moderate rather than just putting up a veneer of moderation in the hope of making strategic gains, then to show the depth of this commitment it must embrace core liberal democratic values, such as tolerance and pluralism. For this perspective, a change in behaviour is one thing but this can never truly be accepted as moderation until there is also accompanying change in the values of the group. Yet this sets the bar very high for what constitutes moderation and frames it exclusively within a liberal democratic lens that elevates pluralism as the *sine qua non* of moderation and the necessary final stage in any transformation. Interestingly, this lack of clarity has led to Wickham reversing her position and now arguing that the concept of moderation is inherently unclear and this obscures insightful academic analysis.<sup>46</sup> She argues that moderation tends to be reductionist, not only in terms of placing parties along a single aggregate ‘radical-moderate’ dimension but also by assuming that parties are unitary actors with strong internal cohesion. Secondly, she argues that it is unclear whether the idea of moderation refers to an end-state or a process. In

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<sup>45</sup> Eccleshall, R. et al. *Political Ideologies. An Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 2003, third edition), chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup> Wickham, C.R. ‘Islamist Movement Change in the Arab World’. *Ali Vural Ak Centre for Global Islamic Studies, George Mason University*, Lecture 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

some usages of the term scholars are referring to a party that has reached a substantive end-point (presumably entailing value change) but in other usages it refers to a process that may still be underway without reaching such an end-point. Thirdly, she states that it is unclear whether moderation is a relative or absolute concept. A party that is radical or moderate in one party system may be classified differently in another party system. Therefore, when using moderation, it is important to clarify if we are talking about the moderation of views and policies that would be radical in any system in the world, such as the use of violence, or if we are talking about policies that are only relatively radical, such as hardline socialist policies in a conservative hegemony. Finally, she states that it is unclear whether moderation refers to values or behaviour and if a party moderates does this imply they have changed their tactics or changed their beliefs as well. In short, according to Wickham, the concept of moderation imposes an illusion of evenness and cohesion which is typically absent from any such actual transformation and therefore the concept is fraught with difficulty.

Rather than being about value change, moderation in the ethno-national context is just as much about changing relationships with other actors in the party system. The core ethno-national values of radical groups are often shared by other moderate parties within the existing system. This is true of republicans in Ireland, violent Basque separatists of ETA in Spain, the radical Kurdish nationalists of the PKK and BDP in Turkey, and the violent Palestinian separatists of Hamas in Israel. In other words, ethno-national value change is not necessary to be classified as a moderate group. Instead what is important is the degree to which a group is willing to work through the existing system and change their relationships with other actors from a violently confrontational basis to an accommodating one, even if the underlying grievance or goals remain. Indeed this is the idea at the heart of McGarry and O'Leary's adapted version of consociationalism for the ethno-national context where the focus is on changing relationships rather than changing values.<sup>47</sup>

## **Conclusion**

All this necessarily raises the question of where this leaves this study prior to applying the framework of moderation to the case of Irish republicanism? There are many key lessons to

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<sup>47</sup> McGarry and O'Leary, 2008.

be drawn from existing work which can help shape the insights to be drawn in this study. Undoubtedly, moderation is best understood as a multi-dimensional concept or, in a slight variant of emphasis, what I call a layered concept. A party can be radical or moderate in different ways and there is no reason to assume that moderation will be an even process. Rather a party may be moderate in some policy dimensions while simultaneously retaining or hardening their radicalism in other aspects. In this regard, understanding the process of moderation entails unpicking the different layers of each dimension to identify the key events and aspects that, when combined, given an overall explanation of moderation. To draw a parallel: the political development of the United Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be viewed as a process of democratisation. During this time decisions were made to extend the electoral franchise, conceptions of rights expanded from the political realm to include social rights, there was more consultation between parliament and social groups, and so on. Although the term ‘democratisation’ did not exist during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, looking back we can now describe the multi-layered developments that occurred in order to democratise the UK state. Similarly, looking back on the recent history of Irish republicanism we can identify multi-layered events in their moderation. Combining these provides us with an overall picture of their moderation, even if the party did not see it in those terms at the time.

Key aspects of moderation entail shifting away from rejecting ruling institutions towards institutional participation and also shifting away from rejecting the existing status quo towards some accommodation to the status quo. As such, notions of participation, accommodation and acquiescence are central to understanding what is at the core of the process of moderation. The main causal mechanisms are also widely accepted, namely that idea that the increased political inclusion of radical actors through electoral participation and democratic bargaining leads to their moderation. However, there is a need to explore whether these factors also hold in the context of an ethno-national party with a history of violence and if they do hold, how exactly this different context shapes the pathway to moderation.

There are also some limitations to existing understandings of moderation. There is a tendency to posit an unrealistic distinction between behavioural moderation and ideological moderation. This is unrealistic because ideology and behaviour are inherently intertwined and crudely separating them fails to capture the reality of how values and action are

interdependent. Although the dichotomy between behavioural and ideological moderation can be contested, nonetheless the key point that these authors are trying to make remains valid – there is a need to distinguish between the different degrees and depth of moderation that is evident amongst formerly radical actors. Some actors may be wholly committed to moderation while others may view it in a more utilitarian light. Participation in itself should not be taken to indicate an unconditional commitment to the political system. The spirit of this idea is a fundamentally important one. An early question facing any former militant non-state group that undertakes moderation will be whether they are genuine or merely masking their original radical agenda. However, demonstrating a commitment to moderation over formerly radical ways is a separate issue to that of ideology. Any analysis of moderation needs to find a way to confront the degree of commitment to moderation but without relying upon the false short-hand of ideological moderation. Furthermore, we should not make the mistake of assuming that anything short of unequivocal pronouncements of the virtues of tolerance, pluralism and liberal democracy indicate a lack of genuine moderation. The transformation from radicalism to moderation is likely to be complex and confusing, with overlapping phases of moderation and radicalism in different policy dimensions. It is also impossible for a party to escape their institutional legacy of radicalism and this history will colour the nature of their moderate form.

The limitations of existing understandings of moderation do not necessarily imply that the concept should be rejected entirely, as Wickham argues. Rather a preferable approach is to acknowledge the importance of the context in which the moderation occurred and build this into attempts to explain what moderation entails and why it took place. Understanding the dimensions of radicalism and how these transformed or failed to transform, tracing the nature of the changes in values and behaviour, specifying the ambivalence in the process, noting how the formerly radical party demonstrated or failed to demonstrate a commitment to moderation, and so on, can all help to clarify the concept and highlight its potential explanatory virtues. It is to this task in the context of the moderation of ethno-national Irish republicanism that I now turn.

## CHAPTER 3

### RADICAL AND MODERATE IRISH REPUBLICANISM, 1916-1937 AND 1969-2010

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Republicanism in Ireland is neither new nor a monolith.<sup>1</sup> It is a highly malleable ideology, as evidenced by the fact that today all major Irish political parties claim to be republican.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, republicanism is certainly not inherently radical. Its lack of inherent radicalism is evident from the fact that it has provided the foundation for the constitution of modern Ireland, a decidedly stable and largely uncontroversial political system. Yet, at the same time, it has provided the ideological basis for the strand of violent insurrection that has become synonymous with radicalism in Ireland. Clearly, there are both moderate and radical strands of republicanism, but it is not always clear what delimits the distinction between these two forms – whether this lies in the goals and ends a group pursues, whether it relates to the means, or to an interaction of the two. In order to clarify the distinction between the categories of radical and moderate in this context, a turn to history can help.

The emergence of Fianna Fáil in 1926 from the post-Civil War rump of Irish dissidents and the transformation of Provisional Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA during the Belfast Agreement peace process of 1998, represent two different examples of the same phenomenon – the moderation of Irish radicalism – occurring in two different contexts. This chapter compares these two instances to search for commonalities and locate radical republicanism within a broader historical context. I aim to understand what are the beliefs and policies that constituted the radical element of radical republicanism; how is Irish republican moderation best understood; and, what are the key layers of the process of republican moderation.

I argue that the process of moderation entailed moving through a series of discrete categories, from absolute radicalism, to relative radicalism, and finally to moderation.<sup>3</sup> I

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<sup>1</sup> Honohan, I. 'Introduction: putting Irish republicanism in a wider context'. In I. Honohan. (ed.) *Republicanism in Ireland. Confronting Theories and Traditions*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 1-22; McGarry, F. 'Introduction'. In F. McGarry. (ed.) *Republicanism in Modern Ireland*. (Dublin: UCD Press, 2003), pp. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ivory, G. 'The meanings of republicanism in contemporary Ireland'. In Honohan, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> This is an adaptation of Capoccia's distinction between ideological and relative anti-systemness. I use the phrase 'radical' rather than anti-system because Capoccia argues that anti-systemness is synonymous with anti-

argue that a party is absolutely radical if some aspect of its ideology is intrinsically radical without requiring any reference to the beliefs of other key actors and parties within the same party system. Such a party would still be considered radical even if it was transferred to another party system regardless of time and place. In contrast, a relationally radical party may not hold any inherently radical beliefs or policies but rather its relationships with other parties within that party system render it radical. If its beliefs are distant from those of other political actors in the party system and it engages in processes such as outbidding and delegitimising aspects of the existing political system even while working within that system's institutions. Understanding what comprises ethno-national moderation is part of the aim of this chapter and I argue that the transformation of republicanism did not entail a fundamental change in their core values or beliefs, but it did represent a significant shift and a clear demonstration of commitment to this new path. Identifying a clear demonstration of commitment to moderation is not just a practical way of assessing the integrity of a group's claims to be moderate, but it is also a solution to the theoretical challenge of separating behaviour and ideology/values. Rather than attempting such an artificial separation to assess the veracity of claims to moderation, identifying clear gestures of commitments to moderation can serve as more preferable indicators.

When looking at the two cases of Sinn Féin in the 1920s and 1970s, a number of commonalities emerge. The starting point for both groups was one of absolute radicalism, which was not solely reducible to the use of violence, albeit violence was a fundamental part of it. Rather, Irish republican radicalism lay in an interaction of three different beliefs: a refusal to participate in ruling institutions and a rejection of the political status quo; an assertion of an alternative claim to sovereignty; and, recourse to the use of violence to achieve their goals. The process of moderation initially entailed moving to a form of relative radicalism, namely agreeing to participate but mainly in order to delegitimise the system from within. It involved moving away from rigidly violent and rejectionist stances towards participation in ruling institutions, acquiescence to be governed by agreed rules of political competition, and accommodation of the *status quo*. However, a strong air of ambivalence remained and parties in both phases had low coalition potential, strained relationships with the ruling institutions and bodies such as the police and army, and their history of violence

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democratic and ideologically anti-system parties wish to undermine democracy. As I argue throughout this chapter, radicalism need not mean anti-democratic and republican radicalism is better understood as ademocratic. Capoccia, G. 'Anti-System Parties. A Conceptual Reassessment'. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 14(1) 2002, pp. 9-35.

aroused suspicion of their motivation and commitments from opposition groups. Once in power, this changed their relationships with other political actors and their stake in society, forcing them to demonstrate a clear commitment to their moderate path. Fianna Fáil's relative radicalism evaporated once they reformed the Free State into what they perceived as a more legitimate entity and Provisional Sinn Féin were forced to demonstrate a commitment to protecting the Northern Irish political unit from former comrade-in-arms turned 'dissident' terrorists in order to establish a stable power-sharing arrangement. They did so while still expressing a clear desire to use the power-sharing arrangement to transition to a united Ireland and disband Northern Ireland in the long-term. In this way, both groups became entirely accommodating as well as showing a commitment to moderation.

Moderation was not undertaken for reasons of political survival, although this was a consideration, but moderation was seen as allowing these groups to implement their republican projects in a way that their rejectionist stances prevented them from doing so. This was done by compromising on their rigid commitment to the republic but without weakening their stance on the illegitimacy of British sovereignty or the illegitimacy of the Free State and Northern Ireland. In both periods, republicans saw the initial political unit within which they now participated as a temporary entity which they sought to transform into something that represented a different view of Irish democracy and self-determination.

## **The Expansion and Contraction of Radical Irish Republicanism, 1916-1937**

This section shows that following the 1916 Rising, Irish nationalism was radicalised but there were limits to its radicalism. Following the War of Independence and the Civil War split, a large cohort of the population became entrenched in their absolute radicalism, adopting tactics of rejection, violence and a refusal to work through the status quo. This evolved into relative radicalism with the emergence of Fianna Fáil in 1926 who agreed to participate in the Free State system but only in order to challenge it. Participation was the first stage in their moderation process. After agreeing to participate, their relative radicalism became difficult to sustain as they were forced to demonstrate a commitment to the moderate path. By 1937, they had reformed those aspects of the Free State they found

objectionable, renamed the country Éire and demonstrated a clear commitment to defending the state. This occurred without changing their essential core of usurping British sovereignty and retaining their belief that full independence and self-determination was the only legitimate form of rule for Ireland.

If we are to identify critical junctures that sent Irish nationalism down a radical and confrontational path, then Irish republican leaders and activists trace it to the Easter Rising of 1916. This was a small and initially marginal insurrection that generated huge public sympathy following Britain's harsh security response and execution of its leaders. When this was combined with growing anti-British sentiment over the possibility of conscription of Irishmen into the British army, widespread support for a peaceful struggle for Irish independence through the Westminster parliament was lost. If the Rising is seen as the beginning of a new phase of radical republicanism, then it is useful to consider what precisely constituted its radicalism. For English the consequences of the Rising enshrined: 'the elevation of physical force violence as practised by a conspiratorial clique; the emphasis upon military gesture performed in the name of the people (but without their mandate) in order that the gesture should convert the peoples and thereby produce subsequent legitimation; [and] the construction of a cult of willing martyrs'.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, crucially, violence alone was not the sole dimension which made this new wave of Irish nationalists radical. The differences between the participants of the Rising and supporters of the constitutional Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), who had hitherto dominated Irish efforts to secure independence by working through the Westminster parliament in pursuit of Home Rule, were wider than just the means and ends each group pursued. McGarry argues that the politicians of the IPP had attempted to secure Home Rule by emphasising 'principles of democracy and good government'. In contrast, the revolutionaries of 1916 by-passed the need for British consent and instead emphasised the pre-political right of Ireland to sovereignty and self-determination, justified by reference to an exclusive Irish national identity and culture.<sup>5</sup> The Rising represented a complete rejection of the idea of working through the existing British ruling institutions in order to secure a gradual degree of Irish independence. The overriding justification for the republic was rooted within the related doctrines of nationalism and self-determination. The Irish race, it was argued, was

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<sup>4</sup> English, R. *Radicals and the Republic. Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-1937*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> McGarry, F. *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916*. (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2010), p. 15.

culturally and ethnically distinct, and this logically demanded an exclusive and distinct set of ruling institutions. Allied to this was the growing influence of self-determination, which Kissane suggests was one of the chief catalysts for the radicalisation of Irish nationalism between 1916 and 1921.<sup>6</sup> Framing appeals for an Irish republic within the doctrine of self-determination offered a way to gain international legitimacy given Wilson's commitment to the ideals of the consent of the governed and ensuring fairness for small nations at the end of World War I. The nation was now described with reference to the specific geographical territory of the whole island of Ireland, with an emphasis on the unique ethnicity, history, language and culture of its residents from those in neighbouring Britain. Wider political developments were giving impetus to the argument that the state should become synonymous with this sense of nationhood and it was now seen as problematic to keep a distinct Irish nation forcefully submerged within the British state. Augusteijn suggests that such an idea was not prevalent within the majority of the population prior to 1916 and it was only through the gesture of the Rising that this notion rose to prominence within Irish nationalist thinking.<sup>7</sup>

Popular expansion whilst retaining a rigid commitment to republicanism and the use of violence to achieve this were to prove difficult for Sinn Féin. The banner that held this disparate group together was Irish self-determination free of Britain, but beyond this unity was hard to find. Following the Rising, Sinn Féin underwent a reorganisation in order to capitalise on increased public support.<sup>8</sup> At its conference in 1917, Éamon de Valera replaced Arthur Griffith as leader and the party became the gathering site for the heterogeneous groups that comprised Irish nationalists. As Constance Markievicz described it, 'Sinn Féin is not a solid, cast iron thing like English parties. It is just a jumble of people of all classes, creeds, and opinions who are all ready to suffer and die for Ireland'.<sup>9</sup> Those groups that gathered under the Sinn Féin label included the military Irish Volunteers and the IRB, agrarian factions and interests, organised labour, feminists, anti-partitionists and the Gaelic League. It embodied both urban and rural interests, landed and landless interests, farmers and workers. As Hart argues, 'this omnibus 'Sinn Féin' flew a republican flag but it could also stand for simple self-government, political and social reform, an end to

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<sup>6</sup> Kissane, B. *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Augusteijn, J. 'Motivation: Why did they Fight for Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution'. In J. Augusteijn, (ed.) *The Irish Revolution 1913-1923*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Laffan notes that after 1917 Sinn Féin was only partially continuous with the party founded in 1905 given the extensive nature of the changes it went through. Laffan, M. *The Resurrection of Ireland. The Sinn Féin Party 1916-1923*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 20-25.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in English, 1994, p. 29.

corruption and profiteering, a voice for youth and women, an alternative to the [IPP], a hard line against partition, a prophylactic against conscription, land for the landless, or Gaelicization', depending on different members' interests.<sup>10</sup> There were those within the leadership who wanted to use the party as a vehicle to create a forceful republican movement but gathering as much support as possible from a diverse array of groups, each with different preferences beyond their common general commitment to Irish independence, put a limit on how forceful the party could become. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1917 some members wanted to pursue a purist republican goal. However, for others republicanism was more a synonym for independence. Therefore, the party ended up adopting a compromise formula and it declared its aim to be 'the securing of international recognition of Ireland as an independent Irish Republic, but once that status was achieved, the Irish people may by referendum freely chose their own form of government'.<sup>11</sup>

Early radicalism was about a subversion of British rule in Ireland, not a rejection of politics or democracy *in toto*. There was never any question of Sinn Féin attempting to work through British institutions. Separatist nationalism and a belief in self-determination ensured that such a path was not considered a legitimate way to pursue their goals. However, it would be a mistake to think of this as a rejection of political institutions as a whole. Hence, in the 1918 general election, Sinn Féin sought an electoral mandate for their plans to withdraw its MPs from the Westminster parliament and form an alternative parallel assembly in Dublin. The election provided an overwhelming victory for Sinn Féin, gaining 73 out of the 105 seats offered to Irish MPs in the Westminster Parliament, a result republicans claimed retrospectively endorsed the Rising. Newly emboldened by what de Valera saw as a mandate from the people for his vision of republicanism, Sinn Féin refused to take their seats at Westminster and instead, claiming inheritance from the 1916 Rising, established the First Dáil Éireann in 1919 (the Irish Assembly or Parliament).

The establishment of the parallel Dáil was a central tactic to this phase of radical republicanism. Its main purpose became to build a political challenge to British sovereignty over Ireland. Through this entity Sinn Féin representatives hoped to undermine the authority of the existing British system of rule and simultaneously replace it with one that would assert the authority and competence of a self-determined system of rule. As such, it both attacked the British state and acted as a way of establishing the infrastructure for

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<sup>10</sup> Hart, P. *The IRA at War, 1916-1923*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Kissane, 2005, p. 44.

future Irish rule.<sup>12</sup> The reality of the Dáil was of a somewhat poorly attended assembly of limited remit. It met for only a total of 24 sessions between 1919 and 1921 and even then attendance was limited, with 34 of its members in prison, and only two members had ever sat in a parliament before.<sup>13</sup> Its real power lay in its propaganda value and in making a difference in those areas where the British state was limited, namely the courts and local government, which it exploited to great effect

Emanating from, and contingent upon, an alternative claim to sovereignty and rejection of existing ruling institutions, was the violent dimension of republicanism. Once this aspect was mobilised it became very difficult to rein it in. Yet the violent dimension of radical republicanism was not necessarily unambiguously anti-democratic. With the declaration of the War of Independence (1919-1921), the military dimension of radical republicanism began to rise in importance. The Dáil had an ambivalent relationship with the Volunteers, who were reluctant to come under civilian control, doubting the republican commitment of some Sinn Féin members, and for the early months of the new parliament the IRA acted outside of civilian subordination. However, by August of 1919, the Volunteers agreed to swear an oath of loyalty to Dáil Éireann, thus enhancing the legitimacy and authority of both groups. This led to their transformation from the Irish Volunteers to the Irish Republican Army. There is much doubt as to how much control the assembly actually exerted over the IRA during the War of Independence and the Dáil did not take responsibility for their actions during the War of Independence until March 1921. Coming under Dáil command, even only rhetorically, did not imply that the IRA felt the need for an electoral mandate to secure the freedom of their country. The Rising embedded the belief within the IRA that initially unsupported acts of violence against the British could serve to shake the Irish populace out of their lethargy and pave the way for politics. Yet nor could the IRA be described as an anti-democratic force. Although they felt themselves to be above the political process, they did not seek to impose military rule or establish a fascist or communist state, they were wholly committed to democracy in the future Irish republic, seeing their role as defenders of Ireland against Britain. As such, Hart labels them ‘ademocratic’ rather than anti-democratic.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mair, P. *The Break-Up of the United Kingdom. The Irish Experience of Regime Change*. (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Hart, p. 97.

An exploration of the motivation and social composition of volunteers and activists implies that they were not interested in creating a whole new social order, but rather their aim was the subversion of British rule.<sup>15</sup> Radical republicans were revolutionary and what happened in Ireland in the decade before independence is best understood as a revolution, but the revolutionaries were what Kevin O'Higgins, guerrilla turned politician, called 'the most conservative revolutionaries'.<sup>16</sup> IRA members were 'not from the highest or lowest in society, but from the middling ranks in between', spanning tradesmen, middle-class professionals and farmers.<sup>17</sup> As such, they had a stake in the social order of the existing society, even if they rejected the existing political order. Local grievances and a sense of injustice against British rule were much more important motivators for grassroots volunteers than revolutionary ideological principles.<sup>18</sup> The desire to volunteer was a response to the perceived and real behaviour of British crown forces in suppressing local communities. This occurred in a wider political context where the legitimacy of the British government in Ireland was already in question, even before 1916, with an image of Britain as an alien oppressor. The IRA was at its most violent in those areas where the British courts and policing were least effective, demonstrating how a breakdown in the functions of the state was important in influencing the size and reach of radicals at a local level.<sup>19</sup> Other important influences also operated at the local level, such as a family history of revolution against English oppression and local schooling which emphasised Irish history and language.<sup>20</sup> There was also a desire to take part in fighting at a time when war and adventure were glorified across Europe during World War I.<sup>21</sup> Volunteering had a social dimension where men joined in groups, alongside their relatives and friends. These local grievances and motivations were then able to be framed by ideologically driven elites to build broad based support for radical nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

If radicals are those who aim to overthrow a system while moderates agree to work through existing institutions, then the end of the War of Independence led to a break in

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<sup>15</sup> English, 1994, has shown the incongruence between socialism and Irish republicanism, arguing that attempts at pursuing a form of socialist republicanism was doomed to failure where there just wasn't the appetite or desire for radical social change.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Regan, J. *The Irish Counter Revolution, 1921-1936*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1999), p. xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Hart, p. 97.

<sup>18</sup> Augusteijn, J. *From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare. The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Hart, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> McGarry, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Garvin, T. *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), p. 116-120.

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that Hart points out that we should not see radical leaders as puppet masters leading the gullible but rather the people who followed were intelligent and made a deliberate choice. Hart, p. 105.

republicanism, splitting them into a group that were willing to settle for less than their ideal republic and a group that insisted on continuing to agitate for complete Irish self-determination. In the 1921 election, Sinn Féin competed as if they were elections to a Second Dáil and won 124 unopposed seats to cement their political hegemony. It was under the auspices of the Second Dáil that Sinn Féin accepted Britain's offer of a Truce which came into effect in July 1921 and led to the negotiations that culminated in the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the onset of the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). The Treaty offered a method of ending the War of Independence by granting Ireland its own parliament and dominion status within the British Empire and agreeing to the withdrawal of the majority of British troops from Ireland. But it also had a number of contestable features, including: the need for all Irish deputies to swear an oath of fidelity to the King of England in his capacity as the head of the Commonwealth; the establishment of a Governor General's office; the retention of the right to appeal to the British Privy Council; and Britain's retention of certain key ports in Ireland. Additionally, it allowed Northern Ireland, which had been created by the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, an opportunity to opt out of the Free State, which it duly accepted. Responses to the Treaty polarised the country. On the one side were those Irishmen who were willing to compromise with Britain, accommodate themselves to the Treaty, and accept as much independence as was possible at that moment in time. On the other side were those who rejected the Treaty document. This is not to say that they rejected compromise with Britain entirely, as evidenced by de Valera's alternative proposed *Document No. 2*, which suggested establishing an 'external association' relationship with Britain within a republican constitution with no mention of the British monarch. However, where they were uncompromising was in terms of endorsing anything which they saw as entailing a compromise on Irish national sovereignty or a loss of Irish self-determination. This rigidity ensured the rejection of the Treaty in its entirety.

What constituted the thinking behind those who became moderate through participation and those who remained radical by continuing to agitate is highly illuminating for understanding the complexities of the ethno-national dimension. It was not that the pro-Treaty side accepted the legitimacy of the British settlement, but rather they were willing to accommodate themselves to the new political order. The pro-Treatyites, led by Michael Collins, argued that it could act as a stepping stone towards establishing a republic, his perspective being that the Treaty 'gives us freedom, not the ultimate freedom that all

nations desire and develop to; but the freedom to achieve it'.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, critics of the Treaty argued that this settlement represented an abandonment of the republican ideal as declared in 1916 and which the First and Second Dáil represented. The oath of fidelity was particularly galling to this viewpoint. According to de Valera, 'The Free State Constitution made them subject to England... No man who stood for the independence of the country or who had any sense of personal or national self-respect, would take an oath to a foreign king'.<sup>24</sup> Both sides viewed the Free State as a political unit that needed to be more republican – the disagreement was over the method of how to do this. Although in the minority overall, the anti-Treaty stance was not a marginal viewpoint and there were reservations throughout the population at large regarding the sovereignty of the new Free State, including within the pro-Treaty cohort, and there was considerable sympathy towards the anti-Treaty position.<sup>25</sup>

Debates over whether to accept or reject the Treaty reveal the complexity of the moderate-radical divide. Those who rejected the Treaty and maintained a rejectionist stance did so in the name of protecting Irish democracy, even though they were actually rejecting the majority will of the Irish population. After a period of internal debate within Sinn Féin and a vote in the Second Dáil, which the pro-Treaty side won by 64 votes to 57 on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1922, Collins and his supporters formed the executive of the first government of the Irish Free State. Even after the vote, anti-Treatyites led by de Valera maintained their rejection of the Treaty, arguing that the Irish people and their representatives had no right to do wrong, even if they were in a majority. De Valera and his followers rejected the Dáil's decision to endorse the Treaty, arguing that it was not in the power of this parliament to dissolve itself in favour of a settlement that failed to deliver a republic. From this perspective the settlement agreed in the Dáil was based in part on Britain's threat of war if it was refused and thus coercion was at the heart of the decision. This greatly challenged the idea that the Treaty could be seen as an act of Irish self-determination.<sup>26</sup> The IRA's decentralised nature enabled the majority of members to reject the Treaty even though Michael Collins endorsed it, with local IRA units asserting that the Minister of State no longer had any control over their direction.

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<sup>23</sup> *Dáil Éireann Debates*, volume 3, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1921.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Dunphy, R. *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland, 1923-1948*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Kissane, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Regan, p. 48.

There is evidence that the population at large sought a peaceful resolution to this disagreement within the context of a unified Sinn Féin party, as indicated by the results of the pact general election of 1922 between the two sides of the Treaty division.<sup>27</sup> However, such unity was never achieved at the elite level. Following the formation of a pro-Treaty Free State government, the anti-Treatyites refused to participate, their forces occupied the Four Courts and civil war broke out. The conflict lasted from 28<sup>th</sup> June 1922 until the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1923 and resulted in a military victory for the pro-Treaty forces following a difficult guerrilla war waged by the anti-Treaty IRA, which included the death of Michael Collins in an ambush. Crucially, although the pro-Treaty side may have secured a military victory, this did not result in the elimination of the political ideas underpinning the anti-Treaty grievances.

Garvin argues that the anti-Treatyites were simply anti-majoritarian in their actions and at times indiscriminately militarist almost purely for the sake of being militarist.<sup>28</sup> Such a view is an oversimplification. There can be little doubt that some actors within the IRA were sceptical of politics, seeing it as compromising and compromised.<sup>29</sup> This does not mean, though, they were simply anti-majoritarian. De Valera did not see his actions as over-riding the popular will but rather he saw Collins's decision to endorse the Treaty as an executive *coup d'état* against the second Dáil where the majority of the people did not necessarily have the right to do wrong when it came to fundamental law like Irish sovereignty.<sup>30</sup> The portrayal of the anti-Treaty IRA as motivated by frustration and criminality was largely propagated by the pro-Treaty government and overlooked the ideological basis to their rejectionist stance.<sup>31</sup> The pro-Treaty leaders had not managed to establish a normal political order that was widely accepted as legitimate and it was this illegitimacy of the Free State from the perspective of some Irish nationalists that gave the anti-Treaty position volition. That the anti-Treatyites were not a marginal political movement is evident from the result of the 1923 election, where even following defeat in the Civil War, de Valera led a reorganised Sinn Féin to 27.4 percent of the vote. This exceeded their expectations,

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<sup>27</sup> Gallagher, M. 'The Pact General Election of 1922'. *Irish Historical Studies* 22(84) 1979, pp. 404-421; Kissane, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Garvin, T. 1922. *The Birth of Irish Democracy*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> English quotes Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff of the IRA as saying he saw the job of the IRA as to 'hew the way for politics to follow' (p. 25) and quotes Ernie O'Malley, IRA officer, as saying 'if [we had consulted the feelings of the people] we would never have fired a shot. If we gave them a good strong lead, they would follow' (p. 34). English, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Kissane, 2005, p. 177-201. Regan has argued that the Free State had questionable democratic credentials at this time too and that the majoritarian anti-majoritarian divide was too obfuscated to be relevant in Ireland at this time. Regan, p. 68-69.

<sup>31</sup> Kissane, 2005, p. 104.

especially given that many anti-Treaty leaders and candidates were in prison at the time, their political activities were subject to state repression and harassment by the police, and they were short of funding.<sup>32</sup>

The Treaty settlement fundamentally changed the scope for republican radicalism by creating a decidedly different political context to that prior to the War of Independence. Following their Civil War defeat, a re-organised Sinn Féin party tactically attempted to carry on where it had left off previously, but this time it was focused on defying an Irish state rather than the British one. Once again it operated an abstentionist policy, refusing to take seats in the new Free State assembly. Sinn Féin returned to the tactics of building the institutions of a parallel state.<sup>33</sup> Using a strategy of ‘outright resistance’ it hoped its parallel institutions would grow in size to swallow the Free State institutions and assume *de facto* government. The party also continued to swear loyalty to the Second Dáil to which de Valera was elected president. In this way the anti-Treatyites attempted to propagate the myth of a pre-existing republic which was more legitimate than the Free State. The difference between this attempt and the earlier parallel Dáil between 1919 and 1921 was that this one never gained popular acceptance or effectiveness on nearly as wide a scale, something vital to the success of any parallel state tactic.<sup>34</sup>

The process of the moderation of the anti-Treaty position began not because they were isolated or defeated by pro-Treaty and British forces, but it stemmed from an internal strategic reassessment by de Valera who thought reformism would be a more likely way of implementing their goals. Undoubtedly declining Sinn Féin and IRA membership combined with the failure of their parallel state strategy was rendering the anti-Treaty position marginal to Irish political life while the new Free State was built around them.<sup>35</sup> However, moderation was also about changing strategy without changing beliefs in an effort to implement their policy programme. What is more, the new Free State was gradually becoming a relatively accommodating political system for a post-civil war society. Rather than pursuing repression of the anti-Treatyite view in the aftermath of the civil war,

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<sup>32</sup> Dunphy, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Pyne, P. ‘The Third Sinn Féin Party 1923-1926: I. Narrative Account’. *The Economic and Social Review* 1(1) 1969, pp. 29-50.

<sup>34</sup> Mair, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Bob Briscoe, a future parliamentarian under de Valera’s leadership, described de Valera’s position at the time as, ‘de Valera was still president of the Irish Republic, a shadow government which governed nothing. He was president of Sinn Féin, a shadow political party which took no part in politics’. Quoted in English, 1994, p. 94.

it designed institutions that allowed for reintegration of this perspective at a later date.<sup>36</sup> The radical republicans may have been defeated but they were still respected, both by their former colleagues and within the electorate, and they had the potential to contribute to the political life of the Free State.

The first step was participation. Within Sinn Féin, de Valera began to argue that abstentionism was holding the movement back and that if the oath of allegiance was removed there would be no obstacle to participating in the Free State parliament as long as they retained their long-term goals.<sup>37</sup> De Valera believed that nearly half of the electorate were prevented from expressing their preferences in elections and two-thirds were opposed in spirit to the existing regime. In order to allow the electorate to express their true preferences it was necessary to remove the oath of fidelity and enact a new constitution. Following a vote at the 1926 Sinn Féin annual conference, de Valera's motion to abandon abstentionism was defeated and so he and a large cohort of party members left to form Fianna Fáil. From the outset Fianna Fáil's desire for full participation was clear and the use of violence as a tactic was rejected. Even though the Cumann na nGaedheal government refused to abolish the oath, de Valera's party eventually took the oath as an 'empty formula' and entered the Dáil in 1927. The IRA remained in existence after the Civil War, but it declined as a threat to the security of the state and members showed reluctance to reintroduce the gun into Irish politics. Nonetheless, militants in the IRA showed no sign of following de Valera and, in fact, upon hearing of the possibility of participating in the Free State parliament, the IRA withdrew its allegiance from the Second Dáil in 1925, moving outside civilian subordination.

With participation, the absolute radicalism of rejectionism and violence was replaced with Fianna Fáil's relative radicalism - they now participated but they still remained radical in terms of what they offered compared to their peers and the extent to which they tried to undermine the Free State system.<sup>38</sup> They rejected the legitimacy of the Free State settlement and vocally criticised it, they continued to assert their right to have fought in the Civil War, they had an ambivalent relationship with the Free State army and police, and they developed a populist social and economic programme that was more socially radical than

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<sup>36</sup> Bowyer Bell, J. 'Societal Patterns and Lessons. The Irish Case'. In R. Higham. (ed.) *Civil Wars in the Twentieth Century*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1972), pp. 217-226.

<sup>37</sup> Kissane, B. *Explaining Irish Democracy*. (Dublin: UCD Press, 2002), p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Ó'Beacháin, D. *Destiny of the Soldiers. Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926-1973*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2010).

that offered by other large parties in the Free State parliament, except perhaps Labour.<sup>39</sup> Yet alongside this they were now willing to accommodate themselves to the existing political system and de Valera even warned his future deputies against the deliberate obstruction of Free State parliamentary business.<sup>40</sup>

Once within the system, Fianna Fáil's relative radicalism was not sustainable, albeit aspects of it were slow and gradual to evaporate. In order to secure power they needed to moderate to make themselves coalitionable. Then once in power they passed a series of policies eradicating many of their grievances with the state. The June 1927 general election saw Fianna Fáil enter the Free State parliament as the second largest party behind the incumbent Cumann na nGaedheal. No party won an outright majority and Fianna Fáil had the possibility of forming a coalition government with the Labour Party. An agreement was struck that secured Labour support and in return Fianna Fáil agreed not to pursue its constitutional reforms during that term of government, apart from abolishing the oath.<sup>41</sup> However, the Cumann na nGaedheal government survived a vote of no confidence by one vote and soon after held snap elections and secured an overall majority.

By the 1932 election, Fianna Fáil formed a minority government with Labour Party support in return for agreeing to pass some of their policies, and de Valera was appointed to the head of the Free State executive. When Fianna Fáil deputies turned up at the assembly to assume governmental office, some of them were armed in anticipation of any hostilities they might encounter, but Cumann na nGaedheal, the army and police stood aside and allowed a peaceful transition of power. This was the beginning of 16 years of Fianna Fáil government that institutionalised their vision as the foundation of Irish state and thus ascribed the state with a legitimacy it had hitherto lacked. Between 1932 and 1938 Fianna Fáil essentially undid all the aspects of the Treaty settlement that it found disturbing, except partition which became more entrenched. In 1932, they withheld land annuity payments to Britain; in 1933 they removed the oath of fidelity; in 1936 they removed all mention of the King and Crown's representatives, including the Governor General, from the constitution; they abolished the Senate which was seen as a protection of British power; in 1937 they

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that Dunphy argues that there were limits to the social and economic radicalism of Fianna Fáil given that it was a mass party embodying Catholic social teachings that prioritised private property and the small bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, that does not detract from the fact that the party was relatively radical compared to others sitting in the parliament at that time.

<sup>40</sup> Kissane, 2002, p. 177.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p. 175-6.

introduced an entirely new constitution to replace the 1922 Free State constitution, renaming the country Éire; and in 1938 control of the Treaty ports was handed over to Irish authorities. In many respects, though, these changes were actually symbolic more than substantial, highlighting that their radicalism was directed at subverting British rule in Ireland and any vestiges of this that remained, rather than a wholesale revolution of the pre-existing system.

It would be a mistake to think of Fianna Fáil as suddenly becoming a “normal” political party even following their ascent to government. Between 1932 and 1937, Fianna Fáil refused to accept the legitimacy of the Free State and they only declared the Irish state to have gained credibility and true self-determination once a new constitution written by de Valera was introduced in 1937. The Free State was accepted as a system of political order and Fianna’s Fáil decision to participate was about acquiescence rather than legitimation. It was only accepted as long as it was transitional and as long as it offered an opportunity to gain power, dismantle its objectionable features and replace them with something more symbolically legitimate that could be proclaimed to embody Irish self-determination. In other words, Fianna Fáil’s relative radicalism only evaporated once they got their way on the Treaty and then they moved to becoming a moderate actor.

Although they failed to change their values towards the Free State, this did not mean that Fianna Fáil did not demonstrate a strong commitment to their moderate path, even to the point of defending the Free State from their former comrades-in-arms who still defied participation. Soon after entering government, the IRA offered to form an alliance with Fianna Fáil based on the fact that the two groups both wanted to keep Cumann na nGaedheal from power. Joseph McGarrity in 1933 tried to sell this deal to de Valera by arguing that the IRA ‘can do things that you will not care to do or cannot do in the face of public criticism, while the IRA pay no heed to public clamour so long as they feel they are doing a national duty’.<sup>42</sup> De Valera rejected this out of hand and instead reiterated his own earlier offer that the IRA dump-arms and members could be integrated into the Irish army, and he continued to make speeches that put distance between himself and the IRA. De Valera also resisted efforts to remove former enemies from privileged positions within the state administration and replace them with more sympathetic colleagues or former

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in English, 1994, p. 173.

republicans.<sup>43</sup> A further test came in the 1930s from the rise of the semi-fascist Blueshirt movement on the right of the political spectrum and the continuing guerrilla violence of the IRA on the left of the political spectrum. Kissane demonstrates how the Fianna Fáil government made use of existing emergency legislation to clamp down on both groups of extremists, Blueshirts and IRA members alike, with equal tenacity and intolerance.<sup>44</sup> By 1937, Fianna Fáil were explicitly declaring that there could be no possible ideological objections to the nature of the Irish state and ongoing radical republicanism was stripped of any remaining vestige of legitimacy.

### **Expanding and Contracting Again, 1970-2010**

Irish radicalism persisted in a somewhat limited form from the 1940s onwards, most notably launching the largely ineffective 'border campaign' between 1956 and 1962.<sup>45</sup> However, in 1969 it was to re-emerge as a potent force in response to the real and perceived oppressiveness of policies in Northern Ireland. Absolute radicalism in this phase embodied the same qualities as the earlier phase – a rejection of participation, an alternative claim to sovereignty, and the use of violence. This revolution was somewhat less socially conservative, but it never resulted in any significant change to the social order. The key to the moderation of this phase was the emergence of a dual military-political strategy. This incrementally increased their level of participation and eventually produced a ceasefire in 1994, transforming them into a relationally radical party. However, once again there were ambiguities in this process and the co-existence of radical and moderate beliefs continued in an internal initial period of relative radicalism, derived from the history of institutionalised violence. Today republicans co-govern a reformed Northern Ireland and consent to it as a system of political order, but only on the condition that it can be transitional to their long-term goal. Moderation was consolidated as shown by their commitment to defending Northern Ireland from dissident threats, but this did not entail a consolidation of the existing political unit as legitimate or valid in republican eyes.

Anti-partitionism was not necessarily central to the original emergence of provisional republicanism, given its more defenderist roots, but the perceived nature of the British state

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<sup>43</sup> Kissane, 2002, p. 182.

<sup>44</sup> Kissane, B. 'Defending Democracy? The legislative response to political extremism in the Irish Free State, 1922-39'. *Irish Historical Studies* 34(134) 2004, pp. 156-174.

<sup>45</sup> Treacy, M. *The IRA 1956-1969. Rethinking the Republic*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

in Northern Ireland allowed an anti-partition element of thinking to take hold. In 1968 a series of civil rights marches led by the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association began - an umbrella group that had links with radical republicans as well as with many other less radical nationalist groups.<sup>46</sup> The movement was seeking to end voting discrimination and gerrymandering which favoured the unionist community, as well as tackling discrimination in the fields of public housing and employment. The civil rights movement was met with security policies of repression by the unionist government (albeit some limited socio-economic reforms were introduced by the Stormont government under pressure from Westminster), leading to increased polarisation between the two communities and localised incidents of violence, particularly in Belfast and Derry. On the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1969, after days of rioting and high tension, Loyalists mobs burned the homes of Catholic residents living on Bombay Street in Belfast and over 1500 Catholics were expelled. This event entered IRA folklore as an example of how they had failed in their duty to defend nationalist communities, an inability blamed upon the desire of IRA leader Cathal Goulding to wind down the IRA, end abstentionism and pursue exclusively peaceful radical-left politics.<sup>47</sup> In light of their perceived failures, the acronym IRA took on the insulting definition of 'I Ran Away' in graffiti around Belfast. Against this backdrop, a group of republicans split from their IRA comrades in protest at the political direction they were taking and formed the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and Provisional Sinn Féin in 1969/70. This new grouping was primarily focused on resuscitating their military prowess and they were decidedly suspicious of the compromising nature of political pursuits.

It is tempting but entirely mistaken to think of the re-emergence of republican violence as an atavistic throwback to some inherent pre-disposition to violence. Instead, once again, a perceived or actual social context of disadvantage and repression was the motivation for PIRA Volunteers. This was then harnessed by elites who readily offered the doctrine of Irish self-determination as a solution to their ills. O'Leary argues that PIRA members were mostly urban, working-class activists who saw themselves as defenders of their communities against loyalists, a partisan police force and partisan British soldiers. Volunteers were not the unemployed, unemployable or criminal elements of Northern Irish catholic society and 'surges in membership were linked to political events rather than to

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<sup>46</sup> English, 2004, pp. 81-108; see also Ó'Dochartaigh, N. *From Civil Rights to Armalites. Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles*. (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997) for how the civil rights movement evolved into violent conflict.

<sup>47</sup> The best account of this comes from Sanders, A. *Inside the IRA. Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), chapter 2.

rent seeking opportunities'.<sup>48</sup> The conditions of radicalisation were the Northern Ireland government's response to the civil rights movements. Compounding this were British security policies of suppression, which were seen as directed exclusively at the nationalist population, especially key events such as introducing internment and the killing of 13 unarmed catholic civilians by the British army during a civil rights demonstration on Bloody Sunday in January 1972. Republican radicalism was a defenderist mentality against British aggression, reinforced by more emotional motivations, such as a family history of republicanism, self-esteem, and a desire to find action.<sup>49</sup> That is not to imply that this was a movement devoid of ideology at all levels. The founding leaders of Provisional republicanism harnessed the sense of local grievance amongst potential volunteers and framed it within the republican doctrine that the British state's denial of Irish self-determination was the real problem. In other words, their short-term interests and the pre-existing ideology interacted to provide radicalised nationalists with a decontesting framework to explain Northern Ireland.

Many of the same characteristics that were central to radical republicanism in the 1910s and 1920s were also central to Provisional republicanism. The Provisionals claimed to derive their legitimacy from the 1916 Proclamation and the Second Dáil of 1919, and they went to great lengths to demonstrate this.<sup>50</sup> The Provisionals were rigidly attached to the notion of a united Irish republic, and anything short of this was viewed as a nationalist failure. Under this conception, the Republic of Ireland, which had been officially declared in 1948, was illegitimate and an unfinished nation-building project.<sup>51</sup> What is more, the extant Republic could not be reformed as the existing institutions derived their authority from the illegitimate Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. To work through these institutions or attempt to utilise them was seen as giving *de facto* recognition to partition and British sovereignty claims. The ruling institutions of Northern Ireland, which derived their authority from the Government of Ireland Act (1920), were also rejected out of hand. In this context, republicans claimed to be left with no other course of action than violence.

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<sup>48</sup> O'Leary, B. 'Mission Accomplished? Looking Back at the IRA'. *Field Day Review* 1 2005, p. 231. This was also the view of British Army intelligence in their 1978 report 'Northern Ireland: Future Terrorists Trends'.

<sup>49</sup> Hughes, J. 'The British Reinvention of Irish Nationalism, 1969-1972'. In J. Hall. (ed.) *Nationalism and War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Alonso, in a study based on extensive interviews with former Volunteers, found that 'they became activists not so much because of the republican tradition but more as a result of the very specific circumstances that existed in Northern Ireland'. Alonso 2007, p. 18 and pp. 67-101.

<sup>50</sup> See English, 2004, p. 113, for how they sought the endorsement of Tom Maguire for their cause.

<sup>51</sup> Provisionals continued to refer disparagingly to it as the 'Free State' or as the '26 counties' to draw attention to its partial nature.

Violence was the central tactic and Provisional Sinn Féin were subservient to the PIRA at this time, but that is not to say the movement was apolitical. Provisionalism was initially characterised by the politics of confrontation and resistance. In 1971, Sinn Féin produced the policy *Éire Nua* (New Ireland).<sup>52</sup> This essentially presented the Provisional vision for a united Ireland, but without actually providing any policies for how to secure a united Ireland. Instead faith was placed in the PIRA to secure a military victory to unite Ireland at which point these policies could be implemented. The other dimension to Provisional politics was the familiar tactic of parallel state-building. The main components of the parallel state strategy focused on building educational, judicial and political institutions that would insulate the catholic community from engaging with the British state. Sinn Féin established a dedicated educational department with the aim of inculcating a ‘proper nationalist outlook’ within the population by challenging what they saw as the dominant and Anglicised version of Irish history and politics. Provisionals also acted as a police force in nationalist areas in Northern Ireland and they established ‘Republican Courts’ to investigate crimes such as house breakings, vandalism and hooliganism, petty crimes, shop breaking, car theft, and drug dealing. The most sophisticated dimension to the parallel state strategy was the attempt to establish four provincial parliaments and one unified coordinating advisory council across the whole island of Ireland in a bid to implement a federal vision of a united Ireland.<sup>53</sup> Finally, and further highlighting their parallel governmental aspirations at this time, when Republicans were accused of forcibly collecting ‘financial tributes’ from residents and businesses of West Belfast, Ruairí Ó’Brádaigh, Sinn Féin’s president, defended this by simply replying: ‘the Stormont government and the Westminster government collect taxes’.<sup>54</sup>

If the post-Civil War parallel state strategy of the 1920s was considered a failure due to a lack of popular legitimacy and effectiveness, then the 1970s’ effort was an even greater disaster. There was a complete lack of continuity with the idealised Republic declared in 1916, which had sustained the 1918 and 1923 parallel states. Also the basic and rudimentary effort at institution building could not compete with the complex and far-reaching institutions required to run modern welfare states with large and active public sectors.<sup>55</sup> Without popular legitimacy and no credibility beyond small republican circles, the parallel

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<sup>52</sup> Sinn Féin. *Éire Nua. The Social and Economic Programme of Sinn Féin*. (Dublin: Sinn Féin 1971).

<sup>53</sup> Sinn Féin. *Peace with Justice: Proposals for Peace in a New Federal Ireland*. (Dublin: Sinn Féin, 1974).

<sup>54</sup> *AP*, Aug 1971, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Mair, p. 18.

parliaments were soon abandoned. The education programme remained something that was designed by republicans and directed at other republicans, failing to make any inroads beyond this. The most successful aspect of the strategy was the IRA's role as a policing body for nationalist areas, and this was a function they maintained throughout their history.

Once again moderation started as a process of internal re-appraisal focused on exploring alternative ways to implement their policy goals in light of popular marginalisation. Fearful of appearing irrelevant to many aspects of everyday politics, an internal critique arose within the party demanding more comprehensive and less utopian policies. This was led by Gerry Adams, who was to become leader of Provisional Sinn Féin in 1983, and other predominantly Northern Irish members of the Provisionals who launched a critique of the policies of the old guard of predominantly Southern Irish members.<sup>56</sup> As Adams was to retrospectively present it, 'there was a recognition that republicans needed to identify their philosophy as being relevant not to the vision of a future Ireland but to the actual Ireland of today, and that they needed to enlist mass popular support, or at least the maximum support possible, for the republican cause'.<sup>57</sup> Left-wing policies aimed at improving the immediate social and economic position of nationalists, especially housing and employment policies, began to be offered in a conscious rejection of former strategy. Although this did not initially change republicanism's rejection of existing institutions or their non-participatory stance, it did represent a fractionalisation of the overall struggle for a united Ireland into a series of smaller and more reformist-oriented goals.

The process of moderation is not necessarily a planned strategy and this accounts for its ambivalence, as is evident from the Provisional's decision to pursue a dual political-military strategy in 1981. This new direction did not have a premeditated end-point of moderation but rather 'the combination of war and politics espoused by senior activists was nothing other than an attempt to raise the overall impact of the movement by combining political ruthlessness with a campaign of terror... [Provisionals] inadvertently compromised their military capacity as electoral politics made them vulnerable in ways they had not foreseen'.<sup>58</sup> O'Boyle argues that the Provisionals always envisaged democracy as an end-point of their

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<sup>56</sup> Many see the signalling of the beginning of this process with the speech by long-standing IRA Volunteer Jimmy Drumm at Bodenstown in 1977.

<sup>57</sup> Adams, G. *The Politics of Irish Freedom*. (Dingle: Brandon, 1986), p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Bourke, R. 'The Politicization of the IRA'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008. This view challenges that more teleological view of Moloney, who argues that the Provisional leadership made a long in advance decision to moderate which they then choreographed the imposition of over the next ten years.

project, but they chose to pursue violent and anti-democratic means to secure this. However, having an underlying commitment to democracy left them open to seeking democratic alternatives to violence, and exploring such possibilities derived from their decision to attempt electoralism.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1970s, PIRA prisoners embarked on a hunger strike in protest at Britain's prisons' policy, ultimately leading to the death of 10 prisoners, and generating world-wide sympathy for the prisoners far beyond their traditional circle of supporters. When an independent nationalist MP died suddenly, republicans decided to field a prisoner who was on hunger-strike as a candidate in the subsequent by-election, albeit it as an abstentionist candidate. Bobby Sands was duly elected to the Westminster parliament on a wave of public sympathy. Similarly, two other abstentionist prisoners on hunger strike were elected to the parliament of the Republic of Ireland in a general election later that year.

From the outset the tension between seeking broad-based support whilst conducting an armed revolutionary struggle was evident. Republicans suddenly had to start defending their actions to potential voters and exposing themselves to dissent from within the nationalist community. The PIRA candidates were elected by making appeals for support beyond the hitherto core republican base. The official stance was that 'to urge people to vote is not to ask them to endorse the candidates political view or his past history but rather to.... save the lives of the present hunger strikers and perhaps more'.<sup>60</sup> Yet it should be noted that both before and immediately after the election, IRA leaders made it clear that 'a revolutionary movement does not depend on a popular mandate as a basis for action. Its mandate comes from the justice and correctness of its cause and therein lies the basis for our mandate'.<sup>61</sup> Inevitably there was some anxiety within the more military minded that an electoral strategy could compromise their radicalism or divert financial resources away from the military struggle. It was precisely to allay such fears that Danny Morrison, Sinn Féin's Director of Publicity, delivered a speech at the 1981 conference where he declared that 'Who here really believes that we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?'. Following the success of the hunger strikers' elections in 1981, and the benefits that an

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<sup>59</sup> O'Boyle, G. 'Bombings to Ballots: The Evolution of the Irish Republican Movement's Conceptualisation of Democracy'. *Irish Political Studies* 26(4) 2011, pp. 593-606.

<sup>60</sup> *AP*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1981.

<sup>61</sup> 'Interview with Three IRA Men'. *Sunday Independent* 19<sup>th</sup> September 1976. This same idea was echoed in an interview in *AP* after the hunger strikes elections where an editorial argued that 'to the IRA, the validity of its mandate, which has undoubtedly been enhanced by the election of an IRA volunteer, rests after the election, as before the election, upon the illegitimacy of partition and the British presence'. *AP*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1981.

electoral mandate brought,<sup>62</sup> the Provisionals decided that Sinn Féin would contest all future elections on an abstentionist basis.<sup>63</sup>

Once the decision to participate was made, it became increasingly difficult to maintain a radical position without consigning themselves to political marginalisation. It soon became evident that electoral participation was incompatible with abstentionism and with a dual political-military strategy (see Chapter 4). Even though they refused to accept the rightfulness of the elected institutions, Sinn Féin still accepted the idea that they needed to win as many votes as possible. What is more, once the emotively charged issue of the hunger strikes was resolved, Sinn Féin's vote share declined to a much more modest level of about 10 percent across Northern Ireland and significantly less than this in the Republic of Ireland. With Gerry Adams now leader of Sinn Féin, he placed the blame for poor electoral results in the Republic of Ireland upon the abstentionist stance of candidates. Within five years of commencing a dual political-military strategy, the IRA and Sinn Féin changed their constitutions to allow candidates to take their seats in the Irish Dáil, albeit while retaining the policy of abstentionism from Westminster and Northern Ireland. This was a contentious process and the policy was initially rejected at the Sinn Féin annual conference in 1985 before ultimately being endorsed the following year and this acted as an important signal for how the leadership could impose moderating choices.<sup>64</sup> This prompted a walk-out from former leaders Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh and Daithí Ó'Conaill who split to form 'Republican Sinn Féin' and the 'Continuity IRA', ironically making it easier for future moderation by removing some hardline internal dissent. The main impetus given to justify the shift in policy was the need to accept the reality of the politics of the Republic of Ireland as this was the best way to achieve republican goals. Republican utopias, it was argued, had a marginalising effect on Sinn Féin within an electorate that uncritically accepted the Republic of Ireland's institutions.

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<sup>62</sup> Irish officials needed to give serious consideration before rejecting the request of Owen Carron, a Provisional Sinn Féin member elected to replace Bobby Sands as MP after he died on hunger strike, to meet the Irish premier because 'Mr Carron is an elected representative who secured 31,000 votes in the recent by-election and that many Nationalists in the North, including many who do not sympathise with the Provos, will be upset and puzzled if he is not met'. Letter of Advice to Taoiseach, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1981, TAOIS 2011/39/1824, *NAI*.

<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that republicans did not maintain their abstentionism in local elections in Northern Ireland although they did for devolved and Westminster elections.

<sup>64</sup> Lynn, B. 'Tactic or Principle? The Evolution of Republican Thinking on Abstentionism in Ireland, 1970-1998'. *Irish Political Studies* 17(2) 2002, pp. 74-94.

Incrementally, the usefulness of violence began to be seen as contingent upon circumstances and circumstances were now dictating that political avenues should be explored alongside military ones.<sup>65</sup> With abstentionism removed, the next logical explanation for still persistently low vote shares was continuing IRA violence, especially botched IRA operations that resulted in civilian casualties. Mitchel McLaughlin, General Secretary of Sinn Féin, when attempting to explain the party's poor performance in local elections in Northern Ireland in 1989 stated that 'IRA operations that went wrong did have an effect [on the low vote share] because in a sense Sinn Féin is held accountable at local level for all aspects of the Republican struggle'.<sup>66</sup> The IRA also acknowledged that civilian casualties had a negative impact upon the 'political struggle' and an IRA spokesman stated that 'There is a greater realisation than ever of the need for the IRA to avoid civilian casualties... They have given our critics the opportunity to raise once again the proposition that the armed struggle is contradicting and undermining the political struggle. That would never be our intention although, undoubtedly, some operations within the past year have created difficulties for everyone'.<sup>67</sup> Essentially, violence was becoming subordinate to electoralism and its efficacy was defined in terms of how it helped or hindered this strategy.

Participation also had the effect of changing the relationships between Provisionals and other political actors. As such, by the time the Provisionals entered peace talks they had already moderated in some significant respects. In a series of interrupted talks between Gerry Adams and John Hume, leader of the SDLP, that began in 1988, Provisionals were essentially provided with a principled pathway to change their direction which was compatible with their overall ideology.<sup>68</sup> The SDLP argued for accepting the British as neutral arbiters who were committed to the idea of ensuring the people of Northern Ireland decided the future of the region rather than having any vested interest in remaining or leaving. In 1990, Peter Brooke, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, declared that 'The British Government has no selfish or strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland: our role is to help, enable and encourage... It is not the aspiration to a sovereign,

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<sup>65</sup> Alonso, R. 'The Modernization in Irish Republican Thinking Toward the Utility of Violence'. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 24(2) 2001, pp. 131-144.

<sup>66</sup> *AP*, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1989, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> *AP*, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1989, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> O'Leary, 2005, p. 224, has argued that 'ideologically barricaded organizations may be best induced to withdraw from violence if an internally principled path can be found for their members to abandon their use of violence'.

united Ireland against which we set our face, but its violent expression'.<sup>69</sup> This essentially reiterated a long-standing British policy that committed itself to contracting their territory if this was the majority will. Another additional consequence of the Adams-Hume talks was that although officially both Sinn Féin and the IRA rejected the SDLP suggestion that two referendums held simultaneously could constitute self-determination,<sup>70</sup> nonetheless this idea was ultimately accepted as providing a pathway to decide democratically the future of Northern Ireland.

Commencing moderation did not necessarily imply a change in attitude or values towards Northern Ireland or the legitimacy of British sovereignty over Ireland. In 1994, the IRA declared what was to become a permanent ceasefire and Sinn Féin entered a prolonged and tense period of all-party talks that culminated in their acceptance of the Belfast Agreement peace accord in 1998. The ceasefire, when combined with their loosening of outright rejection, represented an end to their absolute radicalism. A shift can certainly be observed from the absolute radicalism of pre-1998 to relative radicalism after agreeing to participate fully, but they still retained many values that polarised republicans from other political actors in the system. Interestingly, this stance became somewhat of an electoral asset, with republicans making considerable gains by pitching themselves as militant defenders of nationalist interests while simultaneously showing themselves willing to participate fully.<sup>71</sup> The Provisionals anticipated that a purely political direction could allow them to better implement their policy agenda. However, they were also aware that being overly engaged in political reform of Northern Ireland was potentially damaging to their reputation with their base. Therefore, when negotiating the Belfast Agreement, republican leaders did not engage in negotiations over the new political institutions that were to be established to govern a devolved Northern Ireland, only insisting upon a strong all-Ireland dimension. Instead, they focused primarily upon the security agenda, especially the release of IRA prisoners, striving for a complete overhaul of policing in Northern Ireland, and promoting a 'human rights' agenda to protect what they perceived as a beleaguered nationalist community.<sup>72</sup>

Accepting the Belfast Agreement and a power-sharing settlement for Northern Ireland, even though it remained under British sovereignty, was only undertaken conditionally. It

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted in 'Timeline: Northern Ireland's Road to Peace' [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern\\_ireland/4072261.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4072261.stm), accessed 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

<sup>70</sup> *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1998.

<sup>71</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O'Leary.

<sup>72</sup> Kerr, 2006: 92-95; Murray and Tonge, 213-7.

was done in the belief that the aspects of the Agreement that established cross-border bodies with the Republic of Ireland and that enshrined Irish input into the affairs of Northern Ireland could ultimately act as a conduit to a united Ireland. It was also argued by Provisionals that the Belfast Agreement democratised Northern Ireland, creating a fairer society for nationalists in terms of political and economic opportunities, but there was a clear desire to avoid the consolidation of the new Northern Ireland, which was seen as a temporary and transitional arrangement. Indeed, there are international parallels to support this perspective.<sup>73</sup> There can be little doubt that this was a weakening of their hitherto rigid commitment to the immediate demand for the republican ideal, but this ideal still remained as a long-term necessity.<sup>74</sup> The Provisional commitment to constitutional politics was decidedly ambivalent for the first 10 years in other ways too. This is evident from a return to IRA violence in 1996 but reinstated in 1997; the IRA's continuing role as an internal republican police force; its refusal to engage in any decommissioning until Sinn Féin were actually in elected office and not finally completed until 2005; and, even allegations of running a spy-ring within the new Northern Irish Assembly.

Relative radicalism became a state of moderation as the necessity of ensuring the success of the new path and showing the benefits of endorsing the Belfast Agreement took hold. Their low coalition potential in the eyes of their unionist counterparts was preventing a functioning and stable executive containing Sinn Féin from being established. Therefore, adapting their relatively radical stances to become completely accommodating and demonstrate a commitment to moderation became necessary. Ultimately Sinn Féin was required to demonstrate a clear commitment to the principles of the Belfast Agreement. The party pushed hard to devolve policing and justice powers from Westminster to the Northern Ireland Assembly, which was eventually achieved in 2010 following the St Andrews Agreement of 2006, which in turn followed reluctant decommissioning in 2005. Their response to dissident terrorism by republican groups whose origins stem from either the split over ending abstentionism in 1986 or else who left the movement in protest at the endorsement of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, was also indicative of a commitment to their changed direction. Sinn Féin, in their capacity as co-leaders of the Northern Ireland Executive, responded to the threat of 'dissident' terrorist attacks on the Northern Irish state

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<sup>73</sup> Reynolds.

<sup>74</sup> This led Ruane and Todd to argue that the transformation of republicanism was limited to changing tactics while retaining long-term goals. Ruane, J. and J. Todd. *After the Good Friday Agreement. Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland.* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999).

by utilising the justice and policing powers at their disposal to pursue and capture those responsible, even though in some cases these were the former comrades-in-arms of the Provisionals who are now in power.<sup>75</sup> This was a confirmation of their agreement to abide by the outcomes of the democratic process in a reformed Northern Ireland – in other words, a firm acceptance of the Belfast Agreement as providing a system of order and choosing reformism over any remaining remnants of revolutionary tactics. However, moderation was not about endorsing the legitimacy of the system of order as a rightful system of rule, regardless of the degree of moderate commitment shown.

### **What Constitutes Ethno-National Radicalism and Moderation?**

The transformation of Irish republicanism in both instances was primarily concerned with redefining republicans' relationships with institutions and violence, while at the same time remaining committed to the goals of their ideology. In the two instances analysed in this chapter, the initial stages of the process of moderation entailed shifting from a position of absolute radicalism to one of relative radicalism. This was about shifting from a position of outright resistance, institutional rejection, and the use of violence to one of abandoning violence as a tactic and utilising reformism to offer a policy programme distant from the policies offered by other political parties in order to challenge the existing system. Crucially, contact with stable democratic institutions, even if the legitimacy of these institutions was challenged, rendered even relational radicalism unsustainable. It changed the nature of the relationship between the formerly radical parties and the political system and other political actors within it. Therefore, over time, relational radicalism was reduced mostly to practicing the politics of accommodation and ultimately demonstrating a commitment to moderation. Moderation in the longer-term was also about demonstrating an active commitment to the moderate path, even though this did not entail changing their beliefs about the illegitimacy of the existing political systems or British sovereignty.

Republican radicalism between 1916-1926 and between 1970-1994 embodied absolute radicalism. The values and practices of the post-Rising republicans, and their anti-Treatyite successors in particular, and the values and practices of the early Provisionals ensured that they would be considered radical in any political system. The core of the radicalism of both

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<sup>75</sup> Frampton 2010, p. 90.

phases lay in the same facets – a complete rejection of working through existing political institutions and the use of violence, both of which were justified by an alternative claim to sovereignty and their perception of British sovereignty as denying Ireland democracy. Violence became acceptable once it was framed as a necessary tool of the less powerful colonised people fighting for their right to equality against an alien oppressor. Their radicalism also entailed outright resistance against British institutions in favour of parallel institution building, a denial of the existing ruling elite to have any say in the composition and political direction of a sovereign Ireland, and a great deal of “boat-rocking”, both to loosen Britain’s grip and to shake apathetic Irishmen and women from their complicit acceptance of the status quo. It was uncompromising in its rigid commitment to the ideal Republic, evident from the anti-Treatyite rejection of the Free State and the Provisional rejection of Cathal Goulding’s attempted politicisation in the late 1960s.

But alongside this, there were limits to their radicalism. In both cases, they were more politically radical than socially radical. The radicals of 1916 and 1921 came from all levels of society and had a stake in preserving the social order. Although the anti-Treatyite were somewhat more from the lower end of the social order and more likely to be low skilled and farm labourers than their pre-War of Independence comrades, this was still a conservative Catholic country with a commitment to private property. Undoubtedly, social radicalism was more embedded in Northern Ireland and nationalists in Northern Ireland in the 1960s were marginalised from social participation and this was a strong source of their grievance. But even here, republican volunteers and activists were not the unemployed and unemployable, and rising nationalist prosperity over time also served to stabilise the existing social order. In fact, republicanism in Northern Ireland was more effective when it evolved to encompass a reformist social dimension rather than being an exclusively utopian political organisation.

Moderation when it came was initially about shifting from absolute radicalism to relative radicalism. Relative radicalism was characterised by an end to outright resistance and violence. Yet that it not to say that Fianna Fáil and Provisional Sinn Féin became ‘normalised’ political parties. Rather initial change was inherently ambivalent. While they now participated within the institutions of the Free State and Northern Ireland respectively, both groups continued to deny the legitimacy of these ruling bodies and only participated on condition that they were viewed as transitional to a more acceptable political unit in the

long-term. The shift from absolute to relative radicalism was about accommodation to a form of political order and certainly not about accepting the legitimacy of the ruling institutions and the form of sovereignty that they upheld. There was a loosening of the commitment to the rigid ideal of the Irish republic in return for the opportunity to use the existing institutions to dismantle those aspects of the system that they found objectionable.<sup>76</sup> It is also important to acknowledge that adaptation was active and consciously pursued, rather than merely being responsive to Free State or British state strategies.<sup>77</sup> Importantly, their legacies of violence and rejectionism ensured they were viewed with an air of suspicion and other actors were reluctant to build trusting relationships without a demonstrated commitment to the existing institutions. Both Fianna Fail and the Provisionals existed in a 'grey area' and this explains why they would be simultaneously accused of being too moderate by internal critics and failing to display any real change by their former enemies.

Capoccia, when discussing relational anti-system parties, notes that they have a low coalition potential and indeed this is also true of relational radical parties. In the first general election of 1927, Fianna Fáil had the potential to form a coalition government with the Labour Party but this could only materialise if Fianna Fáil agreed to postpone most of its constitutional programme. By the time Fianna Fáil acceded to power it was as a minority government with tacit Labour Party support, further dragging them into the give-and-take of electoral politics. Similarly, between 1998 and 2007, the Northern Irish Assembly was suspended on four occasions, including for a five-year period between 2002 and 2007, due to the reluctance of the Ulster Unionist Party and Democratic Unionist Party to sit in a power-sharing government with Sinn Féin, mainly due to concerns over ongoing IRA activity and their refusal to decommission weapons. It was the need to cement these relationships and secure a stake in power that facilitated the shift to demonstrating an active commitment to moderation and either resolving or accommodating their relative radicalism.

Once each party assumed executive power, even relational radicalism was difficult or soon unnecessary to sustain. In the case of Fianna Fáil, whenever they assumed governmental

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<sup>76</sup> Kissane, 2012.

<sup>77</sup> In other words, this challenges disgruntled former republicans like McIntyre, 1995 and McKearney, T. *The Provisional IRA. From Insurrection to Parliament*. (London: Pluto, 2011) who see the transformation of Provisionalism as the product of British state strategies.

office they then used that power to undertake a series of important symbolic reforms that removed the vestiges of British sovereignty over Ireland to bestow the state with a degree of legitimacy it had hitherto lacked. This culminated in a new name of Éire and the 1937 Constitution. In the Provisionals case this came with the completion of decommissioning, the signing of the St Andrews Agreement which restored power-sharing, and devolved policing and justice powers from Westminster to Northern Ireland. This was about embarking upon further accommodation of their relationally radical aspects, largely necessitated by the need to improve their relations and enhance their 'coalition potential' with other political actors in the system. By being given a stake in the political future of the new system, they agreed to end spoiler tactics. It was necessary for both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin in power to present a strong defence against threats from former comrades-in-arms (and the Blueshirts in Fianna Fáil's case) that refused to accept reformism and posed an ongoing dissident threat. Fianna Fáil used extensive security powers to clamp down on their former comrades and defend the Free State while simultaneously undoing it from within, and Sinn Féin have been vocal and active in defending Northern Ireland from dissident terrorist threats while explicitly retaining the goal of transitioning Northern Ireland into unification with the Republic of Ireland.

Fianna Fáil participated in order to dismantle those aspects of the Free State that it found objectionable and essentially used the state's institutions against itself. This was made possible by the fact they were not looking for a complete overhaul of the existing order, but just the removal of the vestiges and symbols of British sovereignty. The fact that the Free State was a majoritarian political system that concentrated power in the hands of the executive allowed the elected government the power to undertake significant change. Additionally, and more crucially, both the anti-Treaty and pro-Treaty sides of the debate were agreed on the desired end-point of an Irish republic and the disagreement was over the means to achieve this. There were limits to the changes introduced too given that they failed to reform local government as promised and it could even be argued that that 1937 Constitution drew heavily on the 1921 Treaty, albeit framed within Irish sovereignty. This contrasts greatly with Northern Ireland where there is much less ground for consensus over the future of Northern Ireland as a political unit given that the dominant political cleavage divides the society into those who wish to stay in the United Kingdom and those who wish to form a united Ireland. This is the reason for the consociational institutional arrangement which grants minority vetoes and prevents the concentration of executive power to limit

extraordinary change. Nonetheless, the Provisionals too only acquiesced to be governed by the rules of the Belfast Agreement while remaining under British sovereignty in the belief that they could use these institutions to democratise the Northern Irish political unit and ultimately use the institutions to transition to a united Ireland in the long-term.

The ethno-national context of Irish republicanism challenges definitions of moderation developed in the class and religious contexts, which elevate pluralism and tolerance to the centrality of the process. Such an approach can be seen as overly exacting to the point of possibly missing an important and real transformation away from radicalism. There can be little doubt that both de Valera's anti-Treaty followers and Adams's Provisional republicans went through very real and profound changes. Yet throughout this process, participation was about an aspiration to weaken the existing state not to entrench it. Any steps to consolidate the long-term survival of the Free State or the current Northern Irish political unit would have been a fundamental challenge to the nationalist and republican credentials of Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin respectively and, although they may have been willing to compromise on these credentials, they could not be eliminated entirely. Also neither party rejected their history of violence or their right to armed struggle, even if this right was no longer exercised. The shift from outright resistance to participation and government never entailed legitimising the existing political order or changing their beliefs towards British sovereignty or incomplete Irish sovereignty. Here Lamounier's distinction between acquiescence and legitimacy is useful, where acquiescence is agreeing to the political system but legitimacy is 'acquiescence motivated by subjective agreement with given norms and values'.<sup>78</sup> We cannot assume that the final destination of a radical to moderate transformation is or should be tolerance or pluralism or indeed any other fulsome idea of liberal democratic consolidation where all dissent is seen as becoming part of a 'normalised' political process. Rather, moderation can also be a way of pursuing long-standing goals and implementing prior values in a new context.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is worth considering the key lessons that can be taken forward from this analysis for explaining the causal mechanisms underpinning the moderation of Provisional

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Przeworski, 1986, p. 51.

republicanism. The nature of Irish republicanism is one that is more concerned with political radicalism than social radicalism and this simplified the moderation process by allowing for the removal of British sovereignty to be their main goal rather than the construction of a whole new social order. The nature of Sinn Féin is unclear and highly malleable – both Sinn Féin in the 1920s and Provisional Sinn Féin sought wide popular electoral support but as they did so, this diluted their core policies. This moderation process was primarily sparked by a shift from rejectionism and abstentionism to participation, which was the hallmark of the move from absolute to relative radicalism. Participation brought both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin into contact with stable and predictable democratic institutions. Both Fianna Fáil and the Provisionals embarked upon electoralism from a purely strategic perspective, to gain a mandate for their republican projects. However, the irony of electoral participation was that it changed their relationships not only with the state's institutions but also with other political actors within the system, which in turn demanded reining in relative radicalism and demonstrating an active commitment to moderation. This ultimately led to engaging in processes of democratisation, albeit democratic consolidation was not concerned with consolidating the existing systems but it was about transitioning to a more acceptable political unit. Moderation was multi-dimensional, with different aspects moving at different and uneven paces. The militant dimension moderated later than they accommodated themselves to the political order and some aspects that were core parts of their ethno-national dimension, such as around self-determination and rejecting British sovereignty, were largely resistant to dilution. The key causal processes to explain moderation are those processes that brought republicans into increasing contact with stable institutions of an established state and the inexorable moderating logic of elections and democratic bargaining. An initial cursory examination indicates that the 'inclusion-moderation' hypothesis holds up well in this case. It is to an in-depth examination of these issues in the case of the Provisionals that I now turn.

## CHAPTER 4

### ELECTORALISM, STRATEGIC PARTICIPATION, AND INEXORABLE MODERATION

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This chapter applies the electoral participation element of the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis, or the idea that elections force radicals to adopt more moderate and reformist means in order to be successful. This approach argues that parties go through a series of stages which move them away from radical positions towards more mainstream and moderate positions, often implicitly or explicitly defined in terms of congruence with the preferences of the median voter. Przeworski and Sprague and Kalyvas have demonstrated how European socialists and European Christian Democrats originated as radical movements who initially pursued building parallel states, then embraced ambivalent electoralism before finally emerging as something akin to parties with a weaker commitment to their original policies and a strong commitment to vote-seeking.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Downs and Müller and Strøm have shown that parties forsake rigid attachments to radical policy goals that are distant from the preferences of the median voter in favour of seeking votes or office.<sup>2</sup> Combined, these approaches imply that accepting the principles of electoral competition leads to moderation because liberal democratic elections do not allow for revolution. Electoral participation, especially if a party wishes to gain office, necessitates compromises that render radical policy goals unsustainable due to their lack of widespread appeal.

The electoral participation theories of the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis strongly highlight the need for a reappraisal of the concept of moderation for the ethno-national context. Looking at republican moderation, two noticeable differences stand out in comparison to the context in which electoral moderation theories were originally refined. Firstly, republicans, and more specifically Sinn Féin as their electoral vehicle, evolved during a violent conflict that challenged the legitimacy of the state. The ethno-national goals of Sinn Féin challenged the very legitimacy of the state to rule over its citizens and used violence to challenge the state’s authority. Although republicans also pursued some goals that were achievable, such as policies of cultural recognition, their ultimate goal of

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<sup>1</sup> Przeworski and Sprague; Kalyvas.

<sup>2</sup> Downs, A. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1957); Müller and Strøm.

secession was highly polarizing. Their goals are rooted in a conflict with the state and it may be impossible for them to ever compromise on these aspects as they are their *raison d'être*. Secondly, alongside republican's electoralism there were also major peace negotiations that restructured the British state. There are clear and distinct phases in the evolution of republicanism's attitude to the use of elections and crucially these correlate with a change in other important variables in the Northern Irish context, namely republicanism's engagement in a peace process and international pressure. In other words, elections alone were not the sole cause of their moderation but rather other variables also came into play which were absent in the cases of Christian Democratic and socialist moderation.

This chapter argues that existing theories of moderation through electoral inclusion also hold in the ethno-national context, but in a somewhat modified way. Republicans clearly moved through the same stages of electoral engagement which pushed them in an increasingly moderate direction, rejecting parallel states in favour of ambivalent electoral engagement and ultimately rejecting violence in favour of electoral politics. This was not an exceptional journey and it is a pattern evident in other places and contexts. Moderation was about moving from rejection to participation and ultimately accepting elections and their outcomes as providing what de Valera earlier called 'a system of political order'. This direction was then reinforced by the consociational arrangements which brought republicans into government. However, where existing theories often see a trade-off between electoral growth and policy, for republicans their ultimate goal remains unchanged. Their short-term policies have expanded and changed considerably, but they try to frame these within their long-standing discourse calling for a united Ireland and their rejection of British sovereignty remains undimmed. As such, moderation means something different in this context and it can occur without an acceptance of a nation-state process. Electoral participation was a rational choice by republicans to pursue their goals through a new means in the hope of avoiding marginalisation, a real possibility they feared with the passing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. But elections were also pursued to allow them to implement their policy vision in a way that violence was hindering them from achieving, embracing reformism and accepting the *status quo* as a route through which to pursue their goals. However, elections required making appeals beyond their core base, offering short-term reformist policies alongside their ideal goals of a united Ireland, and recognising the moderate preferences of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. This changed the relations between republicans and the nationalist community. Participation pushed them

from absolute radicalism to relative radicalism but changing relationships moderated even their relative radicalism as they moved closer to the policy positions of reformers like the SDLP. The key factor which allowed this new path to be pursued was the autonomy of the leadership from the grassroots to change the movement's direction.

The role of electoral participation is typically placed at the centre of all existing explanations of the transformation of republicanism, to the point of forming the core of what O'Boyle has described as the 'standard interpretation'.<sup>3</sup> Existing explanations tend to frame republicanism's decision to participate within a historical pattern of pragmatism or within an analytical framework that sees republicans as opportunistic actors that seized a new tactical chance.<sup>4</sup> The most robust and insightful of explanations see republicans as having been boxed and co-opted by British state policies operating through civil society, which in spite of republican efforts to resist this, forced them to pursue their contentious politics in a different form than the use of revolutionary violence, namely electoral participation.<sup>5</sup> As such, the 'standard interpretation' is valuable in understanding that elections had an important role. However, they tend to pay little or no attention to how the process of electoral participation itself brings about moderation through organizational change. As such, this chapter complements existing work but adds to it by showing the mechanical effects of electoral participation, how they caused moderation and the nature of the moderation it caused, rather than assuming that electoral participation was the consequence of moderation and the end point in itself.

### **From Parallel States to Strategic Reassessment, 1970-1980**

Przeworski and Sprague argued that although radical parties may try to maintain stances of complete rejection, these are unsustainable if open and relatively fair electoral institutions exist, as was the case for socialist parties following the expansion of the electoral franchise. Where such institutions are present, then radical groups are either pressured or seduced into exploring this route for instrumental gains or to avoid political marginalisation. However, participation inevitably compromises their radicalism, even if this was not their intention at the outset. The early years of republicanism can be seen in retrospect as the

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<sup>3</sup> O'Boyle, p. 594.

<sup>4</sup> Murray and Tonge; English, 2004; Feeney, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Bean, 2007.

movement coming to the decision that outright rejection was limiting their success and thus a reappraisal towards participation occurred.

The main impetus for the emergence of Provisional republicanism from a split with 'Official' republicanism in 1969 came from dissatisfaction with Cathal Goulding's decision to wind down the military struggle and pursue peaceful radical left politics. Goulding, who had been Chief of Staff of a declining IRA since 1962, persuaded republicans to abandon militarism in favour of radical left politics instead.<sup>6</sup> This move split the IRA Army Council and Sinn Féin supporters, leading to a walk-out by key figures such as Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh, Daithí Ó'Connaill and Seán MacStíofáin.<sup>7</sup> Ó'Brádaigh, who was the most politically savvy of the new group as well as a former Chief of Staff of the IRA during its doomed border campaign (1956-1962), emerged as their natural leader becoming president of the new Sinn Féin while MacStíofáin, the ultimate militarist, became the Chief-of-Staff of the new IRA. To this group of republicans, *active* political participation was unthinkable. Ó'Brádaigh himself was not opposed to electoral participation, having been elected on an abstentionist campaign to the Irish Dáil in 1957 as well as attempting to be elected to Westminster in the Fermanagh-South Tyrone constituency in 1966. However, there was no doubt in the minds of the new Provisional leadership that there was a very significant distinction between abstentionist electoral competition and taking up any seats if elected. As White argues, Ó'Brádaigh's greatest flaw or strength, depending on your perspective, was his consistent and rigid commitment to abstentionism from any and every parliament that was not on an all-Ireland basis and free of British claims to sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> Participation was equated with *de facto* recognition of the legitimacy of these parliaments to make laws for Ireland, something unthinkable to Ó'Brádaigh and his followers. The early Provisionals were resounding in their rejection, declaring that:

Since 1921 Sinn Féin policy has been to abolish the Stormont and Leinster House parliaments and restore the 32 county Dáil Éireann. Sinn Féin has always maintained that this cannot be done by recognising and attending these institutions as minority groups: it can only be done by remaining free of them and convening an All Ireland Assembly.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> On the split in republicanism, see Sanders, pp. 18-44.

<sup>7</sup> Ó'Brádaigh strongly argued that he did not split from the IRA and Sinn Féin, but rather Goulding forfeited his right to be considered a republican leader when he announced his decision to take seats in a partitionist parliament if elected. For Ó'Brádaigh the Provisionals were those with continuity going back to 1916 and he fought hard to demonstrate this, as shown in an interview with Ó'Brádaigh for *This Week* in 1970, transcript in FCO 33/1197, *NA*.

<sup>8</sup> White, R.W. *Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh. The Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> *AP*, Sept 1971, p. 10.

Throughout the first decade of its existence, republicanism was built around three strategies: building a parallel state, the policy programme of *Éire Nua* (New Ireland), and the use of violence. Republicans attempted to minimise their contact with all organs of the ‘illegitimate’ state by attempting to build parallel educational, judicial and political institutions. The politics of rejection also extended to a refusal to recognise the jurisdiction of any British and Irish courts. An editorial in *An Phoblacht* declared that ‘we salute and admire the gallant stand made by men and women North and South in British and Free State courts. First – non recognition – Second – turning of backs, clicking of heels, throwing books of evidence – and Third – the shouts of courage, Up the Provos, God Save Ireland, Traitors All’.<sup>10</sup> Alongside this, republicans attempted to establish four provincial parallel parliaments and one unified coordinating advisory council across the whole island of Ireland in a bid to implement a federal vision of a united Ireland.<sup>11</sup> There was even some discussion within Sinn Féin that it should run candidates in *Dáil* elections but they should take their seats in this all-Ireland parliament, in a hark back to the First and Second *Dáils* of 1918 and 1921. The failure of these institutions to gain any foothold is evident from the fact that only 147 people attended the first meeting of *Dáil Uladh* (Ulster Parliament) and 100 attended the first meeting of *Dáil Connachta* (Connacht Parliament),<sup>12</sup> resulting in British intelligence dismissing the participants as ‘hardly appear[ing] to represent a cross-section of Connaught life’.<sup>13</sup> The attempt to create a federal vision of Ireland was part of a broader policy programme called *Éire Nua*.<sup>14</sup> Essentially this was the brainchild of Ó’Brádaigh and was to become strongly associated with his tenure as President of Sinn Féin. *Éire Nua* outlined policies mainly focused on how a future united Ireland should look, working on the assumption that a united Ireland would be achieved by the IRA. These were not policies to achieve a united Ireland, but they were policies to shape it once this came about. It was also decidedly rural in focus, neglecting many urban issues, including issues of discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland.<sup>15</sup> As such, the policy programme was limited in scope as well as showing the limitations to what Ó’Brádaigh and MacStíofáin thought politics could achieve.

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<sup>10</sup> *AP*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1973, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sinn Féin, 1974.

<sup>12</sup> *Irish Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Irish Embassy Dublin to London (Blatherwick to Thorpe), 19<sup>th</sup> October 1971, FCO 33/1197.

<sup>14</sup> Sinn Féin, 1971, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Tonge, J. ‘Sinn Féin and the ‘New Republicanism’ in Belfast’. *Space and Polity* 10(2) 2006, pp. 139.

The 1970s was the period of the highest levels of IRA activity (see Figure 1, page 93), and 1,010 of the total 1,712 deaths attributed to them throughout the conflict occurred in this decade. A typical IRA statement of this time was issued in August 1971 and declared that ‘physical force is and must be the main means of struggle against the British forces of occupation’. In a book published by the IRA in 1973, the justification for violence was considered self-evident and in fact the use of violence was ‘a duty’:

War is one of the harsh realities of life and being the weapon by which Empires are built, logically enough this same instrument brings about the oppressor’s fall. The moral right to wage war of liberation has never been questioned: the moral right, in fact duty, of challenging a foreign oppressive army of occupation, in our case that of a one-time colonial power Great Britain, has never been questioned in the long and bitter history of Ireland’.<sup>16</sup>

Faith was placed in the military leaders of republicanism who were seen as ‘purer’ republicans and less likely to be compromised than politicians, who were mistrusted and viewed as liable to pursue self-interest over the interests of republicanism. Joe Cahill, commander of the Belfast brigade of the IRA and future Chief-of-Staff, warned of the dangers of ‘week-kneed politicians’ and the necessity of keeping decision-making out of their hands and firmly in the grasp of the military leaders.<sup>17</sup> The belief was that violence would bring the British to a negotiating table where republicans would only engage in negotiations on their terms. Republicanism’s terms required a declaration of intent from Britain to withdraw all military personnel, an acknowledgement by Britain of the right of the whole of the Irish people to decide their own future, and an amnesty for all IRA political prisoners. The rigidity of this position was a source of bemused shock to the British government during secret negotiations in 1972. Republicanism’s rigid commitment to their goals *in toto* convinced the British government that the IRA would accept no incentive short of an all-Ireland republic to stop their violence and therefore there was little point in trying to include them in any proposed solution to the Northern Ireland crisis.<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the decade a strong internal critique emerged within republicanism from those who saw the tactics of this phase as actually inhibiting the achievement of their goals. The critique was spearheaded by Gerry Adams, who was to use it to force a leadership

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<sup>16</sup> Irish Republican Army. *Freedom Struggle*. (Dublin: IRA, 1973). The book was banned in Britain and Ireland but a copy is available in Justice 2004/27/7, *NAI*.

<sup>17</sup> See Joe Cahill’s speech at Bodinstown in 1971. It is also worth noting that Cahill was one of the Provisional delegates who met with Harold Wilson when he was leader of the opposition Labour Party in 1972, showing that this suspicion of entrusting politically minded figures to guard republicanism was more than just rhetoric.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Confidential Annex to Cabinet Meeting Minutes, CM(72) 5<sup>th</sup> Conclusions, Minute 3’, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1972, CAB 128/48, *NAI*.

change within Sinn Féin and to depose Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh, who Adams was to chain to the failures of *Éire Nua*. This leadership struggle also represented an attempt to wrest control away from a predominantly southern-based and socially conservative leadership into the hands of a younger and more socially-radically northern cohort.<sup>19</sup> Adams derided *Éire Nua* and the tactics of parallel states as a form of 'spectator politics' that marginalised republicans from contributing to the direction and shape of Ireland and instead reduced them to the role of watching other political actors, such as the British and Irish governments and the SDLP, influence Ireland's constitutional future.<sup>20</sup> The 'spectator politics' critique centred on the idea that republicans should not assume that the IRA would be able to secure a united Ireland through military means alone. Instead an additional political dimension was required in the struggle for independence. The isolationist abstraction of pursuing a parallel state failed to secure any popular backing because it did not resonate with the everyday needs and experiences of Irish nationalists. As Adams was to argue a number of years later: 'the real requirements of success, an ideology of liberation, must develop from real needs and real interests. Most people will not struggle, never mind vote, for abstract things. They will fight to win material benefits, to improve the quality of their lives, to guarantee the future of their children'.<sup>21</sup> It was also starkly presented by Jimmy Drumm, a veteran IRA member from Belfast who first joined in the 1930s, during his 1977 Bodinstown speech, which many people speculated was actually written by Adams.<sup>22</sup> Drumm declared that 'a successful war of liberation cannot be fought exclusively on the back of the oppressed in the six counties nor around the physical presence of the British army. Hatred and resentment of this army cannot sustain the war and the isolation of socialist republicans around the armed struggle is dangerous'.<sup>23</sup>

The solution lay in what Adams called 'active republicanism'. Adams argued that republicanism's biggest failing was not developing concrete policies to achieve and realise

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<sup>19</sup> Moloney writing in *Magill* in 1980 argued that 'There is undoubtedly a division within the Provo ranks. The organisation can be said now to be roughly divided between North and South, young and old, traditional and revolutionary, but essentially between right and left'. Moloney, E. 'The IRA'. *Magill*, September 1980, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see the articles written by Adams in the *Republican News (RN)* under the pseudonym 'Brownie': 'Active Abstentionism'. *RN*, 11<sup>th</sup> Oct 1975; 'The Republic: A Reality'. *RN* 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1975; 'The National Alternative'. *RN*, 3 April 1976; 'A Review of the Situation – Past, Present and Future' *RN*, 14<sup>th</sup> Aug 1976.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, G. *Presidential Address*. 1987 Sinn Féin Party Conference.

<sup>22</sup> The British government were certainly suspicious that Drumm wrote it himself, doubting that he had the intellectual ability for such a speech. CJ 4/1796, *NA*.

<sup>23</sup> Drumm, J. *Bodinstown Commemoration Address*, 1977. This speech caused much debate in the letters and editorial pages of *AP* in subsequent editions, with critiques focusing on its Marxist tendencies and its potential challenge to the IRA campaign.

the Irish republic – ‘you may be able to bomb a British connection out of existence, given many other necessary political conditions, but you will not bring anything into existence’.<sup>24</sup> Improving the position of Northern nationalists now became a separate but related goal to establishing a united Ireland. This was a significant reversal on the previous position which declared that that position of Northern nationalists would improve once a united Ireland was established and therefore the details of their present position was of secondary importance. Now when republicans talked about building alternatives to the current state, it was not about building utopian ideals that were ascribed worthiness due to their historical purism. Instead it was about developing a set of policies that would fill a social need and improve the position and rights of nationalists by advancing the causes of republicanism. ‘Active republicanism’ developed policies, for example, to advance the position of the workers of Ireland, to improve housing conditions for lower socio-economic groups, as well as offering general policies to tackle social and economic injustices. In particular, inequality and discrimination in Northern Ireland were central to this project. Adams’s reforms were eventually to win out over Ó’Brádaigh’s *Éire Nua*, which was voted out as official policy at the 1982 party conference, in spite of Ó’Brádaigh’s pleas for it to be retained. This prompted Ó’Brádaigh’s resignation, believing that he would undermine the office of President of Sinn Féin if he remained in post where the majority of delegates did not support his policies, and Gerry Adams became the new Sinn Féin President.

Bean has argued that the push towards more active politics was the foundation that allowed the British state to co-opt and institutionalise republicanism as a mainstream social movement.<sup>25</sup> According to this perspective, increased community activism and civil society engagement in Northern Ireland drew republicans into a closer working relationship with the British state. British economic and social policy encouraged republicanism’s engagement, aiming to make them dependent on civil society for their social power. Republicanism soon became most effective as a social institution rather than a military one. In order for republicans to harness the full potential power from this new relationship with nationalist communities, it was necessary to emerge as their formal representatives in local and national elections. Republicans presented this as a new arena of struggle, but the nature of the change in their struggle could not be denied.

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<sup>24</sup> Adams, 1986, p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> Bean 2007, 2008.

This argument is highly compatible with my perspective, which places more emphasis upon how the consequences of electoral engagement compromised the party's radicalism once the decision to participate was made. The shift to active politics led the party to reconsider their degree of participation. At this stage there can be little doubt that republicans, including Adams and his followers, did not necessarily have peaceful and full electoral participation in mind when developing their critique of the existing politics of Sinn Féin and the IRA.<sup>26</sup> However, contingent circumstances coincided with this internal appraisal in a way that was to encourage Sinn Féin to pursue ambivalent electoral participation. British policy was tolerant of greater politicisation of republicanism rather than pursuing the proscription of Sinn Féin, and republicanism already had a history of pragmatic timely forays into electoral competition to suit their own propaganda value. Adams critique entailed fractionalising the republican struggle into short-term aims to sit alongside their long-term goals, which were most rationally pursued through participation. Into the midst of these developments came a critical juncture in the electoral path of republicanism in the form of the IRA hunger strikes of 1981-82, which offered an unmissable opportunity in the eyes of republican elites to pursue a popular mandate to forward their struggle. The question then becomes how exactly the organisational changes required by active republicanism and electoral contestation led to moderation and what was the nature of this moderation?

### **Ambivalent Electoral Participation and New Routes to Old Goals, 1981-1994**

The IRA prisoner hunger strikes provided Sinn Féin with an opportunity to explore the possibility of harnessing an electoral mandate for purely instrumental ends to achieve the short-term goal of reforms of prison conditions. From the leadership's perspective, elections offered the opportunity to pursue republican goals through a new avenue and perhaps allow them to implement their policy programme in a way that violence would not. The elections themselves and the parliaments which they were electing were both still considered to be completely illegitimate sovereign bodies in republican eyes. What is more, pursuing elections did not initially imply curtailing the military campaign and a dual electoral and military strategy was pursued from 1981 until 1994. When republicans initially

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<sup>26</sup> This is clear from Adams's vision which he called 'Active Abstentionism', RN, 1 May 1976

attempted to secure votes from broadly 'moderate' Catholics who would normally support the SDLP, this was done in the hope of radicalising these voters rather than diluting republican policies to meet their pre-existing preferences. In this regard, republicans pursued a decidedly ambivalent form of electoralism.

There is a fundamental tension inherent in ambivalent electoral participation by revolutionary movements. Once electoral participation is seen as instrumental to achieving short-term aims if not long-term goals, then it is necessary that a movement avails of this opportunity. This immediately raises the contradiction that if short-term reforms can be achieved within the confines of the existing political system this undermines the need for revolution and overthrowing the existing system.<sup>27</sup> This tension manifested itself in republicanism in spite of their attempts to maintain a sceptical stance towards their electoralism. The organisation also became re-oriented towards a reformist programme, limiting the resources and organisational capacity for revolution. There was no sign of voters' preferences radicalising and so Sinn Féin support was limited. Participation changed their relationship with the nationalist community and they now needed to recognise their preferences if they were to be electorally successful. Throughout this time it is possible to observe a continuing expansion of their policy programme, away from singular and simplistic goals for a united Ireland to a whole range of reformist policies aimed at Catholics in lower socio-economic groups. This was necessary to build electoral support. These were often grounded in a broad framework of Irish self-determination, but the ultimate goal of a united Ireland was now composed of a series of interim short-term aims to empower its supporters, such as tackling Catholic youth unemployment in Northern Ireland or housing conditions in parts of Dublin. As the policy programme of Sinn Féin became more about empowering supporters within the existing societies rather than outrightly overthrowing them, this represented a form of recognition, which provided the foundation for their future acceptance of existing institutions when they ended abstentionism to the Republic of Ireland.

In the late 1970s republican prisoners in the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland began to protest against the removal of their 'Special Category Status' by the British authorities, which essentially granted them the status of political rather than criminal prisoners. The protest initially took the form of refusing to wear prison uniforms and prisoners wrapped

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<sup>27</sup> Przeworski and Sprague, p. 1-2.

themselves naked in a blanket. Within two years this escalated into a ‘dirty protest’ and prisoners refused to slop-out or leave their cells to wash, instead smearing excrement on the walls of their cells. By 1981, amidst deteriorating conditions and following an earlier aborted hunger strike, a group of prisoners embarked upon a staggered hunger strike, ultimately resulting in the death of 10 prisoners. The prison conditions and the intransigence of the British government generated world-wide sympathy for the prisoners far beyond the traditional circles of republican supporters. When independent MP Frank Maguire died suddenly of a heart attack, republicans decided to field a hunger-striking prisoner as a candidate in the subsequent by-election in Fermangah-South Tyrone. Bobby Sands was duly elected to the Westminster parliament on a wave of public sympathy before dying less than one month later. Similarly, IRA hunger-striking prisoners Kieran Doherty and Paddy Agnew were elected to the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.<sup>28</sup> This success was to encourage republicans to contest all future elections in Ireland and Northern Ireland on an abstentionist basis from 1982 onwards and it became a watershed moment. The electoral participation of hunger striking prisoners can be considered a critical juncture not only because it represented a change in the dominant tactics used by republicans up until this point, but it also led to or consolidated other important changes. These included abandoning *Éire Nua*, changing the leadership from Ó’Brádaigh to Adams, and reorienting the organisation.

What is important to note about republicanism’s initial electoral participation was its strategic and ambivalent nature. Both Ó’Brádaigh and Adams could see that a widespread level of endorsement would increase their negotiating leverage with the British government. A mandate would also increase their access to decision-making processes over the future of Ireland and policy decisions that would impact upon republicanism. This was most evident in the belief that a mandate would increase the pressure for Thatcher’s government to negotiate with the hunger striking prisoners and in how Owen Carron, Bobby Sands’s electoral agent and his successor in the by-election following Sands’s death, attempted to use his position as an MP to gain meetings with the Irish government.<sup>29</sup> The decision to put forward Bobby Sands for election was framed as a temporary tactic to achieve a specific end and *An Phoblacht* described republicans as merely ‘borrowing’ the election to secure

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<sup>28</sup> For the best overview of the events, see Beresford, D. *Ten Men Dead. The Story of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike*. (London: Grafton, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> ‘Advice to Taoiseach about MP Owen Carron’s request for meeting, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1981’. DFA 2011/39/1824, *NAI*. See also the Statement by John Kelly, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Dáil on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1981, DFA 2011/39/1819, *NAI*.

better conditions for republican prisoners.<sup>30</sup> Their election ‘manifesto’ was simply a statement of the five demands made by prisoners for better conditions and nothing else. It was anticipated that an electoral victory would draw international attention to the position of republicans in Northern Ireland, expose the perceived hypocrisy of British democracy when it refused to accede to the demands of a democratically elected MP, and serve as a galvanising force for the nationalist community. The exact same motivations were behind the six prisoner candidates who competed in the Irish Dáil election in 1981. Given the instrumental nature of participation, this allowed republican leaders to reassure supporters this would not be about seeking an electoral mandate for the IRA, who made it clear that ‘the validity of our mandate...rests after the election, as before the election, upon the illegitimacy of partition and the British presence’.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout these initial forays into electoralism, republicanism maintained its right to an alternative claim to sovereignty and its right to use violence against illegitimate British rule. The IRA reminded its members that ‘The Republican attitude towards elections cannot be divorced from our total rejection of the six-county state... Our attitude to constitutional politics is quite simple and clear cut. There is no such thing as constitutional politics in this country’. However, they also went on to claim that ‘There is room for Republicans to examine if the struggle for independence can be improved by an intervention in the electoral process in order to show clearly that people support radical Republicanism and resistance to the British presence more than they support any other collaborationist tendency’.<sup>32</sup> The strategy pursued was the dual use of instrumental electoral contestation alongside violence, a strategy that came to be known as ‘The Armalite and the Ballot Box’ after a quip by Danny Morrison, former Belfast IRA member, director of publicity for Sinn Féin and editor of *An Phoblacht*, at the 1981 Party Conference who asked ‘who here really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone object if, with a ballot paper in one hand and the Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?’. Electoral victories were seen as an endorsement of the revolutionary republican approach rather than republicans seeing an electoral mandate as necessitating a dilution of their policy programme. Morrison argued that ‘The election of prisoner candidates, whose profile as IRA members their opponents and the media emphasised, and the recent local government

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<sup>30</sup> *AP*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1981, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *AP*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1981, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *AP*, 5<sup>th</sup> Sept 1981, p. 20.

elections in the North, show that the mood of the people is changing. They are far from war weary, far from defeat and not so far from victory'.<sup>33</sup>

Competing in elections, even in an ambivalent fashion, necessitated making appeals beyond their core supporters, fractionalising their struggle into a coherent set of short-term aims which would act as stages to achieving their long-term goal of reunification, and ultimately trying to secure a sizeable number of votes to avoid political marginalisation. Harnessing the instrumental power of elections necessitated building alliances within the electorate and adopting a 'broad front' perspective to court the support of individuals that might be sympathetic to the position of the hunger-striking prisoners, even if they would not usually be sympathetic to the radical tactics and goals of republicanism itself. Sworn enemies suddenly became potential allies, including SDLP and Fianna Fáil supporters and Catholic liberal professionals all of whom had been hitherto dismissed as 'Castle Catholics'.<sup>34</sup> Adams presented the new tactic to the republican base with the argument that 'The more people we have with us, the fewer we will have against us... We must build a united nationalist front against the British government. Of course, we will have differences and should be jealous of our own political philosophies but the five demands of the prisoners form sufficient basis for unity among the nationalist grass-roots of all the parties in this country'.<sup>35</sup> The consequence of this was that it changed republicanism's relationships with the nationalist electorate, the vast majority of whom were reformist in their predilections, an issue I return to shortly.

Expanding to secure the support of wider interests also required expanding their policy programme, something Adams and his supporters had been pushing for following the failure of the parallel state strategy. Even though the prisoner candidates ran on the basis of five specific demands, this narrow focus was soon broadened. After his election, Kieran Doherty's electoral agent announced that 'during the election campaign we stated we were only concerned with one issue...the hunger strikers' lives. Whilst this is by far our prime aim, people have proved by the large vote that they care. It is therefore our duty on behalf of Kieran Doherty and his comrades to help the ordinary people'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, during Owen

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<sup>33</sup> Danny Morrison speech at Bodinstown, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> 'Castle Catholic' referred to nationalists who accepted working through the existing parliamentary structures, derived from Stormont Castle where the Northern Irish parliament met. Republicans typically projected them as making personal gains by taking this position, even though it betrayed the Irish nation.

<sup>35</sup> *AP*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1981, p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> *AP*, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1981, p. 16.

Carron's campaign in the by-election following Sands's death, he pledged that 'he will spend all his time in the constituency as a full-time working MP, both for the prisoners and striving to solve the everyday problems of his constituents'.<sup>37</sup> Adams's plan to end 'spectator politics' co-aligned with need to represent the interests of 'ordinary people'. Soon Sinn Féin began to expand a more developed policy programme tackling reform based issues, including unemployment, housing, welfare, discrimination. Once the decision to participate in all elections was made, Sinn Féin began to produce broad election manifestos. Their 1989 manifesto for local elections in Northern Ireland contained policies on the environment, health, housing, social welfare, women, prisoners and culture. It was a similar picture in the Republic of Ireland and full manifestos were produced for the 1987 and 1989 General Elections, also offering reformist policies on a range of issues but with less emphasis on the conflict (although this was still present). By the late 1990s, these changes had become strongly embedded and comprehensive manifestos containing a range of reformist policies were the norm, steadily increasing in style and sophistication with each election. Of course these new issues were ultimately framed within the core concerns of republicanism, such as poor housing for nationalists being blamed upon British neo-colonial interests and discrimination stemming from the inherently sectarian nature of partition, but nonetheless the emphasis in policy changed with the need to cater for elections. Tonge has argued that this period exposed tensions in the dual military and political strategy. He cites the example of the 1983 election where Sinn Féin criticised the high levels of youth unemployment within the nationalist community while the IRA simultaneously discouraged inward investment for fear it would stabilise the statelet.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, according to the new electoral Sinn Féin, getting better housing conditions could be seen as a blow to British colonial interests and thus reforms within the existing system were worthy short-term aims prior to abolishing the systems in their entirety. The trouble was that this implied that the existing systems could be reformed and acknowledged that existing institutions could be used by republicans without losing long-term principles.

Once the idea became embedded that elections could provide another route by which to achieve republican goals, then it became necessary to maintain the early levels of success. However, after the hunger strikes were resolved and the popular emotion of this event was quelled, the republican vote share declined. Essentially, beyond a small core of the electorate, the majority of northern catholics and almost all of the Irish electorate accepted

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<sup>37</sup> *AP*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1981, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Tonge, 2006, p. 140.

the existing institutions as a valid reformist route to pursue and were willing to explore interim stages short of a united Ireland. Rather than Sinn Féin being able to radicalise the preferences of the moderates, Sinn Féin was forced to consider moving towards a moderate position to avoid political marginalisation. Much as Kitschelt has shown for socialist parties, the electoral strategies of elites need to take into account the preferences of the support base they wish to win over, and this can limit the radicalism of parties.<sup>39</sup>

While Sinn Féin hoped (and the British and Irish governments feared) that they would radicalise the preferences of mainstream nationalists this was not forthcoming. In fact, the preferences of nationalist voters' were decidedly more moderate with little appetite for the radicalism of republicans.<sup>40</sup> What is more, within the nationalist bloc, political competition is structured solely around one dimension – the ethno-nationalist dimension.<sup>41</sup> Therefore if republican policies did not appeal to nationalist voters on this basis, they were liable to be marginalised politically. Yet the preferences of nationalist voters were not based around an unswerving and over-riding Irish identity that necessitated a territorial expression. Whyte analysed polling data from the 1960s-1980s and found that the number of Catholics who described themselves as having an Irish political identity was falling, from 76 percent in 1968, to 69 percent in 1978 and to 61 percent in 1986. Indeed, by 1986, 20 percent of Catholics thought of themselves as having a Northern Irish political identity.<sup>42</sup> He also found limited support for a united Ireland, stating that 'there is far from complete support among Catholics for a united Ireland. True, as a long-term objective it receives widespread acceptance. In 1974, 77 percent and in 1982 82 percent of Catholics favoured a united Ireland sometime in the future. But when asked about it as an immediate objective, the proportions are much lower. In only one poll did a majority of Catholics give any kind of a united Ireland as their preferred solution'.<sup>43</sup> Instead by far the most popular solution among Catholics was for some form of power-sharing. 'Among Catholics, [power-sharing] has

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<sup>39</sup> Kitschelt.

<sup>40</sup> The entrenched nature of the bi-confessional divide in the Northern Irish party system meant that Sinn Féin would only focus on Catholic nationalist voters and stood almost no chance of attracting protestant unionist support. For example, in 2007 only 2 per cent of Roman Catholics supported the main unionist parties and only 4 per cent of Protestants claim to back nationalist parties. This trend has been the same throughout the history of Northern Ireland. Hence, this section purely focuses on the preferences of nationalist voters.

<sup>41</sup> Evans, G. and M. Duffy. 'Beyond the Sectarian Divide: The Social Bases and Political Consequences of Nationalist and Unionist Party Competition in Northern Ireland'. *British Journal of Political Science* 27(1) 1997, pp. 47-81; Tilley, J., G. Evans & C. Mitchell. 'Consociationalism and the Evolution of Political Cleavages in Northern Ireland, 1989-2004'. *British Journal of Political Science* 38(4) 2008, pp. 699-717; Tilley, J. and G. Evans. 'Political Generations in Northern Ireland'. *European Journal of Political Research* 50(5) 2011, pp. 583-608.

<sup>42</sup> Whyte, J. *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 67-69.

<sup>43</sup> Whyte, 1990, p. 80.

normally been the most popular first preference, with percentages selecting it in the thirties and forties. If asked where it is acceptable, percentages rise much higher – to 88 in April 1974, 83 in January 1978, 75 in May 1982, 78 in January 1986, 77 again in February 1989'.<sup>44</sup> Similar findings have been evident when looking at a longer time-span too. In an analysis of all generally available public opinion data looking at ethno-national preferences in Northern Ireland between 1968 and 2005, Coakley found that 50% of Catholics opted for joint British and Irish citizenship while only 29% opted for just Irish citizenship. What is more, while Catholics generally overwhelmingly identified with the 'Irish' ethno-national identity (over 90%), a very large proportion were able to identify with a 'Northern Irish' ethno-national identity too (over 70%). Between 1989 and 1996, only approximately 50% of Catholic nationalists described themselves as very strongly or strongly committed to Irish unity (over 80% of their Protestant counterparts were very strongly or strongly committed to maintaining the union with Britain).<sup>45</sup> Support for the use of violence was also limited, with only 13% of Catholics stating that there was a right to take up arms in 1968 and 25% viewing violence as legitimate in 1973.<sup>46</sup> Although it is acknowledged that survey data typically underestimate the level of support for political violence,<sup>47</sup> even when asked about the level of sympathy for groups who have used violence in 1998, only 7% of Catholics had a lot of sympathy, 21% had little sympathy and 72% had no sympathy.<sup>48</sup> These findings were echoed by Fahey *et al* who found some latent sympathy for the IRA, but that this did not translate into votes. They too found that support for Irish unity was nowhere near unanimous within the nationalist electorate in Northern Ireland and a sizeable minority even preferred to remain within the United Kingdom.<sup>49</sup> With this preference structure in place, Sinn Féin was never going to be able to win widespread nationalist support on the basis of denying the existing institutions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

At the same time there were important developments in British and Irish policy. The Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) of 1985 was the British and Irish government's response to the perceived threat that republicanism's dual strategy posed. The AIA reaffirmed the status

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Coakley, J. 'National Identity in Northern Ireland: Stability or Change?'. *Nations and Nationalism* 13(4) 2007, pp. 573-597.

<sup>46</sup> Hayes, B.C. and I. McAllister. 'Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland'. *Political Studies* 49(5) 2001, p. 913.

<sup>47</sup> Breen, R. 'Why is Support for Extreme Parties Underestimated by Surveys? A Latent Case Analysis'. *British Journal of Political Science* 30(2) 2000, pp. 375-382.

<sup>48</sup> Hayes and McAllister, p. 914.

<sup>49</sup> Fahey, T., B.C. Hayes & R. Sinnott. *Conflict and Consensus. A study of values and attitudes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*. (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, but it explicitly acknowledged that the British government would allow Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland if this was the will of the majority of its inhabitants. Additionally, it established an intergovernmental conference which gave the Republic of Ireland a consultative role into Northern Irish policy, thus implicitly acknowledging that existing British sovereignty alone was not an adequate way to govern the region.<sup>50</sup> What is more, the AIA was imposed over the heads of dissenting unionist politicians and voters, who initially attempted to block and prevent its implementation. The British and Irish governments hoped that the AIA would boost the electoral fortunes of the SDLP by highlighting that the unionist community could no longer block nationalist politics and that the British government was a relatively neutral arbiter in deciding the future of Northern Ireland. It allowed the Dublin government to get some implicit acknowledgement of its sovereignty claim and to channel this through the newly established intergovernmental conference, showing that the politics of consent were a viable option to pursue. O'Duffy describes this as creating symmetrical intergovernmental relationships where previously there were asymmetries of British power and it created bi-national sovereignty in Northern Ireland.<sup>51</sup>

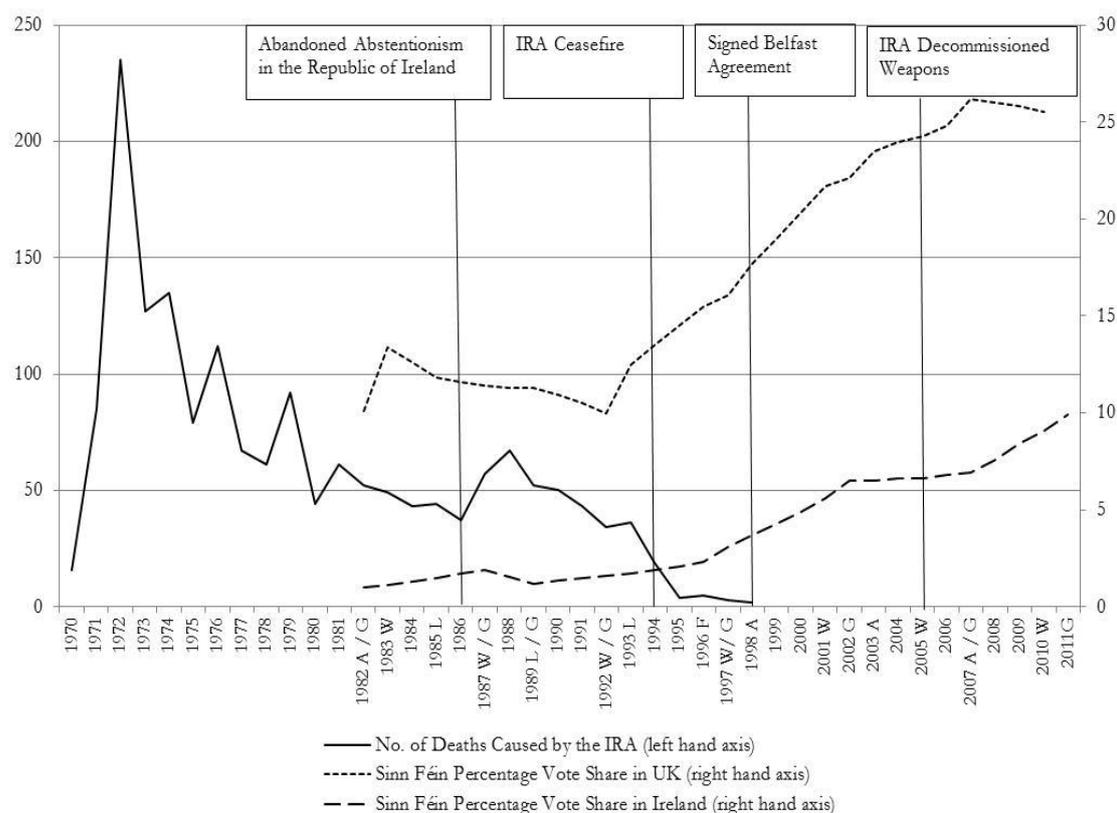
The preference structure of Irish nationalists combined with the AIA had the potential to marginalise republicanism and they needed to respond to avoid this happening. Even after the emotions of the hunger strikes had been quelled, Sinn Féin's vote share in Northern Ireland began to stagnate but after the AIA was introduced, it even saw a slight decline. Their vote share fell from 13.4% in the 1983 Westminster general election to 11.4% in the 1987 general election. In fact, their vote share stagnated at approximately 10% until 1993, when they began to talk of a ceasefire. In the same elections, the SDLP vote share rose from 17.9% to 21.1% between 1983 and 1987. In the two general elections in the Republic of Ireland in 1987 and 1989, the party polled less than 2 percent of first preference votes (see Figure 1)

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<sup>50</sup> O'Duffy, B. 'British and Irish Conflict Regulation from Sunningdale to Belfast. Part II: Playing for a draw 1985-1999'. *Nations and Nationalism* 6(3) 2000, pp. 399-435; Aughey, A. and C. Gormley-Heenan. 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement: 25 Years On'. *The Political Quarterly* 82(3) 2011, pp. 389-397.

<sup>51</sup> O'Duffy, 2000; O'Duffy, B. 'British and Irish Conflict Regulation from Sunningdale to Belfast. Part I: Tracing the Status of Contesting Sovereigns'. *Nations and Nationalism* 5(4) 1999, pp. 523-42.

**Figure 1:** *The number of deaths caused by the IRA compared against the percentage vote share of Sinn Féin.*<sup>52</sup>



**Notes:** A=Northern Ireland Assembly Election, F=Northern Ireland Forum Election, G=Republic of Ireland General Election, L=Northern Ireland Local Government Election, W=Westminster Election. In proportional elections, the vote share is measured by percentage of first preferences.

In addition, Sinn Féin also participated in three other local elections in Northern Ireland not displayed here, but which fit the same trend. The party obtained 16.9 percent in 1997, 20.7 percent in 2001 and 23.3 percent in 2005.

Therefore, an unintended consequence of the AIA was that it laid the foundation for republicanism to be more participatory. The first step was to begin recognising the existing institutions in the Republic of Ireland even while continuing to deny their legitimacy. In Ireland in 1979 republicans began to recognise courts in an attempt to get the better of new anti-terrorist legislation. This legislation increased the penalty on conviction of IRA membership from six months imprisonment to between two and seven years imprisonment, summarily imposed without needing to produce any witnesses beyond the word of a senior police officer if the defendant refused to recognise the court. Needless to say, the republican admiration of maintaining a principled denial of the legitimacy of the

<sup>52</sup> Adapted from Sutton, M. *Bear in Mind these Dead...An Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland.* <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/book/index.html> Accessed: April 2012.

court was rapidly replaced by a strategic recognition. By denying membership the prosecution was required to present a stronger case with independent witnesses in order to secure conviction. This led to Jack Lynch, the Taoiseach at the time, apologising to Margaret Thatcher for how the legislation ‘backfired by leading the IRA to abandon its policy of not recognising the courts’,<sup>53</sup> yet in hindsight recognition brought them into closer contact with the state’s moderating institutions. The further usefulness of accepting the courts system soon became evident to republicans, who used them to challenge the legality of legislation banning Sinn Féin from the public airwaves in Ireland, albeit unsuccessfully. Recognition in Britain soon followed. In fact, at the 1982 party conference a delegate proposed prohibiting Sinn Féin members from recognising the Irish courts, but this was soundly defeated.

By 1985, a far more difficult process of recognition was underway – a move to abandon abstentionism in the Republic of Ireland and for any elected Sinn Féin TDs to take their seats in the Dáil. Dogmatists within republicanism, led by Ruairí Ó’Brádaigh, argued that abstentionism was an inviolable principle and could not be altered without weakening the ideological foundation of republicanism. According to Ó’Brádaigh, ‘entry into [the Irish parliament] meant *de facto* acceptance of the...army, and would enmesh Sinn Féin in constitutionalism. All previous moves by republicans into Leinster House had only strengthened the state and weakened the movement’.<sup>54</sup> There was also the fear that it would damage the IRA by diverting funds and lead to a need to abandon and pathologise the right to armed struggle. The counterview was summed up by Tom Hartley, Sinn Féin General Secretary, who argued that ‘there is a principle riding above all principles and that is the principle of success’.<sup>55</sup> For Adams, abandoning abstentionism was the next logical step to ending spectator politics. Republicans needed to acknowledge political realities rather than offering vague utopias and that entailed engaging with those political institutions that the people of Ireland accepted as legitimate, even if Republicans did not. Adams declared his position as being about recognising the reality of the preferences of potential supporters in Ireland:

We know that Leinster House...is a partitionist parliament, but my attitude to it is exactly the same as my attitude to a British court. Fighting a case in the British court does not mean you recognise the legitimacy or sovereignty or

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<sup>53</sup> ‘Report of meeting between Taoiseach and British Prime Minister’, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1979. TAOIS 2010/19/1646, *NAI*.

<sup>54</sup> *AP*, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 1986, p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> *AP*, 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 1985, p. 7.

validity of that court but that you recognise the reality: you either fight your case or you go to jail. Partition has had an effect in the 26 Counties. The state pretends to be a nation and many people believe it is a nation.<sup>56</sup>

Ultimately the reformers won on the back of the argument that Sinn Féin needed to be more competitive electorally and if republicanism was to be successful it needed popular support which would only come by recognising the preferences of the nationalist electorate. The IRA lifted their constitutional embargo on members taking seats in parliament and Sinn Féin voted to abandon abstentionism for candidates competing in elections to the Republic of Ireland at its party conference of 1986. However, again this decision was made within the context of continually asserting the right to armed struggle.<sup>57</sup> Ó'Brádaigh and a small group of supporters split from the movement and formed their own rival group 'Republican Sinn Féin', which retained a commitment to abstentionism and returned to the earlier *Éire Nua* federal policy. This split did not ultimately damage Provisional republicanism taking very few of the grassroots with them. In fact, it consolidated the power of the pragmatists by removing dogmatists who could potentially bloc any further policy changes.

Throughout this phase, ambivalent electoral participation couldn't stop the logic of electoralism taking hold within the party. Believing in the legitimacy of the elections was not a pre-requisite for them to have a moderating effect. The distribution of voters' preferences and the fear of political marginalisation encouraged Sinn Féin to re-evaluate some of its existing practices and increase their degree of recognition and participation within the systems that it still considered illegitimate. Yet the consequences of increased participation were becoming clear. McIntyre has argued that a lasting legacy of ending abstentionism was that it represented an implicit acknowledgement by republicans that Fianna Fáil's form of Irish nationalism was the appropriate one and that the Republic of Ireland was a complete nation and the struggle should be confined to Northern Ireland rather than Ireland as a whole. This greatly undermined their anti-partition ideology.<sup>58</sup> Hitherto, the party had tried to avoid seeing Northern Ireland in an irredentist light for fear

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<sup>56</sup> *AP*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1986, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> The IRA's decision was also internally controversial and the sole surviving member of the sacred Second Dáil of 1921, Tom Maguire, publicly declared that 'I do not recognise the legitimacy of any army council styling itself on the Council of the Irish Republican Army which lends support to any person or organisation styling itself as Sinn Féin and prepared to enter the partition parliament of Leinster House'. *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 1986, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> McIntyre, p. 112.

of legitimating the existing Republic of Ireland and thus legitimating partition.<sup>59</sup> However, accepting the Republic of Ireland parliament and now wishing to merge with it suddenly transformed Northern Ireland to an irredentist claim rather than seeing both states as partitioned neo-colonies. Increased participation and all this entailed was undermining their stance on partition and the need for revolution in two states.

### **Consolidating Electoral Moderation through Success, 1995-2010**

After abandoning violence as a tactic and replacing this with the exclusive pursuit of electoral mandates, Sinn Féin became ever more moderate as electoral success became more important. The party needed to make itself coalitionable to get into power so it could legislate its goal of a united Ireland into existence. Acceptance of elections as providing a form of political order (and therefore violence was not necessary) occurred mainly through the peace process and, indeed, there is no reason to think that republicanism's tension between participating in elections while mounting a violence anti-system campaign would have been resolved without the peace process negotiations. However, elections were also pertinent in this decision.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s there were certainly some internal critiques of how violence might be hindering vote shares which failed to rise even after ending abstentionism, but these debates were limited in scope. Internal concerns regarding IRA violence first surfaced not by focusing on the right to armed struggle *per se*, but on the damage caused by IRA operations that resulted in civilian casualties. What is more, when it came to making a choice between these alternatives, it is clear that there was a greater popular desire for reforms and political advancement than there was for militant action.<sup>60</sup> Alongside this internal critique of IRA violence, Sinn Féin was engaged in peace talks (to be explored fully in the next chapter) and these two factors influenced the IRA's decision to declare a ceasefire in 1994. This had an immediate and positive impact upon Sinn Féin's vote share in UK elections, which began to rise from 1993 given the widely anticipated nature of the ceasefire.

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<sup>59</sup> Tommy McKearney, former IRA member turned Provisional critic, has outlined the reasons behind the original desire to avoid seeing the conflict as an irredentist one. McKearney, p. 96.

<sup>60</sup> Evans and Tonge, p. 1016.

The peace talks consolidated republicans' attitude to elections as strategic tools to secure their goals. During the course of the peace negotiations republicans repeatedly used their electoral mandate to increase their leverage and criticise the British government and Unionist politicians for stalling the peace process by refusing to negotiate with Sinn Féin without IRA decommissioning, something Sinn Féin claimed violated the electoral democratic rights of their supporters. Much of Sinn Féin's attitude to elections at this time is revealed through the Northern Ireland Forum elections of 1996. The Northern Ireland Forum was an idea that emerged in the peace process and it was an elected body which it was hoped would be used to produce negotiating teams for subsequent all-party peace talks. Republicans immediately dismissed the idea, labelling it an attempt 'to set in place an assembly with a unionist majority' and a 'delaying tactic' to strengthen the unionists' position.<sup>61</sup> In fact, so deep were republican reservations about this body that it was one of a series of factors that influenced the decision by the IRA to abandon their ceasefire and resume a bombing campaign on the British mainland that was to last between February 1996 and July 1997. Yet in spite of the depth of these reservations, in April Adams announced 'we will be taking part in the elections to give leadership at this very crucial time to seek a re-endorsement of our peace strategy and to return a strong republican voice which makes it clear there is no going back to unionist domination'.<sup>62</sup> Following Sinn Féin's highest ever poll the party then gloated

it was John Major who trumped the elections as a gateway to negotiations and Sinn Féin could not have wished for a more resounding mandate to enter those talks. The election should have helped to bring home a very important point to the British government... Quite simply, there cannot be peace when a large section of people are excluded. By demanding entry to talks on those terms Sinn Féin is saying: our voters are not second-class citizens.<sup>63</sup>

Republicans also realised this worked both ways and without a mandate they could not secure their goals. When selling the peace process settlement, which fell well short of the traditional goal of Irish reunification, to their own supporters McGuinness stated that:

A united Ireland was not attainable in this phase not just because of Unionist opposition but because of all the participants only Sinn Féin was advocating and promoting that objective. To the extent that our political strength permitted us to promote all of our positions we did so. A stronger electoral mandate would conceivably have affected the outcome of the talks in any number of ways. We need to learn the lesson of that.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *AP*, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1996, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> *AP*, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1996, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> *AP*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1996, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> *AP*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1998, p. 19.

Sinn Féin was also seeing the potential political gains that could be secured through an electoral mandate in the Republic of Ireland. In advance of the Irish general election of 1997, polls were predicting the narrowest of victories for Fianna Fáil, which raised the possibility of them relying on minor coalition parties to form a government. Prior to the election, Adams declared that ‘in the event of the vote of a Sinn Féin TD being sought to elect a government his party would have a “shopping list”. This would be based first on the needs of the constituency Sinn Féin will represent, second on the “social and economic issues that press down on our communities” and overall on the advance of the peace process’.<sup>65</sup> Once again, Sinn Féin was realising that its electoral mandate could give them political leverage to secure goals and, interestingly, the reforms now clearly took preference over the long-term goals. However, political reality soon shook them when it was made very clear by Fianna Fáil that they considered Sinn Féin to be a totally unacceptable coalition partner, a position they remain in with all major parties in the Republic of Ireland to this day.

Once the new consociational arrangements were in place in Northern Ireland, this further consolidated Sinn Féin’s more moderate electoral positioning. As already noted, the fact that competition within the nationalist bloc was only based around one dimension – the ethno-national dimension – incentivised Sinn Féin to move closer to the SDLP position and the position of the moderate median nationalist voter in a Downsian logic. Additionally, the consociational arrangement encouraged moderation within each bloc because the size of parties’ electoral support was now proportionately linked to executive and legislative power which acted as a serious incentive for the ‘extreme’ parties to moderate and increase their vote share.<sup>66</sup> Prior to the acceptance of the Belfast Agreement and in the first few years following its endorsement, McAllister found that Sinn Féin’s electoral growth was fuelled by harnessing hitherto non-voters and newly enfranchised young voters.<sup>67</sup> However, more recently Sinn Féin’s growth has come from attracting voters who would previously have voted for the SDLP, even seeing some expansion into middle-class professionals who traditionally eschewed Sinn Féin.<sup>68</sup> What is more, prior to 1998, SDLP voters had been somewhat reticent about transferring lower preference votes to Sinn

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<sup>65</sup> *AP*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1997, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup> Garry, J. ‘Consociation and its critics: Evidence from the historic Northern Ireland Assembly election 2007’. *Electoral Studies* 28 2009, pp. 458-466.

<sup>67</sup> McAllister, I. ‘The Armalite and Ballot Box. Sinn Féin’s Electoral Strategy in Northern Ireland’. *Electoral Studies* 23 2004, pp. 123-142.

<sup>68</sup> Evans and Tonge, p. 1025.

Féin candidates, however, since Sinn Féin endorsed the Belfast Agreement the levels of transfers from the SDLP to Sinn Féin has increased markedly. For example, Knox found that in the 1993 local elections in Northern Ireland (the only elections in Northern Ireland using a transferable voting system prior to the restoration of a Northern Ireland parliament), the SDLP were the only party not to transfer votes as expected within their bloc, i.e. to the other nationalist party of Sinn Féin, preferring the Alliance Party, and SDLP voters were more likely to not transfer to a Sinn Féin candidate than they were to transfer to them.<sup>69</sup> In the first Assembly elections in Northern Ireland in 1998, there was an improving but still generally low level of transfers from the SDLP to Sinn Féin, with Sinn Féin receiving 45% of SDLP terminal transfers or 8% of total transfers to Sinn Féin came from the SDLP.<sup>70</sup> However, by the 2011 Assembly election this had increased to almost 13% of all Sinn Féin transfers coming from the SDLP. There was also a marked increase in the proportion of transfers received from Alliance Party voters during the same time period.<sup>71</sup>

The starkness of the change can be discerned from an empirical analysis of republicanism's changing policy position relative to that of the SDLP over time. Benoit and Laver devised a computerised method for deriving policy positions from political texts that is as reliable and valid as hand-coding.<sup>72</sup> Using this technique to examine the annual 'Bodenstown Commemoration'<sup>73</sup> speech delivered by a different senior republican each year and to compare them to the SDLP policy position, the extent and timing of the change is illuminated (full details are in the Appendix). Figure 2 shows the changing policy positions of republicanism between 1970 and 2010. In this graph, a score of -1 represents republicanism's starting policy position in 1970, namely a revolutionary and violent one. A score of +1, represents the SDLP's policy position of 1980, namely a reformist and wholly constitutional one. The left-hand axis gives each speech's estimated policy position as a score between -1 and +1, along with the upper and lower confidence intervals that act as a measure of the certainty of that score. On the right hand axis is the number of deaths

<sup>69</sup>Knox, C. 'Emergence of Power Sharing in Northern Ireland: lessons from Local Government'. *Journal of Conflict Studies* 16(1) 1996.

<sup>70</sup> Evans, G. and B. O'Leary. 'Northern Irish Voters and the British-Irish Agreement: Foundations of a Stable Consociational Settlement'. *The Political Quarterly* 71(1) 2000, p. 89.

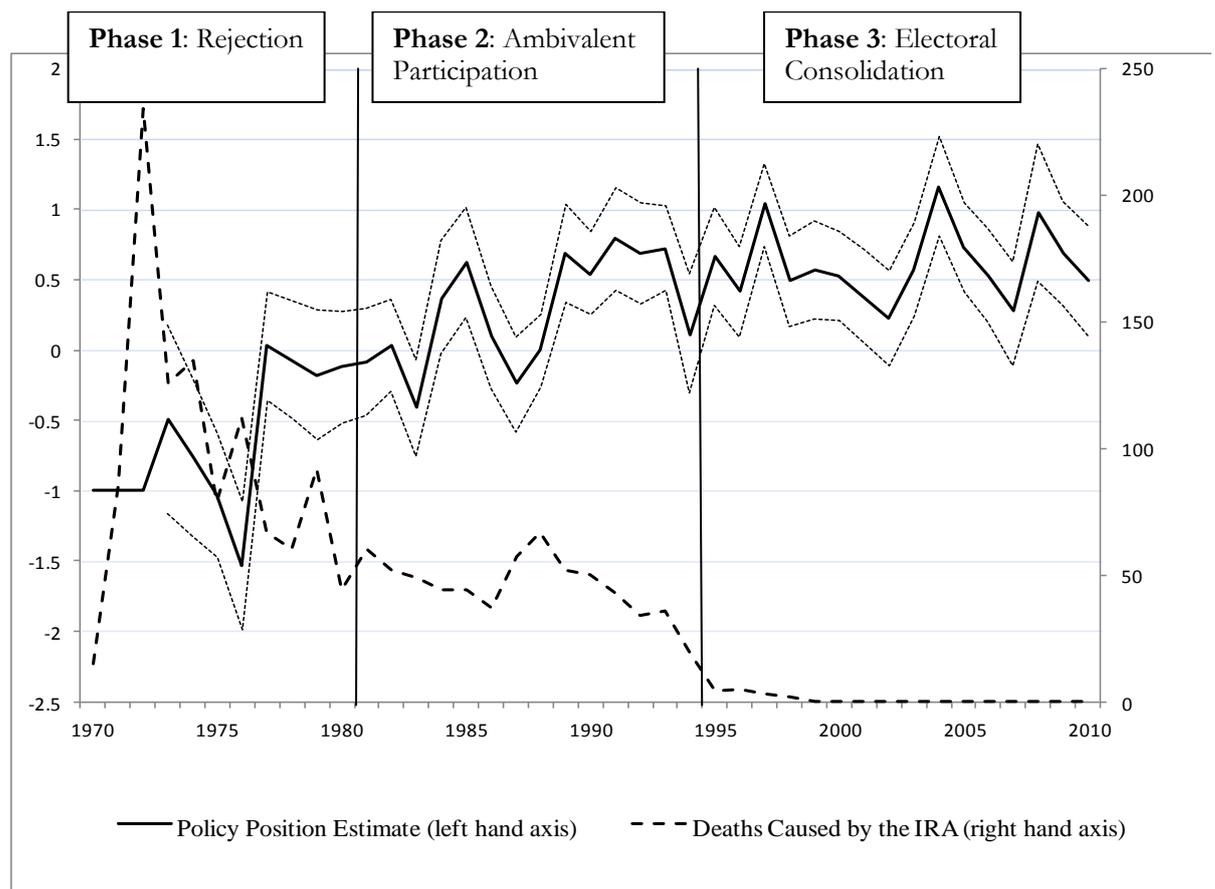
<sup>71</sup> Evans, J. and J. Tonge. 'From Abstentionism to Enthusiasm: Sinn Féin, Nationalist Electors and Support for Devolved Power-Sharing in Northern Ireland'. *Irish Political Studies* 28(1) 2013, pp. 39-57.

<sup>72</sup> Laver, M., K. Benoit and J. Garry. 'Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data'. *American Political Science Review* 97(2) 2003, pp. 311-331.

<sup>73</sup> In June every year since their foundation, Republicans make a pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave in Bodenstown, Co. Kildare where a series of speeches are delivered. These speeches are seen as a key opportunity for elites to float policy ideas to activists.

caused by the IRA in any given year. The graph broadly shows that Sinn Féin have slowly moved closer to the SDLP position and today they occupy the same policy position as the reformist and non-violent policies of the SDLP. Republicanism's policy positions can be grouped into three phases. Between 1970 and 1980, republicanism was consistently revolutionary, with all scores between -1 and 0, although the confidence intervals cross 0 towards the end of the decade. The period between 1981 and 1994 is more ambivalent, with the policy score and confidence intervals crossing 0 and moving between revolutionary and reformist policy positions. However, by the third phase between 1995 and 2010, republicanism adopted consistently reformist positions close to a score of +1, occupying the policy position of the SDLP.

**Figure 2:** The Changing Policy Position (and confidence intervals) of Irish Republicanism along a 'Revolutionary-Reformist' Dimension (left hand axis) and the Number of Deaths Caused by the IRA (right hand axis) between 1970 and 2010.



**Notes:** For the policy position, a score of -1 indicates a violent and revolutionary policy position (derived from republicanism's policy position in 1970) while a score of +1 indicates a peaceful and reformist policy position (derived from the speech of the President of the SDLP to the party conference in 1980).

To ensure that the changing policy position does not merely reflect a change in the meaning of words over time, the same analysis was undertaken using the SDLP speech from 2010 to derive the reformist policy position. This revealed the same pattern in Republicanism's changing policy position over time, with a Pearson's correlation of 0.825,  $p=000$  between the 1980 and the 2010 analyses.

Values for 1974, 1978 and 2001 are imputed as the mid-point between the preceding and proceeding values. The original texts of these speeches were publicly unavailable.

None of this should be taken to imply that republicans have become unalloyed vote seekers. They have certainly extensively changed their short-term policies but without having to change their long-term goals and underlying beliefs in the illegitimacy of Northern Ireland and British sovereignty. Mitchell *et al.* found that while the preferences of Northern nationalists are certainly moderate and many voters endorse peace, prosperity and power-sharing, they simultaneously want the strongest voice possible to protect their ethno-national interests within the power-sharing institutions.<sup>74</sup> As a result, Sinn Féin were able to moderate in terms of endorsing participation, accepting elections as a form of political order, agreeing to abide by their outcomes and rejecting violence. However, they never needed to renounce their institutional history of violence or the right to armed struggle and, in fact, their radical tendencies and history became an electoral asset as long as they abided by the principles of the Belfast Agreement. In this way, the elites were able to maintain their long-term goals and merely recalibrate the emphasis that they put upon them, favouring instead the short-term aims of reform and improving the position of the nationalist community within Northern Ireland. This is not to underestimate the very real changes that the party underwent, but it is to state that while Northern Ireland may have undergone a pluralisation of sovereignty and nationalism,<sup>75</sup> Sinn Féin certainly did not. They retained their traditional stances on Irish sovereignty and the illegitimacy of British rule and any attempts to stay within the union. However, the means changed in a rational response to a changing environment and in an effort to secure long-standing goals through new departures.

## How Change Was Possible

A useful point to consider is how the changes in direction, which were at times incremental and at times dramatic, were possible within republicanism. Crucially republican leaders were

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<sup>74</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O'Leary.

<sup>75</sup> O'Duffy, 2000.

autonomous enough within their organisation to impose significant changes without being constrained by their membership and while still retaining their support. Müller and Strøm have shown that when a party's elite wishes to change their policy position in a way that might be seen to be in conflict with previously held ideological principles, the extent to which the leadership is able to impose a new direction depends on institutional constraints such as: leaders' accountability to party activists; the extent to which policy-making is decentralised within the party; whether the party is reliant on activist funding or public funding; the extent to which electoral results depend upon policy positions; and potential coalition outcomes.<sup>76</sup> In the case of the IRA and Sinn Féin, there was a high degree of leadership autonomy from the grassroots and there were high levels of satisfaction and trust in the leadership which allowed them to move in new strategic directions. What is more, the new direction was ultimately electorally successful.

Given that the IRA was a hierarchical military organisation, decisions were made largely autonomously from the input of soldiers who were disciplined and conditioned to follow executive orders. In addition to this, Moloney has argued that policy decisions by the IRA's Army Council were typically accepted without dispute or questioning because the Army Council, according to republican tradition and lore, was the rightful government of a united Ireland with direct continuity back to the Second Dáil. Moloney argues that the Army Council was 'spiritual, conferred by the blood sacrifice of those who fought and died to attain the Irish Republic and by the will of the whole Irish people who had voted for it back in 1919. The status of government was bestowed upon the Army Council in 1938 when the handful of surviving anti-Treaty members of the Second Dáil, the last all-Ireland and independent parliament, agreed to pass on their authority to its seven members for safekeeping, lest it disappear with their deaths. Thereafter when Volunteers of the IRA...swore their allegiance to the Army Council, it was really to this almost mystical administration that they pledged their loyalty'.<sup>77</sup> The Army Council was composed of seven appointed members who determined the policy of the IRA as well as appointing its Chief-of-Staff, who in turn maintained command over the day-to-day operations of the IRA. In theory the Army Council was subordinate to a General Army Council composed of the rank and file of the entire IRA and which was supposed to meet every two years. However, in reality, all power was really embodied in the Army Council because it was typically too risky to convene a meeting with every member of the IRA for fear of mass arrests and the

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<sup>76</sup> Müller, W.C. and K. Strøm. 'Political Parties and Hard Choices' in Müller and Strøm, pp. 1-35.

<sup>77</sup> Moloney, p. 375-6.

difficult logistics of such a task for an illegal organisation. Therefore, a small group of leaders at the top of the organisation determined policy and used the authoritarian structure and mythical aura of their position to impose this upon their followers.

Sinn Féin is a more democratic organisation in terms of their operation, but they too in reality have a highly powerful and autonomous leadership. Sinn Féin's constitution appears to vest power in the membership of the party in many key respects, such as policy making, choosing the party leader, and selecting candidates to run for election. However, closer examination typically shows that actual power lies with the leadership of the organisation, namely a powerful 12-person *Ard Chomhairle* or Party Executive. A case of seeming branch member power actually being subordinate to the leadership is evident in how the party's President is chosen. Sinn Féin's President is elected each year by all members at the annual conference, but Gerry Adams has been elected unopposed since 1983 and before that Ó'Brádaigh was elected unopposed from 1970 to his resignation in 1983. Similarly, whilst election candidates can be chosen and nominated by party members at constituency conventions, all candidates have to be subsequently approved by a sub-committee of the Party Executive.

As with most political parties, policy is created by a policy committee but it requires approval at the annual party conference before becoming Sinn Féin policy. However, typically the party conference accepted policies proposed by the leadership largely uncritically or else they were not given the opportunity to vote on controversial policies which were often removed from discussion and referred to the Party Executive. A British official described the use of this tactic at their 1975 party conference where 'the order of business was worked out in advance by a steering committee, which effectively ensured that the more contentious items were not reached. Thus, motions dealing with reactivation of the campaign for withdrawal of British forces in Ireland and "that powers of decision for election purposes be returned to Sinn Féin", were not taken'.<sup>78</sup> Issues not voted upon were instead left for the Party Executive to decide. A similar tactic was evident at the 1977 party conference where scheduled debates about the tactics to be used in fighting direct elections to the European Parliament and trade union relationships were prevented by Gerry Adams and Niall Fagan (a member of the Sinn Féin executive who would subsequently walk out with Ó'Brádaigh over the decision to end abstentionism in 1986), who persuaded the

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<sup>78</sup> Letter from R.M. Harris to British Embassy on Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 1975. FCO 87/411, N.A.

delegates to leave the issue to the discretion of the Party Executive.<sup>79</sup> The British rather scathingly referred to this as ‘typical of the dictatorial way in which the *Ard Chomhairle* runs Provisional Sinn Féin’.<sup>80</sup> By the 1980s, leadership dominance of the party was being consolidated even further through organizational changes necessitated by the decision to contest elections. The 1982 annual conference passed a number of changes to the Sinn Féin Constitution that essentially increased the power of the central party over regional branches, notably in terms of granting Sinn Féin elected officials *ex officio* membership on all local committees, entrusted Party Executive members to implement and coordinate policy across all Sinn Féin departments, and set up regional conferences to ‘gauge grassroots opinion’ prior to the national conference.<sup>81</sup> These were deemed necessary to allow greater coordination for the new electoral orientation but this also had the effect of consolidating the leadership’s ability to lead on policy direction at the expense of grassroots branch members.

Not all decisions could be removed from the grassroots, especially the contentious ones, but those that went to the conference were carefully managed. The three most significant examples of these are the decision to abandon federalism and *Éire Nua*, the decision to end abstentionism in 1986, and the decision to accept the Belfast Agreement and participate in the new Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998. The decision to end federalism, although actually resulting in increased engagement and reformism, was framed and presented as a hardening of republicanism by Adams. He argued that federalism represented a ‘sop to unionists’, and that ‘we must recognise that loyalists are a national political minority whose basis is economic and whose philosophy is neo-fascist, anti-nationalist, and anti-democratic. We cannot, and we should not, ever tolerate, or compromise with loyalism’.<sup>82</sup> Ironically, although abandoning federalism was the start of a process of incremental moderation, it was framed as a way to shore up republicanism and protect it from compromise. When this was combined with the added dimension that the debate over federalism and *Éire Nua* also represented a confrontation between Northern republicans looking to take control of the movement from Southern republicans, the policy was rejected and ‘active republicanism’ was adopted. When it came to ending abstentionism, it was harder to present this as a hardening of republicanism, so instead Adams and his followers emphasised that the

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<sup>79</sup> *Hibernia*, October 1977.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Irish Embassy to Whitehall on 1977 Sinn Féin Party Conference (Barrie to Cowper Coles). CJ 4/1796, NA.

<sup>81</sup> *AP*, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1982, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *AP*, 5<sup>th</sup> November 1981, p. 6.

changes in direction were strategic and not about compromising or rejecting long-standing goals. Throughout key stages of republicanism's changing direction, both Adams and McGuinness 'drew on their prestige as Provisional militants, the movement's traditions of loyalty, and the weakness of the republican theoretical tradition' to allow the leaders to control the party 'using the ethos of the Army'.<sup>83</sup> Lynn has suggested that the process of ending abstentionism in 1986 is highly instructive of how republican leaders managed and presented change to the grassroots without losing their support.<sup>84</sup> Prior to voting on the motion at the party conference, Martin McGuinness, who was seen as a committed militarist by the republican base, gave a speech declaring that war against Britain would 'never, never, never' end until freedom had been achieved even if the party took their seats in the Irish Dáil. This was seen as a defining moment in assuaging grassroots' fears about the changing direction. A similar tendency was evident in the presentation of the Belfast Agreement for ratification to the party membership. A constructive ambiguity was created around republicanism's commitment to the armed struggle by implementing the strategy known as 'TUAS, which for some audiences meant Totally UnArmed Strategy while for other audiences it meant the Tactical Use of Armed Struggle'.<sup>85</sup> In this context, Adams's key phrase of 'a new phase of the struggle' can be seen as an assertion of ideological continuity for the grassroots, and the leadership frequently gave speeches that 'played to the gallery' of core grassroots supporters by emphasising the radical nature of republicanism and their unapologetic history of violence.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the leadership's autonomy to make decisions was also enhanced by the high levels of trust granted to them from members, particularly Adams and McGuinness.<sup>87</sup> What is more, many of those more active members who may have been inclined to challenge the direction of the leadership's policy decisions left with the split in the movement in 1986, giving even greater autonomy to the Adams-led leadership.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that theories of moderation through electoral participation broadly hold in the case of republicanism, however, they need to be modified to take into

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<sup>83</sup> Bean, K. and M. Hayes. 'Sinn Féin and the New Republicanism in Ireland: Electoral Progress, Political Stasis, and Ideological Failure'. *Radical History Review* 104 2009, p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> Lynn.

<sup>85</sup> Moloney.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Gormley-Heenan.

account that moderation did not mean abandoning long-held goals and that a changing constellation of other variables were also crucial in this process.

Republicanism moved through the discrete stages of electoral moderation outlined by Przeworski and Sprague and Kalyvas, originating as a rejectionist party who pursued the utopian ideal of a parallel state, before accepting limited and ambivalent electoral participation, which slowly drew them into increasingly moderate positions. If republican moderation is seen as a process of choosing reformism over revolution, pursuing participation over rejection, and accepting the need to work through ruling institutions and acquiescing to abide by their outcomes, then it is possible to see how electoral engagement pulled republicans in this direction. Of course, if participation is defined as a form of moderation then even taking part in an election is moderation, however, what is more important is that the degree of participation steadily increased once the original decision to participate was made.

The first Provisional foray into elections was intended to be temporary and focused on the limited remit of furthering the agenda of the IRA prisoners. However, if they were to be successful, such a limited degree of engagement was not possible. The emotions and sympathy generated by the hunger strikes allowed republicans to achieve a high level of success very quickly, but sustaining this going forward was another matter. Success taught republicans that electoral interventions could be a useful tactic in meeting republican aims and so all future elections were contested. Widespread support was necessary to generate electoral success and this meant moving beyond the core republican base to seeking the support of moderate nationalist voters in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This generated a number of tensions within republicanism – if they could pursue reforms of the existing system this undermined the need for complete revolution; it recalibrated the emphasis within republican thinking, placing a greater emphasis on short-term aims that did not necessarily entail reunification and less over-riding emphasis upon the ideal united Ireland as the immediate goal; republicanism became dependent on delivering on social issues for the support of their base as much as it was based on their ethno-national stances. It also meant that republicans now needed to align their policies with the preferences of the nationalist electorate if they were to be successful, given their failure to radicalise the preferences of voters. The preferences of the electorate were essentially moderate ones that

accepted existing institutions as legitimate sites of authority (particularly in the Republic of Ireland) and who were not wedded overwhelmingly to the need for a territorial expression of an Irish ethnic identity. Crucially, there was also limited support for a campaign of political violence. In this way, republicans were drawn from a process of limited electoral engagement into a more in-depth degree of engagement that entailed accepting the existing institutions, fractionalising their struggle into a series of smaller and more reformist aims, and moving away from singular policies of outright revolution. Once full participation was accepted by ending abstentionism to the Republic of Ireland in 1986 and Northern Ireland in 1998, then this led to even greater need for electoral success as the ability to achieve republican goals was now exclusively through reform and a mandate was needed to legislate a united Ireland into existence. The ending of violence proved an electoral boon for republicans and although they are not unalloyed vote seekers, they have moved closer to the position of their constitutional rivals in Northern Ireland while still promoting their historical legacy of radicalism to create a potent electoral package. In the Republic of Ireland they have managed to carve a niche as a left-wing alternative to what is essentially a centre-right convergence of the mainstream political parties. As such, in terms of providing an overall analytical narrative, electoral theories of moderation have strong traction in this case.

Much as Pierson argues in his discussion of path dependence,<sup>88</sup> elections served as an important critical juncture that delivered increasing returns to republicans by staying on this path while the costs of turning away from elections were high. A growing electoral mandate strengthened republicanism's political position and this, in turn, enhanced their importance within the nationalist community and with other actors in the party system. What is more, a political mandate was seen as increasingly necessary to achieve a united Ireland rather than relying on militarism and utopian idealism. Once the electoral path was chosen the costs of leaving it rose. Any turning away from elections would be interpreted by opponents as a failure to obtain a mandate for their military strategy or for their political goals. Additionally, the political future of Northern Ireland was being decided by the British and Irish governments regardless of whether republicans attempted to engage with this process or not. Therefore, they were heavily incentivised to remain on the electoral path and to make it as successful as they could. In this way, electoral participation became steadily embedded within the movement.

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<sup>88</sup> Pierson, 2000.

It is also important though to consider what moderation did not entail. Participation was strategic and it was an attempt to secure long-stranding republican goals through a new means. It entailed a recalibration of emphasis towards short-term aims, but this did not mean that long-term goals of a united Ireland and assertions of an alternative claim to sovereignty were weakened. In fact, in order for the leadership to sell the changes to their grassroots supporters they often had to emphasise these aspects quite strongly. O'Duffy has argued that the 1980s saw a bi-national sovereignty emerge in the way that Northern Ireland was governed.<sup>89</sup> This may have indeed been the case for some observers, but there was no pluralisation of republicanism's conception of the rightful sovereignty of Ireland as a result of their electoral participation and the policy changes this entailed. The core of their *raison d'être* has been to undermine the Northern Irish state and establish a united Ireland and this remains undimmed. Today they accept elections as a way to allow them to achieve this goal and agree to abide by the results and outcomes that these elections produce. This was a calculated change in strategy rather than a shift in normative values of the movement where violence and vague utopianism were seen as hindering their political goals while electoral mandates were seen as a potentially valuable asset to achieving them. That is not to say there was no value change within republicanism – after all, they now accept that the existing institutions offer a fair route to realise collective political goals and there has been a shift in values away from revolution towards reform. However, there are limits to this value change. O'Boyle has argued that republicans pre-existing commitment to democracy (i.e. they wish to build a 32 county *democratic* social republic) made it easier for them to accept electoral outcomes as providing a system of order.<sup>90</sup> But this does not imply that they changed their values towards the legitimacy of British sovereignty over Northern Ireland or the legitimacy of partition.

Another important point to conclude upon is the explanatory limits to these electoral theories of moderation. I have shown that republicanism's changing electoral strategy can be broken down into three discrete time periods. What is important to note is that there were other important changes coinciding with each time period that need to be taken into account when explaining republican moderation. As such, the republican ceasefire came through a combination and alignment of a number of factors: an internal reappraisal and increasing participation stemming from electoralism; ongoing peace negotiations; a

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<sup>89</sup> O'Duffy, 2000.

<sup>90</sup> O'Boyle.

commitment by all major audiences in Northern Ireland for peace, namely the British government, the Irish government, and the vast majority of the population; and, an international climate that was highly favourable and encouraging towards peace processes. These influences will be explored in the next two chapters, but it is important to note that elections on their own did not cause the eventual end of outright militant revolution. Elections were crucial in causing moderation by exposing republicans to the stable moderating effects of a strong set of institutions, but they were effective only in interaction with these other influences.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEMOCRATISATION AND REINING IN RADICAL REPUBLICANISM

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Applying the democratic bargaining dimension of the ‘inclusion-moderation’ hypothesis to Irish republicanism shows, once again, that this approach has much traction in explaining the transformation of republicanism but it needs to be modified for the ethno-national context. In using the concept of democratisation in the Northern Ireland context I aim to show that there are insights that can be gained from other processes of democratisation, especially those that involve actors bargaining on core issues. In addition, the democratisation process in Northern Ireland highlights that an important aspect of the peace process from the republican perspective entailed challenging the democratic character of Northern Ireland. The case of republicanism demonstrates that democratic bargaining can have a moderating effect, even when it is contested as to what is actually being democratised. For republicans democratisation entailed establishing a sovereign united Ireland. For unionists, democratisation entailed eliminating republicanism’s anti-system threat while retaining Northern Ireland’s constitutional status as part of the United Kingdom. The lack of an agreed nation-state meant that the conflict itself was a conflict over competing conceptions of democracy and over what constituted the rightful unit for self-determination.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the process of democratisation had to accommodate (although not necessarily reconcile) these inherently competing ideas.

In spite of the contested nature of democratisation in Northern Ireland, it is possible to identify clear stages that entailed extensive moderation by republicanism.<sup>2</sup> Initially democratisation in Northern Ireland entailed a gradual and slow liberalization of nationalist participation within the economic sphere in the late 1980s and 1990s, giving them more of a stake in Northern Ireland. Inequalities were reduced but still remained. This undermined republican claims that Northern Ireland was irreformable and reduced the potential nationalist support for revolutionary policies. At the same time, declining levels of

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<sup>1</sup> McGarry and O’Leary, 1995; Bourke, 2003; Aughey, A. ‘Northern Ireland Narratives of British democracy’. *Policy Studies* 33(2) 2012, pp. 145-158.

<sup>2</sup> Przeworski, 1986, has spoken of a phase of liberalisation followed by a transition, which is then presumably followed by consolidation, and these are the stages I adopt also. They closely parallel Walter’s view that negotiated ends to civil wars go through three stages: deciding to negotiate, striking a mutually agreeable bargain, and implementing the agreed bargain.

inequality opened the opportunity for a transition in a way that previously did not exist when unionists had a much more superior position to nationalists and so were less willing to entertain any reform for fear of the extensive redistributive effects this would inevitably entail.<sup>3</sup> Alongside this there was a liberalisation within republicanism, which derived from its desire to build a pan-nationalist alliance with the SDLP and the Irish government. This drew republicans into increasing contact with mainstream Irish nationalism and entailed republican compromises in order to make themselves ‘coalitionable’ to their desired new partners. Combined, these two aspects of liberalisation brought republicans to the point where they were willing to engage in negotiations for a democratic transition.

The transition period was relatively rapid, starting with the inclusion of Sinn Féin in all-party talks in 1997 and culminating in the Belfast Agreement of 1998. The transition phase encompassed at least three distinct dimensions: a transition from war to peace, whether this was seen as the removal of republican violence or the removal of the necessity for republican violence; a transition from a majoritarian form of democracy to a more consensual and accommodating form; and, the reconstruction of political institutions as a form of credible commitment in line with these other transitions. The transition phase was essentially a co-ordinating phase that aligned the multiple interests in Northern Ireland behind a constitutional power-sharing arrangement that was initially British policy in the early 1970s and was returned to again after exploring other options in the 1990s. In other words, the constitutional settlement and the institutional designs were part of a highly path-dependent process rather than a completely new beginning.<sup>4</sup> For republicans the transition phase entailed elite bargaining that resulted in making compromises to their revolutionary positions, in particular their use of violence, in return for institutional and credible guarantees that their goals could be pursued through political channels. Throughout these periods, republican engagement was mainly strategic, although given their ademocratic rather than anti-democratic nature, this made it more natural for them to engage.<sup>5</sup> There was also a decided degree of ambivalence throughout the transition and frequent threats and actual use of violence to increase their negotiating leverage. However, aligning republican interests with the interests of the peace-process through a power-sharing deal,

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<sup>3</sup> This is an application of the argument of Acemoglu and Robinson.

<sup>4</sup> Kissane, B. *New Beginnings. Constitutionalism & Democracy in Modern Ireland*. (Dublin: University College Dublin Press 2011), chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> O’Boyle.

heavily incentivised republicans to remain engaged with the process and to cease being a spoiler in the consolidation phase.<sup>6</sup>

The consolidation phase has a distinct meaning for republicans. It is in this post-Belfast Agreement phase that the meaning and limitations to republican moderation are highlighted. The consolidation phase was primarily about ‘negative moderation’ or the removal of anti-system violence and accepting democratic rules as the only means to pursue goals.<sup>7</sup> This was a difficult process, especially in terms of decommissioning and extracting commitments from republicans to the reformist path. Yet even once these aspects were resolved, largely with the St Andrews Agreement of 2006 and through Sinn Féin’s response to dissident terrorism, this was still a limited form of consolidation that could never entail a change in republicanism’s normative view towards the legitimacy of the territory of Northern Ireland. Ambivalence was removed but the bi-nationalisation of sovereignty aspired to in the Belfast Agreement was never achieved. Consolidation for republicans was about securing the institutions but without consolidating the long-term existence of Northern Ireland itself. Republicans agreed to the institutions created through the process of democratisation on condition that they allowed for an opportunity to transition to a united Ireland and the current reforms were understood as one phase in an inevitable process of reunification.

## **Democratisation Northern Ireland or Democratising Republicanism?**

Using the concept of democratisation can seem somewhat anachronistic in the Northern Ireland context. On the surface at least, the standards of British democracy applied to the governing institutions of Northern Ireland from its foundation in 1921 in the same way as they did to other parts of the United Kingdom. Throughout the entire conflict period there were regular inclusive elections which could be freely contested, a competitive party system and civil and political liberties. Northern Ireland may have had a majoritarian variant of a functioning democratic process, but only the most optimistic of observers would describe it as a fully functioning and consolidated democratic state. Contestation over the status of

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<sup>6</sup> Hartzell and Hoddie.

<sup>7</sup> Pridham, G. ‘The International Context of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective’. In R. Gunther, P.N. Diamandouros, H-J. Puhle. (eds.) *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation – Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 166-203.

Northern Ireland was the very core of the problem between two competing nationalisms,<sup>8</sup> and interpretations of Northern Ireland's rightful status directly influenced what the contending parties understood democratisation to entail. In the context of these competing notions of sovereignty and democracy, Bourke labelled the conflict a 'war of ideas'.<sup>9</sup>

According to the republican viewpoint, Northern Ireland was an inherently flawed political entity established in a manner that violated democratic principles. The partition of Ireland created an artificial unit which denied true Irish self-determination. For Farrell, the only way Northern Ireland could survive as a political entity was by institutionalising discrimination and denying political, social and economic opportunities to the nationalist community. What is more, attempts to challenge the constitutional or institutional arrangements were met with oppression and state violence, necessitating a more direct form of confrontation with the British state than existing constitutional politics allowed for.<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland was essentially a neo-colonial project undertaken in the imperial interests of Great Britain and consolidated through the imposition of Westminster-style institutions in order to strengthen the position of the vulnerable majority through the total domination of the minority. Clifford even goes so far as to suggest that this was undertaken by the British government in order to punish the Republic of Ireland for breaking with the imperial order by discriminating against the Irish government's co-nationals right alongside their border.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, such neo-colonial interpretations of the status of Northern Ireland proliferated throughout the 1960s, placing the root cause of the conflict with Britain's imperial ambitions.<sup>12</sup> Northern Ireland was characterised as a one-party statelet which institutionalised violence in many forms, 'all of which were used for the total coercion of the nationalist community. Institutionalised state discrimination in job allocation and housing, gerrymandered political boundaries, a heavily-armed paramilitary police force with a heavily armed militia, backed up by a wide range of coercive legislation were the tools of state-sponsored violence'.<sup>13</sup> If working within the British system was inherently

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<sup>8</sup> McGarry and O'Leary, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Bourke, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Farrell, 1990. Farrell was never a member of Sinn Féin but he was a founder of People's Democracy, the civil rights movement that shared the republican analysis of the conflict.

<sup>11</sup> Clifford, B. *Northern Ireland: What is it? Or Professor Mansergh Changes his Mind*. (Belfast: Belfast Magazine, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> McGarry and O'Leary, 1995, chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Sinn Féin. *The Sinn Féin/SDLP Talks. January – September 1988*. (Sinn Féin: Dublin, 1998), p. 6. Its one-party nature was evident from the fact that between 1921 and 1972 the UUP composed the entire cabinet and only one cabinet appointment in this time was not a Protestant.

compromising and designed to frustrate Irish independence, then the only solution for republicans was to use violence and remain outside the system.

From this perspective, unionists were not the problem preventing Irish self-determination. Rather British colonial interference was the real power preventing a united Ireland and it propped up and sustained unionism for its own imperial goals.<sup>14</sup> The main way that Britain ensured its position was through granting the unionist community a ‘veto’ over the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. This was said to emanate from a combination of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the 1949 Northern Ireland Act. The 1920 Act gave Britain complete sovereignty over Northern Ireland while the 1949 Act ensured that there could be no changes to the future status of Northern Ireland without the support of a majority in the Northern Ireland parliament. Given the majoritarian nature of the Northern Irish parliament combined with the unionist majority artificially manufactured by the way the border was designed,<sup>15</sup> this was tantamount to giving unionists a permanent veto over any attempts at constitutional reform by working through the existing system.

The idea that Northern Ireland was an illegitimate entity that denied Irish self-determination, and hence denied Irish freedom, was certainly not a marginal view in Ireland. Indeed, begrudging acceptance while denying its legitimacy was the philosophy at the core of Fianna Fáil’s Northern Irish policy, and thus was embedded in Articles 2 and 3 of the 1937 Constitution and in government policy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Patrick Hillery, the Minister for Foreign Affairs when the conflict in Northern Ireland broke out in 1969, stated that ‘An Irish government cannot concede the right of Britain to divide the country’.<sup>16</sup> At its most beligerent, the Fianna Fáil government was accused of supporting Charles Haughey’s and Neil Blaney’s, the then Minister for Finance and Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries respectively, attempt to import arms on behalf of the IRA in the late 1960s. However, this event aside, while successive Irish governments (especially those of a Fianna Fáil hue) may have shared much of the republican analysis of Northern Ireland, they ‘accepted the status quo imposed upon the country’<sup>17</sup> and advocated pressuring the British government into reform and disparaged the use of IRA violence.

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<sup>14</sup> Sinn Féin. *A Scenario for Peace*. (Dublin: Sinn Féin, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Laffan, M. *The Partition of Ireland, 1911-1925*. (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1983).

<sup>16</sup> Minister for External Affairs’s Interview with the German Press Agency, undated but sometime in 1969. DFA 2006/44/406, *NAI*.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*.

In stark contrast, for Unionists the only factor that was hampering democracy was the anti-system violence and politics of republicanism, sustained by the Republic of Ireland's irredentist claims. In 1970, Unionism was willing to admit that 'a sizeable number of people still do not accept the validity of the State', but the solution did not demand institutional, let alone constitutional, reform of Northern Ireland. Instead the solution lay in channelling nationalist discontent within the existing structures. On the one hand, the Unionist political majority acknowledged that 'Government representatives are in the main seen by Opposition Members as being drawn from a group or class with whom they have little or no affinity' and they even went so far as to state that 'the gap between "them" and "us" must be bridged in some way and if the present attitudes preclude this then some experimentation is necessary'.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the suggested policy to bridge this gap was decidedly less than experimental and it entailed inviting the SDLP to form the official opposition within the existing majoritarian parliament. Indeed just weeks before Edward Heath's government suspended devolved rule and imposed direct rule from Westminster in 1972, Brian Faulkner, the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, made a defiant statement:

The Northern Ireland government may be slandered every day of the week as a fascist junta anxious only to beat Catholics into the ground and achieve a military victory. But the fact of the matter is that the elected representatives of the minority have no need to voice their case of their views on the streets, thereby endangering public safety – they have the forum of Parliament and they have an open and pressing invitation from the Government – who, let it not be forgotten, are the democratically elected representatives of the majority, to sit down and reach sensible agreed solutions to our problems.<sup>19</sup>

Implicit in this perspective was the claim that the existing borders of Northern Ireland were the appropriate unit for self-determination and that existing democratic institutions served this process of self-determination well by following the preferences of the majority. Attempts to change the constitutional status quo of ultimate British sovereignty were unthinkable and anti-democratic from this viewpoint. Those nationalists who refused to accept the legitimacy of this process of self-determination were treated with suspicion and those republicans who resorted to and promoted the use of violence were viewed as the sole cause of democratic instability. As such, any peace process was about democratising republicanism to eliminate the IRA from Northern Irish politics whilst still retaining its position within the United Kingdom.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Government Policy on the Minority'. FIN/30/P/20 1970, *PRONI*.

<sup>19</sup> 'Statement by Prime Minister (Mr Brian Faulkner) at Stormont on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1972', *PRONI*.

So what exactly did the democratisation process actually entail? The lack of a nation-state or an overarching accepted national identity meant that it could never be about building unity behind such an identity. Instead, democratisation was essentially limited to an institution building process and evoking loyalty to those institutions as methods of delivering the contradictory aspirations of the different parties. Aughey described this as a process that attempted to move beyond seeing politics in terms of winners and losers and reconciled all parties to accepting the means by which politics should be pursued, even if what constituted the legitimate ends continued to be contested.<sup>20</sup> Yet this was about more than building the politics of accommodation through clever institutional design. Lijphart's proscriptions for reconciling difference assume that all actors are already working within a democratic context.<sup>21</sup> Democratisation in Northern Ireland not only included a reconstruction of the meaning of democracy and a redesign of the institutions accordingly, it also entailed the removal of anti-system violence and the rejection of revolutionary and rejectionist tactics. In short, it was also a war to peace transition. These processes were complementary, whereby changing the dominant practice of democracy in Northern Ireland and republican moderation were mutually reinforcing. Turning to the comparative literature on democratisation can help to frame what these transitions entailed and highlight its path-dependent nature.

## **Liberalisation before Transition**

Przeworski argues that a liberalisation phase precedes a democratic transition and this phase opens up the possibility for a subsequent transition to occur.<sup>22</sup> I argue that in the late 1980s a liberalisation phase occurred, involving two discrete processes, that made it possible for republicans to engage in an elite-bargained transition. This helps to explain why republicanism was more disposed towards the Belfast Agreement's power-sharing settlement in 1998 than it was to the broadly similar Sunningdale settlement in 1973/74.<sup>23</sup> The standard republican explanation for the change in disposition is that they identified a

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<sup>20</sup> Aughey, A. *The Politics of Northern Ireland. Beyond the Belfast Agreement*. (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Lijphart.

<sup>22</sup> Przeworski, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> Kerr has shown the range of factors that unnecessarily prevented the acceptance of the Sunningdale Agreement and these are far-reaching beyond republicanism, which was marginal to the process itself. Kerr, M. *The Destroyers. The Story of Northern Ireland's Lost Peace Process*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011). However, given my focus, I am specifically interested in changes that impacted upon republicanism rather than other important changes that impacted the success of the peace process in general.

mutually hurting stalemate with the British government and so explored alternative options to further the republican agenda.<sup>24</sup> Republicans could not accept a deal any earlier because the ongoing conflict needed to run its course to show that no other outcome was possible.<sup>25</sup> Yet such explanations are not wholly convincing and fail to take into account the evolving political context in which republicanism was operating and changing relationships between key actors.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, I argue that other external factors put pressure on republicanism to liberalise its thinking towards negotiating a settlement.

### *The Liberalisation of Nationalist Participation in the Northern Irish Economy*

Traditional economic modernisation theories that see liberalisation as emanating from crossing a wealth threshold or evolving from an agrarian to an industrial society are not applicable in the context of Northern Ireland.<sup>27</sup> This was already a relatively wealthy and industrial society with a form of functioning democracy. A more fruitful approach is to examine how levels of economic inequality (of opportunity and outcomes) between the ruling class and other groups in society helped or hindered the acceptance of the status quo. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that stable democratic outcomes are typically the product of bargains between a small group of elites within a country who wish to preserve the status quo and the masses who wish to change the status quo.<sup>28</sup> The likelihood of such bargains being offered or accepted depends upon levels of inequality. They argue that the demand for change comes because the masses are aware of the benefits they will gain from democratisation, most notably through a redistribution of wealth which inevitably follows a democratic transition. Overly high levels of inequality will incentivise ruling elites to resist democratisation because they have more to lose (especially if coupled with low costs of repression) while overly low levels of inequality will dampen the masses' demands for democratisation. Therefore, if there is enough inequality to lead to mass demands for democratisation but not enough to incentivise oppression, then this opens the possibility of the ruling elite attempting to strike a bargain with dissenting groups, offering reforms in exchange for abandoning revolution. Where these circumstances occur, democratic

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<sup>24</sup> McGuinness, M. 'The Future of the Union: Northern Ireland'. *London School of Economics and Political Science Public Lecture*, 30 April 2012.

<sup>25</sup> This is akin to Waterman's idea that warring parties need to realise no other options are open before settling. Waterman, H. 'Political Order and the "Settlement" of Civil Wars'. In R. Licklider. (ed.) *Stopping the Killing: How Civil Wars End*. (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Tonge, Shirlow and McAuley, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> The paradigmatic examples of the each of these approaches are, respectively, Lipset, S.M. 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy'. *American Political Science Review* 1959 53(1), pp. 69-105; Moore.

<sup>28</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson.

institutions are the outcome because they offer a way for the ruling elite to make a credible commitment to reform without being able to renege at a future date.

Drawing on Acemoglu and Robinson's understanding of democratisation it can be seen that changing rates of nationalist economic participation in the economy placed pressure upon republican elites to enter negotiations. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s nationalist communities were increasing in relative prosperity and engagement with the state, which meant they were becoming less tolerant of radical republicanism jeopardising that rising prosperity. Such conditions were not in place in 1973 where nationalists were marginalised from full economic participation and there was greater unionist incentive to resist the redistributive effects of democratisation. This economic change occurred against the backdrop of republicanism's increasing need for votes and against their new found tendency to fractionalise their struggle into short-term electoral oriented goals. Of course, levels of inequality changed because of the policies implemented by successive governments which explicitly sought to tackle this in order to undermine one of the root causes of the conflict. As such, nationalist preferences changed as a result of the preference-shaping policies of the British government, which in turn emanated from pressure to address the causes of the conflict.<sup>29</sup>

Northern Ireland under the Stormont regime between 1921 and 1972 was characterised by large inequalities between Protestants and Catholics. Todd and Ruane root this in the historical process of plantation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century which elevated Protestant settlers in Ireland to a position of economic and political power over the Catholic population. The partition of Ireland essentially preserved this historical pattern of dominance in the northeast of Ireland. So in 1921,

the Protestant population comprised the entire class range from aristocracy and substantial bourgeoisie down to skilled and unskilled working class, with a cultural self-perception as an industrious, prosperous, forward-looking people. In the other world was the Catholic population led (if that is the word) as much by its clergy as by its middle class, disproportionately made up of small farmers and unskilled labourers, with lower levels of education and training than its Protestant counterparts.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of how governments attempt to shape the preferences of an electorate to their own advantage, see Dunleavy, P. *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice. Economic Explanations in Political Science.* (London: Harvester, 1991), pp. 112-144.

<sup>30</sup> Todd, J. and J. Ruane. 'Beyond Inequality? Assessing the impact of fair employment, affirmative action and equality measures on conflict in Northern Ireland'. G.K. Brown, A. Langer, F. Stewart. (eds.) *Affirmative Action in Plural Societies. International Experiences.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 186.

During this time, Catholics were discriminated against in three main areas. Firstly, there was discrimination in electoral representation through gerrymandering and restrictions of the electoral franchise. For example, nationalists were ‘manipulated out of control’ of 13 local councils through changes to the post-1922 electoral rules, including in Londonderry where nationalists represented 60 percent of the population.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, there was discrimination in the allocation of public housing in parts of Northern Ireland, notably Fermanagh where although Catholics were a majority of the population they only occupied 568 council houses compared to 1021 Protestant occupied council houses.<sup>32</sup> Finally, and most significantly, there was extensive discrimination in labour market participation, especially in the public sector. While Catholics were fairly represented in manual and low skill public sector jobs, they were greatly underrepresented in the ranks of senior professions. For example, Catholics only represented approximately 6 percent of senior ranks in the civil service throughout the 1920-1960 period and in 1971 they only represented 11 percent of senior government jobs in spite of making up 31 percent of the population. This was coupled with chronically high unemployment throughout the 1970s and 1980s and, notably, over twice the risk of being unemployed than their Protestant counterparts (see below). In short, high inequality was endemic at the time of the formation of radical republicanism.<sup>33</sup>

From the outset of the conflict, the British government acknowledged that change was required in Northern Ireland to include the nationalist minority more fully in all aspects of political and economic life.<sup>34</sup> Successful reforms to remove inequalities were seen as a route to stabilising the region, bolstering the constitutional nationalists of the SDLP and isolating and challenging republican revolutionaries.<sup>35</sup> It was also the policy being demanded by the Irish government in their entreaties of Westminster. In the early 1970s, following the suspension of the Stormont parliament, the British government introduced fairer electoral

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<sup>31</sup> Whyte, J. ‘How Much Discrimination was There under the Unionist Regime, 1921-68?’. In T. Gallagher and J. O’Connell. (eds.) *Contemporary Irish Studies*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 7-35.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* It should be noted that whether or not inequalities were the product of (direct and indirect) discrimination is a debated topic in the literature, with some arguing that Catholic’s subordinate position stemmed from the larger family sizes of Catholics and their refusal to participate in some areas of public employment, especially in the security forces. See, for example, Compton, P.A. *The Contemporary Population of Northern Ireland and Population Related Issues*. (Belfast: Queens University, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> The British government envisaged the solution as being based around ensuring ‘the minority, as well as the majority, could enjoy an active, permanent and guaranteed role in the life and public affairs of the Province’. ‘Cabinet Confidential Annex CM(71) 46<sup>th</sup> Conclusions, Minute 3’, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1971. CAB 128/48/5, *NA*.

<sup>35</sup> A typical aspiration of reforms in Northern Ireland was that ‘if [they] could contain elements capable of winning a measure of support among moderate Catholics, the IRA might forfeit much of the benevolent neutrality which they enjoyed at the hands of individuals who sympathised with their political aims even while abhorring their methods’. ‘Confidential Annex CM(72) 13<sup>th</sup> Conclusions’, Thursday 7 March 1972. CAB 128/48/5, *NA*.

practices and reformed local government.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, under pressure from the British government, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was established. This in essence took decisions about public housing allocation out of the hands of local elected politicians in an attempt to rein in Unionist politicians favouring Protestants applicants, regardless of levels of need. While these two policies did much to end inequalities in these areas, labour market inequalities proved more intractable, persisting into the 1980s.

Crucially, by the mid 1990s (*prior* to the transition phase beginning) the position of Catholics ameliorated but without actually achieving equality. This, in effect, challenged republican claims that Northern Ireland was irreformable while simultaneously increasing the pressure for further reforms to achieve more gains. Catholic unemployment rates throughout the 1970s and 1980s were extremely high, peaking at 25.5 percent according to the 1981 census, compared to 11.4 percent unemployment for Protestants (see Table 2). What is more, Catholic males were 2.6 times more likely to be unemployed than their Protestant counterparts in 1971 and 2.4 times more likely in 1981. It was in this context that the Westminster government introduced the 1976 Fair Employment Act, making direct discrimination in the workplace illegal. This Act, which was largely self-monitoring and without real regulatory power, was later superseded by the 1989 Fair Employment Act, which made both direct and indirect discrimination illegal and enshrined affirmative action to address labour market inequalities. Although it is debated as to how much changes in labour market employment rates are attributable to this Act or whether they are attributable to a general economic boom in the 1990s (as indicated by declining levels of unemployment for both groups),<sup>37</sup> nonetheless the unemployment differential fell from a high of 2.6 in 1971 to 2.0 in the mid 1990s and even to 1.6 in 1996. There was also a general decline in rates of Catholic unemployment throughout this period. Although it is difficult to compare the census data directly to the Labour Force Survey data, it is clear that there is a declining trend between 1970 and prior to the transition phase.

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<sup>36</sup> Smith, D.J. and G. Chambers. *Inequality in Northern Ireland*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> Todd and Ruane, 2011; Muttarak, R., H. Hamill, A. Heath and C. McCrudden. 'Does Affirmative Action Work? Evidence from the Operation of Fair Employment Legislation in Northern Ireland'. *Sociology* 2012, published online before print.

**Table 2:** *Protestant vs Catholic Unemployment Rates and Catholic Unemployment Differentials*

	<b>Protestant Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Catholic Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Male Catholic Unemployment differential</b>
<b>1971 Census</b>	5.5	13.8	2.6
<b>1981 Census</b>	11.4	25.5	2.4
<b>1991 Census</b>	10.7	22.8	2.2
<b>1990 LFS</b>	8.6	16.0	1.8
<b>1991 LFS</b>	7.8	18.4	2.4
<b>1992 LFS</b>	9.1	18.4	2.4
<b>1993 LFS</b>	9.4	18.1	2.1
<b>1994 LFS</b>	8.6	16.1	2.0
<b>1995 LFS</b>	8.1	15.9	2.0
<b>1996 LFS</b>	7.8	12.8	1.6
<b>1997 LFS</b>	5.3	12.2	2.9
<b>1998 LFS</b>	5.4	10.4	2.3

Source: Northern Ireland Census and Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey.

While there has always been a Catholic middle class in Northern Ireland, this has grown in size and changed in nature since the 1990s. Using mobility survey data and comparing the position of Catholics in 1973 to their position in 1996, Breen found an increased and more occupationally diverse Catholic middle class in 1996.<sup>38</sup> Breen found that by the mid 1990s, the influence of a man's ethnic group membership in predicting his socio-economic outcomes had declined significantly and that although Protestants still held some advantages over Catholics these had been greatly reduced. In the early 1970s, the Catholic middle class was 'clustered in occupations servicing the Catholic community (teachers, doctors, lawyers, clergy, etc.) with substantial under-representation in business, finance and public administration'.<sup>39</sup> However, as can be seen from the data in Table 3, Catholics increased their position in the most senior occupation sectors in both the public and private sectors, again prior to the transition phase. During this time Catholics comprised approximately 40 percent of the population, and between 1990 and 1996 Catholics went from comprising 30.8 percent of managers and senior professionals to 38 percent in the public sector and from 32 percent to 38 percent in the private sector. What is more, throughout this time Catholics comprised a large proportion of associate professionals in the public sector as well as a growing proportion of associate professionals in the private sector. This is not to say that that a state of equality existed, even if this position was

<sup>38</sup> Breen, R. 'Class Inequality and Social Mobility in Northern Ireland, 1973 to 1996'. *American Sociological Review* 65(3) 2000, p. 396.

<sup>39</sup> Osborne, R.D. 'Progressing the Equality Agenda in Northern Ireland'. *Journal of Social Policy* 32(3) 2003, p. 343.

improving. Nonetheless, a growing middle class employed in the public sector was an emerging pattern.

**Table 3:** *Percentage of Catholics comprising selected employment groups*

	Public Sector Employment			Private Sector Employment		
	Managers and Professional	Associate Professionals	Lowest Skilled Groups	Managers and Professionals	Associate Professionals	Lowest Skilled Groups
<b>1990</b>	30.8	43.9	38.1	32.2	29.9	38.2
<b>1991</b>	32.6	43.7	38.6	33.3	31.1	39.0
<b>1992</b>	33.4	44.0	38.6	35.3	33.2	39.5
<b>1993</b>	35.9	44.3	40.6	34.5	34.5	39.3
<b>1994</b>	36.8	44.7	41.2	36.3	36.0	40.5
<b>1995</b>	37.3	44.4	41.6	36.7	36.9	40.8
<b>1996</b>	38.2	44.5	42.5	37.4	38.3	40.3
<b>1997</b>	39.0	44.7	42.9	38.0	37.6	41.3
<b>1998</b>	40.1	45.1	43.1	38.8	39.2	41.3

**Source:** Adapted from Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland. *Profile of the Monitored Workforce*. (Belfast: Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland, 1990-1998). ‘Mangers and Professionals’ refers to an average of ‘soc 1’ and ‘soc 2’; Associate Professionals refers to ‘soc 3’ and ‘Lowest Skilled Groups’ refers to an average of ‘soc 8’ and ‘soc 9’.

These changes were also reinforced by improving Catholic educational attainment. Prior to 1975, Catholic schools significantly underperformed their Protestant state counterparts.<sup>40</sup> However, after 1975 the position began to improve significantly and, by the 1990s, Catholics were just as likely to have a qualification higher than an ‘A level or equivalent’, as well as performing comparably in terms of gaining ‘A levels or equivalent’ and ‘O levels or equivalent’.<sup>41</sup> The reforms within the labour market were then making it easier to convert those educational opportunities into employment opportunities.

From this portrait of key changes in nationalist rates of economic participation it is evident that relatively successful reforms to reduce inequalities between Protestants and Catholics were implemented prior to any transition phase. British government policies that attempted to tackle the economic grievances underpinning the conflict served as a form of preference-shaping within the nationalist electorate as a whole. Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair’s Chief of Staff and key instigator of his party’s Northern Ireland policy, acknowledged the British government’s preference shaping role. When discussing attempts to negotiate a peace process in Northern Ireland he noted that ‘the British government was not only a facilitator

<sup>40</sup> Whyte, 1983.

<sup>41</sup> *Labour Force Survey. Religion Report*. (Belfast: Statistics and Social Division, Policy Planning Unit, 1990-1998).

of the talks, but a major player. We were actually ruling Northern Ireland so we could determine what happened on the ground even if we did not have any selfish interest in what the outcome was, other than that it was peaceful and that it was acceptable to the two sides'.<sup>42</sup> Bean argued a somewhat comparable perspective in that he too observed a change in the economy of Northern Ireland through a restructuring of civil society which precipitated a transformation in republicanism.<sup>43</sup> This inevitably posed a challenge to the republican claims that Northern Ireland was beyond reform. There was a growing and emerging Catholic middle class with an increased stake in Northern Ireland evident by the early 1990s. That is not to say that this group wished to maintain the *status quo*, as clearly many inequalities persisted. Rather this reduced the appetite for all-out revolution given that the extreme inequalities of the 1921-1972 period were being reined in. Nor am I arguing that changes in the economic structure of Northern Ireland determined that republican elites would enter a transition phrase, but rather I am arguing that this created an opportunity to pursue such a strategy and this opportunity dovetailed with changes in the leadership and elite choices. In other words, 'objective factors constitute at most constraints to that which is possible under a concrete historical situation but do not determine the outcome of such situations'.<sup>44</sup> What is important is the presence or absence of possible alternatives to the existing *status quo* and whether these will be pursued by elites. The decision of which strategy to pursue is largely determined by the interests of each group and their perceived likelihood of success in achieving their goals, such as in preserving the *status quo* or in promoting a redistribution of power, which highlights how strategic choices and socio-economic structure interact. In short, economic changes created an opportunity for elites to pursue a bargain and incentivised them to pursue further and more extensive reforms in exchange for halting revolution.

### *The Liberalisation of Republicanism through Alliance Building*

Di Palma argues that in a process of democratisation normal interests and alliances between elites are redefined and reshuffled, albeit often on a temporary basis. These result in either enhancing or reducing the prospects for a successful transition.<sup>45</sup> Alliances can lead to a

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<sup>42</sup> Powell, J. *Great Hatred, Little Room. Making Peace in Northern Ireland*. (London: The Bodley Head, 2008), p. 147.

<sup>43</sup> Bean, 2007, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Przeworski, 1986, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Di Palma.

change in strategic interests and this, in turn, facilitates a transition phase. Similarly, Higley and Burton argue that prior to institution-building a united elite need to emerge to give direction and leadership to the process.<sup>46</sup> It was exactly such alliance building that was at the heart of the second process of liberalisation within republicanism which entailed Sinn Féin gradually loosening some of their more rigid interpretations of Northern Ireland and Irish self-determination, culminating in an IRA ceasefire in 1994, and allowing for peace talks to negotiate a transition.

Soon after the introduction of the AIA in 1985, which aimed to marginalise republicanism and bolster the SDLP, Sinn Féin were invited by a third party to engage in talks with the SDLP. In light of republican anxiety about political marginalisation, building a possible alliance with the SDLP became an appealing tactic. Sinn Féin had just released their policy document *A Scenario for Peace* (1987), which embodied many aspects of the traditional republican perspective, arguing that the only solution to conflict in Northern Ireland was to end partition and for Britain to either withdraw or set a date for withdrawal. Tom Hartley, who was to become one of the Sinn Féin delegates during the alliance-building talks, explained the motivation for pursuing an alliance in terms of the failure of such republican initiatives to attract widespread support. ‘The weakness of *A Scenario for Peace* is that we had produced a document which I suppose in republican terms is a ‘ground’ document. But only republicans read it... What we wanted to do was to develop a politic in which we would engage with all the political forces on this island so that it wasn’t just republicans talking to republicans’.<sup>47</sup> The party’s official line was to describe the motivation for entering the talks in terms of their potential to increase Sinn Féin’s ability to implement its policy agenda:

This invitation [to talks with the SDLP] came against a background of persistent attempts by the Dublin and London governments and most of the political parties, including the SDLP, to isolate Sinn Féin completely from the political arena... Sinn Féin’s view is that the British government needs to be met with a firm, united and unambiguous demand from all Irish nationalist parties for an end to the unionist veto and for a declaration of a date for withdrawal.<sup>48</sup>

In early 1988 Gerry Adams initially met with John Hume but this was soon widened to a Sinn Féin delegation comprising of Adams, Hartley, Danny Morrison and Mitchel

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<sup>46</sup> Higley, J. and M. Burton. *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Taylor, pp. 302-3.

<sup>48</sup> Sinn Féin, 1988.

McLaughlin engaged in dialogue with leading members of the SDLP (Hume, Seamus Mallon, Sean Farren and Austin Currie). Sinn Féin entered the talks hoping to republicanise the SDLP. Indeed, in these talks between January and September 1988, the main focus for Sinn Féin was on trying to persuade the SDLP that their efforts to reform Northern Ireland were merely propping up British colonial domination of Ireland, that the unionist veto was a bulwark that prevented any constitutional reform, and that Irish self-determination could only be exercised on an all-Irish basis, which reduced unionists to their rightful place as a minority within Ireland. Yet alongside these grand aims, there was also a realism of what was achievable and Sinn Féin also sought co-operation on much less contentious issues, suggesting that ‘issues like the MacBride principles, job discrimination and repression should be forced onto the SDLP agenda’.<sup>49</sup> Republicanism’s fractionalised aims were offered as a potential pathway to an alliance.

While there was some broad agreement between the two parties, such as that Irish reunification was the ultimate goal and that any proposed solution needed to include the Republic of Ireland, generally the SDLP consistently challenged and refuted many of Sinn Féin’s central claims. The SDLP delegation asserted that Britain was neutral in Northern Ireland and its only commitment was to implementing a democratic process. Therefore, the best approach to pursuing Irish unity was certainly not armed struggle but attempting to win unionist consent for a political process of extensive constitutional change. The SDLP also argued that unionists no longer had a veto over British policy in Ireland since the implementation of the AIA against unionists’ wishes and over their heads, but they did have a ‘natural veto’ as inhabitants of Ireland whose agreement was essential if unity was to be achieved. What is more, the SDLP were very clear that they would be willing to pursue an alliance of broad interests, and this could even include the Irish government, but that this would come with certain conditions:

The SDLP has no objection and indeed would be willing to work with Sinn Féin or any other party to develop a strategy towards the achievement of agreed common objectives. We would make it clear however that we would be working together on exactly the same terms – using democratic and peaceful methods and without any links or associations with any paramilitary organisations or with support or approval for such activity’.<sup>50</sup>

These talks did not result in any such agreement between the parties, with Sinn Féin resisting the dilution of their interpretation of the conflict and the SDLP firmly standing by

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<sup>49</sup> *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1988, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Sinn Féin, 1988.

their purely peaceful and reformist path. However, that does not mean they did not have a liberalising impact on republicanism. As Murray and Tonge argue, ‘the significance of this opening phase of the Hume-Adams dialogue was that both parties held an optimistic view that Britain might act as a persuader for Irish unity. This eased the way forward, as both parties could concur that the most likely method of persuading Britain in this direction was by bringing the Dublin government into a nationalist coalition’.<sup>51</sup> The possible incentive of an alliance was established and Sinn Féin now argued that ‘the adoption of [a policy demanding Irish reunification] by Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the Dublin government would advance the situation, concentrate everyone’s mind, not least the unionists, and put the responsibility where it belongs – with the British government’.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, republicans commended the talks for establishing the precedent that Sinn Féin needed to be included in any discussions on the future of Northern Ireland. Indeed, following these talks it became a firm SDLP policy that any peace initiative should strive to include republicans.<sup>53</sup>

At around the same time, British politicians were attempting to encourage Sinn Féin to accept their neutrality and move towards a process of negotiation. Adams had been in secret talks with British officials since 1987, opening channels of communication between the two sets of actors.<sup>54</sup> Significantly, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, declared in November 1990 that Britain ‘had no selfish strategic or economic interest’ in Northern Ireland and reiterated the idea embedded in the AIA that Britain would accept Irish unification if it was desired by a majority of the people. All of this was against a backdrop of an increasingly symmetrical intergovernmental approach to the management of the conflict by the British and Irish governments.<sup>55</sup> In 1993, the two governments published the Downing Street Declaration, which met with an encouraging response from Adams emphasising the importance of the symmetrical relationship between the British and Irish governments as well as implicitly acknowledging how it would be valuable to republicans to build closer relations with the Dublin government. He declared that:

If the British government is prepared to cooperate with the Dublin government to bring about Irish self-determination...then there is a real possibility of

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<sup>51</sup> Murray and Tonge, p. 170.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> This was to the benefit of Sinn Féin and the frustration of the British government when all-party talks excluding Sinn Féin were attempted in 1997 due to the breach in the IRA ceasefire, but rapidly came to nought due to the SDLP’s insistence on including the republican viewpoint before commencing negotiations. ‘Soundbites are last rites at talks’. *Irish Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Moloney, p. 296.

<sup>55</sup> O’Duffy, 2000.

progress... The Joint Declaration does contain, for the first time ever, a recognition by the British, though heavily qualified, that the Irish people as a whole have the right to self-determination. This right has never been acknowledged before by the British and this is a potentially significant development and an indication of the strength of this democratic argument.<sup>56</sup>

Talks between Adams and Hume were to resume again in April 1993, and this time they were central to achieving an IRA ceasefire one year later and to Sinn Féin internalising the SDLP position in almost all aspects of the peace process. Sinn Féin was now persuaded that their interests would be best pursued through a pan-national alliance. Addressing an internal conference, a senior Sinn Féin leader argued that ‘when the leaders of northern nationalism say that there can be no internal settlement, that is a very powerful message’, the implication being that it was far more powerful than if Adams had said this on his own from a position of isolation.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, if the Irish government was to challenge Northern Ireland’s constitutional position from a new found position of symmetry with their British counterparts, it was preferable from the republican perspective to be able to influence the Dublin government. Inclusion became central to their strategy. Such avenues were open to republicans but this could only come through a jettisoning of outright revolution and ceasing to use violence.

Through the resumed talks, Sinn Féin began to shift their position in a way that prepared them for the negotiations to follow in the transition phase. The idea that interim institutional arrangements in a reformed Northern Ireland were necessary prior to attempting to secure Irish unity by consent was broadly accepted. Tom Hartley attributed this change directly to the alliance-building talks: ‘What you have now is that you can’t have accommodation without the unionists. You can’t have peace in Ireland if the unionists don’t have their fingerprints on a settlement. So our thought processes have changed more this last number of years because of that dialogue’.<sup>58</sup> They also began to acknowledge that a British withdrawal would not take place prior to an IRA ceasefire and they dropped their demand for a declaration of withdrawal in favour of a British government that makes the ending of partition its policy in Ireland and cooperates with the Dublin government and unionist population to bring this about.<sup>59</sup> A pan-nationalist alliance could be used to argue for a strong Irish dimension to any settlement, something that Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the

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<sup>56</sup> *AP*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1994, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> *AP*, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1995.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Taylor, p. 303.

<sup>59</sup> Sinn Féin. *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland*. (Dublin: Sinn Féin, 1994).

Irish government all agreed upon. The thorniest issue of what constituted self-determination was to be overcome by both sides agreeing that the Irish people had a right to self-determination but agreeing to the SDLP policy that this could be exercised as parallel consent in dual referendums in the two polities of Ireland. It should be noted that while this was accepted as a workable solution it was never accepted as a true act of self-determination and decried as such by republicans on the eve of such referendums in Ireland to ratify the Belfast Agreement in May 1998. Adams admitted at a party debate that:

it is clear that the referendums do not constitute the exercise of national self-determination. Self-determination is universally accepted to mean a nation's right to exercise political freedom...without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity... [But] it is important that we realise that the peace process is not concluded. The [Belfast Agreement] document is another staging post on the road to a peace settlement'.<sup>60</sup>

By August 1994 the IRA announced a complete cessation of military operations and within a week, Adams, Hume and the Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, released a joint statement bringing the Irish government formally into the pan-nationalist alliance. Jim McAllister, a former Sinn Féin councillor, placed the alliance with the SDLP and the Irish government at the heart of the decision for a ceasefire:

'It is important to remember that the IRA called their cease-fire because they believed the conditions existed for an honest and realistic process to deal with the problems Britain has caused in Ireland...Republicans have always said that one of the reasons for armed struggle was that those in a position to promote Irish unity and democracy, such as the Dublin government and the SDLP, were sidestepping the issue. They are now proving willing to address the situation and we welcome this'.<sup>61</sup>

Republicans embraced a pan-nationalist alliance in the hope that this could bring them closer to their policy goals by increasing their influence to shape any settlement. The necessary compromises were accepted as long as the alliance was seen as helping to create a transition process to a united Ireland by building a strong Irish dimension. Yet just as fundamental to the policy changes that emanated from building alliances was the change in republicanism's relationships with other actors in Irish nationalism. No longer were republicans the isolated outsiders of absolute radicalism, but they were now engaged with other actors within the established political system. While they were certainly still radical in some respects, even after ending violence and outright rejectionism, their radicalism was

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<sup>60</sup> *AP*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1998, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> *AP*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1995, p. 10. Ironically in spite of this endorsement, McAllister was soon to leave Sinn Féin in protest at the removal of the IRA from Northern Irish politics.

now defined in relation to that of other actors within the system rather than as a group that was so radical it sat outside the very confines of the system itself.

## **The Rapid Transition**

A democratic transition can be understood as a phase whereby the parameters of a new democratic regime are worked out through some form of negotiation.<sup>62</sup> Crucially, the transition phase is about building an institutional framework that provides multiple credible commitments, namely a commitment by the former ruling classes that they will not renege on promised reforms in the future and by the revolutionary classes that they will abandon revolution in favour of reform.<sup>63</sup> From Przeworski's perspective, the institution building that is embodied by the transition phase should be about 'institutionalising uncertainty' and accepting that 'in a democracy, no group is able to intervene when outcomes of conflicts violate their self-perceived interests. Democracy means that all groups must subject their interests to uncertainty'.<sup>64</sup> Yet Northern Ireland's transition challenges aspects of these understandings, notably just how much was truly negotiable during this phase and the idea that democracy needs to institutionalise uncertainty. In fact, the need for credible commitments to secure further republican moderation was deeply enshrined through the process of power-sharing in order limit the degree of uncertainty in the short-term. As many scholars of civil war have argued, power-sharing greatly increases the chances of reaching and implementing a settlement by enshrining guarantees that allow radicals to overcome their uncertainties about changing policies.<sup>65</sup> However, the long-term future of Northern Ireland did become necessarily uncertain and subject to simple majoritarian decision-making.

The transition phase in Northern Ireland was much shorter than the liberalisation phase and it ran from the beginning of all-party talks in 1997 until the acceptance of the Belfast Agreement in 1998. During this phase, earlier liberalisations within republicanism were formally institutionalised through a process of elite bargaining. At least three transitions were evident: a transition from war to peace, a transition from a majoritarian to a consensus

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<sup>62</sup> Rustow calls this the 'decision phase' and states it must entail deliberate decisions on the part of political leaders about accepting and institutionalising democratic values.

<sup>63</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson.

<sup>64</sup> Przeworski, 1986, p. 58. From this definition it is easy to see why Przeworski only classifies a state as democratic after it has undergone a peaceful turnover in government.

<sup>65</sup> Hartzell and Hoddie; Walter.

form of democracy, and a reconstruction of the political institutions of Northern Ireland. Crucially, Northern Ireland was not just a transition from an illiberal democracy to a more liberal form of democracy, it was also a war to peace transition. In this context, the degree to which uncertainty could be institutionalised was limited. In order to secure republicanism's participation and secure their acceptance of democracy as the only valid form of contestation, it was necessary to enshrine power-sharing in the settlement. Power-sharing was also not a new British policy, dating at least from the Sunningdale initiative of 1973/74. Additionally, although other policy options than power-sharing were considered following the failure of Sunningdale, the Belfast Agreement was rooted in other earlier agreements like the AIA (1985) and the Downing Street Declaration (1993) which promoted greater coordination between Britain and Ireland and enshrined Irish input into discussions around the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Thus this transition was as much about co-ordinating interests behind a pre-existing settlement as it was about contesting the democratic scope of the new regime.<sup>66</sup> This helped all parties to the Agreement to be able to compromise knowing that their interests would be protected by a strong institutional framework. In this transition what exactly was up for grabs in this phase was limited to a power-sharing context. Essentially, guaranteeing republican spoilers a stake in power not only established a credible commitment to reformism in its strongest possible form, something that was necessary to help them overcome what they saw as a history of the unionist veto, but it also allowed republican policy sacrifices to be made by protecting their interests rather than subjecting them to complete uncertainty. In other words, it rendered Huntington's claim that radicals will bargain away their revolutionary policies in return for a stake in the new society much more achievable by being able to guarantee republicans their stake, in spite of the potential uncertainties that come with democracy. Yet at the same time it was necessary to institutionalise uncertainty over the long-term future of Northern Ireland to secure republican acquiescence as their acceptance was ultimately conditional on viewing this as one stage in a 'stepping stone' process to a united Ireland.

Soon after the IRA ceasefire, Sinn Féin issued the policy document *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland*.<sup>67</sup> Alongside their traditional assertions of self-determination, the proposed solutions to the conflict changed markedly. Calls for the immediate departure of Britain and leaving the future of Northern Ireland to Irishmen and women were replaced with demands for 'a

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<sup>66</sup> Kissane, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Sinn Féin, 1994.

British government that makes the ending of partition its policy in Ireland; a Dublin government that has the same policy; cooperation between the London and Dublin governments to bring this about in the shortest possible time with the greatest possible consent and minimizing costs of every kind; that this may be done in cooperation with unionists and northern nationalists'.<sup>68</sup> This laid the foundation for the possibility of a negotiated settlement between all parties, but beginning these talks was to prove difficult. The Irish government led by the Fianna Fáil's leader, Albert Reynolds, took responsibility for the interests of the nationalist perspective to the negotiations while the British government led by the Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, took responsibility for ensuring the unionist interests were heard.<sup>69</sup> Yet Major's government found itself reliant on Unionist politicians' support to maintain its slim majority in the House of Commons and this, combined with Major's desire to demilitarise Irish republicanism prior to negotiations, led to the British government publicly blocking Sinn Féin from entering talks without prior decommissioning, an issue that republicans were to prevaricate over for the next 10 years. Whilst secret talks were actually ongoing between the Conservative government and Irish republicans at this time, they did not result in any progress towards Sinn Féin's inclusion in public negotiations. For Sinn Féin this was a typical British response, over-riding the democratically mandated representatives of the nationalist community for the sake of self-interest and in 1996 the IRA brought their ceasefire to an end with a large bomb in London's Canary Wharf. Yet republicans made it clear that the return to violence was not a return to unbridled militarism and soon after the explosion Adams baldly stated that Sinn Féin could not abandon the peace negotiations - 'it is simply not good enough to walk away from a peace process which took so long and so much effort to build'. Tony Blair's election in 1997 helped to reinvigorate the process and the need for decommissioning prior to all-party talks was abandoned, provided the IRA re-imposed their ceasefire, which they duly did. Talks started and they culminated in the signing of the Belfast Agreement by the all major parties, apart from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the United Kingdom Unionist Party.

The Belfast Agreement was essentially an institution-building document that transformed the traditional form of democracy seen in Northern Ireland to date. The Agreement was explicitly consociational in nature, based on the principles of executive power-sharing, proportionality (of the executive, the legislature and public sector positions), equality of the

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<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, section 5.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor, p. 328-343.

two communities (and Others), and enshrining minority vetoes.<sup>70</sup> The Agreement was divided into three strands. Strand One covered the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, primarily focusing on the devolved power-sharing institutions that were established. This strand was left to the individual parties to negotiate, but republicans largely chose to not engage with this strand, implicitly accepting the need for a power-sharing settlement but refusing to be seen to negotiate this. Therefore, this strand was negotiated primarily by the SDLP and the UUP and the final settlement bore a close resemblance to long-held SDLP institutional suggestions. Strand Two concerned the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Although this was of central importance to republicans and their strategy hinged upon creating strong North-South institutions which could potentially build a dynamic to facilitate a shift towards a united Ireland, this strand was largely negotiated by the Irish government. The finalised North-South institutions were more limited in scope than republicans would have liked but it has been suggested that republicans were implicitly aware of the need to concede on this Strand to Unionists in order to secure a deal and republicans accepted the revocation of Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act (1920), an important symbolic gesture for them, in return.<sup>71</sup> Strand Three focused on the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, establishing a British-Irish council as a counter-weight to the North-South Ministerial Council. Throughout the process, republican negotiators tended to focus on issue of core salience with their base and that would allow them to sell the Agreement as a victory for nationalists. This meant they mainly pushed hard for the release of republican prisoners as early as possible, an overhaul of policing in Northern Ireland, and enshrining the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Irish law as well as establishing a Human Rights Commission. In addition, they succeeded in delaying a final ruling on decommissioning until a later date.<sup>72</sup>

According to Kissane the Agreement offered a method of drawing a line beneath the conflict by allowing for horizontal democratic endorsement.<sup>73</sup> That is, unlike earlier attempts to offer devolved rule to Ireland, such as the Home Rule bills, rather than being ratified at the elite level, the Agreement was also endorsed in two parallel referendums. For the nationalist SDLP this was the first time that Irish self-determination had been exercised

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<sup>70</sup> O'Leary, B. 'The Nature of the Agreement'. *Fordham International Law Review* 22(4) 1998, pp. 1628-1667.

<sup>71</sup> Kerr, 2006: 94.

<sup>72</sup> Murray and Tonge, 213-139.

<sup>73</sup> Kissane, 2011.

since the 1918 election, albeit Sinn Féin and the IRA rejected this as true self-determination. Nonetheless, this showed a shift towards a more consensual form of democracy, dispersing power to the people and away from the executive.

The key aspect of concern for this study is how an Agreement of this nature helped to moderate republicanism by providing them with guarantees and subsequently interlocking their fortunes with that of the Agreement in order to secure their moderation. The shift towards a consensual form democracy was about challenging the unionist veto and the idea of indivisible sovereignty operated by central Westminster decree. Ending majoritarian rule became synonymous for republicans with moving closer to a united Ireland. This led to the seemingly unthinkable position just 15 years earlier that republicans now saw the establishment of consensual institutions within a devolved Northern Ireland as somewhat of a victory, as an editorial in *An Phoblacht* made clear: '[Unionist] desire for an internal settlement with a devolved administration comes from their wish to restore majority rule, that is, unionist domination, in the Six Counties. But the British, under the pressure of Irish nationalists, have now firmly enshrined into their political project for the Six Counties the principle of power-sharing in some shape or form'.<sup>74</sup> Of course, power-sharing was a long-standing British policy independent of Irish pressure but, nonetheless, the general idea that a shift towards a consensus form of democracy represented a victory for nationalists persisted. While campaigning for an endorsement of the Agreement, Adams argued that 'it is the notion of being top dog which sustains unionist supremacy. We are dealing here with justice issues, cultural rights, political rights, economic rights and national rights. We are also dealing with the reality of removing the reason from elements within unionism for their very existence as unionists. Because if the union does not guarantee their top dog position, then they can have no more loyalty than I do'.<sup>75</sup> As such, seeing consensus democracy as a step towards a united Ireland embodied a very particular understanding of unionist interests. Even though the Agreement resulted in the removal of the much hated Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the amendment of the Ireland Act (1949), the distinction between the traditional unionist veto and the need for unionist consent was often stretched to the limit. Indeed when the Agreement was produced Sinn Féin TD, Caoimhghín Ó'Caoláin, stated that 'consent here, once again, is unarguably the unionist

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<sup>74</sup> AP, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1995, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> AP, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1998, p. 9.

veto in disguise. However, the Government of Ireland Act has been repealed and it can be argued that the overall effect of the document is to weaken the Union'.<sup>76</sup>

More fundamental for republicans was the North-South dimension to the settlement, which emerged as their main hope for building momentum towards a united Ireland. Republicans argued that securing Irish input into the Northern Irish executive was a great victory and prevented portraying the conflict in Northern Ireland as an internal issue. Maximising the Irish dimension, it was hoped, would lead to closer links on an all-Ireland basis which would provide the foundation for ultimate reunification. Sinn Féin's party executive released a paper assessing the Belfast Agreement where they argued exactly this point: 'The [Agreement] is not a political settlement. When set in the context of our strategy, tactics and goals, the [Agreement] is a basis for further progress and advance of our struggle. It is another staging post on the road to a peace settlement'.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Reynolds detects in the transitional nature of the Agreement's institutional arrangements, 'an historical inevitability about the reunification of Ireland', a claim further supported by comparison with other transitions in divided countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe.<sup>78</sup> It is in this context that electoral success in the Republic of Ireland became as central to the republican vision as electoral gains in the North. Sinn Féin, as the only political party competing in both jurisdictions in Ireland, could convincingly claim an all-Ireland dynamic was in place if they rose to executive power in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. What is more, after rising to become the fourth largest party and obtain their highest ever vote share in the 2011 Irish general election, they certainly seemed to be moving in their desired direction.

Once again this was a process of accepting the reformed institutions as a system of rule but it was not about accepting the legitimacy of that rule. The ruling institutions were agreed on condition they provided a route for republicans to realise their alternative claim to sovereignty. Revolutionary methods were strategically forsaken by the leadership in favour of an alternative form of contention. Securing full acceptance may have meant providing guarantees in the short-term but it also meant removing guarantees about the future of Northern Ireland and introducing uncertainty in the long-term. The future of Northern Ireland was now subject to popular majority referendum. Such an approach appealed to

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<sup>76</sup> *AP*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1996, p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1998, p. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Reynolds.

republicans who always had their own majoritarian streak, typically arguing that unionists should be treated as a minority in a majoritarian system of all-Ireland democracy. More fundamentally, of course, it also opened the possibility for a transition to a united Ireland if demographical change facilitated this or if they could persuade the unionist community. It also was able to secure the support of unionists who were and remain the numerical plurality in Northern Ireland. In this manner, the new constitutional arrangements were accepted with little contention by republicans, in spite of their history of decrying Northern Ireland under British rule as irreformable. In part this was because the parameters of the settlement were already in place since the early 1970s and also because many of the necessary changes within republicanism had already occurred following the earlier liberalisation period where they accepted the need to align their policies behind those of the nationalist community and the pan-nationalist alliance. In other words, again this was a path-dependent process of increasing returns.

Bourke sees an irony in the fact that ultimately the constitutional fate of Northern Ireland is decided by majority vote through a referendum of its inhabitants. The core problem facing Northern Ireland in the 1970s is still present today, namely a majoritarian political process that has the capacity to alienate a very sizeable group, only this time it could potentially be some future nationalist majority imposing its will upon a unionist minority to become part of a united Ireland.<sup>79</sup> Aughey sees more immediate problems in the Agreement's attempt to solve the competing sovereignty claims. He argues that the fundamental tension between each community's aspirations was overcome by imposition and appeasement, which only served to undermine the transformative power of the negotiated settlement in the eyes of the unionist community. He argues that 'The distinctive unionist sense of absurdity, and the belief that there exists a state of fraud, is related to the gap between what is felt – the unnecessary evils of paramilitary irresponsibility, political manipulation and government appeasement – and what is asserted – the agreement is the best possible of all possible worlds and everything in it is a necessary good. It is one of the ironies of post-agreement politics, then, that the attribute which 'agreement' entails – trust in the language of politics – is the very thing that is missing'.<sup>80</sup> However, any suggestion that anything other than accommodation of the opposing community's right to their aspirations could be built into the peace settlement seems implausible. In short, uncertainty had to lie at the heart of the Agreement as this is the essence of democracy. Power-sharing tried to limit this uncertainty

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<sup>79</sup> Bourke 2003.

<sup>80</sup> Aughey, A. 'The Art and Effect of Political Lying'. *Irish Political Studies* 2002 17(2), p. 14.

and did so in the short-term, but Northern Ireland's long-term future needed to be thrust into doubt in order to secure republican acquiescence.

What emerged as the most intractable issues for republicanism, namely the symbolic military aspects such as decommissioning and reform of the police in Northern Ireland, were not tackled in the Belfast Agreement but deliberately left to be dealt with by independent commissions in the consolidation phase. This meant that republicanism's moderation in the transition phase was ambivalent. There was significant moderation in terms of ending violence permanently, agreeing to participate in the institutions of Northern Ireland under British sovereignty, accepting the need for unionist consent to achieve a united Ireland, and acquiescing to abide by the outcomes of this process. However, the symbolic legacy of their radicalism remained undimmed. Republicans prevaricated over decommissioning, continued to point out the ongoing existence of the IRA, refused to apologise or distance themselves from the legacy of armed struggle and continued to use their physical threat in the political arena, albeit in a diminished form. Thus by the end of the transition phase republicans were accused simultaneously of still being radicals in disguise by their unionist opponents and of being overly compromising and traitors to a united Ireland by disillusioned former comrades. Indeed a relatively small number of these comrades split from the Provisional movement in protest at accepting the Belfast Agreement, adding to those dissidents who left with Ó'Brádaigh in 1986 in protest at ending abstentionism.<sup>81</sup> Yet from the position of hindsight it is clear how this transition phase locked republicanism into a certain path that meant many of these ambivalences had to be resolved in the consolidation phase. This was summed up by one republican activist in a note of resigned acceptance: 'we appear to be on a road of stepping stones to a united Éire, a path which some object to. This path was not chosen recently, but by the Irish traitors in 1921. Much as some may dislike this road, there appears to be no going back. This is the road we are on, and we may as well follow it'.<sup>82</sup>

## **The Inherently Partial Consolidation of Republican Moderation**

Republicans may have engaged in the transition in a strategic and limited fashion, but this was unsustainable if the Agreement was to be consolidated. Republican interests were now

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<sup>81</sup> See Frampton, 2010 and Sanders 2011 for details of these splits.

<sup>82</sup> *AP*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1998, p. 12.

closely tied up with the successful operation of the Agreement in order to achieve their aspirations of a transitional route to Irish unity. The consolidation phase became about tackling many of the militant aspects of republican radicalism that were postponed in the transition phase to ensure the Agreement's implementation in full. In short, republicans needed to demonstrate a clear commitment to the moderate path to show that they had more than a shallow affiliation with the new democratic system of order. Once again, central to this process was a change in their relationships with other political actors, especially the Unionists to whom Sinn Féin now needed to make itself coalitionable in order to establish functioning power-sharing. Yet at the same time, republicans were only willing to consolidate the new Northern Ireland to a limited extent. They committed themselves to consolidating the functioning democratic institutions, but they could never consolidate Northern Ireland for fear of giving it a degree of permanence or legitimacy.

Understanding this process requires examining what precisely is meant by consolidation in this context. Schedler suggests that there is a continuum of 'democraticness', with highly authoritarian systems on one extreme, moving through to electoral democracies, then liberal democracies and finally advanced democracies at the other end of the continuum.<sup>83</sup> He argues that where a regime is placed on this continuum will shape what a process of democratic consolidation entails. For example, an electoral democracy is more democratic than an authoritarian regime and it holds regular clean and competitive elections. However, it sometimes fails to uphold political and civil freedoms essential for a liberal democracy. Therefore, in electoral democracies, democratic consolidation is about preventing a deterioration back to a more authoritarian incarnation and instead pushing for the liberalisation of the polity. In contrast, liberal democracies have all the components of a strong and healthy democracy in both procedure and spirit and consolidation in this case is about preventing slippage back to an electoral democracy and more about aspiring to embed liberal values over the long-term. Another useful concept for understanding how republicanism viewed the peace process is Pridham's distinction between negative and positive democratic consolidation.<sup>84</sup> Pridham argues that negative consolidation is concerned with the removal of anti-system behaviour and ensuring that all groups accept that democracy is the only game in town - a primarily elite-led process. In contrast, positive consolidation is about moving beyond an acceptance of democracy as a set of rules and embedding a belief in the value of democracy both as an ideal and as a form of rule for that

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<sup>83</sup> Schedler, A. 'What is Democratic Consolidation?'. *Journal of Democracy* 9(2) 1998, pp. 91-107.

<sup>84</sup> Pridham.

state. Positive consolidation is also about the emergence and entrenchment of a normative commitment to democracy.

Republicans understood their efforts in the peace process as an attempt to push Northern Ireland from an electoral democracy to a liberal democracy. They wished to move beyond the formal holding of free and fair elections to a situation that was more focused on ensuring the equality of civil, social and political rights for Northern Irish nationalists. However, it is not entirely clear that they would ever want Northern Ireland to become an advanced liberal democracy as this implies that it is long-established with little hope of regression to earlier forms. Whilst the lack of regression would be welcome to republicans, the idea of Northern Ireland becoming long-established would not be compatible with their transitional vision. Unionists understood the peace process as attempting to eliminate the negative anti-system violence and behaviour of the IRA and Sinn Féin in order to secure the state within the United Kingdom and push it towards becoming an advanced liberal democracy. So Unionists saw their role as a form of negative consolidation by the removal of IRA violence and positive consolidation by creating a framework within which republicans would accept the legitimacy of Northern Ireland. However, nationalists may have seen it as a form of negative consolidation in terms of removing the state's violence and discriminatory policies, but it is also clear they would only want a limited degree of positive consolidation. That is to say, republicans only want a limited acceptance of the state's democratic institutions to the extent that they allowed for the disbandment of the state at a later date. This can be seen as another example from republicanism that highlights Lamounier's distinction between acquiescence and legitimacy in democratisation.<sup>85</sup> Republican's acquiesced to the new institutional arrangements and agreed to participate within them. Unionists read this as endorsing the legitimacy of Northern Ireland and celebrated this recognition, as did many disillusioned former republicans who despaired at the recognition. However, for republicans this was about participating purely in order to transform Northern Ireland into something that would be acceptable to them in the long-term – a united Ireland. They saw their participation as bestowing no normative legitimacy upon the institutions or the territory of Northern Ireland as it is currently constituted. In other words, as Schedler, Pridham, Lamounier and others have all argued, participation and acquiescence within a set of institutions is very different from legitimising that institutional

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Przeworski, 1986, p. 51.

arrangement and the nature of democratic consolidation depends upon the aspirations of the actors engaging in the process.

Attempting to implement the Belfast Agreement's new institutions in 1999 threw sharp relief upon republicanism's ongoing radicalism. Unionists were strongly insistent upon the need to resolve those aspects of the peace process that had been deliberately postponed until after the transition phase, namely the role of the IRA and the decommissioning of its weapons. Although no longer engaging in violence against the British state, ongoing IRA activity remained. The IRA was used to enforce the Belfast Agreement in nationalist areas, it continued to act as a policing body in local communities including engaging in punishment attacks for law-breakers, IRA volunteers undertook the largest bank robbery in the history of the British and Irish states, and three volunteers were arrested in Colombia training FARC guerrillas. As late as 2002, the IRA and Sinn Féin were accused of running a "spy-ring" in the new Northern Irish Assembly. In this context, IRA decommissioning became of central importance to unionists who refused to share power with Sinn Féin before this was completed. In short, Sinn Féin were not 'coalitionable' as long as they retained their weapons and fell short of the 'total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences' as enshrined in the Agreement. The Unionists initially attempted to coerce Sinn Féin by evicting them from the Assembly, a measure that required cross-community support not forthcoming from the SDLP, and so they suspended Sinn Féin from the North-South Ministerial Council instead. However, when decommissioning was still not forthcoming and with unionists threatening to bring down the Assembly, the British government stepped in and suspended the Assembly. This happened on four occasions between 2000 and 2007, twice only for 24 hours but also for almost five years between 2002 and 2007.

Republicans' commitment to their weapons stemmed from both ideological and self-interested reasons. Militarism was at the core of the movement from its foundation. For example, immediately after embracing elections and becoming the new president of Sinn Féin, the relatively moderate Adams felt the need to reassure the republican base that armed struggle was still central to his approach, stating that 'there are those who tell us that the British Government will not be moved by armed struggle... The history of Ireland and British colonial involvement throughout the world tells us that they will not be moved by

anything else'.<sup>86</sup> Even after the first ceasefire in 1994, in response to a shout from the crowd calling to 'bring back the IRA', he responded 'They haven't gone away, you know'.<sup>87</sup> Reinforcing the ideological commitment were the self-interested gains of using decommissioning as a drawn-out bargaining tool. Republicans insisted that decommissioning could only occur within the wider context of the 'demilitarization' of Northern Ireland as a whole and this necessitated the scaling back of the British Army and reform of existing policing in Northern Ireland. There was a clear awareness that decommissioning would change the nature of their bargaining power and therefore republicans saw it as necessary to extract the maximum concessions from this process.<sup>88</sup>

When a resolution finally came it arose from a number of factors, such as an increasing acceptance of the role of the international guarantors (see Chapter 6). However, one crucial reason was that the republican political strategy hinged upon making the new Northern Irish institutions work, with a clear alignment of the self-interest of the revolutionaries with the interests of the peace process. This was most obviously the case in their desire to use the North-South Ministerial Council to generate a path to Irish unity, but the successful implementation of the Belfast Agreement also directly impacted on Sinn Féin's electoral performance. Adams acknowledged that 'the success of this process will not only be judged on what structures emerge from it but on how the lives of people from day to day are improved'.<sup>89</sup> For republicans to realise any impact on people's lives, this required devolved power-sharing rather than direct rule from Westminster and this was clear to the republican leadership. In this context, the republican leadership slowly moved towards a position of agreeing to decommission but did so while trying to exploit this bargaining power. Decommissioning was completed in 2005 with the statement that 'our decisions have been taken to advance our republican and democratic objectives, including our goal of a united Ireland'.<sup>90</sup>

Putting the possibility of a return to violence beyond their reach and endorsing the Agreement's demand to demonstrate an exclusive commitment to the democratic

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<sup>86</sup> Adams, G. *Presidential Address*. Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, 1983.

<sup>87</sup> *AP*, 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> A similar approach to extending and delaying demobilization and disarmament in an effort to increase their leverage to secure self-interested goals was evident in the FMLN's transition from rebels to politicians in El Salvador in the 1990s. Wood, E.J. *Forging Democracy from Below. Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 78-107.

<sup>89</sup> *AP*, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1998, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> O'Neill, P. *Historic IRA Statement*. (Dublin, Irish Republican Publicity Bureau, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2005).

resolution of political disputes opened up the possibility of implementing the final aspect of the Agreement – the devolution of policing and justice to a Northern Irish government that included republicans. Policing and justice powers were one of the final sets of powers to be devolved from Westminster to the Northern Ireland Assembly given the mistrust of Sinn Féin in government by Unionists and the mistrust of Sinn Féin towards the Northern Irish police. Yet at the same time, the republican strategy necessitated removing the fact that nationalists were being ruled by policing powers exercised by a sovereign British government whose authority they rejected. Policing was a particularly contentious issue. For republicans, since 1921 the devolved police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was the equivalent of a paramilitary policing force under the political control of a Protestant one-party state.<sup>91</sup> The sectarian nature of the RUC became even clearer for republicans from 1970 onwards and it became republican orthodoxy that the RUC were ‘routinely involved in the torture and ill-treatment of nationalists’.<sup>92</sup> As McGarry and O’Leary argued, ‘the absence of police legitimacy has been importantly connected with the absence of political legitimacy for Northern Ireland: nationalists have found the RUC unacceptable because it has been associated with and has defended unacceptable political arrangements’.<sup>93</sup> Although the republican aspiration of replacing the RUC with all-Ireland police force was never likely, it was clear that republicans would not be willing to accept a reformed or modified RUC. Rather, grander change was required to create a legitimate police service that would attract the support of the republican and nationalist community.

Once again faced with the reality that Unionists would not share power without Sinn Féin endorsing a Northern Irish police force, and under increasing pressure from both the British and Irish governments, Sinn Féin shifted position to demonstrate a stronger commitment to a reformed Northern Ireland. The St. Andrews Agreement was negotiated in 2006 following decommissioning and it aimed to restore the devolved Assembly and devolve policing and justice powers – key goals desired by republicans. After much stalling until the Patten Commission’s recommendations were enacted in full, eventually at a special conference in 2007 Sinn Féin members overwhelmingly voted to support policing in Northern Ireland and Sinn Féin took its position on the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

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<sup>91</sup> Sinn Féin. *Policing in Transition. A legacy of repression, an opportunity for justice.* (Sinn Féin: Ard Chomhairle Discussion Document, 1996).

<sup>92</sup> Sinn Féin. *A Police Service for a New Future. Submission to the Commission on Policing.* (Belfast: Sinn Féin, 1998).

<sup>93</sup> McGarry, J. and B. O’Leary. *Policing Northern Ireland. Proposals for a New Start.* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1999), p. 41. Mulcahy makes a similar argument. Mulcahy, A. *Policing Northern Ireland. Conflict, Legitimacy and Reform.* (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2006), p. 3.

Following elections in March 2007, Sinn Féin emerged as the largest nationalist party and the historically 'hardline' Democratic Unionist Party as the largest unionist party. A power-sharing executive was agreed and Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness became deputy First Minister. This was seen by many commentators as the extremists emerging to dominate Northern Irish politics, but the reality was that republicans were already a moderate actor by this stage, forsaking revolution, accepting participation and pursuing reforms within the confines of the status quo.

The final test of republicanism during the consolidation phase was their response to dissident terrorism – essentially their former comrades-in-arms who rejected moderation in favour of an unchanging commitment to armed struggle until Irish reunification is realised. Their evolving response can be seen as shifting from a clearly strategic commitment to the peace process to moving to a deeper commitment as their responsibilities towards the governance of Northern Ireland increased. In other words, their shallow and minimalist commitment was unsustainable to gain the policy goals they pursued and therefore deeper commitments to their moderate path needed to be displayed. The first real test of republican's new direction from dissident terrorists came with the Omagh bomb in August 1998. Planted by the Real IRA in an effort to disrupt the peace process, the bomb killed 29 people. Clear condemnations of the bombing followed from both Adams and McGuinness, but Sinn Féin also refused to cooperate with the investigation because it was led by the RUC.<sup>94</sup> In fact, Frampton argues that Sinn Féin's response was to condemn the attack as an attack on the peace process and as a strategic failure, but not to offer a moral condemnation of the act.<sup>95</sup> Tony Blair too expected a stronger statement from Sinn Féin in the wake of the attack, such as declaring an end to the IRA.<sup>96</sup>

During this very early stage of the consolidation period, republicans were still occupying a somewhat ambiguous position, having endorsed the Belfast Agreement and agreed to power-sharing but with the IRA still engaging in illicit activity and without having undertaken decommissioning. Anti-system threats are seen as posing a particularly strong challenge to democracies which need to defend themselves from the threat while at the same time not violating the spirit of the democracy they are trying to uphold. Historically republicans posed just such a threat to the British state. However, after the endorsement of

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<sup>94</sup>'Omagh Families Seek Justice', *BBC News*, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2000.

<sup>95</sup> Frampton 2011, pp. 249-50.

<sup>96</sup> Powell, p. 139.

the St Andrews Agreement and the devolution of policing and justice powers almost ten years later, Sinn Féin were now one of a group of parties tasked with defending Northern Ireland from the violent anti-system threat. For example, following the assassination of a Catholic policeman by former members of the Provisional IRA in 2011 (again in the town of Omagh), Martin McGuinness as deputy First Minister was actively involved in using the resources of the state to attempt to arrest and prosecute the attackers. Similarly, in an earlier case of the shooting of a Catholic police officer in 2009 by the Continuity IRA, McGuinness subsequently condemned as ‘traitors to the island of Ireland’.<sup>97</sup> When tested, republican leaders in government aligned themselves with the Northern Irish institutions over the principles and violent tactics of their former comrades. In fact, as late as 2012 an important tool used against dissident terrorists was non-jury courts, a legacy of the old regime that was formerly derided by republicans as anti-nationalist and anti-democratic but which they now wielded against their former comrades and new enemies.<sup>98</sup> In their evolving response to dissident terrorism and the shift from passive condemnation to active suppression of those who pursued the same tactic and interpretations of the conflict as republicans themselves pursued some time earlier, it is clear to see a commitment to the subordination of militarism in favour of securing Northern Ireland and its institutions.

For some, the Belfast Agreement aspired towards embedding Northern Ireland as a bi-national territory and enshrining tolerance for the competing ideas that characterise its complicated history.<sup>99</sup> This viewpoint sees the enshrined role of the Republic of Ireland into the Executive management of Northern Ireland, the acknowledgement of the existences of at least two different legitimate national identities; and the limits the Agreement imposes upon unilateral Westminster sovereignty, as heralding a change in the *de facto* traditional sovereign order governing the territory.<sup>100</sup> Of course, such a viewpoint would be contested by the unionist community who view the Agreement as protecting British sovereignty rather than pluralising it. The Agreement makes clear that Northern Ireland remains within the United Kingdom unless the population consents to change this

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<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Sanders, p. 239.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Seven People Face Terrorism Charges in Northern Ireland’. *The Guardian*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Sinn Féin previously described such courts as ‘contrary to normal standards of justice and for which – in the current situation [post-Belfast Agreement] – there remains no façade of justification’. Sinn Féin, 1996.

<sup>99</sup> O’Duffy, 1999; 2000; Murray and Tonge, p. 199; O’Leary, 1998.

<sup>100</sup> On the limits to traditional Westminster sovereignty in Northern Ireland, see Bogdanor, V. *Devolution in the United Kingdom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), who argues that the UK today is best seen as ‘quasi-federal’ given that Westminster’s sovereignty to undo devolution has been constrained by the popular referendums passed to establish the settlements in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as the international agreement establishing the new devolved institutions, which states are typically very reluctant to violate.

and this formulation has been endorsed by the Irish government and acquiesced to by republicans and the SDLP. As such, Britain has never explicitly presented the Agreement as a step towards the bi-nationalisation of sovereignty, but instead presented the Agreement as recognising minority rights to an alternative national identity. Any attempt to have done so would have made it very difficult to sell the Agreement to the Unionist community. It could also be argued that the four suspensions of the Belfast Assembly by the Westminster parliament in its early years demonstrated where *de jure* sovereignty continues to lie. Regardless of the extent to which scholars and the British government disagree over whether this represents a *de jure* or *de facto* step towards a bi-nationalisation of sovereignty, it is quite clear that such tolerance and acceptance of bi-nationalisation of Ireland were not a part of the moderation of republicanism. There were limits to the extent to which they would ever tolerate alternative conceptions of the 'rightful' Irish nationalism of Northern Ireland. Governing institutions were accepted as a route to solving conflict but Northern Ireland remained part of an unfinished nation building project with an air of inevitability towards its final resting place as part of a united Ireland. As an ethno-nationalist party it is hard to imagine how it could be any other way. Certain beliefs and values were inherent to their ethno-national nature and may have been subject to dilution but not to eradication. Means can change but ends have a large degree of inevitable fixity in this case. The moderate shift in tactics was about exploring alternative ways to realise the rightful territorial conception of Irish nationalism and not about a rejection of armed struggle as a right. Republicans remained unapologetic for their hitherto armed struggle which they saw as necessary, and the salience of their militarism was evident from the fact this dimension was much slower than their acceptance of intermediate constitutional stages to Irish unity.

## **Conclusion**

Democratisation in Northern Ireland is atypical given the anomalous nature of the political unit. Northern Ireland had two competing sovereignty claims and the very possibility for it to ever exist as a legitimate political unit is called into question by republicans. This was not just a case of two competing claims for control over access to executive power but it was much more fundamental than this. It was also competing claims over the sovereign basis of Northern Ireland and how the institutions governing it should reflect its transitional nature or should reflect its nature as a normalised part of the UK. In this regard, the case stands

apart from many others in debates about democratisation. For republicans, reforming Northern Ireland was not about making it more democratic, which was not possible, but it was about opening the possibility to transition to a democratic united Ireland in due course. Once again, as with discussions about electoral moderation, many of the existing theories assume there is an accepted state in place and contestation is over control of this state rather than over the legitimacy or right to existence of the state.

Nonetheless, many lessons from these other contexts apply here. From the republicans' perspective, the peace process can be disaggregated into three stages: liberalisation, transition and consolidation, each of which evoked increasing moderate positions. Liberalisation opened the possibility for a transition. By the 1980s, the interests of republicans were already aligned with the nationalist community in a way they were not previously following their decision to enter elections. The liberalisation phase led to a change in republicanism because their self-interest was now aligned to an increasingly prosperous Catholic nationalist population. Additionally, the republican desire to avoid political marginalisation and to become more influential in the constitutional future of Northern Ireland led to them aligning their self-interests behind a pan-nationalist alliance. Changing their relationships with these audiences required forfeiting violent revolutionary policies and accepting the reformist path. The transition phase was a rapid phase of bargaining and institution building with all parties in Northern Ireland. In this phase the earlier republican compromises were able to become institutionalised because of the power-sharing nature of the Agreement and because the Agreement was a gradual instalment from 1985 onwards and broadly similar in form to the earlier Sunningdale Agreement rather than a completely new arrangement. This gave all sides the confidence to alter core strategies knowing that their interests would be protected by a pre-designed institutional framework, where strong institutions that ensure politicians stick to agreements reduce the possibility of polarisation and violence.<sup>101</sup> Here moderation was about working out the rules by which participatory politics would occur and drawing republicans into deeper contact with ruling institutions. Yet ambivalence in republican moderation was allowed to remain beyond the transition phase, with this phase more focused on securing the general agreement to abandon revolution in return for an increased stake in decision making within a reformed set of institutions. The consolidation phase then became about removing all ongoing anti-system behaviour and instilling democracy as the only acceptable method of pursuing

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<sup>101</sup> Snyder, J. *From Voting to Violence: Democratisation and Nationalist Conflict*. (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 54.

political goals and resolving conflict. In short, consolidation was about eliminating the possibility of returning to revolutionary ways. Once again, this phase was also characterised by changing relationships. Republicanism needed to make itself coalitionable, this time not to another nationalist party but to its political opponents in the unionist community. Republicanism had aligned its self-interests behind the Belfast Agreement and this required they ensured that the new institutions functioned successfully. Thus, further moderation was exacted.

Once again, moderation was a process facilitated by the changing relationships between republicans and other political actors. They began as absolute outsiders, distant from any relationship with other actors due to their use of violence and revolution. However, each phase entailed bringing them into closer contact with other political groups. In the liberalisation phase, they may have retained many differences from the SDLP in terms of their historical and ongoing use of violence, but shifted position to align their interests. The key outcome was to move themselves from a position of absolute radicalism to a position of relative radicalism. They were no longer absolutely outside the system, but following their ceasefire they were now able to define themselves as radical in relation to the nationalist party they competed against within the same system. Similarly when entering the power-sharing executive, Sinn Féin needed to reposition themselves from a party that was historically outside the system and beyond acceptability to Unionist politicians to one that was a coalitionable partner. Again this entailed a shift from absolute to relational radicalism. Crucially though, maintaining a position of relational radicalism became challenging for Sinn Féin as the consolidation process demanded increased moderation and clearer commitments to the moderate path, and even their relational radicalism dimmed over time.

However, republican consolidation falls decidedly short of the vision announced in the Belfast Agreement that views Northern Irish citizens as both British and Irish and which some commentators see as aspiring towards a bi-national territory and tolerance for alternative aspirations. Neither Sinn Féin nor the IRA accepted the consolidation of Northern Ireland as a political unit. It is here that we see this case depart from the standard lessons in the democratisation literature and indeed republicanism in Northern Ireland can offer some important insights for what consolidation means in other disputed political entities. Consolidation was never about consolidating Northern Ireland as a durable and stable political unit. Indeed, its legitimacy, in terms of any normative commitment to its

existence, continued to be denied. Instead consolidation was about securing the functioning of a new set of institutions that republicans aspired to use to transition to a united Ireland. For republicans, the reformed Northern Ireland was inherently transitional, one step on an inevitable and historically determined road to reunification. Given this understanding it is impossible to think of consolidation in the dominant sense in which it is used in terms of embedding a widespread attitudinal endorsement of the new system of governing. Consolidation is primarily a negative process of the removal of anti-democratic possibilities. To the extent that it embodies some value change, this is all conditional upon consolidating the institutions for what they can deliver at a later stage and certainly not about generating widespread nationalist support for Northern Ireland as a legitimate political unit.

## CHAPTER 6

### IRISH-AMERICA AND THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION TO REPUBLICAN MODERATION

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The case of Northern Ireland clearly shows that international actors can have an important role in the moderation of ethno-national radicalism. To understand the moderation of Irish republicanism fully it is necessary to take into account the role of the US government and the Irish-American diaspora. As such, this case stands in stark contrast to the assumptions underpinning the 'inclusion-moderation' approach which typically emphasises internal and domestic explanations of moderation. Similarly, the original theory of consociationalism initially neglected the role of external actors in solving conflict because it was not developed with the context of ethno-national tension and conflicts over self-determination in mind.<sup>1</sup> The role of external actors is also neglected in the inclusion-moderation hypothesis because this too was developed in the religious or class context and needs to be tailored for ethno-national disputes over self-determination. Following the decision by Clinton to become more interventionist in Northern Ireland and establish his administration as an external neutral broker, thus breaking radically with the hitherto dominant US policy towards Northern Ireland of aligning behind Britain, key actors in Irish-America, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, utilised diplomacy and lobbying in a way that galvanised support behind a negotiated settlement.<sup>2</sup> Although there can be little doubt that the initial impetus for the moderation of radical republicanism was rooted in the domestic context,<sup>3</sup> this international dimension was crucial in serving as a catalyst both by offering incentives for republicans to moderate and by acting as a neutral guarantor to the peace process, thus reassuring republicanism that they would protect their interests in the ambiguous and

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<sup>1</sup> McGarry and O'Leary 2008, argue that consociational theory can be modified for the ethno-national context by looking to the external dimensions of the state. In line with this claim, Kerr 2006 has highlighted the role of exogenous actors in building on the consociational model of democracy.

<sup>2</sup> Lynch, T.J. *Turf War. The Clinton Administration and the Northern Ireland*. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004); Arthur, P. *Special Relationships. Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem*. (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2000), pp. 132-159; Wilson, A.J. *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995*. (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1995), pp. 106-140; Thompson, J.E. *American Policy and Northern Ireland. A Saga of Peacebuilding*. (Westport, Praeger, 2001), pp. 71-96.

<sup>3</sup> Both those who argue in favour of recognising the international dimension to resolving the Northern Irish conflict and those who are sceptical of its relevance, argue for the primacy of domestic factors. See, for example, Dixon, P. 'Rethinking the international and Northern Ireland: a critique'. In Cox, M., A. Guelke and F. Stephen. (eds.) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, second edition), pp. 409-426; Cox, M. 'Rethinking the international and Northern Ireland: A defence'. In Cox et al. (eds.), pp. 427-442.

vulnerable process of moderation against feared British intransigence or backtracking. In short, the international dimension was important for encouraging participation and for the negative consolidation of their moderation by removing pathways back to violence.

This chapter argues that, under the presidency of Bill Clinton, the US's role can be understood as an international intervention that gained concessions from republicans and supported them in accepting participation and decommissioning in a reformed Northern Ireland. It achieved this in two ways. Firstly, once Clinton's government made the decision to become more interventionist in Northern Ireland, his government along with important Irish-American lobby groups, such as Americans for a New Ireland Agenda, were able to put pressure on republicans to adopt a more constitutional approach to their goal of a united Ireland. They achieved this by offering incentives of investment from Irish-America into both Ireland and Sinn Féin, as well as offering access to powerful figures in the US. Simultaneously, they threatened to withdraw these benefits and isolate republicans in favour of the SDLP should they fail to pursue non-violent and participatory politics. Secondly, once the decision to enter negotiations was made, the US adopted the role of an international broker, reassuring republicans that their interests would be protected in the negotiation and implementation of a treaty. In order to fulfil this role and win over the trust of all communities in Northern Ireland, it was important that the US acted neutrally and agreed to protect the interests of both nationalists and unionists, especially given the mistrust many Unionists held towards the US as being unduly sympathetic towards Irish nationalism. This position of trenchant neutrality also allowed the US to be seen by republicans as a counterbalance to the possible British dominance of the peace negotiations and to reassure them that if they embraced an exclusively political path, the US would act as a guarantor of their interests and work to prevent Britain renegeing on any agreed commitments. In the previous chapter I argued that republicans prevaricated over decommissioning to use this as a bargaining tool to extract more concessions, but it must also be noted that they prevaricated over decommissioning for fear of being rendered vulnerable to attack or duplicity by Britain. Clinton's appointment of a peace envoy and the decision to establish an international commission to implement the decommissioning of weapons, were ways of overcoming the difficulties republicans had in committing to a peace process when they were unsure if Britain and the Unionists would continue to uphold the treaty once the republican threat of violence was removed. This was especially important given the historical animosity and mutual mistrust between these groups.

However, republicans continued to evade decommissioning, even with these reassurances. Therefore, following September 11<sup>th</sup> and under the presidency of George W. Bush, the US's role evolved again from being seen by republicans as a guarantor of their interests to one that used coercive pressure, eventually helping to bring about final decommissioning in 2005.

Two theoretical frameworks help to explain the role that this intervention played in the moderation of Sinn Féin. The first framework, which has already been discussed in the domestic context, was the need for Sinn Féin to make themselves coalitionable and an acceptable political ally. In order to extend the idea of a pan-nationalist front to include Irish-America and in order to extract the economic and political benefits of a relationship with the US, republicans needed to make themselves compatible with the Clinton government's demand that they would only support republican participation if they did so from a position of the exclusive use of peaceful means and the total rejection of violence. Significantly, the republican goals of a united Ireland and their historical view of armed struggle as legitimate were not under pressure to change, but rather it was about bringing republicans to accept a constitutional path as the way forward for them to pursue their goals. The second framework derives from literature about negotiating an end to civil wars and implementing civil war treaties. Statistical studies highlight that interventions are more likely to be successful after the end of the Cold War and where they include third-party guarantees and power-sharing institutional designs.<sup>4</sup> As Walter argues, 'the greatest challenge is to design a treaty that convinces the combatants to shed their partisan armies and surrender conquered territory even though such steps will increase their vulnerability and limit their ability to enforce the treaty's other terms. When groups obtain third-party security guarantees for the treacherous demobilization period that follows the signing of an agreement...they will implement their settlement'.<sup>5</sup> What is more, the nature of an international intervention is typically a short and targeted one, and the international actor is only present during the negotiation and implementation phases. In this way an international intervention can help overcome the reluctance of adversaries to commit to moderation where there is a history of hostility engendering suspicion of the adversaries' motives.

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<sup>4</sup> Hartzell et al, 2001; Hartzell and Hoddie; Walter; Mattes and Savun.

<sup>5</sup> Walter, p. 3.

This process is highly compatible with explanations of the international dimension to democratisation, which emphasise the twin factors of leverage and linkage.<sup>6</sup> Leverage refers to the democratising pressures that a powerful Western government can exert on an authoritarian group, such as using economic and political incentives, putative sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Yet leverage alone, it is argued, is not enough to bring about democratisation. Rather linkage is also required. This refers to the extent of an authoritarian group's ties to the United States, the EU, and Western-dominated multilateral institutions. These include economic, geopolitical, social, communication, and transnational civil society links, which serve to heighten the salience in the West of authoritarian abuses, increase the probability of an international response, and create domestic constituencies with a stake in adhering to democratic norms. Interestingly, Levitsky and Way argue that geographical proximity is the most important factor in establishing linkages, but in the Northern Irish case, the distance of the US was compensated for by the shared sense of historical identity and the potential for Northern Ireland to serve as a successful example of a new foreign policy direction for the US.

Understanding how this process fed into the moderation of republicanism is important. The international intervention facilitated participation, although this process had already begun much earlier as a result of domestic factors. Where the international dimension was crucial was in terms of encouraging and extracting a deeper commitment to moderation by allowing republicans to commit to the peace treaty and subsequently to decommission their weapons to eliminate a path back to violence. As such, the international dimension was important in terms of negative moderation and removing anti-system behaviour. Once again there was no change in the long-term policy goals or aims of republicanism which, if anything, were endorsed and supported by sections of the Irish-American diaspora as long as they were pursued peacefully.

This chapter begins by looking at US policy towards Northern Ireland in the Cold War period. It shows that throughout this time, US policy was a non-interventionist one, guided by the pro-British instincts of the State Department. However, that is not to say that the issue of Northern Ireland was ignored entirely with US political circles. Although there were some radical groups in the Irish diaspora during the 1970s and 1980s, ultimately

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<sup>6</sup> Levitsky, S. and L. Way. 'International Linkage and Democratization'. *Journal of Democracy* 16(3) 2005, pp. 20-34; Levitsky, S. and L.A. Way. 'Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimensions of Regime Change'. *Comparative Political Studies* 38(4) 2006, pp. 379-400.

constitutional nationalism came to be most influential within Irish-America. This meant that when US under Clinton chose to become more interventionist the shape of their policy was one that completely precluded the possibility of accepting unreformed radical republicanism. Therefore, if republicans were to gain from the US's intervention they needed to accept their framework insisting upon peaceful politics and the principle of consent to decide the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Next I examine how after the Cold War Clinton intervened in Northern Irish affairs and helped to bring radical republicans to a constitutional nationalist position by being perceived as a guarantor and protector of their interests while also being perceived as a counter-balance to British intransigence. Finally, I examine how by 2001 when George W. Bush came to power, the parameters of the settlement had been established and the scope for US intervention was reduced. While the US retained an important role, especially in terms of getting republicans to accept the decommissioning process, it was about pressuring them rather than being perceived by republicans as a guarantor of the peace process.

## **US Policy and Northern Ireland During the Cold War**

During the Cold War period, the US had a low level of active engagement in the affairs of Northern Ireland, expressing sympathy with Irish nationalists but recognising it as a domestic issue within Britain's sovereignty. Throughout this time the US refused to actively engage in Northern Ireland and instead, led by advice from the State Department about how to best serve US economic and strategic interests, US policy publicly supported the British policy of the day.<sup>7</sup> That is not to say that this was an uneventful time in US-Northern Irish relations and a range of Irish-American lobby groups and some key political figures tried to shape a more activist US policy – efforts that were largely unsuccessful. What is also observable within this period is a rise in the role of domestic constitutional nationalists, most notably John Hume but also members of the Irish Embassy, to counter political sympathy for republicans in the Irish-American diaspora. Indeed, by the end of the Cold War, constitutional nationalism was embedded in Irish-American thinking as the only legitimate route to pursue a united Ireland. This is not to imply that the US actively pursued a policy of Irish reunification, but rather to the extent that they saw Irish reunification as a legitimate goal to be pursued by some actors within Ireland, then this had to be done

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<sup>7</sup> Lynch, Chapter 2.

peacefully and without recourse to violence. Thus by the time America became more interventionist under Clinton, it was already clearly established that such an intervention would not tolerate violent republicanism and that it would only tolerate an Irish nationalist position that worked through democratic institutions to gain consent for unification. There was no scope for Sinn Féin to shape the nature of the US intervention in a radical direction and instead republicans needed to frame themselves within the constitutional approach to appease US interests.

From the outset of the troubles, all parties to the conflict believed that the US could have an important influence over the direction and framing of the conflict. Given that almost 44 million Americans at this time described themselves as having Irish ancestry, they also had a strong interest in the region.<sup>8</sup> It was with this in mind that the Irish government in 1969 petitioned the US to support a proposal to dispatch UN peace-keeping troops immediately and endorse the reunification of Ireland as the only acceptable solution to the emerging violence in Northern Ireland. The US government's reply was to express sympathy but emphasise that it would not intervene in an affair that they accepted as the remit of another sovereign state: 'The Government of the United States is deeply distressed by the human suffering that has resulted from the recent events in that area. Nevertheless, the Government of the United States has no appropriate basis to intervene with regard to the domestic political situation or civil disturbances in other sovereign countries. The Government of the United States continues to believe that the problems concerning Northern Ireland can best be resolved by those who are directly concerned'.<sup>9</sup> It may have been clear in advance to Jack Lynch, the Irish Taoiseach at the time, that such an approach would be unsuccessful,<sup>10</sup> but nonetheless this indicated the potential influence the US government was seen as possessing. Indeed following a visit by Tip O'Neill and others to Ireland in 1979, Jack Lynch stated that 'the influence of the United States with the British Government was enormous and we would hope that the United States would indicate to the United Kingdom that positive moves would have to be made'.<sup>11</sup> Although Northern Ireland was occasionally raised in Congress, it was clear that it did not fit in with US foreign

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<sup>8</sup> This number comes from the 1980 census and it includes Irish Americans of both Catholic and Protestant ancestry. It is worth noting that these two groups had 'separate experiences of immigration [that] led to a loss of visibility on the part of the Ulster-Scots and an exaggerated sense of political importance among those of a Catholic background'. Arthur, p. 136.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of a Meeting at the State Department, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1969 between Dr O'hEideain (Charge d'Affaires, Ireland), Mr Lawton (Third Secretary, Ireland), Mr Springsteen (Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, USA) and Mr Goldstein (Irish Country Officer, USA). DFA 2006/44/406, *NAI*.

<sup>10</sup> Sanders, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> 'Visit of US Congressional Delegation, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1979'. TAOIS 2010/19/1646, *NAI*.

policy goals and Lynch's calls for intervention fell on deaf ears.<sup>12</sup> This sympathetic but detached stance was to remain in place throughout the Cold War era.

Yet the lack of intervention at the most senior political level of the President and the State Department did not mean that the US as a whole was completely uninterested in events. Levels of sympathy and interest were often responsive to key incidents that occurred in Northern Ireland, such as introducing internment, Bloody Sunday and the hunger strikes. It has also been argued that republican sympathy proliferated in the US because those with an interest in Irish affairs had limited access to information, leading to an overreliance on often biased sources sympathetic to the republican perspective, most notably the newspaper *The Irish People*.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the interpretation that only ignorance of the facts and partiality would lead to support for republicanism was a position that the British government was happy to promote.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of British efforts to counter this republican 'propaganda', by the end of the decade a number of non-governmental organisations had arisen in the urban centres of the US that were to prove a crucial resource for republicans, in some cases in terms of providing finance and weapons and in other cases in terms of providing equally important moral sustenance.<sup>15</sup> The most prominent of these was the Irish Northern Aid Committee (Noraid), established in New York in 1970 by the anti-Treaty Civil War veteran, Michael Flannery. Initially its membership was dominated by Irish-born individuals who had emigrated to the United States and it was not until the 1980s that US-born members exceeded its Irish-born membership. Noraid presented itself as a group focused on fund-raising for the republican charity, *An Cumann Cabbrach* (The Welfare Branch), which provided welfare and support for the families of republican prisoners. In reality, however, the group was widely seen as also channelling money to the purchase of arms. Although self-reported figures for such a group should be treated with caution, they are indicative of the group's importance to republicanism: Noraid sent almost \$6 million to Ireland between

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<sup>12</sup> Thompson, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Thompson, p. 24; Sanders, p. 102 and 113.

<sup>14</sup> Britain's insistence that support for republicanism in America was only a result of selective information is evident from a letter sent by the British Embassy in Washington in 1981 once the hunger strike started, claiming that 'I sense a growing realisation in the major US media that they have dropped their guard, and have too easily and uncritically provided a platform for strongly biased and extremist views, and that this reflects poorly on their journalistic probity'. Telex from Henderson in Washington to Prime Minister's Office, undated but 1981. PM 19/505 *NA*. See also Dumbrell, J. 'The United States and the Northern Irish Conflict 1969-94: From Indifference to Intervention'. *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 6 1995, pp. 108-9.

<sup>15</sup> See Dumbrell, 1995 for a full overview of these groups and their goals.

1970 and 1986.<sup>16</sup> What is more, the fund-raising potential of Noraid was directly related to key events in Northern Ireland and so, ‘Noraid declared remittances of \$312,700 for the six months following Bloody Sunday [in January 1972], significantly higher than the \$121,722 it raised the following year’.<sup>17</sup> It also raised almost \$500,000 in the first half of 1981 following the start of the hunger strike, raising more in three months than it did in most years.<sup>18</sup> This is not to imply that Noraid and the republican movement were in perfect harmony and operating as a single organisation. A potentially divisive issue between the two was the socialism advocated by the republican leadership which had very limited appeal to the conservative working class base of Irish-Americans. It was in this context that Gerry Adams was forced to deny there was any Marxist element within Sinn Féin for fear of hampering the fund raising potential offered by Irish-America, as happened to Bernadette Devlin some years earlier when she vocalised her criticisms of conservative American policies.<sup>19</sup>

Yet Noraid was not solely of financial benefit, although clearly this was their most important role. It also provided key morale and ideological support for the use of violence, typically rooted in romantic visions of the Easter Rising and the War of Independence. The Irish government saw this as another important front on which they needed to battle violent republicanism with Sean Donlon, Ireland Ambassador to the United States, arguing in 1979 that ‘a great deal of support for the IRA has drifted away in the North and they needed to point somewhere else for the moral basis of their campaign. The obvious place to look was Irish-Americans’.<sup>20</sup> Britain was certainly not unaware of the importance of Noraid, arguing in 1981 with a remarkable degree of determinism in their view of republican violence that, ‘the fact that America is the Provisionals’ largest single source of modern weapons is only one aspect of this support. Without American support, the Provisional IRA would collapse. For that reason we cannot dismiss American views as of no consequence. If we are faced with more hunger strike deaths Noraid will, with increasing success, exploit the latent atavism of the Irish-American community’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Guelke, A. ‘The United States, Irish Americans and the Northern Ireland Peace Process’. *International Affairs* 72(3) 1996, pp. 522.

<sup>17</sup> Sanders, p. 112.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson, p. 31-40.

<sup>20</sup> *The Evening Press*, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1979.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Memo from Henderson, British Embassy in Washington to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1981, PREM 19/505, *NA*.

Another important group at this time was the Irish National Caucus (INC) established in 1974 specifically to lobby Congress. As a lobby group, the INC went to great lengths to distance itself from supporting political violence and emphasised that none of the money it raised was sent back to Ireland, albeit INC members retained a decidedly republican interpretation of the conflict.<sup>22</sup> At the behest of the INC, the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs was established in 1977. This Committee was chaired by Mario Biaggi, who although without a direct connection with Ireland himself, was a Representative for New York with important political connections to Irish-America.

In spite of the non-interventionist nature of US foreign policy towards Northern Ireland at this time, these two groups managed to secure some important, but ultimately limited, successes. In 1979 the Ad Hoc Committee was crucial in introducing a suspension in sales of handguns to the RUC, a decision that was met with expressions of deep regret within Britain. The decision followed an investigation by an English judge, Harry Bennett, into allegations of mistreatment of prisoners by the RUC at Castlereagh interrogation centre, and his conclusion that some injuries experienced by prisoners 'were inflicted by someone other than the prisoner himself'.<sup>23</sup> In this political climate the Ad Hoc Committee successfully pressured the White House into the suspension because there were no guarantees the weapons would not be used indiscriminately against nationalists.<sup>24</sup> This decision was significant because it 'served to boost the IRA, who saw the legitimacy of the security forces undermined by elected officials in the United States'.<sup>25</sup> Their other major success was the momentum they managed to build behind the MacBride principles, which ultimately led to Britain passing the Fair Employment Act (1989) in response to this pressure. In 1984, Seán MacBride, former anti-Treaty leader, former Minister for External Affairs in the Irish government and, at the time, the Chairman of the INC in the Republic of Ireland, lent his name to a set of fair-employment principles designed to promote a code of conduct for US firms operating in Northern Ireland. By 1987 these principles had been endorsed by trade union federations as well as by state legislatures in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Eventually after 13 state legislatures had adopted this legislation, in 1996 these were adopted at the federal level. This was important because it implied that the British government was either not trusted to, or not capable of

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<sup>22</sup> Guelke, 1996, p. 525.

<sup>23</sup> *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Police Interrogation Procedures in Northern Ireland.* (London: HMSO, 1979).

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, p. 86-7.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders, p. 118.

tackling discrimination against nationalists and additional legislation was actually required. Again this signalled a blow to Britain's international standing and vindication of the republican interpretation of Northern Ireland as a sectarian political unit.

Yet Irish-America was not homogeneously supportive of the radical republican position and within ten years of the start of the conflict, groups like Noraid and the INC were largely side-lined in favour of more constitutional nationalist approaches. Although there were waves of sympathy for republicans during the hunger strikes, in general, by the early 1980s Irish-America, especially at the political elite level, had consolidated their opinion behind a non-violent and reformist position. Much of the reason why this moderate consensus emerged was down to the mobilisation of domestic Irish actors who lobbied hard to rein in potential support for radicalism. As MacGinty argues, 'since the 1970s, Irish governments have had two aims in relation to Northern Ireland and the United States. The first has been to discourage Irish-Americans from contributing to the IRA. The second has been to interest US administrations in the Northern Ireland issue'.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps an even more important influence than the Irish government in achieving these aims was John Hume, who was a constant throughout this period, unlike the changing personnel of government.<sup>27</sup> Hume's motivation in engaging America stemmed from the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement in 1974, which convinced him that 'a purely internal solution would not succeed and that in an intimidatory culture constitutional nationalism was not strong enough on its own right to win its case through reason'.<sup>28</sup> Although Sunningdale was not a purely internal solution in that it envisaged a role for the Irish government in Northern Ireland through a Council of Ireland, its collapse under Unionist dissent and the failure of Britain to push the unionist community towards a united Ireland were key problems from Hume's perspective. In light of this earlier setback he worked under the assumption that aligning powerful external allies, notably the US government and key actors within the Irish-American diaspora, would increase the pressure on Britain to force Unionism towards a settlement that could ultimately bring an united Ireland closer.

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<sup>26</sup> MacGinty, R. 'American Influences on the Northern Irish Peace Process'. *Journal of Conflict Studies* 71(2) 1997, pp. 31-50.

<sup>27</sup> On the role of the Irish government and John Hume in shaping the politics of the Four Horsemen, see Dumbrell, 1995, p. 117.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur, p. 138-139.

Beginning in 1972, Hume steadily built a close relationship with Ted Kennedy and Hume's framing and proposed solutions to the conflict were soon evident in the public statements of Kennedy. Kennedy, along with Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Speaker of the House, 'Tip' O'Neill and Governor Hugh Carey of New York, formed a group known as the 'Four Horsemen'. Although Kennedy had flirted with more radical positions in the early 1970s, such as proposing a resolution to the Senate in support of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland in October 1971 and although Tip O'Neill was a key influence in passing legislation suspending the sale of handguns to the RUC, as the decade progressed these leading figures harmonised around a clear SDLP position. On St Patrick's Day 1977, the Four Horsemen released a statement condemning republican violence in Northern Ireland; later that year Kennedy praised the contribution of Ulster-Scots to America; and in August 1977 the Four Horsemen met with President Jimmy Carter and persuaded him to release a statement condemning violence, expressing support for a peaceful settlement that included the Republic of Ireland and promising financial support from the US in the event of a negotiated settlement. Persuading the President to make a statement on Northern Ireland following the reticence of Nixon and Ford, meant that the limited achievements of the INC and the Ad Hoc Committee paled into comparative insignificance.

Again this should not be mistaken for a shift in US policy towards Northern Ireland, which remained aligned behind a clear non-interventionist stance and supportive of Britain, and Carter's statement sank with little effect.<sup>29</sup> However, it does indicate that once the decision to become more interventionist was made by Clinton 15 years later, individuals who were subsequently to emerge as key actors within Irish-America in the political and business world were already largely committed to a constitutional nationalist position that embodied the SDLP interpretation of the conflict and its solutions. Thus, there was no scope for republicans to radicalise Irish-America but rather they needed to make themselves coalitionable to gain the benefits of being able to align themselves with these powerful interests.

What is more, when the Clinton government became more interventionist the parameters of what was an acceptable policy to pursue were already set – namely, non-violence, a resolution that included the Irish government, and the pursuit of Irish unity through consent. When the peace process began and the US established itself as a neutral broker

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<sup>29</sup> Lynch, p. 21. Indeed Lynch comprehensively dismisses explanations that see a steady drift towards more US intervention during this time and which culminate in Clinton's interventionism, instead arguing that Clinton represented much more of a sharp break with policy to date.

whose role would extend to protecting Irish nationalist and republican interests (along with those of other parties to the peace process), this only occurred as long as this pre-existing framework was accepted - constitutional nationalism needed to be embraced by republicans to be accepted into the Irish-American fold.

## **Clinton's Intervention and the 'Squeezing' of Republicanism**

As Sinn Féin moved towards the possibility of negotiating a settlement and undertaking significant shifts in many of their policy positions, there were fundamental issues of mistrust on all sides of the parties to the conflict. A key recurring theme of the main negotiations of the Belfast Agreement was the need to build trust and confidence in the process, with George Mitchell arguing at the start of the peace process that mistrust amongst the communities was the deepest problem to overcome.<sup>30</sup> This was certainly central to the design of the institutions, ensuring that they embodied a strong emphasis on civil liberties and embraced the notion of *guarantismo*,<sup>31</sup> but it was also necessary to build trust before parties would even agree to attempt to negotiate the settlement. This is where the US came to serve as a neutral guarantor of the peace process for all actors. From the specifically republican perspective, the involvement of the US as a broker of the peace process demonstrated to them that the US would guarantee their interests would not be unfairly encroached upon in the design of a stable democratic settlement. The US government acted as a third-party guarantor of the peace process and helped republicans to overcome commitment problems by offering credible guarantees that its interests would be protected even after demilitarisation. In this way, the US appointed special envoy, former Senator George Mitchell, was able to make gains that neither government could secure, notably when chairing the talks that led to the Belfast Agreement and in the implementation of devolution. However, given the Clinton administration's relatively sympathetic view of the difficulties facing Adams and McGuinness from out-flanking and dissidents, the US government was content not to push the IRA too strongly on decommissioning and this issue remained unresolved by the end of Clinton's and Mitchell's tenure. This was to prove the greatest obstacle to implementing the peace process and it

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in 'Mitchell confident settlement can be reached in 'good faith' negotiations'. *Irish Times*, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1997; Mitchell, G.J. *Making Peace*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Di Palma.

was only solved when George W. Bush's envoy took over, who was less sympathetic to Irish nationalism and more willing to coerce republicans on this issue.

Accounts of Clinton's role in Northern Ireland emphasise how the end of the Cold War freed him to intervene in a way that was not hitherto possible. Cox argues that during the Cold War the US was locked into an intimate security partnership with Britain and jeopardising this by intervening in Northern Ireland was close to unthinkable.<sup>32</sup> In a parallel argument, Guelke states that by the end of the Cold War international norms around self-determination had changed from the idea of entirely independent states with permanently fixed boundaries towards a realisation of globalised interdependence. This weakened Sinn Féin's traditional and exclusionary interpretation of self-determination and it also enabled the view that intervention in the affairs of sovereign states was justifiable if violations of human rights were occurring.<sup>33</sup> While it is tempting to think of the US's intervention as being motivated by an attempt to shore up support within the Irish-American electorate,<sup>34</sup> such an understanding is not wholly satisfactory. Admittedly almost 20 percent of Americans described themselves as of Irish origin, but many of these were Ulster-Scots who may have resented or been unimpressed by a US intervention in a generally pro-nationalist way. What is more, it is not clear that this policy was even a vote winning policy,<sup>35</sup> and Clinton himself famously described his electoral fortunes as hanging on economic policies rather than foreign policy towards a relatively unimportant territory in Europe. Actually, the US intervention in Northern Ireland is compatible with Downs and Stedman's argument that major powers primarily engage in foreign interventions for their own strategic gains.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, 'at the heart of Clinton's Irish initiatives lay the desire to establish, in conditions which did not risk the loss of American lives, internationalist precedents for American peace promotion'.<sup>37</sup> This was particularly important given the poor record of Clinton's administration in foreign policy in the first year of his tenure as

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<sup>32</sup> Cox, 1997. He also argues that the end of the Cold War undermined republicanism's revolutionary ideological interpretation of the conflict.

<sup>33</sup> Guelke, A. 'Northern Ireland and the International System'. In Crotty, W. and D.E. Schmitt. (eds.) *Ireland on the World Stage*. (Harlow: Longman, 2002), pp. 127-139.

<sup>34</sup> Dumbrell quotes Michael Mates, a Conservative party minister of state in the Northern Ireland office between 1992-1993, as deriding Clinton's efforts as 'cynical playing to the green Irish vote'. Dumbrell, J. 'The New American Connection: President George W. Bush and Northern Ireland'. In Cox et al. 2006, p. 358.

<sup>35</sup> Guelke, 1996, argues that there is no evidence that Irish issues had anything other than a marginal impact on electoral outcomes in the US, p. 535.

<sup>36</sup> Downs and Stedman. For how this intervention was compatible with US strategic foreign policy goals, see also Thompson, p. 164.

<sup>37</sup> Dumbrell, 2006, p. 358.

president.<sup>38</sup> Clinton was able to use a successful settlement in Northern Ireland to shape the role of the US in other conflicts in a post-Cold War era and add credibility to American interventions elsewhere as well as resonating with his personally held liberal interventionist belief system. As Clinton himself at the time stated ‘I think sometimes we are too reluctant to engage ourselves in a positive way because of our long-standing special relationship with Great Britain and also because it seemed such a thorny problem. But I have a very strong feeling that in the aftermath of the Cold War, we need a governing rationale for our engagement in the world, not just in Northern Ireland’.<sup>39</sup> As such, it served an important strategic function.<sup>40</sup>

In the course of his election campaign and in an effort to court the Irish-American vote in the mistaken belief that they voted as a homogenous ethnic bloc, Clinton promised to appoint a peace envoy to Northern Ireland and grant Gerry Adams a visa to the US if elected. A group of Irish-Americans formed to put their support behind Clinton and to pressure him to follow through on these pledges, naming themselves Americans for a New Ireland Agenda (ANIA). This group was comprised of Irish-American entrepreneurs who were an established part of corporate America, such as Chuck Feeney and Bill Flynn, along with Congressman Bruce Morrison, and others. They described themselves as ‘Irish-American corporate people’ taking the ‘issue out of bars and into the boardrooms’ and they were clearly committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland.<sup>41</sup> Although in the first six months following his election, Clinton failed to appoint a peace envoy or grant Adams a visa as he struggled to develop a cogent overseas strategy,<sup>42</sup> following the breakthrough signing of the Downing Street Declaration by the British and Irish governments in December 1993, this soon changed. Clinton proved very open to influence from the Irish government and, at their request, he declined to appoint a peace envoy to allay Irish fears that this would disrupt their own behind-the-scenes negotiations. At the same time, members of the ANIA continued to lobby for a visa for Gerry Adams. In December 1993, Clinton granted Adams a 48-hour visa ostensibly to attend a conference organised by Bill Flynn in his capacity as chairman of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy. The visa was granted under pressure from the Irish-American lobby, including Senators Kennedy and Moynihan, who hoped it would serve the purpose of

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<sup>38</sup> Lynch, Chapter 3.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Clery, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Guelke, 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Arthur, p. 157.

<sup>42</sup> MacGinty, 1997.

strengthening Adams's standing both internationally and within the IRA in his efforts to engage in a peace process. According to Adams, the granting of the visa brought forward the IRA ceasefire by about one year, presumably by convincing the hawks in the republican movement that the peaceful path delivered real results.<sup>43</sup> In the following years, Adams was granted further visas and in 1995 he was allowed to fund-raise for Sinn Féin, a factor which helped to divert money away from Noraid.<sup>44</sup> There was also the promise of an economic peace dividend of inward investment through an International Fund (in line with such promises, by 2011 around 20 percent of private sector jobs in Northern Ireland were linked to US companies and their subsidiaries).<sup>45</sup> In short, Clinton and Irish-America were now actively courting Adams.

The decision to become more interventionist, as signalled by the granting of the visa to Adams, was a deeply contested one within the administration at the time.<sup>46</sup> Foreign policy was traditionally heavily influenced by the State Department and, as already noted, the State Department strongly prioritised the interests of the British government given their important strategic partnership with the US in the realms of economic and foreign affairs. Knowing that granting Adams a visa would upset the British, along with deep concerns about legitimising a man closely associated with an ongoing terrorist organisation, the State Department strongly disagreed with granting the visa. In contrast, Clinton's close inner circle of policy advisors on Northern Ireland, namely Tony Lake, Nancy Soderberg and Trina Vargo, along with important figures like Edward Kennedy and the Irish-American lobby and the Irish government, all supported granting the visa in the anticipation that it could act as a conduit to enmesh the senior republican leadership in politics and reinforce their drift towards seeking an exclusively peaceful solution. Whilst Clinton ultimately followed the advice of his advisors and granted the visa, thus bypassing the State Department and entrenching deep tensions between the White House and the State Department, there was certainly some scepticism and constructive doubts around the role of the US intervention. This meant that the US intervention needed to strive to be seen as scrupulously neutral in the eyes of the British and Unionist politicians if its role was to be

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<sup>43</sup> O'Clery, C. *The Greening of the White House*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> Dumbrell, 2006, p. 358-9.

<sup>45</sup> Dumbrell, 2006, 359.

<sup>46</sup> Lynch details the tensions between the White House and the State department and analyses the reasons and impact of Clinton's decision to bypass the State Department and adopt an interventionist policy contrary to the State Department's advice.

accepted going forward, albeit by granting the visa it came to be seen by republicans as an important guarantor of their interests, even when these went against British wishes.

Although the British government were aggrieved at the granting of the visa, with John Major famously refusing to take Clinton's phone calls for five days, this derived from disgruntlement that London no longer held sway over US policy as much as it derived from the actual granting of the visa itself. Jonathan Powell, the future Chief of Staff of Tony Blair and one of the leading British figures in the Belfast negotiations, was at the time stationed in the British Embassy in the United States and argued against the visa, although he subsequently acknowledged that granting the visa was the correct decision for the peace process.<sup>47</sup> There was also a general air of caution within the British government towards US interventions. This was not just related to the allegedly negative personal dynamics between Major and Clinton and it extended into Blair's time in office too. The British government tended to view the US as pro-nationalist, even if they were not pro-republican, and therefore British officials fretted about the destabilising effect of a US intervention upon the unionist community and the delicate nascent peace process. In contrast, republicans widely welcomed the move, reassured that the US would help address the asymmetry in their negotiations with Britain.<sup>48</sup> As Kerr argues, 'the internationalisation of the political process brought in a US influence that went some way towards narrowing the gulf between British and Irish negotiating strengths' as well as bringing trust and confidence building measures that facilitated republicans engaging with the British in an uncertain peace process.<sup>49</sup>

The US role was to prove more profound than consolidating political incentives for Sinn Féin's moderation. Under Clinton, the US government took on the crucial role of serving as a guarantor and an honest broker during the peace process.<sup>50</sup> This was vital given the historical levels of animosity and mistrust between republicans and the British government, which rendered it difficult for republicans to commit to negotiations for fear of British betrayal. The US's role also became about giving republicans confidence so that they could end violence and accept Britain at its word without fretting that it was a colonial master's plot to demilitarise a problematic insurgency before returning to the status quo. This was a

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<sup>47</sup> Powell, p. 79.

<sup>48</sup> *AP*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Kerr, 2006, p. 91.

<sup>50</sup> Kerr, 2006, p. 92.

genuine concern for republicans with Adams arguing that a crucial factor in delays over decommissioning was ‘the depth of insecurity for nationalists living in the North’, given the large presence of the British army, the partisan history of the RUC, and the presence of loyalist paramilitaries.<sup>51</sup> In order for the US to fulfil this role, it was necessary that it acted in a scrupulously neutral fashion. Clinton had demonstrated to republicans and nationalists that the US administration would no longer unquestioningly act in the interests of the British, but they still needed to gain the acceptance of both the British and, most importantly, the Unionist negotiators who viewed them as potentially highly sympathetic to Irish nationalism. One significant way such neutrality was demonstrated to Unionism was the clarity and firmness with which the US government stated its belief that for those seeking Irish unity, only unity through consent could be seen as a legitimate route. Additionally, Tony Lake strove to be seen as fair and even-handed within the confines of Clinton’s policy, engaging with Unionists and the British immediately after attempting to draw republicans into the peace process.<sup>52</sup> Indeed so successful was the US administration at establishing the neutrality of its interests that by 1994 David Trimble, future leader of the UUP, stated after a meeting with the Vice-President Al Gore, ‘They made it absolutely clear that they have no formula for the political way forward, that they want to help in what way they can the political process and that it is up to the two governments and the parties in Northern Ireland to determine the political way forward’.<sup>53</sup> As such, the US was able to be acceptable to all parties – it came to be seen as a neutral broker who could help deliver republicanism and get them to endorse the principle of consent by the British and Unionists, and it continued to be seen as a powerful ally who could provide key benefits and counter-balance potential British perfidy by republicans.

The granting of the visa served an important purpose in the moderation of republicanism. From George Mitchell’s perspective, ‘it validated Adams and gave him access to the world stage’.<sup>54</sup> In other words, it helped make Adams an acceptable person to engage with in a process of negotiation. As Kerr argues, ‘someone had to legitimise Adams on the international stage, and it certainly could not have been Major’.<sup>55</sup> What is more, the visa acted simultaneously as an incentive to moderate and a disincentive to resist moderation.

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<sup>51</sup> Adams, G. *Hope and History. Making Peace in Ireland*. (Kerry: Brandon Publishers, 2003), p. 214.

<sup>52</sup> Clery, p. 134.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 161.

<sup>54</sup> Mitchell, p. 113.

<sup>55</sup> Kerr, 2006, p. 91. See also Clancy, M.A.C. *Peace Without Consensus. Power Sharing Politics in Northern Ireland*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 64.

Cox argues that ‘it gave republicans a glimpse of new vistas which might be made available to them if they changed course’.<sup>56</sup> The lure of this incentive was clear when Mitchel McLaughlin reassured grassroots republicans by stating that ‘Sinn Féin now, through our president Gerry Adams, has direct access to the corridors of power in Washington’.<sup>57</sup> Yet at the same time, the threat of removing these gains acted as leverage over the republican movement. ‘By letting Irish republicans know that it had friends in high places who it could easily lose if it failed to deliver, it put further pressure upon them to call off the violence’.<sup>58</sup> MacGinty sums this position up with a quote from the Irish premier’s press secretary about why they supported the granting of the visa to Adams in the first instance: ‘Sinn Féin will pay a price for going to Capitol Hill. A lot of powerful people went out on a limb for Adams. If he doesn’t deliver, they’ll have him back in the house with the steel shutters (Sinn Féin headquarters, Falls Road Belfast) so fast his feet won’t touch the ground. We’re slowly putting the squeeze on them, pulling them in, boxing them in, cutting off their lines of retreat’.<sup>59</sup> The Irish-American squeeze was fully evident when a delegation of businessmen and Congressman Bruce Morrison visited Belfast in August 1993 on a fact-finding mission, during which the IRA imposed a clandestine ceasefire for the duration of their visit. Another Irish-American delegation was to visit again in 1994, soon after which the IRA declared what was to become their lasting ceasefire.

The depth of mutual mistrust and suspicion was clear as soon as negotiations were attempted, as was the US’s role in stabilising republicanism’s commitment. Prior to declaring the August 1994 ceasefire, Adams noted that he received commitments from the visiting US businessmen, including that they would ‘act as guarantors insofar as they could, and do their best to get the US government to act as guarantors, so that any agreements entered into by the governments were adhered to’.<sup>60</sup> Congressman and businessman Bruce Morrison was one of those providing these guarantees and he later noted that Sinn Féin ‘wanted somebody they knew could speak with authority to the White House and speak back to them’, describing assurances from the White House as ‘absolutely indispensable’ to securing an IRA ceasefire – ‘I was able to lay out for the White House what was needed and the necessary assurances were given. I communicated in writing and orally these things, and

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<sup>56</sup> Cox, 1997, p. 687.

<sup>57</sup> *AP*, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1995, p. 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Cox, 1997, p. 687.

<sup>59</sup> MacGinty, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Adams, 2003, p. 176.

there was a process in the White House that gave back assurances sufficient to do the deed'.<sup>61</sup>

Once the IRA declared a ceasefire in August 1994, the issue of the permanency of this ceasefire came to the fore. Unionist leaders were in the position of neither wanting, nor being able to, negotiate with Sinn Féin representatives, let alone share government with them, while the IRA retained its arms. John Major was publicly sympathetic to the Unionist position, even though his government was conducting secret negotiations with republicans behind the scenes while he publicly decried the possibility of engaging with Sinn Féin and IRA members as legitimate political representatives.<sup>62</sup> Adding to the complications, Major was reliant on Unionist members of parliament to secure his majority at Westminster. Yet republicans were insistent that they could only put their weapons beyond use as part of a broader strategy to demilitarise the whole conflict, including scaling back or removing the British military apparatus. Undoubtedly in part republicans held to this position to increase their bargaining power throughout the negotiations, but they also held to this position for fear of being deceived by the British government. For republicans, 'on one level, [decommissioning] was simply a propagandist ploy by the British government to "humiliate" the IRA, on another, the pre-condition of decommissioning was simply "the ambush up the road", an attempt to protract the process of 'decontamination' of Sinn Féin by a government for whom "negotiation is war by another means"'.<sup>63</sup> According to suspicious republicans, the British government and Unionists were deliberately extending the negotiation process and erecting barriers to a settlement in the hope of running down the IRA's military capabilities and then returning to the pre-existing *status quo*. For republicans, the IRA was not just a negotiating chip to be held onto for as long as possible but rather it was also a bulwark against potential British tyranny. Republicans believed that 'the armed struggle prevented a settlement on British terms',<sup>64</sup> and therefore it was difficult for them to abandon this. In addition, republicans feared being left vulnerable to attack by

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in 'President's man played pivotal role in setting up ceasefire'. *Irish Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1997. Morrison, however, rejected the use of the term 'guarantor' preferring the phrase 'friend of the process' and 'supporter of a just settlement'.

<sup>62</sup> Major responded to a parliamentary question in November 1993 by saying that 'If the implication of his remarks is that we should sit down and talk with Mr. [Adams](#) and the Provisional IRA, I can say only that that would turn my stomach and those of most honorable Members; we will not do it. If and when there is a total ending of violence, and if and when that ending of violence is established for a significant time, we shall talk to all the constitutional parties that have people elected in their names. I will not talk to people who murder indiscriminately'. *Hansard House of Commons*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1993, Volume 231, Column 35.

<sup>63</sup> Brown, K. and C. Hauswedell. *Burying the Hatchet. The Decommissioning of Paramilitary Arms in Northern Ireland*. (Bonn: Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> *AP*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1995, p. 5.

former adversaries if they decommissioned. *An Phoblacht* argued that ‘given the experience of the past, when a virtually defenceless nationalist community in the north was attacked by loyalists and the militarised RUC, it is unrealistic to expect that community to disarm unilaterally’.<sup>65</sup> For republicans, decommissioning could only occur as part of the negotiated settlement, not prior to its negotiation and they suggested that an independent third-party would help in this situation.<sup>66</sup> Mistrust was clearly evident on the British side too, given that the IRA had previously come close to assassinating both Thatcher and Major, IRA violence was ongoing in the form of punishment beatings and policing the nationalist community, and it was unclear whether Adams and McGuinness could really deliver a lasting IRA ceasefire.

Amidst this rapidly entrenching position of mutual mistrust, Clinton appointed George Mitchell as a peace envoy to Northern Ireland in December 1994. His role in this process is somewhat disputed – some British officials claim that his appointment was mainly accepted as a way of preventing more direct intervention by Clinton himself while simultaneously co-opting Mitchell to the British position.<sup>67</sup> Such a perspective exclusively sees the talks through the British prism where the challenge was to get republicans to give up violence and accept the constitutional status quo. However, for republicans Mitchell’s appointment was much more of a signal that Britain would not be allowed to dictate the talks in the interests of Unionism. Yet nor could he be seen to be acting purely in the interests of Irish nationalism and demonstrating his neutrality was crucial to gaining acceptance by all sides. His success at being impartial and even handed in order to assuage mistrust and fears on all sides is evident from an assessment of his role when receiving a peace award from the American Ireland Fund, who described him as ‘neither nationalist nor unionist, but humanist. The international statesman is motivated by his feelings of common humanity for the people on both sides in Northern Ireland, trapped in the vice of history’.<sup>68</sup>

Initially Mitchell’s position focused on encouraging investment and economic development, but it rapidly expanded into much more than this. In one of his first tasks, Mitchell chaired the International Body of Decommissioning, tasked with finding a way to resolve the

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<sup>65</sup> *AP*, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1994, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Sinn Féin. *Submission to the Mitchell Commission*. 11<sup>th</sup> January 1996.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the assessment of Mitchell when he was receiving a peace award from the American Ireland Fund as ‘neither nationalist nor unionist, but humanist. The international statesman is motivated by his feelings of common humanity for the people on both sides in Northern Ireland, trapped in the vice of history’. *Irish Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1997.

contrasting positions between republicans on the one side and the British government and unionists on the others. The Commission's report concluded that paramilitary groups should not decommission arms prior to all-party talks but rather some decommissioning should occur during the substantive negotiations. This immediately helped to reassure republicans that the US would advance their interests against British and Unionist intransigence. Mitchell expressed his surprise that the British government seemed to assume that his report would agree with them and recommend decommissioning prior to beginning negotiations,<sup>69</sup> and his ultimate recommendation of parallel decommissioning was reassuring to republicans of the independence of US interests and their willingness to defy British interests.<sup>70</sup> John Major largely rejected this idea, suggesting instead that an elected Forum for Political Dialogue be established as a conduit into multi-party talks. The IRA responded by ending its ceasefire in February 1996 (albeit Sinn Féin still competed in the Forum elections, but it has been argued that there were plans to end the ceasefire within grassroots republican circles prior to the publication of Mitchell's report).<sup>71</sup> The failure was not necessarily the fault of the third-party but rather it was down to the fact that the third-party's recommendations were not followed by the domestic actors, thus there was no way to navigate beyond the mistrust. Irish-American reactions to renewed IRA violence stripped republicans of their public respectability, in spite of Sinn Féin making it clear that they desired to return to negotiations if the impasse of mistrust could be overcome. Renewed violence remained until Tony Blair's landslide electoral victory in the British general election of 1997 introduced fresh impetus into the peace process. Soon after his election in 1997, Blair announced that 'decommissioning is secondary to actually getting people into talks'. Additionally, the US government placed increased pressure upon republicans to accept British reassurances about negotiations,<sup>72</sup> paving the way for a second IRA ceasefire and for Sinn Féin to enter all-party talks. To further consolidate US reassurances to accept negotiations with Britain in good faith, Mitchell was appointed to chair the talks.

The shape of the Belfast Agreement was largely already in place prior to negotiations and the outstanding aspects were actually negotiated by the British and Irish governments rather

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<sup>69</sup> Mitchell, p. 30; Powell, p. 83.

<sup>70</sup> Adams, p. 154. This built on earlier measures taken by the American government that helped to secure republicans' confidence, such as the granting of visa to Adams and Joe Cahill and Clinton's public demand that the British explore substantive talks while the option was available.

<sup>71</sup> Bew, P., M. Frampton and I. Gurruchaga. *Talking to Terrorists: Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country*. (London: Hurst and Co., 2009), p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> Clancy, p. 73.

than Mitchell, although there are indications that Mitchell was important in gaining consensus over the relations between Ireland and Northern Ireland.<sup>73</sup> Yet even if the parameters of the settlement were already in place, the presence of Mitchell in the Chair helped extract republican consent through confidence-building in a way that the British government alone could not achieve. US guarantees were again crucial for republicans at the stage when they were required to endorse the Agreement, just as they had been when republicans were considering their first ceasefire. Late into the final night of negotiations and prior to agreeing to take the document to their grassroots for approval, Adams described a crucial phone call with Bill Clinton:

I told [Clinton] that I thought we had the basis of an agreement, but a lot depended on how the British delivered on its commitments... I told the President that if we were to see this agreement delivered, then he had to ensure that the British didn't pull out of their commitments. I also pointed up the hard reality that the unionists had yet to engage with us. I told him my fear was that once negotiations were over, pressure would be off the Brits and the UUP... Bill Clinton understood this. He was prepared to do all he could to guarantee any agreement.<sup>74</sup>

This same ability was on display in the implementation phase of the Belfast Agreement. In the year following the historical agreement, little progress was being made and a devolved assembly was yet to be established, mainly as a result of Unionist hesitations to enter government with Sinn Féin prior to the decommissioning of IRA weapons. The British and Irish governments attempted but failed to break the deadlock when they suggested a timetable for the establishment of a Northern Irish Assembly in a manner that was indexed to decommissioning. Again this proposal was rejected by the parties in Northern Ireland, leading to the two governments inviting Mitchell to return and undertake a one-year review in an effort to move the process forward. Jonathan Powell suggested that Mitchell could achieve progress in a way that the British and Irish governments could not given his status as an independent and international broker.<sup>75</sup> Republicans continued to be hesitant towards the need to decommission prior to Sinn Féin entering a devolved Executive and they viewed decommissioning as an issue used by Unionists to disguise the fact that they just didn't want to share power with Irish nationalists. As such, republicans blamed the

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<sup>73</sup> It is in this context that Seamus Mallon famously called the Belfast Agreement 'Sunningdale for slow learners'. See also Clancy, p. 180.

<sup>74</sup> Adams, 2003, p. 363. Mitchell also cites the importance of this phone call in eliciting republican support, as well as phone calls to other participants in the final stages of the negotiations, p. 178.

<sup>75</sup> Powell, p. 156.

Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD),<sup>76</sup> established prior to the Belfast Agreement in 1997 to handle decommissioning, for allowing the issue to be dominated by partisan interests. ‘McGuinness felt that a serious flaw in the negotiations had been the failure of the IICD to “effectively stamp” its authority on the process, which had led to Unionism seizing the issue and using it as a “weapon to beat Sinn Féin over the head”’.<sup>77</sup> Once again for republicans it was the failure to strengthen the position of international third parties that threatened the process by allowing it to become dominated by domestic actors they did not trust. Mitchell’s review proposed the solution of establishing a devolved Assembly immediately and aim to complete decommissioning by April 2000. As an indicator of good faith he requested paramilitary organisations appoint a representative to liaise with the IICD. Republicans accepted this offer and by December 1999, the Northern Ireland Executive was established and Sinn Féin held the health and education ministries while the IRA still retained its arms.

The reason why Mitchell was able to gain trust with republicans and get them to commit where the British could not, is well highlighted through the independent Patten Commission’s recommendations for reform of policing, a highly contested issue that emerged to run in parallel with decommissioning. Upon its publications in September 1999, the British government’s response was minimalist, retaining much more power for the central state rather than devolving this as had been recommended by Patten and advocated by nationalists.<sup>78</sup> The Blair government, and Peter Mandelson as Secretary for State of Northern Ireland, felt the need to tone down the recommendations of the report in order to bolster the vulnerable position of David Trimble within his UUP, but this came at the cost of further undermining the trust that republicans had in British governments to implement the Belfast Agreement in full. Yet both the Clinton administration and the Irish government pressured Britain to implement this report. In these conditions, an honest broker from the republican perspective (who was also acceptable to other parties to the negotiations), helped them to build trust in the process and commit to moderating policies that the British and Irish governments alone could not convince them to do, especially when the British were seen as potentially renegeing if they got the chance.

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<sup>76</sup> The IICD was established in 1997 as part of the negotiations for the Belfast Agreement and attempted to internationalise the issue of decommissioning to help in its resolution. It was chaired by the retired Canadian general, John de Chastelain, and also contained the Finn Tauno Nieminen and the American Donald Johnson.

<sup>77</sup> Brown and Hauswedell, p. 36.

<sup>78</sup> McGarry and O’Leary 2008, p. 378.

Yet there were limits to what Mitchell and Clinton could achieve. Decommissioning was to emerge as the crucial issue in the implementation phase. In order to secure the agreement of the main parties (except the DUP who refused to accept it), the Belfast Agreement essentially side-lined decommissioning and it was ‘submerged in the subcommittees – literally parked’ to be tackled later in the implementation process.<sup>79</sup> Even after establishing the power-sharing Assembly, IRA progress on decommissioning failed to materialise, leading to a negative report by the IICD in February 2000. In order to prevent the negative spectacle of Unionist politicians walking out of the Executive in protest, Peter Mandelson, suspended its functioning. Brown and Hauswedell argued that the reason for the impasse at this stage was that there was a ‘lack of mutual understanding among the main conflicting parties’ and that ‘at the crucial moment of implementing the institutional core piece of the Agreement, [the suspension] signalled a fundamental withdrawal of trust’.<sup>80</sup> By the time Clinton and Mitchell’s tenure came to an end in early 2001, the Assembly was re-established but still highly vulnerable and decommissioning remained the biggest obstacle to the peace process.

The US intervention under Clinton had a profound effect upon republicanism in terms of their willingness and ability to commit to a peace process. It acted as a stabilising force, reassuring republicans that a fair long-term macro-democratic settlement with relatively low risks for republicans would be secured along with redressing some of their grievances. Irish-America was central to providing a set of incentives and disincentives that reinforced those on the domestic level. The US was also able to legitimise Adams as the head of Sinn Féin, paving the way for negotiations. Within these negotiations, the appointment of George Mitchell was vital in enabling republicans to overcome trust issues and endorse the Belfast Agreement in spite of their historically acrimonious relationship with Britain and unionism while the appointment was also acceptable to Unionists given the neutrality he consistently sought to demonstrate. From the outset, Clinton signalled a new direction in US policy, by-passing the traditionally pro-British State Department and going against British wishes by granting Adams a visa. As such, from the outset US involvement was widely welcomed by republicans and seen as an important corrective to the policies of the British state. This is evident not least in the way republicans sought and received assurances from the US that they would guarantee the peace process at the crucial stages immediately

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<sup>79</sup> MacGinty, R. ‘Biting the Bullet’: Decommissioning in the Transition from War to Peace in Northern Ireland’. *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 10 1999, pp. 237-147.

<sup>80</sup> Brown and Hauswedell, p. 42.

prior to an IRA ceasefire and immediately prior to agreeing to support the Belfast Agreement, provided that republicans accepted the principle of consent as the sole route to Irish unity. Clinton's sympathy for Irish nationalism was what helped to win republican trust that the US could act as an honest broker and protect their interests during the negotiation process. But it was the same sympathy for the position of Adams within republicanism, and his presumed vulnerability to being outflanked within his own party, that led to the US government not pushing decommissioning at this stage. Clinton and Mitchell had succeeded in internationalising decommissioning and the IICD was broadly accepted as the appropriate channel to achieve decommissioning, but there was little movement forthcoming on this. Here, again, was clear evidence that the final and most radically salient aspect of republicanism was their militarism and decommissioning was difficult to tackle until a less sympathetic US government came to power with a strong agenda against terrorism following the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

### **Bush and the Imposition of Republican Decommissioning**

By the time of the election of George W. Bush in 2000, the scope for US intervention had greatly dwindled. The IRA and other paramilitaries were on ceasefires which were looking increasingly permanent, the Belfast Agreement was in place, and the principles of power-sharing had been endorsed. However, decommissioning and the permanent disbandment of the IRA were the outstanding issues that were threatening to destabilise the implementation of the peace process and this is where the new administration's efforts were to focus. In general, Northern Ireland was a lower priority for Bush than his predecessor, but that did not imply that they were unengaged. In fact, the exogenous factor of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the US's response to these were crucial driving forces behind republican decommissioning when it came. In other words, this phase was no longer about acting as a guarantor that reassured republicans, but rather it was about coercing and using moral pressure to remove their military capability permanently.

Although the Northern Irish Assembly was in place at the start of 2001 it was living a precarious existence, as would be evidenced by two 24-hour suspensions that were imposed in August and September of that year. The UUP under Trimble continued to struggle to share power with Sinn Féin without IRA decommissioning and although on the 6<sup>th</sup> May the

previous year the IRA released a statement saying that ‘The IRA leadership will initiate a process that will completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use’, this was yet to happen. Powell noted that a recurring theme of this phase of the negotiations was repeated evasions by Sinn Féin and the IRA over precise phrasing that they were committed to decommissioning.<sup>81</sup> The British government’s repeated efforts to offer concessions on the demilitarisation of Northern Ireland as a whole and allowances for Sinn Féin officials failed to move the IRA.

When Bush assumed office in 2001, he appointed Richard Haass to serve as his Special Envoy in Northern Ireland. Haass immediately emphasised a change in direction by signalling that he believed the solution to Northern Ireland’s outstanding tension was primarily something to be tackled by the British and Irish governments and that the solution did not lie in Washington.<sup>82</sup> In short, a return to the policy of non-intervention looked likely, especially given that Northern Irish policy was relocated from the White House back to the State Department. However, although there was a clear change in direction, non-intervention never really materialised for two reasons. Firstly, Haass continued to assert an interest in the peace process, primarily to promote the Bush administration’s internationalism and to be associated with a successful peace process on the world stage.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, the key events of the arrest of three IRA men in Colombia and the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 gave the US a huge desire to impose decommissioning in line with their wider goals in the ‘war on terror’.

On August 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, three members of the IRA were arrested in Colombia for travelling using false passports and charged with training FARC guerrillas in mortar bombing techniques. This event massively eroded sympathy for republicans both within the US political elite and within their new allies in corporate Irish-America. Clancy notes that ‘the discovery of the ‘Colombia Three’ rattled Congress and the Bush administration, and both signalled their anger with the republican movement by calling for congressional hearings into the matter’.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Bill Flynn called on the IRA to disarm immediately in the aftermath of the arrests. Jim Gibney, a senior Sinn Féin strategist, noted its effect upon republicanism, stating that ‘There is no doubt that Colombia was very damaging to Sinn

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<sup>81</sup> Powell, *passim*.

<sup>82</sup> Clancy, p. 114.

<sup>83</sup> Dumbrell, 2006, p. 360.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid*.

Féin in the United States...and a lot of work has been done by Sinn Féin representatives in the United States to try and deal with the fallout from that'.<sup>85</sup>

Yet a more wide-reaching event was the completely exogenous one of the attacks on the World Trade Centre exactly one month later. After the experience of a very large-scale terrorist event in one of the heartlands of what was hitherto their Irish-American support base, latent tolerance for any terrorist campaign by the IRA evaporated. Schmitt argues that the effects of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were that it cut off the ability of republicans to return to violence because any such moves would alienate their international supporters and they would rapidly lose the political capital they accumulated since entering the peace process seven years earlier. Given the fact that Sinn Féin were in ongoing negotiations, retaining high levels of political capital with the US government and with their supporters in general, was crucial. In addition, demands for immediate IRA decommissioning were now receiving a more sympathetic hearing within the US government and so it created an opportunity to increase massively the pressure on republicans to put their arms permanently beyond use.<sup>86</sup> Jonathan Powell also argued to republicans that September 11<sup>th</sup> rendered their form of terrorism obsolete, having been superseded by a more high profile and threatening variety.<sup>87</sup> The new Northern Irish peace envoy, Richard Haass, changed the tone of his engagement from one of cajoling to one of outright pressure on republicans.<sup>88</sup> He threatened to withdraw fundraising visas from Sinn Féin officials in the future and this was backed up by Bill Flynn who threatened the withdrawal of donations from corporate US. As Dumbrell notes, 'with Sinn Féin receiving around \$1 million annually in declared donations from the United States, Haass's and Flynn's threats were always like to draw some sort of positive response'.<sup>89</sup>

With their scope for delay and prevarication greatly reduced, just six weeks later the IRA engaged in its first tentative acts of decommissioning and further decommissioning was to follow in March 2002. However, soon their prevarication to complete decommissioning was to return and stalemate again set in. In 2003 Haass left his post in disagreement with

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Frampton, 2009, p. 148.

<sup>86</sup> Schmitt, D.E. 'The US War on Terrorism and its Impact on the Politics of Accommodation in Northern Ireland'. In Farrington, C. (ed.) *Global Change, Civil Society and the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 54-72.

<sup>87</sup> Powell, p. 202 and p. 310.

<sup>88</sup> 'Picking up the baton of Mitchell'. *Irish Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2004. This article suggests that 'fairly well attested legend has it that [Haass] berated Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, and that first "act" of decommissioning soon followed'.

<sup>89</sup> Dumbrell, 2006, p. 361.

Bush over the direction of the war on terror and he was replaced by Mitchell Reiss who increased the pressure on republicans to complete decommissioning even further. Reiss stated that he saw his role as eliciting a change of policy stance from Sinn Féin towards endorsing the police service and completing decommissioning in full and he used the influence of Irish-America and governmental pressure to achieve this.<sup>90</sup> Following the largest bank robbery in the history of the state by the IRA and the killing of Robert McCartney in a pub brawl by a senior IRA leader and subsequent witness intimidation by IRA members, republicans came under hitherto unseen levels of US pressure to endorse policing and complete the final decommissioning of weapons. Domestic factors were complicating the completion of the process too: Trimble had departed the scene and Sinn Féin had eclipsed the SDLP in terms of electoral support meaning that a power-sharing Executive now needed to be built around the DUP and Sinn Féin. However, Reiss continued to increase the pressure and during Adams's visit to the US on St Patrick's Day in 2005, 'wherever Adams went in Washington, he faced bipartisan opprobrium' including from former allies.<sup>91</sup> Adams was not invited to the White House, Ted Kennedy and George Bush refused to meet him, and previously supportive Irish-American groups denounced republicans for their ongoing links to violence. Additionally, Sinn Féin members were now being denied fund-raising visas.<sup>92</sup> A senior political figure in the US, quoted in the *Irish Times*, noted that members of Congress were no longer willing to go out on a limb for republicans – "Ten years ago we could have got 20 congressmen and half a dozen senators from both parties to sign a letter to the president... Today we'd have trouble getting one". His point was underlined by the absence for the first time in 10 years, of any Congress member at the Sinn Féin Ardfeis in Dublin last week. The problem is not just recent events. Enthusiasm for a never-ending peace process has given way to a weary ennui'.<sup>93</sup>

The following month, after returning to Ireland and with Westminster and local elections looming, Adams called for the IRA to engage in purely political and democratic activity. In July 2005 the IRA announced that it had 'formally ordered an end to the armed campaign... All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms... The IRA leadership has also authorised our representative to engage with the IICD to complete the process to verifiably

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<sup>90</sup> Reiss, M. *Negotiating with Evil. When to Talk with Terrorists*. (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2010), p. 36 and p. 67.

<sup>91</sup> Clancy, p. 150. Clancy argues that Reiss's bipartisan approach and keeping Irish-American businessmen and politicians up-to-date on events enabled him to garner their support to manage republicanism in this way.

<sup>92</sup> 'Adams faces task in US of restoring faith in Sinn Féin'. *Irish Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005; 'Senator Kennedy refuses to meet Adams'. *Irish Times*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

<sup>93</sup> 'The end of the affair'. *Irish Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

put its arms beyond use'. Decommissioning of IRA weapons was complete by September that year. Decommissioning opened the way for a deal on policing at St Andrews and the re-establishment of the power-sharing Assembly with the DUP and Sinn Féin at the helm and the subsequent withdrawal of US interests in the peace process, which were already waning by this stage anyway.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that international factors played an important role in ethno-national moderation. This challenges the dominant inclusion-moderation hypothesis, which focuses exclusively on domestic factors. Due to being developed in the class and religious contexts, existing approaches neglect the fact that political conflict over self-determination issues and competing nationalisms often cross states' borders and in many instances engage actors in the diaspora. Additionally, existing explanations fail to take into account the fact that moderation in groups with a history of institutionalised violence may require third-party interventions. Ending entrenched civil wars often requires international actors acting as brokers and guarantors. In these respects, the moderation of ethno-national radical groups needs to include an examination of the international dimension. That is not to say that moderation originated in the international context as clearly domestic circumstances in Britain and Ireland were the initial drivers of this process. However, the international context was a crucial facilitator for completing moderation. This is not just about bringing in a new external actor to bargain with republicans, although this was certainly part of it. It was also about the US being perceived by republicans as guaranteeing their interests in a future disputed arena of political competition while also being an acceptable broker of peace to the Unionists and British too.

US leverage over republicans initially took the form of incentives, such as offers of economic investment and access to powerful political leaders, to entice republicans into negotiations. Meetings with senior US politicians and businessmen, fund-raising visas, and reassurances that republican interests were being heard were the initial offering of the international partner. In order for these to be effective, the US needed to demonstrate that it was not here purely in the short-term but they would be a longer-term stabilising effect upon the future of Northern Ireland and would continue to ensure republican demands

were heard.<sup>94</sup> This was also a process of providing a stable basis to democracy in Northern Ireland rather than merely representing short-term strategic interactions between key leaders. Over time, incentivising levers turned to more pressurising levers, and the threat of withdrawal of US support and the exercise of moral condemnation came to the fore over decommissioning. The linkages between republicans and the US were crucial to ensuring that these levers were effective, and these links stemmed from a strong and active diaspora and sense of shared history on the republican side, and a sense that Northern Ireland could be used as a model of effective foreign policy interventions on the US side.<sup>95</sup> Geographical proximity was not necessary in this case given these other strong ties and incentives.

The civil wars literature draws our attention to the fact that a negotiated settlement is more likely to be agreed and implemented after the Cold War and if a third-party acts as a guarantor. This is important because it allows violent radicals to undergo a process of demilitarisation which they view as leaving themselves vulnerable knowing that their interests can be protected by an honest broker to prevent encroachment by an adversary. Of course, the context in which these findings were refined and developed are typically very different than that in Northern Ireland. They often focus on large-scale civil wars and in countries that are characterised by weak and uncertain political institutions, which greatly destabilises the process of looking for a negotiated settlement. However, in spite of these different contexts, this chapter has shown that there are clear parallels with the moderation of Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland.

Prior to the Cold War, the US generally refused to engage in any policy that would jeopardise their relationship with a powerful ally. In fact, de Valera had already learnt this lesson much to his disappointment as early as the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 when President Wilson refused to support Ireland's bid for self-determination for fear of upsetting his allies, in spite of the Irish case fitting with Wilsonian principles.<sup>96</sup> Indeed this pattern was the case throughout the Cold War presidencies. However, after the Cold War,

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<sup>94</sup> 'Upbeat Mitchell sees Stormont as a "Labour of Love"'. *Irish Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1997; 'Clinton hopes Northern Ireland talks can shift to 'substantive negotiations' in June'. *Irish Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1997; 'White House attempts to breathe new life into peace process'. *Irish Times*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1997.

<sup>95</sup> America's interest in using Northern Ireland as a successful example of their brokering ability is evident from Clinton's reluctance to return to Northern Ireland during the crisis on decommissioning and that he only came on condition that he (mistakenly) thought progress was being made. See Powell's account of trying to secure Clinton's visit, p. 182.

<sup>96</sup> Kissane, 2005, p. 45.

the US under Clinton suddenly perceived an incentive and the ability to adopt a more interventionist stance. Through a combination of incentives and the threat of their removal, along with presenting themselves as a neutral guarantor of all interests in the peace process, the US enabled republicans to commit to a ceasefire and agree to participation in the reformed institutions of Northern Ireland. Given the prolonged history of suspicion and hostility between republicans and the British and unionist communities, the role of US guarantees and brokering should not be underestimated. George Bush's special envoys also played their role in securing republican moderation, but this was more through a process of coercion and pressure than through offering guarantees and brokering.

This brings us back to an important overarching question – what was the nature of the republican moderation generated by this causal factor? The role of the international intervention was much more limited in time and scope than that of the more domestic factors of elections and democratic bargaining. In fact, the effects of US engagement was more akin to de-radicalisation than moderation, by which I mean a short-term process specifically focused on removing the use of violence rather than the longer-term and gradualist processes already examined. The US intervention certainly encouraged participation, but many of the incentives and the momentum towards participation were already in place in the domestic context. Also Mitchell was not necessarily involved in negotiating the actual content of the Belfast Agreement to a huge extent, given that the broad parameters of the internal strand were already in place for a long-time. Yet the role of Irish-America in allowing the shift from rejection to participation in spite of the inherent anxiety in such a transformation was crucial. The other important aspect of moderation that the international intervention generated was the removal of the pathway back to violence. Through the pressures of the Bush administration, along with important domestic developments, the IRA engaged in its final act of decommissioning seven years after Sinn Féin accepted the Belfast Agreement and five years after Sinn Féin first sat in the Northern Irish Executive. This process was about negative moderation – the removal of anti-system violence and revolution. Again it did not necessarily entail positive moderation – a total change in the values or beliefs of republicans. Nowhere is this clearer than in the IRA's statement announcing their own disbandment and cooperation with decommissioning in full. After announcing they were destroying their arms in order to build confidence in the process their statement added that 'our decisions have been taken to advance our republican and democratic objectives, including our goal of a united Ireland...and to end

British rule in our country... We reiterate our view that the armed struggle was entirely legitimate'.

## CHAPTER 7

### REIMAGINING ETHNO-NATIONAL MODERATION – LESSONS FROM IRISH REPUBLICANISM

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Having explored the relevance of theories developed in the comparative context for understanding the moderation of Irish republicanism, I now turn to exploring the lessons of this case for the theory of moderation. This entails returning to the idea that republicanism is well-suited to exploring the pathways of the causal relationship between political inclusion and moderation in the ethno-national context. As such, this chapter uses lessons from Northern Ireland to offer a tentative conceptual rethinking around the inclusion-moderation hypothesis for violent ethno-nationalists. My main focus is on assessing how well this theory travels to this context and what this reveals about existing understandings of the concept and the causal mechanisms underpinning it.

I argue that the causal theory that inclusion leads to a *process* of moderation is a useful toolkit in this context too. The core understanding of moderation as a process that entails shifting from revolutionary ‘boat-rocking’ to reformism within an existing set of institutions is a very appropriate way of understanding this transformation. A macro approach that examines how strong institutions can provide a stable basis to political competition where these institutions are seen as limiting the risks associated with moderation, is a very useful approach for explaining why radical movements make strategic adjustments in a moderate direction which then become embedded over time. Powerful formal institutions such as elections, democratic power-sharing institutions, a changing party system, and clear rules of democratic competition, as well as the more informal institutions such as an international intervention and alliance building, were important causes of moderation. This approach complements existing ideas that focus on interplay and the co-option of social movements by highlighting that the interplay between the British and Irish governments and republican elites occurred within a wider context of strong institutions which produced their own incentives for moderation. In short, the causes of the process of ethno-national moderation are well explained by the inclusion-moderation hypothesis. Additionally, the understanding of moderation as multi-dimensional and the idea that different aspects of radical groups moderate at different paces, with some aspects more resistant to the moderating incentives of inclusion than others, are all extremely pertinent.

The normative assumption that moderation should entail a change in values is brought into question by this context, however. Having been developed in the class and religious context, this fails to take into account the fact that an ethno-national party has an irreducible core to their ideology – issues such as self-determination and sovereignty are the *sine qua non* of an ethno-national movement. Assuming in advance that moderation should entail a change in these values or beliefs may be unrealistic and overly normative in this context. Expecting Irish republicanism to legitimise a bi-national understanding of Northern Ireland's sovereignty and accept alternative sovereignty claims to the territory of Northern Ireland is an inappropriate measure of moderation. Existing understandings tempt us to understand this as a case of behavioural moderation without any ideological moderation, but this underestimates the depth of the changes that republicanism went through by assuming they are merely restricted to the level of behaviour if they do not come to embody tolerance, pluralism and other 'progressive' liberal democratic values. This problem derives from the fact that existing approaches fail to offer an adequate understanding of what constitutes ideology and, in fact, the separation of ideology from behaviour is overly artificial, given that ideology is ultimately action-oriented. Republicanism's changing behaviour certainly entailed changing their worldview too and there can be little doubt that agreeing to participate fully in elections or acquiescing to decommissioning their weapons represented crossing an ideological plain. Certainly within republicanism there was a tension between their behaviour and their original beliefs, but this did not prevent them from demonstrating a clear commitment to the moderate path and becoming almost entirely accommodating, even while retaining their core beliefs around ethnic self-determination.

Therefore, I offer an alternative understanding of moderation, drawing on the nature of the transformation of republicanism. I argue that moderation should be seen in less normative terms, stepping away from the idea that it should embody value change as a final stage. Building on Capoccia's understanding of anti-system parties,<sup>1</sup> I suggest that a more insightful approach is to frame moderation as a journey from absolute radicalism, to relative radicalism and finally to a position of accommodating and committed moderation. Such an understanding allows for the fact that the ethno-national dimension of a formerly radical

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<sup>1</sup> Capoccia, 2002.

group may never be able to fall under the rubric of liberal democratic values like tolerance and pluralism.

In conclusion I consider the limitations to generating an adapted version of these concepts based on just one case study and, therefore, I offer an assessment of those aspects of the Northern Ireland context that stand out as potentially unusual for these debates. In some respects the nature of the state in Northern Ireland is anomalous. Northern Ireland may have been a contested territory and an unusual type of political unit, but it was characterised by a series of strong British institutions throughout its history and little or no state weakness. In addition, these strong institutions were increasingly Anglo-Irish in character. Strong institutions like these were able to reassure republicans when committing to political participation at key critical junctures and they delivered increasing returns to create a path-dependent process of moderation. It is doubtful that elite decisions at critical junctures would have become binding in the absence of such strong institutions and a stable British-Irish relationship. Britain from 1973 onwards was also highly tolerant of Sinn Féin's anti-system challenge, allowing rather than repressing their politicisation. This partly helps to explain why the peace process was successful in Northern Ireland. Strong institutions were vital in helping to channel violence into political contestation and preventing a return to violence in the delicate phase that immediately followed the war to peace transition. This is important given that political pre-conditions are more crucial to consolidating an agreed democratic framework than other factors, and so a pre-existing set of strong political institutions minimises the risks for adversarial groups to commit to a democratic settlement to channel their disputes.<sup>2</sup> The replicability of such a context may be limited in other scenarios.

## **Multi-Dimensional and Layered Moderation**

Existing understandings of the *process* of moderation are very useful for illuminating the transformation of radical ethno-nationalism. It is clear from the case of Irish republicanism that moderation entailed moving away from pursuing their goals through revolutionary methods and rejecting existing institutions as a conduit of political contestation. It was concerned with jettisoning the use of both violence and revolutionary politics such as

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander, G. *The Sources of Democratic Consolidation*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

parallel state building. The underlying core ideological justification for this radicalism was their alternative claim to sovereignty, perceiving Northern Ireland as a colonial political unit and part of an unfinished Irish nation-building project that began in 1916. As such, this was clearly a group that significantly ‘rocked-the-boat’ in their political approach. The moderation process was essentially a process of replacing revolutionary politics with increased participation within the existing political institutions or within a set of reformed political institutions and agreeing to pursue their goals through gradual reformism rather than attempting an outright overhaul.

The shift towards participation was layered and challenges the dominant view of Irish republicanism as falling into two discrete dichotomous categories of radical and moderate. Retrospectively, it is possible to detect the nascent process of moderation beginning with the failure of the parallel state strategy. This is not to imply a teleological understanding by examining the end point of republicanism today and tracing how it was inevitable that they would reach this point. Indeed, the degree of contestation over key decisions within republicanism, such as ending abstentionism or endorsing the Belfast Agreement and the splits that these caused, demonstrate this was a contested process. Yet with hindsight it is possible to see this phase as culminating in the critical juncture of the decision to contest elections with hunger striking prisoners, which set republicans on a path-dependent road of ‘increasing returns’ and high costs for leaving it.<sup>3</sup> The party undertook an internal critique, resulting in the expansion of their policy programme and the fractionalisation of their long-term goal of a united Ireland into a series of shorter-term and more reformist-oriented aims to sit alongside this ultimate goal. This immediately raised the tension within republicanism that if reformism could be pursued within the confines of the existing institutions, what was the need for pursuing outright revolution. As such, while the major step towards participation was with the decision to contest elections, this process actually began earlier with the failure of parallel state building. The logic of electoral competition ensured that this became a process of inexorable moderation if the party wished to avoid political marginalisation. Participation within these institutional structures changed their relationships with other key actors, which were to evolve further over time, notably the nationalist electorate, the SDLP, and the Irish and British governments. It is important to note that no one factor alone was sufficient to produce the outcome of committed

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<sup>3</sup> Pierson, 2000.

moderation but rather it was in an interaction of elections and democratic bargaining that this emerged.

Republicanism adds further evidence to the idea that moderation cannot be understood in terms of a single aggregate dimension. Sanchez-Cuenca argues that moderation is simply convergence on the position of the median voter along a single aggregate dimension.<sup>4</sup> In other words, much like an aggregate left-right dimension, we can construct a single aggregate radical-moderate dimension and moderation is best understood as convergence upon the position endorsed by the average or middle voter in a distribution of voters. Such an understanding is problematic for a number of reasons. It assumes that the median voter holds a moderate policy position, an assumption that is highly contestable in the case of deeply divided societies characterised by violent conflict. It also implicitly assumes that radicalism is always relational to other actors in society but, as I will argue below, it is useful to distinguish between absolute and relational radicalism. Finally, such an approach assumes that moderation is an even process across all the different issues that a radical group focuses on. According to Wickham, this creates an illusion of coherence and evenness that is absent in reality from such transformations.<sup>5</sup> Rather, political parties or political groups have a number of different policy dimensions and a party may be radical in some while being simultaneously moderate in others.<sup>6</sup> As such, trying to aggregate this into a single dimension overlooks the subtleties and nuances of the process.

Irish republicans provide strong support for the idea that moderation is a layered process, moving at a different pace in some issue areas than others. The different dimensions of republicanism and the manner of their moderation (or not) reveals an interesting pattern. In spite of their history of contesting British sovereignty, the aspects that were the least resistant to moderation were those concerned with agreeing to be governed by the outcomes of reformed institutions within Northern Ireland. In part this was because republicans already had a history of engagement with institutions without endorsing their legitimacy but also the nature of the institutions and a lack of state weakness helped republicans to commit – an issue I return to later. This was a process of accommodation, or what the historical trend in Irish academia refers to as ‘pragmatism’. The party certainly had

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<sup>4</sup> Sanchez-Cuenca.

<sup>5</sup> Wickham, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Schwedler, 2006.

a prior normative commitment to democracy,<sup>7</sup> and undoubtedly this made the moderation easier to undertake and easier to become embedded.<sup>8</sup> Given the strategic nature of their participation, this change in direction was able to be reconciled with their core goal of achieving a united Ireland rather than betraying it. Where dissent emerged within the organisation over increased participation it was over whether this change in direction really remained true to this goal or indirectly subverted it by recognising British sovereignty and partition. For those who accepted that strategic participation could be beneficial to republicanism, there was relatively little debate over the actual constitutional arrangements to be accepted. In fact, the main debate was over ensuring republicans had the opportunity for full and meaningful participation, something that was overcome through the inherent guarantees of the power-sharing settlement.

A much more resistant dimension to the incentives of moderation was the military dimension of republicanism. It may be tempting to assume this implies that defenderism was a stronger part of the republican ideology than anti-partitionism – indeed, perhaps those republicans most committed to ending partition left the movement in 1986 leaving the Northern defenderists in control, individuals who joined in the specific context of perceiving attacks upon their community rather than joining initially for ideological reasons. However, it is also because participation could be easily aligned with their ultimate goal of a united Ireland, but permanently ending the armed struggle prior to realising a united Irish republic was much harder to reconcile. Where power-sharing could be presented as a step towards a transition to a united Ireland, decommissioning could not be presented as such. The finding that the militant aspects of a radical group are the last to moderate during a war to peace transition has also been observed in other contexts,<sup>9</sup> and in the case of Northern Ireland decommissioning and endorsing the reformed Police Service of Northern Ireland were the most entrenched aspects to be overcome. These were difficult because of the ideological history of republicanism – in other words, it was not just about using these as bargaining chips to gain as many concessions as possible for the republican position.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> O’Boyle.

<sup>8</sup> This adds support to Mainwaring’s idea that a prior history of democracy increases the chances of consolidating a democratic transition within groups, but it does not necessarily preclude the possibility that clever institutional design can overcome a lack of normative commitments to democracy, as both di Palma and Bermeo argue. If anything the Northern Irish case seems to provide proof for both these points of view by building on republicanism’s democratic commitments with power-sharing to overcome the militant legacy!

<sup>9</sup> Wood, 2009 shows this to be the case in El Salvador. De Zeeuw shows the challenges of demilitarisation in soldier to politician transformations.

<sup>10</sup> This is the sole interpretation considered in the much of the literature – see, for example, Clancy or Powell for an academic or insider interpretation along these lines respectively.

Republicanism has always had a defenderism element to it, especially in terms of the motivations of volunteers, whether in the post-1916 phase or in the post-1969 phase. In this context, putting weapons permanently beyond use and accepting the rule of law in a devolved British state challenged this role. Additionally, it did not appear to be an electoral necessity to decommission. It was necessary in order to make themselves coalitionable but not to actually win votes. Sinn Féin's largest electoral gains occurred at the time of the IRA ceasefire and their vote share within the nationalist community steadily rose without undertaking decommissioning. Regardless of the most apposite explanations to understand this, it is clear that republicanism moderated its stance on political participation prior to ending its military campaign and, in fact, these final aspects to moderate only did so after Sinn Féin had assumed executive power and after the exogenous shock of the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. This again highlights the contingent nature of republican moderation rather than seeing this as an inevitable process.

One of the most intriguing lessons from the study of republicanism is that some aspects of radical ethno-national groups may be immune from moderation and the layer of beliefs concerning sovereignty and self-determination remained mostly unchanged throughout this time period. While there is little unfinished business for republicans in terms of reforms within Northern Ireland from the republican perspective, the main area they do not compromise on is the external and symbolic issue of territorial unity. There was a dilution of how self-determination could be exercised, shifting from the necessity of an all-Ireland political unit to a willingness to accommodate parallel referendums in the two parts of Ireland. There was also an acceptance of the need to gain unionist consent rather than seeing them as a minority voice within the rightful all-Ireland political unit. However, the ultimate notion that the most appropriate unit for self-determination was the entire island of Ireland, and anything short of this may be accommodated but not legitimated, remained. Additionally, republicanism was resistant to any efforts to pluralise the sovereignty of Northern Ireland, interpreting the Belfast Agreement as a step towards an historically-inevitable reunited Ireland rather than a celebration of the diversity of both British and Irish claims. Even where they accept unionists' right to be identified as British, they do not concede that this means the territory unionists inhabit has a right to be part of the United Kingdom. What they have conceded is an acceptance that unionists have the right to an historical claim to be British but not that they have a right to claim the territory for Britain. The exercise of self-determination has changed but the alternative claim to sovereignty and

a *de jure* rejection of British sovereignty remain core beliefs. One reason it was possible to retain these was that these beliefs, once pursued in a democratic and reformist manner, were highly compatible with the values of other key actors in the political arena, such as the SDLP, the Irish government and Irish-America. Additionally, since 1973/74, Britain made it clear that Irish unity was a legitimate goal to pursue. Therefore, these core beliefs did not render republicanism relationally radical or undermine their coalition potential. As such, republicans were not pressured to change these values once they engaged in new political relationships.

Wickham found that increased political participation is often initially undertaken for strategic purposes.<sup>11</sup> The idea that participation was strategic in its origins was also strongly evident in Irish republicanism's case. At all stages the leadership emphasised that increased participation was about bringing republicans closer to their goal of a united Ireland. For the republican elite, moderation was not necessarily the choice between principles and power, as their dissident critics liked to portray – rather moderation became the route through which they could secure power, which would in turn allow them to implement their long-standing principles. In other words, policy and office were not seen as a trade-off but were seen as complementary. Initially the thinking was that a political mandate would increase their leverage with the British government but this then shifted to the idea that an exclusively political mandate would increase their ability to legislate a united Ireland into existence in a way that armed struggle could not. The fact that they refused to give any legitimate endorsement to the institutions within which they were now participating allowed them to maintain continuity with their rejection of British sovereignty while still *de facto* accepting it as a temporary system of political order. Participation was about opening up the possibility for republicans to implement their long-standing agenda and make a comeback on their own terms against attempts to marginalise them from Irish political life.

Wickham also argues that initially strategic participation becomes embedded through a process of habituation, much as Rustow sees democratisation becoming embedded.<sup>12</sup> However, it is not clear that habituation is the best way of interpreting how strategic participation developed into consolidated moderation in this case. The context of a formerly violent ethno-national party entering power as alleged moderates raised much suspicion and mistrust between all parties, resulting in demands for republicans to prove

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<sup>11</sup> Wickham, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*; Rustow, 1970.

their commitment to moderation long before the notion of habituation could set it. Republicanism did not become an exclusively political group due to a slow winding down of their capacity to launch armed struggle, although this may also have been happening incidentally. Rather they were pushed towards demonstrating a commitment to moderation by their evolving relationships with other actors and their need to make themselves coalitionable and an acceptable partner with whom to share power. It was under concerted effort from unionist politicians along with the three governments of Britain, Ireland and the United States, that commitments to moderation were extracted. Ultimately, it was in the face of a need to make a choice between defending the new institutions or implicitly accepting ongoing attacks against these institutions from their former comrades that their greatest test emerged, a test that resulted in pushing them from being distant from other parties within the political system to a position that was closer and thus more coalitionable. In these circumstances, demonstrating a commitment to moderation was not about habituation but it was about coming under pressure to make a choice.

### **The Macro-Institutional Causes of Ethno-National Moderation**

Macro-institutional explanations are important causes of ethno-national moderation. Strong democratic institutions that provide a stable basis for political competition,<sup>13</sup> especially when they reduce the risks for electoral losers by enshrining power-sharing, have the capacity to regulate revolutionary radicalism and channel it within an accepted framework for political contestation. Crucially, an institutional framework does not need to be perceived as legitimate in order to have this moderating effect. In the case of Irish republicanism, placing an emphasis upon macro-causal explanations is an important addition to explanations that tend to primarily focus on the meso level of interplay and strategies between the British government and republican elites. It also reinforces the need to distinguish between the different levels of radicalism at the micro, meso and macro levels, as Della Porta and LaFree argue.<sup>14</sup>

Irish republicans encountered the same dilemma as identified by Przeworski and Sprague, namely elections are inherently restrictive of radicalism as the logic of electoral competition

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Della Porta and LaFree.

simply does not allow for outright revolution.<sup>15</sup> The constraints and incentives that are built into electoral participation held sway over many aspects of republicanism, even though ethno-national issues are less bargainable than the socio-economic issues which formed the context of Przeworski and Sprague's original thesis. Electoral participation, even when undertaken with a high degree of ambivalence towards the outcome and towards the institutions it was electing, necessitated republicans fractionalising their ultimate goals into short-term aims, it required them to build alliances beyond their core supporters to win more votes, and it required diluting their radical goals in order to make widespread appeals more successful. Of course, it was possible for republicans to ignore the incentives to tailor a policy programme that would secure more votes, but this would lead to political marginalisation in light of the Northern Irish nationalist electorate's essentially moderate preferences – a strategy the British and Irish governments sought to achieve through the AIA in 1985. However, republicanism was aware that electoral success was the only principle that mattered.<sup>16</sup> It was through electoral competition that many republican principles became diluted to tactics, most notably abstentionism. Even though republicans did not believe in the legitimacy of the outcomes produced by the elections, once the inequalities of participation were removed, such as eliminating the rate-payers franchise that favoured unionist voters, then it created a level playing field. In other words, electoral competition in Northern Ireland could be relied upon to produce a result that was a fair reflection of the votes cast and this meant that elections were a relatively open and stable basis for electoral competition.

Once republicans accepted and proved they could profit through electoral competition, they engaged in a process of reconstructing the democratic institutions in Northern Ireland with a view to committing to exclusively peaceful politics. The settlement agreed to in 1997/98 was one that was broadly in place since the early 1970s and one that reduced the risks of political competition through power-sharing. This partly explains why accepting a reformed set of institutions under British sovereignty was a relatively uncontroversial decision within republicanism, certainly compared to moderating their militant dimensions. The reconstructed political institutions were long-standing and credible methods of regulating political competition that did not favour unionists in the way a majoritarian system previously did. Additionally, British declarations that republicans would be allowed to pursue their ultimate goal of secession through these institutions was accepted. Thus the

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<sup>15</sup> Przeworski and Sprague.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 4, footnote 55.

risks of democratic competition were minimised through this institutional design while the potential for gains was high. It is in this context that the American intervention makes the most sense. Rather than seeing them as a neutral arbiter in disputes, although George Mitchell certainly fulfilled his role even-handedly, they were initially perceived by republicans as a guarantor of their interests. This was another factor that was seen as reducing the risks of committing to political competition that potentially offered higher gains than a strategy of armed resistance. Of course, they also had a role of pressuring republicans to decommission, but this does not detract from their importance as an informal institution that provided a stable basis to those who were considering committing to political rather than violent contestation.

These stable frameworks had a profound effect upon republicans' relationships with other actors in the system. These institutions regulated their relationships with other actors, requiring them to build alliances both with nationalist and unionist actors. Under these conditions, republicanism was required to make itself coalitionable and the institutional framework gave them the confidence to be able to do so. In short, leadership exchanges and interplay in Northern Ireland occurred within a macro-institutional context that was fundamentally important and which needs to be acknowledged.

As such, it is possible to understand republican moderation as deriving from a stable and strong democratic institutional framework that was able to regulate radicalism by giving the radicals the confidence to commit to a moderate path with relatively low risks and possibly high gains. In this regard, the three institutional factors examined here reinforced each other by all encouraging and allowing republicans to commit to moderation. No one factor can be considered in isolation and no single factor was sufficient to produce the moderate outcome. The sequence of macro-institutional engagement was also important in the case of republicanism. They only engaged in democratic bargaining after they had demonstrated to themselves that they could be successful in elections. Even then, democratic bargaining was not enough to produce the commitments required to consolidate their moderation but rather the international intervention, both as guarantors and appliers of pressure, was necessary. Crucially what allowed republicans to commit ultimately was that democratic institutions in Northern Ireland could be accepted to produce stable and predictable results with the opportunity to exercise state power without inherently favouring one side over the other in advance. Committing to democracy was thus simultaneously associated with low

risks while also rendering the future of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom uncertain.

### **What Constitutes Moderation in an Ethno-National Context?**

Clearly existing explanations are strong on the *process* of moderation, but they are less satisfactory when it comes to understanding the *category* of what it means to be classified as moderate. While the inclusion-moderation hypothesis holds much explanatory power in this context, its central focus on moderation as necessitating ‘ideological change’ towards pluralism and tolerance is questionable. Certain values which form the lynch-pin for ethno-national radicalism are too salient to the identity of the party to undergo significant value change in a pluralistic or more tolerant direction. Given the elevation of ideological change to the centre of definitions of moderation, this implies that ethno-national groups may never be able to be moderate. However, a failure to legitimate a pluralisation of their ethno-national identity does not necessarily imply a lack of commitment towards the moderate path on behalf of former radicals. In other words, there is an ambivalence and grey area at the core of an ethno-national transformation, a clear change in behaviour from revolution to participation, a possible dilution of long-standing rigid principles, and a commitment to this path, but without necessarily embodying core changes in their beliefs regarding their ethno-national goals. Declaring this to be an incomplete or partial process of moderation overlooks the fact that this grey area is possibly inherent in the transformation of ethno-nationalism and the expectation of value change in such parties is illusory.

In an effort to make an important distinction between those radical groups who change their behaviour but without changing their beliefs, studies of moderation distinguish between behavioural moderation and ideological moderation. The distinction between these two categories is that ideological moderation entails ‘the abandonment, postponement, or revision of radical goals that enables an opposition movement to accommodate itself to the give and take of “normal” competitive politics’,<sup>17</sup> or alternatively, it entails changing ideas so that they do not contradict the principles of popular sovereignty and political pluralism.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Schwedler emphasises increased tolerance of alternative perspectives.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Wickham, 2004, p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> Tezcür, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Schwedler 2006, p. 3; Wickham, 2004, p. 206.

Moderation is viewed as insincere if it does not also include a change in ideology and it is for this reason that definitions encompass a substantive element that emphasises value change.

At first glance this seems to be a relatively insightful distinction to make in the case of Irish republicanism. Soon after the endorsement of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, scholars began to frame republicanism's transformation as a change in the means they were using but without actually changing the substance of republicanism. It was about subordinating long-term goals to short-term aims but without actually changing those long-term goals, which remained in the background.<sup>20</sup> This was the viewpoint of Unionism during the negotiation and implementation phase. Unionists were extremely cautious that republicanism was engaging disingenuously in the peace process, changing their behaviour while in reality remaining unreconstructed violent radicals in sheep's clothing.

Indeed, there can be little doubt that many aspects of republicanism's belief system did not change. I have argued consistently that this was about a process of committed accommodation and acquiescence without changing their stance on the legitimacy of Northern Ireland as a political unit. The Belfast Agreement states that it is 'the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland'.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the ideal aspiration was to create in Northern Ireland something akin to the trend identified in some advanced liberal democracies for a new form of pluralistic nationalism that did not necessarily need a territorial form of expression.<sup>22</sup> Yet there is little evidence that this viewpoint was accepted by Irish republicans. Their endorsement of the Belfast Agreement was undertaken instrumentally on the condition that it would help them to realise their historically inevitable goal of a united Ireland. Ireland continued to be viewed as an incomplete nation-building project that should be rightfully reunited and freed from British sovereignty. Whilst unionist consent was now accepted for pursuing these goals, that did not mean that they now accepted Northern Ireland as a legitimate part of Britain or that it

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Ruane and Todd, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> *The Agreement. Agreement reached in multi-party negotiations.* Article 1, iv.

<sup>22</sup> Quebec, Scotland and Catalonia are held as models of a new form of nationalism that is not tethered to a need for territorial representation in the traditional sense. Keating, M. *Nations Against the State. The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland.* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001); Keating, M. *Pluri-National Democracy. Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

could ever be a legitimate political unit as long as it was not under a united Irish sovereignty. This was exactly Lamounier's understanding of accommodation without legitimising the institutional framework to which they now accommodated themselves.<sup>23</sup> The lynchpin of their radicalism, that aspect which initially encouraged revolution and violence, namely their alternative claim to sovereignty, remained. What is more, an alternative claim to sovereignty always has some radicalism at its core as it implies a complete change of the ruling apparatus and personnel, albeit this might be pursued in a reformist manner.

On closer inspection, however, the limits of the behavioural-ideological distinction are illuminated by the case of republicanism. The layered nature of moderation challenges the behavioural-ideological distinction and the idea that there should be a final substantive endpoint in a radical to moderate transformation. It is unclear that the distinction between behaviour and ideology is actually tenable. It is based on a misreading of the meaning of ideology, seeing it as above behaviour rather than rooted in practices. In contrast, once behaviour and ideology are seen as intimately linked then it is impossible to think in terms of changes in behaviour without some changes in beliefs. Instead what becomes important is which beliefs change and which remain the same and how this affects a group's ability to be classified as moderate. If certain beliefs cannot change without a group losing its ideological identity, then a better measure of moderation is a group's *commitment* to moderate behaviour rather than the presence or absence of normative liberal values like tolerance and pluralism.

In the most influential theorisation of ideology in recent years,<sup>24</sup> Freedman demonstrates that ideology is actually action-oriented. For Freedman, ideologies are ubiquitous and offer a way of decontesting the meaning of contested notions.<sup>25</sup> They gain their meaning not only through the material and social conditions of a specific time and place, but also through the ways in which different concepts within an ideology are related to each other. He argues that ideologies have three distinct but related layers. Each layer forms a mutually reinforcing relationship with the others, but there are differences in the degree to which they are central to the overall ideology. At the centre is **the core**, which contains those aspects of an

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Przeworski, 1986, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Eccleshall et al., p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> The following discussion is based on Freedman, M. *Ideologies and Political Theory. A Conceptual Approach*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), chapters 1 and 2.

ideology that are ineliminable and whose removal would result in an end to the ideology. Freeden gives the example of liberty as being in the ineliminable core of liberalism – if the notion of the unconstrained individual was removed from an ideology it would cease to fit within the family of liberalism. Alongside the core lies **the adjacent** which has a logical and mutual relationship with the core. An adjacent concept to liberty might be democracy, which gives liberty a specific meaning and which is also ascribed a specific meaning by liberty. So the meaning of each concept is ‘filled out’ in a distinctive way by their mutual relationship. Freeden gives the following example to clarify the relationship between the core and adjacent: ‘the conventional path through the logical outreaches of liberty has become the one affiliated with democratic self-government, or with the kinds of equality that make self-government possible and that allow the generalization of liberty. Ideas drawn from equality and democracy have come in turn to create an ideational context that colours our understanding of liberty’.<sup>26</sup> The final layer is **the periphery**. The periphery contains ideas which are not vital to the integrity of the core, but depending on the time-period and context they may become more or less important or central to the ideology. Also within the periphery are ‘perimeter components’ which are not fully developed concepts but loose ideas or policy-proposals that derive from the core and adjacent. As such, they are more short-lived and also more particular, but it is this level that links the core to specific political action and behaviour. Thus Freeden’s theory highlights that it is difficult to conceive of behavioural changes without understanding them as embodying or emanating from changes in other aspects of a group’s ideology.

A brief sketch of the changing ideology of republicanism using Freeden’s framework helps to illuminate this. When republicanism emerged in Northern Ireland in 1969, it was clearly strongly defenderist at its core. Elites and volunteers were driven by a desire to defend catholic nationalists from the violence of the Northern Irish state. Armed struggle was the only path to achieving this and the centrality of the belief in armed struggle was evident in their formation, given they emerged in protest at Cathal Goulding’s attempts to wind down the armed struggle within the Official IRA.<sup>27</sup> Clearly many Northern volunteers were not ideologically conscious of notions of self-determination or how the present struggle related to partition and 1916. Former IRA volunteer, Tommy McKearney has recalled that there

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup> The centrality of violence is also clear from early documents such as the IRA’s book *Freedom’s Struggle*, 1973, see Chapter 4, footnote 16 and their ‘*Green Book*’ produced for volunteers in 1977.

was a lack of ideology within new recruits to the IRA,<sup>28</sup> and even Adams himself dismissed the idea that the streets of Belfast were creaking under the weight of heavy ideological discourse. He stated that in the early 1970s 'I was no more politically conscious than many of my contemporaries... we were certain on only one thing: the injustice of the system could not go unchallenged'.<sup>29</sup> However, a small elite of Southern nationalists that had more direct continuity with the earlier struggle in the War of Independence and the anti-Treaty movement, either through their parents' or their own participation in the doomed Border Campaign of the 1950s, were to emerge as the new leadership. In Ruairí Ó'Brádaigh in particular there was a skilled leader who readily framed Northern Ireland in the 1960s as part of a continuous struggle with the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> This interpretation was soon built on to the defenderist motivation, giving their grievances greater ideological depth and continuity. From the outset, disseminating this ideology of armed struggle justified by an alternative claim to sovereignty and Irish self-determination was propagated and promoted through the pages of *An Phoblacht* and through training sessions where education in ideas was as important as training in weapons.<sup>31</sup> The ideology of Irish self-determination had an inherent appeal to a group of young men looking for radical change where anti-colonial rhetoric was readily combined with socialism in the North and was fostered and sustained by poor socio-economic conditions.

Throughout the 1970s the adjacent and periphery filled out these core ideas in a very specific way, led by Ó'Brádaigh drawing on traditional republicanism. In the adjacent, the core belief of Irish sovereignty over Northern Ireland was filled out by viewing Britain as a colonial power engaged in an illegitimate empire-building effort. Unionists were not accepted as British but rather they were seen as Irish, citing their Celtic heritage as proof of this, and they were obliged to commit their lot in with the rest of their fellow Irishmen, although efforts would be made to protect their minority identity through federalism. In the periphery, the core beliefs manifested as limited engagement with British institutions, parallel state building and abstentionism. In this way, the different levels of ideology all reinforced each other to present a radical group.

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<sup>28</sup> McKearney, p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> Adams, 1986, p. 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> White, p. 140-190.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the interview with an IRA leader in the *Irish People* on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1979, where he stated that 'we train lecturers to go the [IRA] cells and deliver talks on security, counter-insurgency techniques and the politics of why we are fighting'.

Institutional contact, changing economic and social conditions, and changing relationships with other political actors led to a re-evaluation of aspects of the adjacent and peripheral ideology, such as non-participation and Britain's strategic interest in Northern Ireland. What is more, following the departure of Ó'Brádaigh and his largely Southern contingent of traditionalists, this weakened the continuity with the earlier phase of republicanism and made it easier for less rigid interpretations of the core value of Irish self-determination to emerge in the adjacent and periphery. The tensions that existed between behaviour and values in internal debates in republicanism were essentially conflicts over how ideas in the adjacent and periphery should fill out the core values. The core of an alternative claim to sovereignty remained but the adjacent no longer saw Britain as a colonial power with a vested interest in maintaining control over Ireland. Unionists were accepted as British and their different aspirations were acknowledged, although the alternative claim to sovereignty ensured they were not seen as legitimate aspirations. This also meant that the tactics in the periphery could change. If Britain no longer had a vested interest, then participation in British institutions could become an acceptable route to pursue republican goals. Abstentionism was ultimately replaced with deeper participation. Armed struggle also changed its position. The belief in the right to exercise armed struggle remains in the core, hence the difficulty in overcoming decommissioning and the ongoing assertion of the legitimate right to wage war in the past. However, its role as a peripheral tactic changed, so it was much easier to undertake a ceasefire (a tactical change in the periphery) than it was to decommission (a value in the core).

The significance of changes in the adjacent and the periphery should not be underestimated. Hutchinson has argued that nationalities, and smaller nationalities in particular, can often see a battle within them for control over the meaning of that national identity. Whilst there is a core 'ethnie' at the heart of a national identity, historical, cultural and political processes shape how that ethnie is given its full meaning in a modern nation state.<sup>32</sup> As such, it is not unusual for smaller nationalisms to divide between radicals and moderates, but this division is not over core issues given that the ethnie is accepted across both groups. Rather the divisions are over adjacent and peripheral issues. This can be seen between the SDLP's vision of Irish nationalism and Sinn Féin's and the IRA's vision. They both agreed on a core Irish identity that is distinct from Britain and deserves recognition through exclusive Irish self-determination. However, the battle and disagreement between

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<sup>32</sup> Hutchinson, J. *Nations as Zones of Conflict*. (London: Sage, 2005).

these two groups was over how this should be exercised politically. Republicanism elevated violence and defenderism to their core and exercised this as a tactic in their periphery as well as retaining a rigid understanding of self-determination and an imposed identity on Ulster protestants. The SDLP were seen as moderate because of their rejection of violence but also because of their flexibility and lack of rigidity in their adjacent and peripheral beliefs. In other words, the core belief of an alternative claim to sovereignty does not have to be inherently radical if it is exercised in a moderate way through the adjacent and peripheral values. To the extent that nationalism in Northern Ireland was a zone of conflict, it is clear that the moderate SDLP's understanding emerged as the dominant workable vision of Irish nationalism, and so republicanism's transformation was about coming to accept this vision of nationalism and accommodating itself accordingly.

Using this understanding of ideology, the ambivalence of republican change becomes much easier to comprehend. This was not about a change in behaviour without any change in ideology. This is more than a debate over semantics and whether moderation theorists are really referring to sincerity rather than ideology. The point is that some aspects may not be subject to ideological change without that ideology losing its meaning, namely the ineliminable core or in the case of republicanism a belief in Irish self-determination. However, just because the ideological core remains constant does not preclude change within other levels of the ideology and these can change the meaning and interpretation of the core values which remain constant. Instead this is about the changing relationships between the meaning of concepts within the different levels of the ideology. An alternative claim to sovereignty and a belief in the right to armed struggle remained at the core, but the very extensive changes in the adjacent and periphery changed the meaning of how these core values were exercised and pursued. The process of moderation was about how the combined interacting effect of the concepts in the ideology shifted from revolution to reform. To assert that to be classified as moderate or having 'completed' the process of moderation, must entail a pluralisation of values in the ideology is confusing. The alternative claim to sovereignty and the right to use violence to achieve self-determination are not inherently anti-democratic, but rather republican's ademocracy lay in the way these were exercised.<sup>33</sup> It is not clear that these values need to be pluralised or made more inclusive and tolerant for republicanism to be considered moderate.

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<sup>33</sup> Augusteijn, J. 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002'. *Irish Political Studies* 18(1) 2003, pp. 1-26.

Therefore, how should we attempt to capture and understand ethno-national moderation? We still need a method of exploring the tension that is manifest between behaviour and values, given that Irish republicanism's participation was strategic and undertaken without endorsing the legitimacy of the political unit in which it now competes. Additionally, we need a method of acknowledging that aspects of republicanism were not necessarily absolutely radical at the outset and therefore, these can remain without jeopardising the newly accommodating direction of the movement. It is to this task that I now turn.

### **Towards an Alternative Conception of Ethno-National Moderation**

A more productive approach to conceptualising the moderation of ethno-national radicalism is to draw on key concepts from the anti-systems literature, somewhat modified for this context. This disaggregates radicalism into absolute and relational radicalism and distinguishes between parties that are typical pro-system parties and accept the legitimacy of the system and those that are anti-system but entirely accommodating. Adapting these ideas allows me to specify the idea of demonstrating a commitment to moderation rather than using an obfuscating short-hand of ideological change.

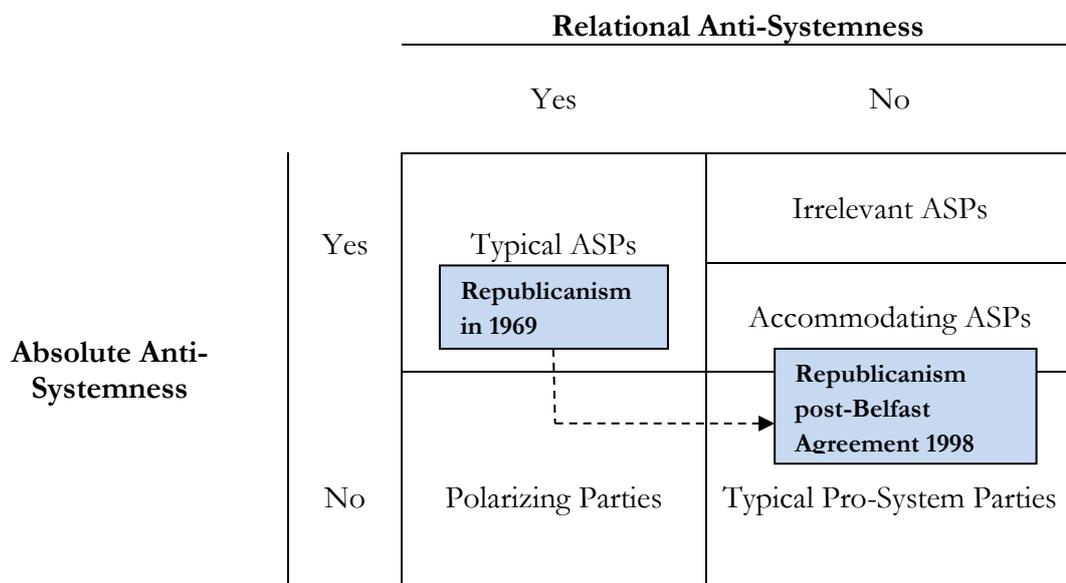
Capoccia argues that the concept of anti-systemness can be understood in two distinct ways.<sup>34</sup> Firstly, anti-system parties may be 'ideologically anti-system'. A party is ideologically anti-system if some aspect of its ideology is intrinsically anti-system without requiring any reference to the location of other parties within the party system. Such a party would remain anti-system even if it was transferred into a different party system. Capoccia also notes that in this instance, anti-systemness typically sees the system as some specific conception of democracy and as such, anti-system is anti-democratic. Secondly, anti-system parties may be relationally anti-system. That is the party may not hold any ideologically anti-system beliefs but rather its relationship with other parties within that party system render it anti-system. A party can be considered relationally anti-system if its electorate is spatially distant from that of neighbouring parties; if it has low coalition potential; and if the party engages in outbidding behaviour or attempts to delegitimise the system. However, there is nothing inherently anti-system within its ideology, and if the same party competed in a different party system then perhaps it would no longer be classified as anti-system.

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<sup>34</sup> Capoccia, 2002.

Capoccia maps out the different configurations of anti-system parties using these two conceptions of anti-systemness, as shown in Figure 3 below. A party that is both ideologically and relationally anti-system is a typical anti-system party. However, it is possible just to be relationally anti-system without being ideologically anti-system, and this will cause a centrifugal dynamic to emerge within a polity if the anti-system party is successful. In contrast, ideologically anti-system parties that are not relationally anti-system are either accommodating or irrelevant. It could be that the party adopts participatory tactics as they fear political marginalisation or that they believe this is a more fruitful tactic to pursue than de-legitimisation or that the party is too marginal to make any impact on the stability of the existing system.

**Figure 3:** *The changing position of Irish Republicanism.*<sup>35</sup>



Here we can build a parallel with definitions of moderation. *Pace* Capoccia, rather than think in terms of an ideological and relational divide, it is preferable think in terms of an absolute and relational divide to avoid confusion over the use of the term ‘ideology’. The moderation process can be understood as shifting positions within this conceptual map. A radical group that is outright revolutionary is absolutely radical. However, this is not the only form of radicalism, and indeed a party that does not have outright radical qualities, such as the use of violence or the desire to induce a complete overhaul of the status quo, can still be relationally radical. Becoming a moderate party means moving away from these

<sup>35</sup> Adapted from *ibid*, p. 24.

positions to either support the system or become accommodating. Using this conceptualisation it is possible to view the process of moderation as one which does not necessarily involve value change, although this may be part of the process, and instead trace the shift in terms of whether a party moves away from absolute radicalism to make themselves accommodating to the *status quo* even whilst retaining some absolute anti-system beliefs. Additionally, moderation may entail a radical group moving away from relative radicalism to make themselves coalitionable and able to work with other partners and institutions within that system.

Irish republicanism formed in 1969 as a party that was both absolutely and relationally radical. The three aspects of its radicalism (an alternative claim to sovereignty, a complete rejection of working through existing institutions and the use of violence to achieve their goals) ensured that they would be considered radical in any system in which they competed and had a polarising effect on the Northern Irish political system by creating a distance between them and other parties within the system. Initial change was about removing the absolute rejection of working through existing institutions by taking part in elections through ambivalent electoral participation. The next aspect in their moderation entailed the removal of anti-system violence and agreeing to abide by the outcomes produced by these institutions as providing a system of political order. This also necessitated rendering their alternative claim to sovereignty accommodating to the existing order. However, these initial steps did not eliminate their radicalism but instead pushed them into the category of relational radicalism. They remained a polarising political party, initially being uncoalitionable with the unionists in the power-sharing settlement. Pressures and pushes for republicans to engage in decommissioning were about resolving this relational radicalism. Demonstrations of their commitment to their new moderate path, especially demonstrating a commitment to defend the new Northern Irish institutions, brought them into a position where they no longer adopted positions that caused a centrifugal dynamic to emerge within the party system. Crucially, they could do this whilst retaining the alternative claim to sovereignty which was absolutely radical and in defiance of the existing system because it was accommodating and didn't prevent the elimination of relational radicalism thanks to the clever institutional design of the Belfast Agreement which allowed both unionists and republicans to endorse it as a method of achieving their seemingly opposing ideas.

In this approach, maximalist definitions of moderation as necessitating value change away from any beliefs that might constitute radicalism is redirected towards an emphasis on accommodation and a focus on the relationships that a radical group has with other groups within a system. This is more relevant to the ethno-national context given that some beliefs that a sub-state nationalist group embodies are not subject to pluralisation, yet this does not prevent them becoming entirely accommodating and committed to their accommodatory path. Indeed, it removes the normative element of existing definitions which assume that a process of movement in a liberal direction of pluralism is the most desirable strategy of moderation.<sup>36</sup> The ethno-national context challenges this assumption by showing that a pluralisation of national and sovereign claims is not necessary to establish a stable basis of moderation within formerly radical groups. Accommodation, facilitated by changing relationships, is a preferable way of operationalising what moderation means in the ethno-national context.

## **The Anomalies of the Northern Irish Case**

Republicanism was utilised in this study as a pathway case to test the established hypothesised relationships between a set of independent variables and the outcome of moderation. As such, it is important to be aware of the dangers of over-generalising from a single case.<sup>37</sup> This does not prevent tentative suggestions towards generating a new conceptual framework for understanding ethno-national moderation based on this case. However, it does necessitate that the context of this case and its unique aspects are specified, especially given its context was at times highly distinctive.<sup>38</sup>

Northern Ireland was an anomalous political entity in many respects, which both sustained republicanism's discontent and enabled their moderation. For the vast majority of its existence since 1921, Northern Ireland was rejected as a legitimate site of political authority by a sizeable minority of the population. The notion that Northern Ireland could be a fair democracy, certainly prior to the 1970s, was rejected by Irish nationalists. Many of its institutions were perceived by nationalists as inherently biased and unable to provide a basis

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<sup>36</sup> In other words, the existing assumptions underpinning the concept of moderation runs in parallel with Paris's critique of peacebuilding which assumes liberal democracy is the best way of building the peace. Paris, R. 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Interventionism'. *International Security* 22(2) 1997, pp. 54-89.

<sup>37</sup> Bennett and Elman.

<sup>38</sup> O'Kane, E. 'Learning from Northern Ireland? The Uses and Abuses of the Irish 'Model''. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12(2) 2010, pp. 239-256.

for fair political competition, a view which even held sway within the British government.<sup>39</sup> Between 1921 and 1972, Northern Ireland was highly compatible with Hartzell et al.'s definition of a weak state as a 'state dominated by a single group or coalition of groups [that] acts aggressively toward out-group interests, exploiting and repressing their politically disadvantaged peoples, [that] combines the hardness of military and police strength with the softness of political illegitimacy'.<sup>40</sup>

Yet once devolution was suspended and direct rule from Westminster was imposed in 1972, this idea of state weakness in Northern Ireland was steadily removed over the next two decades. Political reforms, equality measures and the legitimization of Irish nationalism, all strengthened the central state. A strong state also meant strong political institutions and this is what sets Northern Ireland apart from many other sites of ethno-national conflict. Where other conflicts may suffer from a weak set of political institutions combined with poor socio-economic outcomes, Northern Ireland had a long history of British democracy behind it and, although suffering from significant inequalities and relative poverty compared to other parts of the United Kingdom, it was a 'first-world' country. This is important because a strong set of political institutions that operated in a stable and predictable way, combined with the absence of a destabilising weak state, allowed republicans to commit to political participation. What is more, once the risks of political participation were reduced even further by bringing in power-sharing, this allowed for even greater participation. In this way, the macro-institutional framework was able to channel dissent into political participation and prevent it from retuning to a form of violent expression.<sup>41</sup>

If contact with these stable macro-institutions was crucial to republican moderation, then Britain's highly tolerant approach from 1973 onwards that allowed the politicisation of republicanism needs to be taken into account. Rummens and Abts argue that there are two broad models of responses by democratic governments to anti-system threats, although

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<sup>39</sup> For example in 1972 a letter from the Central Secretariat in Stormont advised the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, that, 'whether, in the end, arrangements for the internal government of Northern Ireland are made on devolutionary or on integrationist lines, we are wholly persuaded that no settlement will "stick" for more than a brief period if it does not tackle the fundamental and underlying problem of the relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland'. 'Political Settlement: The "Irish Dimension"', 8<sup>th</sup> September 1972, *PRONI*.

<sup>40</sup> Hartzell et al., p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander, 2002; Snyder, 2000.

intermediate positions between the two are often sought in practice.<sup>42</sup> A tolerant and accommodating approach prioritises freedom of expression and assumes that greater political inclusion of extremists in democratic processes will lead to their moderation. In contrast, intolerant approaches use more repressive legislative and security measures on the grounds that it is necessary to protect the true substantive values of democracy, which are often challenged by anti-system groups. Britain's response to Sinn Féin's anti-system threat was firmly in the tolerant camp, even while implementing strong anti-terrorist legislation against the IRA. However, this was initially a largely ineffective policy as tolerance was combined with efforts to isolate republicans from political processes, a confusingly mixed strategy that O'Duffy argues was one of the worst state strategies that could be pursued.<sup>43</sup> However, from the late 1980s onwards, British policy changed to engaging Sinn Féin with the political process, a much more complementary approach to their tolerant stance and one that brought republicans into a more inclusive process.

In the period between 1972 and 1985, British and Irish policy aimed to isolate and marginalise republicanism. Throughout this time, the greatest emphasis was placed upon refining 'effective' security responses and tackling some of the most obvious inequalities to undermine latent nationalist support for republicanism.<sup>44</sup> In a Cabinet meeting in June 1972, it was asserted that the 'principle object of the Government's policies had been to detach moderate Roman Catholics from supporting the IRA'.<sup>45</sup> A consequence of this approach was that it fragmented the nationalist population into categories of moderates and radicals, or those who could be worked with and those who needed to be excluded, thus making it much harder for any British proposals to be acceptable to the whole of the nationalist population.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, at the same time and somewhat contradictorily given their focus on attempting to 'defeat' the IRA, successive British governments pursued policies that were highly tolerant of any politicisation within Sinn Féin.<sup>47</sup> In April 1973, William Whitelaw, the Conservative

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<sup>42</sup> Rummens, S. and K. Abts. 'Defending Democracy: The Concentric Containment of Political Extremism'. *Political Studies* 58(4) 2010, pp. 649-665.

<sup>43</sup> O'Duffy, 1999, p. 538-542.

<sup>44</sup> Cunningham, M. *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland 1969-2000*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> 'Cabinet Confidential Annex to CM(72) 30 Minute 4. Northern Ireland'. Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June 1972, CAB 128/48, NA.

<sup>46</sup> O'Duffy, 1999, p. 535.

<sup>47</sup> O'Leary 1997 has argued that British policies towards Northern Ireland between 1979 and 1997 were often contradictory due to slow levels of ethno-national learning, and this earlier period could be symptomatic of

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, instructed civil servants to draw up legislation considering the possibility of de-proscribing Sinn Féin to make it a legal political party. Whilst there was some initial opposition to this within the cabinet, ultimately this legislation was passed in 1974. The reasons given for this move were varied, depending on the audience. The most pragmatic reason offered was that prosecutions of republicans generally came from membership of the IRA, which would remain proscribed, rather than membership of Sinn Féin, and as such it was unnecessary illiberal legislation. Other reasons included that it would show the public how little support republicans had if they were allowed to run in elections or else show that they were fearful to put their policies to a public mandate if they did not run. However, the most common reason offered to fellow parliamentarians in Westminster was that offered by Merlyn Rees, the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when opening the debate on this legislation: 'In my view there are signs that on both extreme wings there are people who, although at one time committed to violence, would now like to find a way back to political activity. It is the counterpart of our action against those who use violence'.<sup>48</sup> This degree of tolerance of Sinn Féin soon became embedded British policy and when in 1978 re-proscription of Sinn Féin was half-heartedly mooted by the Labour government, this was cautioned against by the Attorney General's office who argued strongly that 'there is political advantage in leaving Provisional Sinn Féin unproscribed'.<sup>49</sup>

Even when Sinn Féin's emergence seemed to threaten established politics and potentially destabilise Northern Ireland, the British government largely maintained its tolerance, albeit while continuing to try to isolate Sinn Féin from popular support. When republicans emerged with such force onto the electoral arena in 1981 in both the UK and Ireland, this initially caused concern that it represented a radicalisation of formerly moderate Catholics. In a briefing letter to Margaret Thatcher in June 1981, the Northern Ireland Office wrote that:

We have tended to regard the involvement of the Provisionals in political activity as a development to be encouraged. But it is a development that requires a response from Government, as their terrorist activities receive a response. There is a very general agreement that the Catholic community has been disturbed by the hunger strikers' deaths, that it blames Government, that there is a degree of alienation and that the Provisionals are getting more

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the same tendency. Brendan O'Leary. 'The Conservative Stewardship of NI, 1979-97: Sound-bottomed Contradictions or Slow Learning?' *Political Studies* 45 1997, pp. 663-676.

<sup>48</sup> *Hansard HC Debate*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1974, vol 871, cols 1476.

<sup>49</sup> 'Proscription of Provisional Sinn Féin and Others', 26<sup>th</sup> October 1978, CJ 4/2374, *NA*.

support. Unless their political exploitation of the hunger strike situation – and the resulting recrudescence of support for Provisional IRA – can be countered, then the Provisionals “going political” can succeed where their terrorist activity has failed.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, the Irish government also expressed concern about what the election of radical Sinn Féin candidates implied and in a letter from Garret Fitzgerald to Margaret Thatcher urging her to do more to end the hunger strike, he wrote that ‘this is a development which directly threatens the stability of our state through the intrusion of interests which would never have been lent such formal authority but for the propaganda effects of the confrontation in the Maze’.<sup>51</sup> This was especially worrying in Ireland because of its permissive electoral system which in theory allows smaller parties to emerge and flourish and, in 1981, two elected hunger striking prisoners prevented Charles Haughey from being able to form a majority government and placed them in a crucial position, if only they had taken up their seats. It was in this context that the AIA was negotiated with the intention of isolating Sinn Féin and bolstering the SDLP, but what it actually did was change the relationships between the dominant actors in Northern Ireland in a way that allowed for republicans to more readily accept working through the existing institutions.<sup>52</sup> Yet even alongside these fears, the British government remained highly tolerant. Sinn Féin was not proscribed even when pursuing a dual military and political strategy. The goal of a united Ireland through consent was further enshrined as a legitimate goal in the AIA. What is more, following the beginning of the Adams-Hume dialogue and secret talks with Britain, there was a shift in British policy towards including republicans in a settlement rather than attempting to isolate them. It was this shift in inclusion that led to Brooke’s declaration of Britain as having no selfish strategic interest in Northern Ireland and in the Downing Street Declaration which offered a pathway for republicans into negotiations.

In line with this idea that stability and predictability matters when trying to understand why radicals embark on a process of moderation, the Belfast Agreement of 1998 was clearly a gradual instalment that had begun with Sunningdale in 1973/74 rather than a completely new beginning.<sup>53</sup> There were of course differences between these two settlements, most notably in the North-South dimension and in the efforts to include republicanism in the latter settlement, but there was also remarkable continuity. The power-sharing institutional

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<sup>50</sup> ‘The Provisionals – Political Activity’. Memo forwarded to the Prime Minister 16<sup>th</sup> June 1981. Prem 19/505, *NA*.

<sup>51</sup> Letter From Taoiseach to British Prime Minister, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1981 DFA 2011/39/1824, *NAI*.

<sup>52</sup> O’Leary, 1997.

<sup>53</sup> Kissane, 2011, p. 118-135.

designs enshrined in the process were very well established by the time all-party negotiations began in 1997 as was the British commitment to allow a united Ireland if that was the majority will of the population. Explanations of the success of the Belfast Agreement that emphasise factors such as choreography and elite interplay neglect the fact that choreography is an important aspect of every peace process, but this does not guarantee their success.<sup>54</sup> The causal factors of moderation are different than those which allow for the orchestration of the transformation to be undertaken by the elites within the radical group. What was crucial to republicanism was that the institutional arrangements in Northern Ireland were seen as providing a predictable basis to political competition and once they were reformed to meet the republican standards of 'fairness', they were also seen as providing a low risk strategy combined with real possibilities for achieving their goals.

Successive British governments were highly tolerant of Sinn Féin because they had nothing to lose by tolerating them and, in fact, they were heavily incentivised to explore every method possible to resolve the conflict.<sup>55</sup> The only of the major parties to organise and compete in elections to Northern Ireland was the Conservative Party, with both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats refusing to do so. What is more, the Conservative Party did not enter elections until 1989 and it has always performed poorly in the region, with their highest ever vote share across the region under 6 percent in the 1992 Westminster election. In this regard British policy was able to allow Sinn Féin to emerge as none of the major political parties were set to lose votes or support in the House of Commons from the emergence of republicanism into mainstream politics. Support in Northern Ireland was generally not crucial to their survival, and therefore they could pursue potentially unpopular policies such as tolerating a dual political and military strategy. The political autonomy of successive British governments from the territory of Northern Ireland allowed them to commit to the secession of Northern Ireland, if this was what the majority of the population decided, as early as the Sunningdale Agreement in 1973 and reaffirmed in the AIA in 1985. British policy was more concerned with upholding peaceful politics rather than maintaining the integrity of their borders at all costs. Thus British policy was very

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<sup>54</sup> See Dixon, 2008 for the choreography perspective.

<sup>55</sup> One exception to this was John Major's government of 1993-97, which by the end of his tenure was reliant on unionist MPs for a majority in Westminster. After making some initial vital breakthroughs in the peace process, Major was later seen to let this momentum slip by erecting difficult demands for republicans around decommissioning prior to entering peace talks and refused to change their stance at the behest of unionism. This explanation is also highly compatible with the idea that British governments free of partisan interests were better able to tackle the conflict in Northern Ireland.

different to the expected theory of territorial contraction which suggests that one of the hardest policies for a state to adopt is a willingness to contract its own borders.<sup>56</sup>

What is more, Northern Irish issues were never central to the policies or agenda of British governments. Northern Ireland had been of consistently low electoral salience for voters in British elections who remain largely indifferent over how to manage it, and it was rarely mentioned by candidates or in election manifestos.<sup>57</sup> Aughey and Gormley-Heenan further argue that Northern Ireland was never fully integrated into the politics of the United Kingdom and instead it was always the politics of Great Britain *and* Northern Ireland.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Dixon has argued that British policy towards Northern Ireland was shaped by the belief that Northern Ireland was different to the rest of the Kingdom and therefore different policies were required than would be acceptable in the rest of the Union. British policy in Northern Ireland was required to secure the support and cooperation of the Republic of Ireland and other international opinion, which heavily incentivised reducing nationalist alienation and promoting a stable political settlement.<sup>59</sup>

Without such a high level of tolerance of the politicisation of Sinn Féin and an acceptance of their goal of Irish unity, republicans would not have had the opportunity to come into contact with the moderating effects of macro-institutions, but the political conditions that produced this level of tolerance are important to contextualise and acknowledge. Major British political parties had little or no electoral interest in Northern Ireland, the region was never fully integrated in policy terms into Great Britain, and external relationships all encouraged successive British governments to tolerate Sinn Féin's politicisation. This constellation of conditions is unusual and important in explaining how republicanism came into sustained contact with macro-institutions.

## Conclusion

The inclusion-moderation hypothesis clearly has a lot to offer the ethno-national context. The most relevant lesson from this theory is the emphasis on macro-institutional processes,

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<sup>56</sup> Lustick. I.S. *Unsettled States. Disputed Lands. Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> McGarry and O'Leary 1995, p. 115-119; Cunningham, p. 155.

<sup>58</sup> Aughey and Gormley-Heenan, p. 393-4.

<sup>59</sup> Dixon, P. 'British Policy Towards Northern Ireland 1969-2000: continuity, tactical adjustment and consistent 'inconsistencies''. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3(3) 2001, p. 364.

which provide a powerful causal explanation. Even though the legitimacy of these institutions may be rejected and their sovereignty challenged, inclusion within these processes still produced a moderating effect. This offers an important re-orientation for the case of Irish republicanism to ensure that explanations of their transformation that focus on interplay and exchanges between elites in the British government and republicanism also acknowledge the wider institutional context within which such exchanges occurred.

Given that the inclusion-moderation hypothesis was developed in the context of class and religious parties, it inevitably requires some tailoring to suit the ethno-national context. The existing theory primarily emphasises internal factors, but the ethno-national dimension cuts across domestic borders and an international dimension (beyond the domestic context of the British and Irish governments) was also crucial in the case of Irish republicanism. A yet more salient problem in the transfer to the new context is the fact that emphases within existing definitions of the category of moderation are exposed as overly normative. The assumption that reaching a categorisation of ‘moderate’ requires a change in radical values to embody liberal values of tolerance and pluralism fails to take into account that core ethno-national values are not subject to compromise in this way. That is not to imply that there is no ideological change within a radical to moderate ethno-national transformation. Indeed, extensive changes in the adjacent and periphery of republicanism’s ideology were evident, allowing for a dilution of their hitherto rigid interpretations of Irish self-determination and their alternative claim to sovereignty. Regardless of this, core values were largely continuous throughout the transformation, with a resistance to a bi-nationalisation of sovereignty claims to Northern Ireland and a continuing assertion of the right to armed struggle, even though this right was no longer exercised. Therefore, a preferable way to understand this transformation is in terms of how accommodating republicanism has become – in effect, rendering their potentially radical values completely accommodating. The depth of the change is also better measured through an examination of tests of their commitment to their new moderate path, such as undertaking decommissioning and protecting the newly designed institutions from ongoing anti-system threats. Such an approach removes the emphasis on normative values and instead acknowledges that some groups can become committed moderates while still retaining a *de jure* rejection of the system in which they are competing.

Republicanism has served as an important pathway case to tease out how well the inclusion-moderation hypothesis holds in the ethno-national context, but it is necessary to acknowledge that the Northern Irish context was anomalous in some important respects. Successive British governments were largely free to be highly tolerant of the politicisation of Sinn Féin, which brought republicans into contact with stable macro-institutional framework. In addition, and crucially, these institutions were strong and credible. These institutions then provided a stable and predictable basis to political competition, and given that power-sharing was also a part of the proposed institutional redesign of Northern Ireland, republicans could commit to an exclusively peaceful path knowing that the risks were low while they also had the potential for successfully realising their goals through these institutions. These conditions in Northern Ireland are not necessarily unique but they should be acknowledged when attempting to extrapolate tentatively an improved understanding of moderation in the ethno-national context.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

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The moderation of radical ethno-nationalism is possible through increased inclusion with macro-institutional processes. In the case of Irish republicanism this was a gradual process, although one characterised by key choices at critical junctures which set the protagonists down a path-dependent route to moderation. Elections, democratic reforms and international brokering all served to reinforce each other – each entailed steadily increasing the degree of republican inclusion and imposing strictures on their radicalism. As such, moderation should not be reduced solely to the outcome of interplay or exchanges between key actors, but rather this stable macro-institutional context is also important. However, the inclusion-moderation thesis needs to be tailored for the ethno-national context. Ethno-national moderation can best be understood as movement through a series of stages, beginning with absolute radicalism, moving to relative radicalism, before becoming moderate. Moderation is a layered process with some aspects of a radical group's policies and beliefs becoming moderate while others remain radical, albeit their remaining radicalism becomes completely accommodating over time. This is about acquiescing to a system of political order rather than core value change. In the case of Irish republicans they continued to assert an alternative claim to sovereignty, reject the legitimacy of British ruling institutions, and continue to assert the legitimacy of their right to armed struggle, albeit they have put the use of violence in their past. As such, rather than thinking of ethno-national moderation as entailing value change to prove the sincerity of moderation, it is preferable to look to the ways a radical group demonstrates a commitment to their new moderate path. In the Irish republican case this was done through the processes of decommissioning, endorsing the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and their response to ongoing threats of violence from dissident former comrades.

These findings have important implications both for further study of Irish republicanism and for the study of radical ethno-national movements in other contexts. Small nationalities are often characterised by internal zones of conflict that divide a nationalist movement into radicals and moderates.<sup>1</sup> These groups may agree on the core ethnic identity of their

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson.

nationalist group, but there is often intra-national conflict on how that ethnic identity should be expressed and pursued politically. The radicals within a minority nationalist group are those that rigidly pursue the political representation of their ethnic core through exclusive self-determination and who adopt revolutionary methods to achieve this goal. Radical minority ethno-nationalists are often met with repression and military force by the dominant group in a state, both of which are often seen as highly effective tools and responses. For example, repression is held up as an important and successful response by the Turkish government against radical Kurdish nationalists and the Spanish government against ETA. In Northern Ireland too, effective military responses and the use of military intelligence are often cited as defeating the IRA or causing a stalemate to set in, which then allowed for a negotiated end to the conflict. Indeed, a limitation of this work is that it did not consider the role of these tactics or other more military responses as enforcers of moderation.

Yet justifying repression is problematic in the ethno-national context where it is not always clear that the anti-system party are outright anti-democrats but may be challenging the very sovereignty of the existing political unit.<sup>2</sup> Ethno-national radicals may see themselves as 'true democrats' attempting to achieve self-determination or establish an acceptable sovereign unit. Both Lijphart and Horowitz have argued that some accommodation of minority nationalist demands is necessary to achieve a stable solution without violating liberal democratic principles,<sup>3</sup> while O'Leary warns that policies such as control or attempted assimilation run the risk of being seen as outright repression.<sup>4</sup> In short, concepts such as legitimacy, democracy and sovereignty all become somewhat blurred when there is a specifically ethno-national anti-system challenge. But for many states, tolerating such groups is unthinkable for fear it will lead to a contraction of their borders.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, how and why states respond to anti-system challenges from ethno-national groups, and whether these encourage or exacerbate anti-system radicalism, are key questions for investigation. Future research would benefit by comparing Irish republicanism to other cases where there is variance in the legislative responses of the state to radical minority nationalism

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<sup>2</sup> Kissane, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Lijphart, 1968; Horowitz, 1985. Of course, they disagree profoundly on how minorities should be included.

<sup>4</sup> O'Leary, B. 'The Elements of Right-Sizing and Right-Peopling the State' in B. O'Leary, I.S. Lustick and T. Callaghy. (eds.) *Right-Sizing the State. The Politics of Moving Borders*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 15-73.

<sup>5</sup> Lustick.

(repression versus tolerance) and the strength of the institutions in a state and whether these are effective at eliciting moderation through contact.

### **Path Dependent Ethno-National Moderation and Strong Institutions**

In terms of explaining the moderation of Irish republicanism, I have argued that existing explanations neglect the importance of strong and stable macro-institutions. Hitherto, studies of the transformation of republicanism focused on factors such as interplay between the British government and republicans and the leadership choices of republicans and other elites. My aim has not been to challenge these explanations and indeed throughout I emphasise and acknowledge how important such choices have been. Instead I have sought to demonstrate that it is crucial to acknowledge the macro-institutional context in which such decision-making and policy strategies played out.

Moderation can be understood retrospectively as a process by which a radical group may pass through a number of phases.<sup>6</sup> Absolute radicalism is characterised by the use of outright revolutionary means, such as violence and a rejection of existing institutions, which ensure that an absolutely radical group would be considered radical in any system in which they were present. Relative radicalism is characterised by a group that has abandoned the tactics of absolute radicalism and now participates within the system, but they do so in a destabilising fashion. Relatively radical groups are distant from other parties and considered uncoalitionable due to the radical nature of their policies as well as often engaging in outbidding. Moderation is a process whereby these forms of radicalism are either eliminated or the radical party becomes accommodating and agrees to work constructively through the existing system. Crucially, it does not imply accepting the legitimacy of the system but only acquiescing to it as providing a system of order. The journey of an ethno-national party through the stages of moderation can be explained as deriving from institutional contact.

The most prominent and first institutional framework encountered by republicans was elections. Even when British policy was a confused mixture of tolerating the politicisation of republicanism while simultaneously attempting to marginalise republicans from Northern Ireland's political life (between 1973 and the late 1980s), the rules and requirements of electoral competition had a moderating effect. In order to gain any

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Capoccia's framework for analysing anti-systemness.

strategic advantage from electoral participation, this necessitated embarking upon a series of reforms that brought republicanism into more moderate positions, such as expanding their policy programme, fractionalising their struggle into a series of short-term aims to sit alongside their long-term goal, appealing beyond their core supporters, and recognising the essentially moderate preference structure of the nationalist electorate. Electoral participation also brought them into contact with the party systems in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Agreeing to participate may have limited their absolute radicalism and attempts to defy the system in its entirety, but it did not necessarily end their relative radicalism. Initially Sinn Féin remained distant from other parties and uncoalitionable, acting as a destabilising and polarising force. However, in order to make gains from their participation and in order to achieve their goals through the existing system, it was clear to republicans that they needed to cooperate with and gain support from other parties. Such alliance building necessitated making themselves coalitionable (both with potential allies and political opponents in the power-sharing executive) and reining in their relative radicalism. In short, participation changed their relationships with other actors which in turn moderated their relative radicalism. Thus the initial decision to participate in elections made at the critical juncture of the hunger strikes, sent republicans down a gradual but steady path of increasing moderation.

Even when it came to engaging in a process of democratic bargaining with other actors in Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland, this was as much about stable institutions as it was about interplay. The democratisation of republicanism was not necessarily about Britain and Ireland passing policies that attempted to capture or contain republicanism, but rather it was about pursuing policies that brought republicans into contact with stable institutional structures to which republicans were willing to entrust their interests. The same pattern is evident in republicanism's interactions with Irish-America and senior American political figures. American policies were just as much about reinforcing republicanism's willingness to engage with a stable democratic framework as it was about co-opting their radicalism. Once again, alliance building and changing the relationships between republicans and other key political actors was central to this process. Bargaining between these groups to extract moderate concessions from republicanism was undertaken in return for creating a set of macro-democratic institutions that was able to provide a stable and predictable basis for future political competition. Republicans clearly had certain concessions that they sought to extract from the British government (such as prisoner releases, reform of the RUC, steps to

tackle the ‘causes of the conflict’) but their ability to commit to full political participation and abandon their absolute and relative radicalism was made possible by institutions that guaranteed a predictable basis to future political competition, reduced the risks from the republican perspective of participation through power-sharing and guarantees, and rendered the future of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom uncertain.

In short, Alexander’s argument that institutions can be providers of a stable basis of political competition, as well as its product, is vital in this context.<sup>7</sup> A series of stable institutions, such as electoral competition, power-sharing designs, the party system, and an international framework of guarantees, all produced a stable and low-risk basis to political competition but extracted moderate concessions as the cost for participation. This was a long-term process that stretched well beyond the limited remit of demilitarisation and de-radicalisation. The stability of political competition produced by these institutions is vitally important because it highlights that it was only in the interaction of these three factors that the outcome of moderation was produced. Republicans began an internal reappraisal towards greater participation as early as the late 1970s, albeit this was a limited form of participation initially in the form of a dual military-political strategy in the early 1980s. In this phase, electoral participation alone was not enough to secure an end to absolute radicalism in Northern Ireland precisely because republicans did not view the institutions of Northern Ireland as offering a basis for them to pursue their goals through exclusively peaceful means. The institutions in Northern Ireland and Britain were seen as sectarian in nature, loaded against their interests and did not provide a low-risk basis for their political participation. In fact, they were perceived as ensuring the ongoing position of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom through the unionist veto. In order for the full moderating potential of elections to be realised, it was necessary that a co-ordinated response between Britain and Ireland emerged, aligned behind a devolved power-sharing settlement that embodied constitutional change in the status of Northern Ireland through the removal of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the modification of the 1949 Northern Ireland Act. Democratic bargaining produced a set of institutions that republicans could accept as a system of political order and as a route to pursue their goals. They also offered a basis on which to regulate their relationships with political rivals, both within and outside the nationalist camp. International brokerage affirmed that the nature of the Belfast Agreement was the only settlement available to republicans and that their interests could be

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander, 2001.

meaningfully represented and pursued within this framework. No one institution alone was sufficient (elections were needed to bring republicans to the point where they would consider democratic inclusion, but elections without democratic reform and guarantees were not enough) but all were necessary to cause republican moderation.

Yet in order for these institutions to have this moderating impact it was necessary that they were strong (in other words, there was no state weakness) and that they had both a British-Irish dimension and US endorsement. Between 1921 and 1972, the devolved administration of Northern Ireland had an essential weakness at its core that prevented it from ever being acceptable to nationalists. It was characterised by high levels of socio-economic inequalities in the out-group (Catholic nationalists) compared to the in-group (Protestant unionists), an inherently biased system of political competition, and a rejection of the authority of the devolved government by a sizable proportion of the population. Following the imposition of direct rule a number of factors gradually helped to restore the strength of Northern Ireland's institutions, notably a programme of preference sharing by the British government to tackle socio-economic and political inequalities and British acknowledgements that they would accept a united Ireland as a legitimate goal if pursued exclusively through these political channels.

The gradual evolution of British policy towards the management of Northern Ireland also came to remove the weakness underpinning Northern Ireland over time. While it was consistently tolerant of the politicisation of Sinn Féin and Irish republicanism from 1974 onwards (while simultaneously imposing strong security measures against the IRA), its constitutional policy regarding the best way to manage Northern Ireland was not consistent until the mid-1980s. While it was clear that no British government was willing to entertain a return to the pre-1972 Stormont era, what should replace it was contested and subject to change as governments changed. While the British government pursued a policy of devolved power-sharing which attempted to isolate radical republicans and loyalists under Heath with the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973/4, following its collapse Wilson, who first came to power in February 1974, changed tack. To avoid the British government taking the full blame for the failure to resolve the ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees, established an elected Constitutional Convention that lacked legislative powers but would consider 'what provision for the government of Northern Ireland is likely to command the most widespread acceptance

throughout the community there'.<sup>8</sup> Many saw this as a weakening of the British government's commitment to power-sharing, a reassertion of direct rule, and imposing limits to the extent to which the devolution of certain powers would be considered.<sup>9</sup> It was also a policy that aimed to shift responsibility for the management of the conflict to the Northern Irish parties themselves. The Convention was a failure in terms of identifying an acceptable way forward to all parties. Subsequently Wilson even considered the possibility of withdrawal from Northern Ireland, a policy that was not widely supported within the civil service, prompting the Irish government to draw up emergency plans in case of such an eventuality.<sup>10</sup> Yet anxiety over the potential harm to British interests that would be caused by withdrawal prompted Wilson to back away from this possibility and in the end continuing with direct rule was favoured. From 1976 onwards, Wilson's government made devolution a largely long-term aspiration, continuing with the policy of direct rule and pursuing security-based solutions to the conflict in the short-term. There was little or no appetite for enshrining an Irish dimension in any solution or recognising that Ireland should have some input into the constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Indeed, this status quo was largely maintained under Callaghan who pursued no significant constitutional initiatives (Roy Mason's limited '5 Point Plan' aside). At this same time, the Conservative Party in opposition, especially guided by their shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Airey Neave, broke with the traditional policy of bipartisan support for government policies towards Northern Ireland and espoused the integration of Northern Ireland more firmly within the UK, treating it much the same as Scotland. This even became the official Conservative Party policy in their 1979 election manifesto.

Yet the Conservatives in power under Thatcher from 1979 onwards somewhat distanced themselves from a policy of integration and return to devolution, although not explicitly containing embracing power-sharing. James Prior established an elected Assembly in Northern Ireland in 1982 based on the principle of rolling devolution, whereby the assembly initially only had a consultative function but more powers would be devolved once it became clear that the Assembly was able to manage its affairs successfully. However, the Assembly assiduously avoided using the phrase power-sharing and there was no input for the Irish government. The failure of this Assembly became evident when it was boycotted by the nationalist parties which prevented any devolution from occurring.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Cunningham, p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 94-95.

<sup>10</sup> Kerr, 2011.

It was against the failures of these alternative strategies (withdrawal, ongoing direct rule, containing the conflict as a Northern Irish only issue, limited devolution) and the rise of Sinn Féin into electoral politics following the hunger strikes, that Thatcher began to pursue closer British-Irish relations through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Yet even with the signing of the AIA in 1985, which acknowledged a role for the Republic of Ireland in the future of Northern Ireland and was imposed against the wishes of most Unionists, this was undertaken by Thatcher in the hope of making security gains against the IRA rather than due to an ideological commitment or belief in the supremacy of including the Irish government in decision-making. It was with this shift in the nature of relations between the two governments and the eventual agreement to coordinate and throw their collective weight behind a power-sharing solution that was to lead to the Belfast Agreement.<sup>11</sup> While many other policy options had been pursued between the Sunningdale Agreement in 1973 and returning to a power-sharing model in 1998, what was important was that this was not a completely new beginning – the broad nature and shape of power-sharing institutions were already a familiar possibility to all-parties and by 1998 British-Irish cooperation have become embedded.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, throughout this period of changing constitutional policies pursued by successive governments, they were consistent in their tolerance of the politicisation of Irish republicanism, de-proscribing the organisation in 1974 and never seriously considering making it illegal again. Against this background of tolerance for republicanism and some prior familiarity with what was required of a power-sharing settlement, coordination between Britain and Ireland allowed for the emergence of a stable institutional settlement which facilitated moderation.

Here it becomes clear how British and Irish state strategies interacted with the macro-institutional factors. If stable institutions are crucial in eliciting moderation, this certainly does not imply that the government's policies are marginal or ineffective. The British government engaged in a process of preference shaping, altering the socio-economic and political climate in Northern Ireland to make the region more inclusive and tackle some of the concrete grievances that were seen as giving latent and active support to radical republicanism. Similarly, concerted lobbying from the Irish government towards Britain and the United States and lobbying from the constitutional nationalist perspective of John Hume added further impetus to a process of preference shaping. This is not to imply that

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<sup>11</sup> Kerr, 2006; O'Duffy, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Kissane, 2011.

government policies were essentially a cat-and-mouse game of attempts to co-opt republicanism (although Bean and others have convincingly shown that this was certainly one important strand of British policies)<sup>13</sup> but rather by shaping the preferences of the nationalist electorate and the political arena in which republicanism was looking either for explicit electoral support or implicit moral support, this imposed constraints and incentives which made participation a more viable and necessary strategy. It is not even clear that the British government anticipated that participation would result in moderation (or at least this view was not consistently held in British policy making circles) and such preference shaping often sat alongside policies of attempting to isolate republicanism.<sup>14</sup> However, once republicans responded to these preference shaping pressures through participation, then the inexorable moderating effect of stable institutions came into play.

Overall what is observable is that stable institutional arrangements created a path-dependent process of moderating incentives. Moderation was gradual and inexorable, but without being determined in a teleological fashion. As Cortell and Peterson and Streeck and Thelen acknowledge,<sup>15</sup> crucial events created openings for a path-dependent process of gradual change to occur. Following the decision to contest elections in the midst of the hunger-strikes, the stable framework of electoral institutions led to increasing returns for republicans and imposed high costs if this path was abandoned. Electoral participation began sceptically and with a focus on one specific issue, but it rapidly became clear to republicans that the potential for gains were high. Their first foray into electoral participation with the hunger-striking prisoners was a huge propaganda coup and two of its successful candidates could have potentially held the balance of power in the Irish parliament if they took their seats. This lured republicans into competing in all future elections. Yet even when they were less successful in these elections, it was not possible for them to step away from these without this appearing like they feared the lack of a mandate for armed struggle or losing their position within the nationalist communities they purported to represent. Yet it was also clear that electoral politics offered a potential new route to achieve long-standing goals and a meaningful electoral mandate could be a powerful tool in their hands. Similarly, critical decisions such as declaring an IRA ceasefire with a view to entering negotiations in 1994 and accepting the Belfast Agreement in 1998, were created by both key international events (part of the boom in peace processes

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<sup>13</sup> Bean, 2008, 2007; McIntyre.

<sup>14</sup> O'Duffy, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Cortell and Peterson; Streeck and Thelen

following the ending of the Cold War and American interventionism) as well as steady domestic developments. Once democratic negotiations were pursued, this locked republicans into a road of ending their absolute radicalism. Walking away from the negotiations would firmly place the blame with them and British-Irish cooperation established the possibility of negotiating the future of Northern Ireland without republican input. However, staying on this path led to substantial electoral gains for Sinn Féin, as well as key gains in areas of republican grievance, such as addressing outstanding political and socio-economic inequalities, the early release of prisoners, and the reform of policing in Northern Ireland. Alongside this republicans gained access to political power in the international arena and a degree of legitimacy they hitherto lacked. In these circumstances, turning away from these processes would have been a very difficult decision to make. That is not to say this process was determined in advance and disputes within the movement at key critical junctures serve to highlight the contested nature of decisions, as do the importance of exogenous events such as the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> in undermining the IRA. However it is clear that once key decisions were made it became very difficult to renege upon their new strategic direction without suffering from high real and opportunity costs.

The inclusion-moderation approach does not translate perfectly to the ethno-national setting, however, and republicanism offers a crucial new direction for understanding what it means to have reached a moderate destination (as opposed to engaging in a process of moderation on the way to that destination). Existing understandings emphasise the need to distinguish between those groups that engage in moderation and are sincere in their pursuits and those groups that merely present a veneer of moderation with a view to manipulating the existing system to implement their long-standing radical goals. Current thinking to distinguish between these two paths hinges on a separation of behavioural moderation and ideological moderation. However, republicanism shows that this is a false separation and, in fact, it is impossible to think of behavioural changes without these having an ideological resonance and representing changes in the adjacent and periphery of an ideology. What is more, it is not clear that a radical group needs to display a change in their values towards tolerance and pluralism to be classified as moderate in this ethno-national context. Republicanism was already compatible with liberal democracy in the long-term, even in its absolutely radical phase (being best understood as ademocratic rather than anti-democratic). Once the appropriate territorial unit for Irish self-determination was

established it was clear that the IRA would come under civilian control and revolution would be abandoned. However, those values that gave republicanism its radical core (the assertion of an alternative claim to sovereignty, a belief in the rightfulness of using violence to achieve Irish sovereignty, and a rejection of the legitimacy of British political institutions) did not really change. Clearly republicans rendered all these values completely accommodating and they diluted the rigidity of their expression, but they continue to hold them as *de jure* and symbolic beliefs. In this way, the idea of ideological value change as an indicator of achieving moderation is limited in a context where it is not clear that an ethno-national party can or needs to change its values to be moderate.

Yet the issue of the sincerity of republicanism's commitment to moderation was a major recurring issue for the British government and Unionist politicians repeatedly throughout the peace process, highlighting that the issue of 'fig-leaf' moderation needs to be addressed. In the Northern Ireland context, this was overcome by extracting clear commitments from republicanism to demonstrate that they would pursue and protect participation over rejection and uphold the new institutional framework of Northern Ireland. This was achieved by extracting decommissioning, seeing them endorse the devolved policing and justice powers for Northern Ireland, and through their response to dissident terrorism. This represents more than just a practical demonstration of the commitment of Irish republicanism and it also offers a theoretical solution to how to distinguish the sincerity of ethno-national moderation.

The key contribution of this thesis has been to offer a conceptual framework for understanding the moderation of ethno-national moderation, something that has not been explored to date. The distinct emphasis in this process upon institutional stability and gradual moderation sets this explanatory framework apart from other emphases within the literature that look to the role of meso- and micro-level factors, especially interplay and exchange.

### **The Limitations of this Work**

An axiomatic assumption at the start of this study was that politics matters when it comes to explaining moderation. I assume that political ideology and concrete political goals are important to a radical ethno-national group like Irish republicanism, and therefore inclusion

in a process that allows them to pursue their goals is a possible incentive for moderation. However, I have not considered the counterview that violent groups such as the IRA, the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers Party) in Turkey, or ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* – Basque Homeland and Freedom) in Spain, are essentially motivated by militancy and this is their reason for existence. For example, it has been argued that in spite of favourable circumstances for peace, the PKK resisted these incentives because a peace process would potentially challenge their political hegemony over its community and the dynamics of competition in Turkey necessitated their radicalisation if they were to survive as an influential organisation.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, one view of Basque radicalism is that there is little more that it can achieve given the high levels of local autonomy already in Spain and therefore their conflict was as much about establishing their own hegemony and power as it was about political goals.<sup>17</sup>

According to these perspectives, military defeat or the imposition of a military stalemate is what leads to the moderation of radicalism. In other words, if the military strength of the radicals is eliminated, this undermines their potential for successful radicalism leading to them either becoming marginal or else being forced to participate within the system due to the constriction of their options. Certainly there are a number of authors in the Irish case that emphasise the role of the British military and in particular the penetration of the IRA with British informers at the most senior levels, as being crucial in bringing about the moderation of republicanism. For example, the Smithwick Tribunal in Ireland was told that one in four IRA members were informers recruited by the Irish or Northern Irish police.<sup>18</sup> A recurring theme in Moloney's history of the IRA is the ability of British intelligence to recruit informers from the highest leadership levels, which greatly weakened their organisational and operational capacity.<sup>19</sup> High profile cases such as that of Dennis Donaldson, IRA member and close ally to the senior leadership of Sinn Féin, and Freddie Scappaticci's (a leading member of the IRA's Internal Security Unit) alleged role as 'Stakeknife', provide evidence for the importance of the tactics used by British intelligence to compromise republicanism. Senior republicans like McGuinness and Adams may not admit that the IRA was heavily penetrated by informants or that this weakened their

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<sup>16</sup> Tezcür, G. 'When democratisation radicalises: The Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey'. *Journal of Peace Research* 2010, 47(6), pp. 775-789.

<sup>17</sup> Alonso, R. 'Why Do Terrorists Stop? Analyzing Why ETA Members Abandon or Continue with Terrorism'. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34(9) 2011, pp. 696-716.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-18521165>

<sup>19</sup> Moloney.

military capabilities, but they certainly argue that a military stalemate set in with the British government and this led to the rethink in their strategy.<sup>20</sup>

In other contexts too, military repression is seen as an important weapon to enforce moderation. In Spain, Basque nationalism is divided between the radicals of ETA and *Herri Batasuna* and the moderates of the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV – Basque Nationalist Party), as well as divisions within ETA over how much emphasis should be placed on the military approach at the expense of politics. Historically following the transition to democracy in Spain, successive governments were tolerant of movements for Basque sovereignty, giving the region a large degree of autonomy, including their own language laws and ability to raise taxation. For some critics in the conservative *Partido Popular* (People’s Party), this tolerance was seen as strengthening the notion of a distinct Basque ethno-national identity. There were also repeated attempts to negotiate with ETA to bring them into peaceful politics, including by Felipe González, leader of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE – Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party) during his premiership, in the 1980s and Jose Maria Aznar, leader of the *Partido Popular*, during his premiership in the 1990s. While these brought ceasefires, they proved to be temporary in nature and were seen by some as only serving to reinforce ETA’s motto *Bietan Jarrai* (‘Keep up Both’ [politics and violence]). For many, what ultimately brought about the lasting ETA ceasefire currently in place was the change in tone of Spanish policies, increasing their militarily suppressive policies and reducing their tolerance of the glorification and celebration of violent Basque separatism. In 2002, Spain passed a law that did not just proscribe all parties that supported political violence but also left those that did not condemn terrorism outright liable for prosecution. In addition, Spain and France began to cooperate more and ETA suffered a number of arrests and convictions of successive senior leaders, greatly weakening their position. Alongside this, there was a clampdown on local funding for Basque terrorism and an increased refusal to tolerate public celebrations and veneration of violent Basque separatism. For many, this change in tone was the catalyst behind ETA’s decision to announce a ceasefire in 2010, and they are currently in a phase of being an exclusively political movement but refusing to disband their paramilitary dimension or decommission weapons. Indeed, the *Partido Popular* has repeatedly boasted that they managed to defeat ETA without granting them any political concessions.

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<sup>20</sup> McGuinness.

In Turkey the government's legislative responses have been decidedly intolerant of radical Kurdish nationalism and military solutions have been the primary policy pursued. Again Kurdish nationalism is divided into its radical and moderate components, with both hardliners and moderates evident within the *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP – Peace and Democracy Party) and a powerful paramilitary movement in the PKK. Successive governments in Turkey have been much less encouraging of Kurdish politicisation than either Britain or Spain, actively pursuing policies to limit their political engagement with the existing system and suppress a separatist identity.<sup>21</sup> Most notably, a 10 percent national electoral threshold was implemented in the 1980s, making it practically impossible for Kurdish parties to gain representation in the Turkish parliament and forcing them to enter elections as either independent candidates or non-Kurdish affiliated parties. Demands for separation and engagement in separatist activities are banned in the Turkish constitution and this has led to the enforced dissolution of Kurdish political parties and the arrest and imprisonment of individuals engaged in separatist activities (as it did with Communist and Islamic parties too). Additionally, Turkish national identity is enshrined as trumping local Kurdish identities (although there are signs of this position possibly changing in any new constitutional arrangements currently being negotiated). What is more, Turkey remains a highly majoritarian country with centralising institutions.<sup>22</sup> Rather than politically engaging with Kurdish separatists (although there have been limited attempts in the mid 1990s and in 2010-11), historically the main tactic used has been an attempt to defeat the PKK militarily. Again, for many politicians and commentators, it is the success of these militant tactics that has led to Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned leader of the PKK, engaging in peace talks at the moment and a recent ceasefire and withdrawal of PKK forces to Northern Iraq (although it remains to be seen if this will be a lasting ceasefire or successful process).

As such, my exclusive emphasis upon political factors and the political engagement of radical ethno-nationalism, neglects an important dimension. This is especially pertinent given that the IRA was a paramilitary group, embodying the logic of militarism, and so the importance of British counter-insurgency strategies and tactics cannot be underestimated. It is also a potential challenge to my emphasis upon the importance of stable and durable institutions and instead the military dimension places the emphasis back upon British tactics

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<sup>21</sup> Barkey H.J and G.E. Fuller. *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998); Olson, R. *Blood, Beliefs and Ballots. The Management of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 2007-2009*. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Lord, C. 'The Persistence of Turkey's Majoritarian System of Government'. *Government and Opposition* 2012 47(2), pp. 228-255.

to contain republicanism and force them into the political fold. Indeed, one of the striking absences in the literature studying Irish republicanism is the lack of studies that examine how broader political processes, such as the ones described in this study, worked together with the counter-insurgency strategies of the British and Irish government.

Having said that, it is clear that the empirical patterns in the evolution of Irish republicanism are highly consistent with my macro-institutional emphasis and it is well established that elites respond to rational incentives, even if the grassroots are often less willing to do so. The military dimension is undoubtedly important, but it need not challenge the salience of macro-institutional explanations. Indeed, in the case of ETA, the tolerance of Basque nationalism at the regional level, language autonomy, varied local taxation, and so on, were all consistent factors in post-transition Spain alongside the other more recent changes in government policy. Similarly, although the destination of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process is still unknown and far from certain, this process seems to be offering limited regional autonomy for Southeast Turkey for the first time in the history of the conflict. Prior to these constitutional developments at the central governmental level, state repression was correlated with the hardening militancy of the PKK (although, of course, it is impossible to tease out the causal direction of this correlation). What is more, as O'Leary and others have argued, repression is not a stable or long-term solution to ethno-national conflict and the politics of accommodation are also required.<sup>23</sup> As such, establishing a stable institutional basis to political competition remains vital and it is the degree of tolerance or repression pursued by a dominant state against a minority ethno-national group that may be key to understanding the process of moderation. Military responses are important (and additional research into how these can complement or contradict legislative responses in the context of Northern Ireland would be welcome), but this framework places the primary emphasis upon political engagement and this is the most fruitful area of future research.

### **The Implications of this Study for Future Research**

A systematic examination of different cases of violent ethno-national radicalism and moderation would allow for variation in some of the crucial independent variables identified in this study, thus giving an increased understanding of the pathways to ethno-national moderation (and resistance to these pathways). Future research would benefit from

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<sup>23</sup> O'Leary, 2001.

identifying all cases of ethno-national radicalism within a given time period. Then each of these cases could be classified according to the dependent variable (whether they moderated or not) and the key independent variables identified in the study, namely the degree of tolerance towards the ethno-national movement from the state (i.e. institutional contact versus suppression) and the strength of the institutions in place (i.e. state weakness versus stable low-risk institutions). These variations are displayed in Table 4 below.

**Figure 4:** *Variables to Explore the Extension of this Conceptual Framework*

		<b>Stable Macro Institutions</b>	
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Tolerance of Anti-System Politicisation</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<b>Moderation</b> , eg Republicanism in Northern Ireland; ETA in post-transition Spain	<b>No moderation</b> due to inability/ lack of institutional mechanisms to overcome radical groups' commitment fears, e.g. MNLA in Mali between 2012-13
	<i>No</i>	<b>No moderation</b> due to lack of contact with stable institutions deriving from policies of repression, e.g PKK in Turkey until 2012	<b>No moderation</b>

To test the breadth of this framework and examine how well it stands up in other contexts, it would be of great benefit to undertake an audit of radical ethno-national groups and their state's responses. Each radical ethno-national group could then be classified using the table above and a subset of pathway cases could be selected to explore if they produced the expected outcome and examine the causal pathways of these four variations in-depth. In other words, the framework developed here can be tested systematically on other cases of ethno-national conflict in order to tease out its explanatory power and help to refine its

main claims and unpack any assumptions that it embodies as a result of only being based on the Northern Irish case.

If the main claim of this thesis is that tolerance and stable institutions are necessary conditions to allow for the moderation of radical ethno-nationalism, this implies that the absence of either of these conditions would prevent this from occurring (or at least prevent it from occurring along the pathways that I have suggested here). Whether the presence or the absence of these conditions will produce the expected outcomes is easily assessed by drawing on cases of other conflicts once selected as suggested above and then the nature of the meaning of moderation in the ethno-national context can also be assessed drawing on this wider pool of cases.

In the top left cell of Figure 4 is a case like Irish republicanism where their politicisation is tolerated and the existing institutions are capable of providing credible guarantees and a stable basis for political competition. Here we would expect moderation. Other cases that have also produced moderation, such as ETA in Spain, could be examined to explore the meaning of moderation in this context and whether it also embodied acquiescing to a system of political order and demonstrating a commitment to this new order, but without necessarily changing their core ethno-national values. The juxtaposition to this scenario is the bottom right cell, which represents a state that does not tolerate the anti-system threat, pursuing repressive policies instead, and is also characterised by a weak state with limited institutional strength. In these instances, moderation would not be expected. It may be difficult to find cases that fit both these criteria as in the absence of stable institutions and tolerance for 'out-groups' this may well be a failed or failing state and so the conflict is a struggle for the regime itself rather than necessarily a sub-national territorial struggle.

The other two cells are potentially more ambiguous but it is possible to predict tentatively an outcome. In the top right is a state that is tolerant but with weak institutions. This example would allow a radical ethno-national group to come into contact with its macro-institutional framework, but this would be largely ineffective in soliciting moderate concessions if the radicals do not believe the existing institutions can provide a stable and low-risk basis to future political competition or represent their interests fairly. One such case may be the current ongoing conflict between rebel forces in Northern Mali and the government. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) initially

waged a war and declared independence for Northern Mali in 2012. However, following concessions by the Malian government they renounced their claim of independence and are currently in peace negotiations. Yet these negotiations are extremely fragile with violence between both sides continuing in 2013, in part due to the lack of perceived credible guarantees by the rebels.

There is a similar outcome in the bottom left cell, but for different reasons. Although there may be a stable macro-institutional framework in place, this will not elicit moderation if the radical group is not tolerated and not allowed to come into contact with these institutions. One example of this is Turkey's response to the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) until 2012, which is best characterised as suppressive of any separatist Kurdish identity and intent on limiting their political opportunities within the existing political system. There are some signs that this position changed in 2013 with promises of a new constitution which would protect the Kurdish identity more and the commencement of peace talks, but unless the Turkish state can promise institutional reforms to tolerate the Kurdish identity and aspirations more, peace negotiations are likely to fail according to the framework offered here.

In other words, by systematically auditing the number of other cases of ethno-national territorial conflict and looking at key cases of moderation or ongoing radicalism, it would be possible to expand the specific contexts in which the framework is applied. So doing would help to test its robustness as well as offer the opportunity to tailor and modify it as necessary. Such an approach would provide a valuable avenue for future research and make some potentially important contributions to ongoing debates in the field of ethnic conflict.

## **Conclusion**

This study has offered an important theoretical and conceptual understanding of how ethno-national radicals come to moderate and agree to work through institutions rather than attempting to overthrow them. This is an important area of study that has not previously been explored and it certainly merits further systematic research to explore the breadth and depth of the applicability of this framework in other contexts. This would help to uncover its full potential as a causal framework.

## APPENDIX

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The tables below show the full results of the Wordscores analysis used to demonstrate republicanism's changing policy position relative to that of the SDLP in Chapter 4, Figure 2. The Wordscores method derives reliable and valid estimates of policy positions from political texts. The method treats words as data and by looking for how often a word occurs in a given text, it makes an estimate of the policy position of that text based on the assumption that the relative frequencies of certain words is as a result of underlying political positions. The method has been shown to be as effective at estimating policy positions as methods that rely on hand coding or constructing a data dictionary in advance.<sup>24</sup>

For this analysis I examined the changing policy position of the 'Bodenstown' speeches, delivered by a different senior republican each year between 1970 and 2010. These speeches are seen as a statement of an internal republican assessment of their previous year and they set out their policy agenda for the coming year ahead. I compared the changing policy position of these speeches by comparing them against two 'reference' texts that each represented opposite ends of a 'revolutionary-reform' dimension. Although this involves aggregating moderation into a single dimension, a method I criticise as being an over-simplification, it does provide a useful indicator of policy change that supplements my layered analysis.

For the revolutionary end of the dimension I made the axiomatic assumption that the republican starting position of 1970 was a radical and revolutionary one and used this speech as the revolutionary reference text. However, the 1970 Bodenstown speech was only 960 words long, thus providing only a limited remit of words as a reference base for comparison. Therefore I combined the speeches of 1970, 1971 and 1972 and coded this combined speech with a value of -1. At the other end of the dimension I made the assumption that the SDLP policy position was a reformist one. I coded the SDLP presidential speech to the party conference of 1980 delivered by John Hume (the earliest copy of a full SDLP conference speech that I could source) as +1. Verbatim copies of all Bodenstown speeches between 1974 and 2010 were then compared to these reference texts to locate them along this dimension. The method also provides confidence intervals

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<sup>24</sup> Laver, Benoit and Garry.

assessing the certainty of the policy position estimate that is generated. The Bodestown speeches for the years 1974, 1978 and 2001 were not publicly available and the values for these years were imputed as the midpoint between the previous and subsequent year.

Table 1A below shows the full details of this analysis. It presents the policy position estimate and the upper and lower bands of the confidence intervals. In addition, it presents the total number of words that could be scored in each speech and reports this as a percentage (in other words, the total number of words in a speech that were also present in at least one of the two reference texts). One danger with a Wordscores longitudinal analysis of speeches is that the meaning of words changes over time, thus undermining the validity of the reference texts. For example, it is possible that the words used in a set of reference texts sourced in the early 1970s and 1980 are not valid for comparison to speeches delivered in the 2000s. Therefore I also ran the exact same analysis, but this time using the SDLP Party Leader's Speech from 2010 by Margaret Ritchie. These results are reported in Table 2A below.

There is a high correlation between these two sets of scores (Pearson's Correlation of 0.825,  $p=0.000$ ), showing that although the exact policy position estimate may vary according to the reference text, the trend is a clear one – namely, republicanism gradually shifted its policy position from a revolutionary one in 1970 to a reformist one by 2000.

**Table 1A:** *Wordscores analysis of the Bodenshtown Speeches Using the 1980 SDLP Party Leader Conference Speech as Reference Text*

Year	Policy Position Estimate	90% CI Lower Band	90% CI Upper Band	Total Words in Speech Scored	Percentage of Words in Speech Scored
1970	-1			960	100
1971	-1			2680	100
1972	-1			1245	100
1973	-0.49	-1.16	0.18	485	80.3
1974		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
1975	-1.03	-1.48	-0.6	1216	84.6
1976	-1.53	-1.99	-1.08	1127	85.0
1977	0.03	-0.36	0.41	1409	79.0
1978		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
1979	-0.18	-0.64	0.28	1038	79.1
1980	-0.12	-0.52	0.27	1571	78.2
1981	-0.09	-0.47	0.3	1383	75.9
1982	0.03	-0.3	0.36	1969	79.3
1983	-0.41	-0.76	-0.07	1786	79.2
1984	0.37	-0.03	0.78	1305	74.4
1985	0.62	0.23	1.01	1485	78.5
1986	0.1	-0.27	0.46	1644	75.8
1987	-0.24	-0.58	0.09	1990	78.7
1988	0	-0.26	0.25	3563	79.4
1989	0.69	0.34	1.04	1886	78.8
1990	0.54	0.25	0.84	2506	79.9
1991	0.79	0.42	1.15	1747	79.2
1992	0.69	0.33	1.05	1535	76.9
1993	0.72	0.42	1.02	2271	77.1
1994	0.11	-0.31	0.54	1167	73.7
1995	0.66	0.32	1.01	1786	80.4
1996	0.42	0.09	0.74	2249	80.9
1997	1.04	0.74	1.33	2220	76.9
1998	0.49	0.17	0.81	2136	80.0
1999	0.57	0.22	0.92	1790	78.5
2000	0.53	0.21	0.84	2122	79.7
2001		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
2002	0.23	-0.11	0.56	1994	77.0
2003	0.57	0.24	0.91	1891	80.3
2004	1.16	0.81	1.52	1673	77.5
2005	0.73	0.41	1.05	2004	77.8
2006	0.53	0.2	0.86	1997	81.2
2007	0.28	-0.11	0.63	1625	78.4
2008	0.98	0.49	1.46	950	81.5
2009	0.69	0.32	1.06	1690	76.9
2010	0.49	0.1	0.89	1492	79.7

**Table 2A:** *Wordscores Analysis of the Bodenshtown Speeches Using the 2010 SDLP Party Conference Speech as Reference Text*

Year	Policy Position Estimate	90% CI Lower Band	90% CI Upper Band	Total Words in Speech Scored	Percentage of Words in Speech Scored
1970	-1			960	100
1971	-1			2680	100
1972	-1			1245	100
1973	-0.54	-1.12	0.05	499	82.6
1974		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
1975	-0.084	-1.22	-0.47	1232	85.7
1976	-1.20	-1.59	-0.81	1145	86.3
1977	-0.33	-0.68	0.03	1437	80.6
1978		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
1979	-0.09	-0.51	0.33	1054	80.3
1980	-0.06	-0.41	0.29	1595	79.4
1981	-0.30	-0.65	0.05	1396	76.6
1982	-0.34	-0.63	-0.05	1991	80.2
1983	-0.38	-0.70	-0.06	1837	81.4
1984	0.08	-0.28	0.44	1323	75.4
1985	0.09	-0.26	0.44	1497	79.2
1986	-0.02	-0.35	0.31	1676	77.3
1987	-0.26	-0.04	0.57	2065	81.7
1988	-0.25	-0.48	-0.02	3615	80.5
1989	0.10	-0.22	0.41	1924	80.4
1990	-0.14	-0.41	0.12	2534	80.8
1991	0.06	-0.28	0.40	1798	81.5
1992	0.21	-0.13	0.55	1585	79.4
1993	0.50	0.22	0.78	2352	79.9
1994	0.51	0.10	0.91	1237	78.1
1995	0.01	-0.31	0.33	1818	81.9
1996	0.36	0.07	0.65	2302	82.8
1997	1.19	0.90	1.49	2374	82.3
1998	0.90	0.59	1.20	2281	85.4
1999	0.87	0.53	1.20	1882	82.5
2000	1.03	0.73	1.33	2258	84.9
2001		<i>Text Unavailable, Imputed Value</i>			
2002	0.56	0.25	0.89	2094	80.8
2003	1.00	0.68	1.31	1989	84.5
2004	1.59	1.25	1.92	1783	82.5
2005	1.04	0.74	1.34	2109	81.8
2006	0.42	0.12	0.73	2051	83.4
2007	1.04	0.69	1.39	1734	83.6
2008	1.38	0.93	1.83	986	84.6
2009	0.99	0.64	1.33	1780	81.0
2010	0.73	0.36	1.09	1547	82.6

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