Territoriality, Democracy and National Conflict Resolution in Ireland

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The nation-state ideal, centerpiece of nationalist doctrine, is seriously flawed, most obviously where reality falls well short of the assumed geographical coincidence of 'nation' and 'state'. Attempts to make reality fit the ideal can lead to serious conflicts over national identity, sovereignty and territory; and such conflicts are not amenable to 'normal' democratic resolution precisely because what is at issue is the territorial framework for the exercise of democracy as conventionally understood. Strategies to manage or resolve these conflicts have included the re-drawing of territorial borders and the partitioning or re-partitioning of states, while within given state borders there have been various consociational or power-sharing arrangements which focus on inter-communal boundaries and relations. Both types of strategy may ameliorate particular conflicts at particular times, but they can be seen as 'national solutions to a national problem' and as contradictions in terms which not surprisingly fail to deliver a solution in many cases. They 'manage' rather than 'resolve', and sometimes they fail even to 'manage' because of their built-in tendency to reproduce if not exacerbate the problems they are supposed to solve. Typically, the powers who 'manage' share the same flawed assumptions as those they are 'managing'. More appropriate in such contexts are transnational strategies which stress the importance of crossing the borders between states and between national communities. Drawing on the Northern Ireland context and research into border crossings in both senses, this paper outlines the limits of territorial re-organization and of consociationalism, and argues instead that institutions which straddle territorial borders are necessary for resolving national conflict. But to facilitate genuine conflict resolution, such institutions need to be democratic both in terms of electoral representation and in wider participatory and non-territorial terms.

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Nationalism is a doctrine which promises to deceive. Its limitations and conflicts are deeply rooted in problems of geography and territoriality. While often associated with democratic movements for popular liberation and self-determination, its ideal of the sovereign nation-state is seriously flawed, especially where reality falls short of the assumed geographical coincidence of state and nation. Attempts to

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make reality fit the ideal of the 'single nation' state can lead to serious conflicts over national identity and territory, whether in Ireland or the Basque Country or a host of other situations from the Balkans to Kashmir, Chechnia to Ruanda, the Middle East to East Timor.

Such conflicts are not amenable to 'normal' democratic resolution precisely because what is at issue is the territorial framework for the exercise of democracy. Furthermore, they reflect more general limitations of liberal representative democracy, not only within the contested regions—where in some cases democracy may be more notable for its absence—but also in the wider system of states, including its leading powers. This helps explain both the intractability of national conflicts and the high failure rate of the national 'solutions' which leading world powers propagate or support. Their strategies to manage or resolve these conflicts have generally involved re-drawing territorial state borders, or power-sharing 'consociational' arrangements that emphasize inter-communal borders and relations within given, unchanged state frontiers (McGarry and O'Leary, 1993). But 'national solutions to national problems' may be a contradiction in terms, 'managing' or 'regulating' rather than 'resolving', and sometimes failing even to 'manage'.

The flaws in nationalism reflect limitations of representative democracy, with problems of territoriality a common denominator. As we shall see, these problems and the failures of national 'solutions' together point to the necessity for transnational resolutions which cross the borders of states and of nations, combining national with transnational representative democracy and with non-territorial forms of political participation. Liberal democracy depends on a spatial fix between territory and representation: territorially delimited and fixed electorates are the basis for what democracy unfortunately amounts to for most of us most of the time. But the acceleration of 'globalization' since the 1960s and, in western Europe, the increasing integration of the European Union, are making it harder to maintain political life within traditional territorial limits, as evidenced for instance by the growth of transnational political movements which are not primarily based on territory (McGrew, 1995). However, this is not to argue that a 'post-nationalist' era is on the horizon. Nor should nationalism be simplistically dismissed as entirely negative. While some see transnationalism as emancipation from flawed nationalisms, others continue to see nationalism as itself emancipatory, and often with good reason. 'Globalization' can indeed generate or exacerbate nationalist conflicts where the national state is seen as a defense against powerful external forces. But 'globalization' is a contradictory process that also calls into question the assumptions about exclusive territorial sovereignty which underlie nationalism and it seems to offer the possibility of transcending their limitations (Anderson, 1996). There may be good reasons for looking to transnational forms of democracy as a means of resolving or getting beyond national conflicts.

These possibilities are explored here in the context of the national conflict in Ireland. Long epitomizing intractability (where it was said 'the problem is that there

is no solution'—see Whyte, 1991), it is just possible that Ireland might offer a pioneering transnational resolution of a national conflict. This conflict for exclusive territorial sovereignty over Northern Ireland between Irish nationalists and British nationalists or unionists contains many of the elements common to national conflicts elsewhere, including spectacular failures to achieve nationalism's ideal of the 'nation-state' where the territorial bounds of 'nation' and 'state' coincide geographically. As in other national conflicts (*Index*, 1997), territorial partition has been part of the problem rather than a solution; and consociational power-sharing institutions which may well help to contain conflict in the short-run are doing so at the expense of further entrenching and deepening the divisions that have generated the conflict. More optimistically, however, the 'Belfast Agreement' (*Agreement*, April 1998)—ratified in June 1998 by 71 percent of Northern Ireland voters in a very high poll, and by 94 percent of those who voted in the Irish Republic—envisages a solution where power-sharing within Northern Ireland is supplemented by some cross-border institutions linking the Northern and Southern electorates and their respective state institutions, an idea which dates back to the still-born 'Council of Ireland' of 1920.[1] The Agreement even hints at the possibility of non-territorial participatory democracy straddling the border, though it would need to be substantially extended and augmented by other developments in civil society if it is to pioneer a new transnational resolution to national conflicts.

It is now commonly understood that a resolution of the Irish conflict requires a 'decommissioning of mindsets', particularly those of Irish nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. But this also applies more generally in Ireland, Britain and beyond, and especially to the nationalist assumptions of the two states directly involved in the conflict. The British and Irish governments have at times grossly mismanaged the search for a solution; and, despite their recognition that some cross-border institutional links are needed, there is still the widespread assumption or belief that there are really just two options 'at the end of the day': an all-Ireland republic or a purely British Northern Ireland. This is largely because both states (like contemporary states in general) remain wedded to a nationalist view of their own territorial sovereignty; their mindsets too have been largely 'stuck in a rut' of nationalism, incapable of the border-crossing vision needed to imagine a genuine resolution.

The first section of the article outlines the double failures of British and Irish nationalisms, their contemporary legacy of Northern Ireland, and how the underlying socio-spatial problems of nationalism and liberal democracy relate to territoriality. The second section discusses the limitations both of territorial partition and of consociationalism which maintains the territorial status quo at a price. For genuine conflict resolution, the need for border-crossing political institutions and processes is argued in the last section. It suggests how the problems of national democracy can be transcended by extending representative democracy across borders, and by developing non-territorial participatory democracy around non-national issues that cross the borders between nations and nation-states.

PROBLEMS OF NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN IRELAND

Nationalism is simultaneously a cultural and a political phenomenon. It links historically and culturally defined territorial communities called 'nations' to political statehood, either as a reality or as an aspiration. Nations and states are specifically territorial entities—they explicitly claim and are based on particular geographical territories. Both use geographical space to control and influence social processes, as distinct from merely occupying space which is true of all social activity (Anderson, 1986). The ideal of nationalist doctrine is that nations and states should coincide geographically in nation states: the territory of the state and that of the nation should be one and the same, with each state expressing the 'general will' of a single, culturally unified nation, and each nation having its own state.

This doctrine has a very powerful democratic appeal, and especially where democracy is denied by neighboring nations or imperialistic states. The history of nationalism is closely bound up with the history of democratization, anti-colonialism, and communal struggles against 'outside interference'. Nationalism's promise of 'emancipation' underscores the difficulty of solving national conflicts; and those adopting a lofty moral disdain for the 'petty parochialism' of other's national conflicts frequently do so from the security of their own unstated, even unconscious, nationalism. But nationalist theory promises more than it can ever deliver in practice. Nations and states often fail to coincide, frequently leaving sizeable 'national minorities' on the 'wrong side' of state borders. The happy spatial coincidence of a single cultural community with a single political sovereignty is rarely achieved in reality, and attempts to make reality fit the ideal have often had horrific consequences as in so-called ethnic cleansing.

Even where the ideal of geographical coincidence is peacefully approximated, nationalism is an inherently contradictory, 'two-faced' phenomenon (Nairn, 1977). 'Progressive' and forward-looking in promising a better future, it is typically backward-looking and sometimes reactionary in its use of an often mythical or invented past. It is simultaneously unifying and divisive, inclusive and exclusionary. It brings together different groups and classes in a political-cultural community defined as 'the people' or 'nation' with a strong shared and mutually supportive sense of belonging. At the same time, however, it separates out different 'peoples', emphasizing non-belonging and fueling tensions and conflicts between nations and between states. While national conflicts are replete with the democratic rhetoric and reflect disagreements over the appropriate territorial framework for democracy—who is 'in' with whom, who is to be excluded from the political community, how are majorities to be achieved—democracy is often sadly lacking in practice. The supposedly unifying 'national interest' is inevitably a limited, ideological or illusionary unity given that contemporary territorial communities are internally divided into different classes and riven by competing interests. Rather than serving the interests of 'the whole nation', nationalism often serves the interests of dominant social groups and classes, and particularly where they have state power. And here nationalism's

generation of external difference and conflict can be a useful ideological means of covering up internal differences and asserting internal control.

Failures, British and Irish

These failings are very evident in Northern Ireland. Far from approximating nationalism's ideal, it is the product of a succession of failures in nation- and state-building, both from a British nationalist and an Irish nationalist viewpoint (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993), though the formal symmetry masks great inequalities and qualitative differences.

British nationalism developed out of the state-building of England's monarchs. This met its most serious obstacles in an Ireland which, unlike Britain, remained largely Roman Catholic—a potential ally for England's main Catholic rivals, Spain and France, to which Irish opponents of British rule periodically turned for help. By the eighteenth century, land ownership in Ireland was monopolized by the so-called 'Protestant Ascendancy', an Episcopalian elite which was largely an extension of England's landed class. This 'Ascendancy' instituted the 'Penal Laws' discriminating against Catholics, and also against non-Episcopalian Protestant 'Dissenters', mainly Presbyterians. But it was only when influenced by the French Revolution that the resulting Irish discontents came to be expressed in nationalism and republicanism.

Ireland's first nationalist, republican movement, 'The Society of United Irishmen', uniting 'Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter', was mainly initiated by Belfast Presbyterians and established in 1791. But it was defeated militarily and politically by the British state and the 'Ascendancy', partly through their sponsorship of the explicitly sectarian Orange Order, instituted in 1795. Ever since then, Irish unionists/British nationalists have relied on anti-Catholicism for popular mobilization in Ireland, though Northern Irish unionism is now increasingly distanced from an over-arching British identity—declining in Britain with the weakening of its formative empire and Protestant bases (Colley, 1992). However, Northern unionists do still get support from an influential right-wing rump of traditional British nationalists and from a more diffuse nationalist 'Britishness' present in all the main political parties and the media in Britain (O'Dowd, 1998). This helps explain the systematic policy bias towards an 'internal settlement' within Northern Ireland—maintaining its exclusively British sovereignty and the 'territorial integrity' of the UK—despite the fact that competition for exclusive sovereignty is the nub of the conflict.

The development of British nationalism was, according to its leading historian Linda Colley, "heavily dependent... on a broadly Protestant culture, a massive overseas empire, and recurrent war with France" (Colley, 1992:6). But Ireland, more Catholic than Protestant,

> was never able or willing to play a satisfactory part in this Britishness...
> cut off from Great Britain by the sea... it was cut off still more effec-
> tively by the prejudices of the English, Welsh and Scots, and by the
> self-image of the bulk of the Irish themselves, both Protestants and
> Catholics. (Colley, 1992:8 and 322–3)

Whereas British nationalism has state-sponsored, imperialist and sectarian origins, Irish nationalism, by contrast, developed as an anti-colonialist movement and is anti-sectarian in principle as well as origin, although in practice—and mirror-imaging unionism to its own detriment—it has often been imbued with Catholic sectarianism. For most of its life Irish nationalism has been an oppositional and 'sub-state' movement in a British-dominated context. This remains the case in Northern Ireland, the present apex of state-building and nation-building failures, where British and Irish nationalisms now meet 'head-on', in tragic testimony to the flawed ideal of the 'nation state'.

Limitations of Territorial Democracy

The discourse of national conflict in Ireland is very typical in its clashing rhetorics of 'democratic rights', 'majority wishes', 'self-determination' and so forth, reflecting the close connections between nationalism and democracy, at least in theory. But it also suggests that the limitations of conventional territorial democracy are a central part of the problem, and that a democratic resolution of these conflicts is unlikely in terms of national territoriality.

Thus, unionists appeal to the 'democratic wishes of the majority' in Northern Ireland as decisive in deciding its constitutional future, and the British government underwrites this interpretation of 'democracy'. This may seem reasonable, but only if we forget Northern Ireland's origins and the fact that the core issue is that the partition of Ireland in 1920 gave Northern Ireland a built-in unionist majority as the decisive framework for 'democracy' (see below). If the territorial framework determines the outcome of the 'democratic majority vote', who decides the framework? Clearly, we cannot simply accept 'democracy' at face value without considering how it works or fails to work, and the historical origins of its territorial framework.

Undemocratic origins are typical of territorial democracy, and need to be 'forgotten' for democracy to be accepted as legitimate (Connolly, 1991). There is the paradox that democratic polities require democratic institutions for democracy to function, but democracy is absent until the institutions are established. This 'predemocratic' stage applies to the delimitation and institutionalization of the territorial base for democracy, whether this involves the acceptance of existing territorial borders, the carving out of new territories, or the imposition of new borders by an external power (Kratochwil, 1986). The problem in situations of national conflict, however, is that the origins are what is at issue and they cannot be 'forgotten', despite calls to the contrary. The frequent British complaint that 'the Irish are obsessed with history' might mean that British officialdom has strong reasons for forgetting while at least some of the Northern Irish have even stronger reasons for remembering.[2]

As for the contemporary establishment of democratic institutions to resolve the conflict, the paradox remains that new territorial democracy cannot be established by conventional democratic procedures. The 'territory' is at issue. The national

conflict is a conflict over who has a vote and who organizes the voting in the first place. While conventional territorial democracy remains the main available means of democratic accountability, and generally needs strengthening, a large part of the problem is that conventional democracy has a virtual monopoly on what is officially accepted and encouraged as 'democracy'. It needs to be complemented by border-crossing forms of democracy more in keeping with a transnationalizing world which continues to generate problems of national territoriality.

Problems of Territoriality

The problems and their resolution revolve around *territoriality* as a particular mode of social organization and control. Geographic space is actively used to express and implement relationships of social power, whether benign or malign, peaceful or violent (e.g., locking people in, or out, giving voting or other rights to people in specified areas). Spatial strategies are used to influence or control resources, information, symbols and people, by delimiting and asserting control over geographical areas (called 'territories'), and access into or out of them. Geographical areas and their borders are used to control, classify and communicate (Sack, 1986).

Territoriality has powerful advantages, providing easily understood symbolic markers 'on the ground' to denote possession, rights to privacy, inclusion and exclusion, entry and/or exit. For representative democracy it means that there is a pre-given all-purpose area whose adult population has voting rights on a whole range of issues deemed to effect that area, rather than the constituency of voters having to be decided issue by issue according to the people actually affected by each issue. Having an area delimited independently minimizes the 'problem of origins' and who 'decides the decision-makers'.

But these strengths are also weaknesses. Territoriality's simple specifications often crudely over-simplify and distort social realities. Social relationships are depersonalized, the sources and relations of power are reified and obscured. 'Community' is defined by area on the often false assumption that people who share contiguous physical space also interact socially; and, conversely, those who do interact from across the pre-given borders are excluded, while non-territorially defined communities are systematically disadvantaged. Territoriality is moreover inherently conflictual, generating rival territorialities in a space-filling process. Borders need constant maintenance, itself a potential source of conflict as, for example, in the unionist Orange marches and opposition to them in Irish nationalist neighborhoods in Northern Ireland. Such events at a localized level (most infamously at Drumcree) serve to replicate and reinforce the national conflict over territory and state borders (Anderson and Shuttleworth, 1998).

Territoriality actively encourages the 'zero-sum games' characteristic of national conflicts. Whereas there is a fixed total amount of territory, and more for one side does indeed mean less for the other, the same zero-sum argument does not apply to economic development, cultural richness, democratic responsiveness, wealth or

welfare, none of which have static, fixed totals. The totals to be 'shared' can rise (or more likely decline in situations of serious conflict). But while it is possible for everyone in a society to be better off, such 'positive-sum' thinking tends to be precluded where territorial mindsets are locked into 'zero-sum' nationalism.

NATIONAL 'SOLUTIONS' TO NATIONAL CONFLICT

Some 'solutions' to national conflict are very clearly non-solutions. They may be one-sidedly brutal oppressions of 'national minorities' by state powers, from the English General Lake in the 1790s in what is now Northern Ireland, to General Suharto in East Timor, and Slobodon Milosevic in the Balkans in the 1990s. 'Non-solutions' in the sense of being morally obnoxious, they are also often counter-productive, simply generating even more opposition in the long-term.[3] Non-solutions may also be unilaterally frivolous or condescending, as in attempts to 'buy off' nationalist opposition movements with concessions on issues regarded as relatively unimportant by the dominant power, such as cultural issues separated from 'politics'.[4] They are often non-solutions in the sense of being attempts to manage rather than solve conflict, which, as evidenced in three decades of conflict in Northern Ireland, are in effect mismanagement.

In contrast, strategies such as the re-drawing of state borders, and internal 'consociationalism' or 'power-sharing' between different national groups, are less obviously non-solutions. In combination with other measures they may indeed have some ameliorative effects which prepare the ground for a resolution. However, territorial partition, as in Ireland, the Indian sub-continent, Palestine, Cyprus and former Yugoslavia, has a dismal record, often creating more problems than it solves (Fraser, 1984; *Index*, 1997).[5] Alternatively, the problem may be the more common refusal to redraw external borders and to insist on an 'internal settlement', not because it is clearly the better option in the particular circumstances, but because it reinforces the status quo of statehood and the territorial integrity of national states more generally.

Partition of Ireland and Ulster

The Irish case demonstrates that the basic problem with partition is that while it may perhaps satisfy the political aspirations of some groups it does so at the expense of worsening the situation of others. Rather than being agreed democratically, it is generally imposed autocratically by 'outside' or imperialist powers, and, as in Ireland, against the wishes of the majority of the population in the disputed area. It is generally impossible to have a simple territorial separation of the contending national groups because they are geographically intermingled. Partition processes are therefore inherently bitter and often bloody, actively encouraging forced population movement and so-called 'ethnic cleansing', or at the very least generating further conflict, and rendering proposals for 'cross-border' cooperation still-born (Fraser, 1984). They also typically ride roughshod over economic realities, though again as

the Irish case demonstrates, such continuing realities can be a basis for later resolution.

The partition of Ireland and Ulster was in fact relatively peaceful compared to, say the Indian case, yet it shows why partition, though not a solution, is nevertheless one of the 'standard responses'. From the 1880s, Irish unionists, their main concentration among the Protestant section of the population in the nine-county province of Ulster, campaigned under the slogan of 'Home Rule is Rome rule', to block the limited form of political autonomy on offer for the whole country within a UK and Empire framework. Their anti-Catholicism was encouraged by leading British Conservative Party members such as Lord Salisbury. It was he and his associates who first proposed the 'divide and rule' strategy of partition and tried, without much local success, to sell the idea that there were 'two Irish nations' (Anderson, 1989). Most Ulster unionists did not want partition, preferring to resist Home Rule on an all-Ireland basis; the threat of partition was a blocking tactic or at most a reluctant strategy of last resort. Yet partition had a powerful purchase on the 'establishment' mindset of British administrators. It followed logically from a long history of 'divide and rule' strategies across the Empire; it helped to cast the British government as the well-intentioned, indeed long-suffering, 'neutral' party 'holding the ring' between the contending aspirations of its warring subjects (whether Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Muslims and Hindus in India, or Greeks and Turks in Cyprus): and they could clearly be blamed for the conflict, and for failures to find a solution.

The Westminster House of Commons had voted for Irish 'Home Rule' in 1886, only to have it vetoed by the unelected House of Lords. But, when this veto was removed and it became clear in the decade before 1920 that 'blocking' on a nine-county Ulster basis would not succeed, the Ulster unionists, with the backing of the British state, opted for partition and a six-county Northern Ireland. Irish nationalist objections were met with the threat of overwhelming British force. There was no vote or plebiscite, either Ireland-wide or in the northern counties, despite—or rather because of—sizeable Irish nationalist majorities in large parts of Northern Ireland, and the implication that a democratic plebiscite on a county or district basis would very probably have produced a much smaller and perhaps non-contiguous, non-viable 'Northern Ireland'.

The new six-county territorial entity gave unionists a 'safe' (roughly 66 to 33 percent) majority of Protestants (assumed to be unionist) over Catholics (assumed to be nationalist), compared to a much narrower majority (roughly only 55 to 45 percent) if the three Ulster counties with large Catholic majorities, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, had not been excluded. For the roughly 900,000 unionists in what is now Northern Ireland, the "price of their own salvation... was the abandonment of their fellow unionists, around 300,000, outside the north-east" (Kennedy, 1988). Unionists in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan had been an integral part of Ulster opposition to Irish 'Home Rule', but now, in their own view, they were 'thrown overboard from the lifeboat' so that the 'safe majority' in the six counties could be secured.

Following partition, the preservation of Northern Ireland's built-in Protestant majority became unionism's 'territorial imperative', and one whose sectarian implications have recently been sharpened by the increasing size of the Catholic minority (from about 35 percent of the Northern Ireland population in 1971, to around 42 percent in 1991—see Anderson and Shuttleworth, 1994). In reality, partition has had the 'pressure-cooker' effect of concentrating the conflict within a smaller territory and further entrenching the 'zero-sum' politics of 'minority' versus 'majority', with conflict over national territoriality and local territorial disputes being mutually reinforcing. Partition effectively foreclosed the opportunity of a more 'positive-sum' joint endeavor in a single redefined political entity, as evidenced in unionism's failure to create an homogenizing 'myth of place' for Northern Ireland (Graham, 1997).

By the same token, if partition has been a tragedy, a further re-partition of Northern Ireland would add farce and yet more tragedy. Put forward by an Irish academic, Liam Kennedy, it would not only produce discontinuous and functionally unviable territories, but would also encourage forced population movements of the geographically intermingled groups (McGarry and O'Leary, 1990). Its irresponsibility became clearer some years later when Kennedy's ideas and maps were used by loyalist paramilitaries for their last-resort 'doomsday solution', complete with threats to 'ethnically cleanse' inconveniently located Catholics, including about half the population of Belfast. Nor was such irresponsibility confined to Irish sources. Despite its potentially bloody impracticality, re-partition combined with the relocation of Northern Irish nationalists was reportedly considered a serious policy option by Mrs. Thatcher.[6] But for Ireland, as elsewhere in the contemporary world, 'internal solutions' that maintain the 'territorial integrity' of existing state borders have been the preferred solution.[7]

Territorial Integrity and Consociationalism

Following partition in 1920, British policy became a matter of *non-* rather than *mis-*management, of less than benign neglect rather than a search for a solution, internal or otherwise. Northern Ireland became effectively a one-party sectarian statelet, with, in the words of its first Prime Minister, James Craig, "a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people". The British government generally abdicated its responsibilities and left Northern Ireland to its own unionist devices, despite continuing sectarian violence and clear evidence of malfunctioning, including serious riots in Belfast in 1935, the IRA 'anti-border' campaign of 1956–62, and the Civil Rights campaign from the mid-1960s. It was only in 1969, when the unionist administration lost control of the situation because of its own excesses, that the British government finally began to intervene, sending in the British Army, reforming the local police and local government, and finally closing down the 'Protestant parliament', imposing 'direct rule' from London.

The outcome, however, was a reproduction of many of the problems of unionist rule, partly because an 'internal' solution was sought in effectively one-sided British nationalist terms of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, despite the

concerns of Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland and of the Irish government. Britain's 1973 Act confirming that the formal decision on the future of the disputed territory of Northern Ireland lay with the majority in that territory voting in a referendum—'democratic' until Northern Ireland's built-in unionist majority is re-membered—in fact skewed developments away from peaceful conflict resolution and entrenched war. For unionists it underlined the fact that Northern Ireland's place in the union was explicitly less secure than that of all other parts of the UK where 'Westminster' sovereignty remained 'non-negotiable'. Unionism's sectarian 'territorial imperative' was thus reinforced; Northern Irish nationalists were to be kept in permanent minority status and treated as 'the alien threat within'. Effec-tively, unionists were given a further disincentive to negotiate with their nationalist neighbors, and with everything explicitly hinging on whether or not unionists re-tained their majority, sectarianism was actively encouraged. For nationalists, on the other hand, it simply confirmed a gerrymandered framework in which they were pre-determined losers—the major reason why some of them have felt justified in resorting to armed struggle. There was a certain irony in excuses that Britain could not find a solution because 'the problem was there was no solution', for the British authorities had established their own nationalist cul de sac where in nationalism's terms there was indeed no solution.

However, with the acceptance of the Dublin government as a 'junior partner' in conflict management through the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, there was some recognition of the Ireland-wide as well as UK context of the conflict. But the cross-border dimension has followed behind and still remains very clearly subordinate to the goal of internal power-sharing. The cost of this is the further institutionalization and deepening of national divisions within Northern Ireland. Managing, rather than transcending, sectarian divisions is unfortunately the general or overall effect of consociational power-sharing, whatever its short term, sectional or partial advan-tages. However well-intentioned in terms of achieving a 'fair balance' between 'the two conflicting communities', the dualism of taking them as givens and reinforcing them is more in line with conflict management than resolution (see also Ruane and Todd, 1996).

Such power-sharing maintains 'territorial integrity' and in some circumstances it may contain and regulate conflict, but typically it does so at the expense of 'inter-nalizing', institutionalizing and perpetuating division. It is based on the 'consocia-tional' model developed primarily in the Netherlands (Lijphart, 1983). In contrast to the Westminster electoral system of 'winner-takes-all' within territorially-defined entities, this model offers a set of non-majoritarian devices for diffusing and sharing power among different groups. A power-sharing government is drawn from the different segments (e.g., different ethnic communities) in the society, a high degree of autonomy is delegated to each segment, and minority groups are given a veto to protect their particular interests. There can be separate voting systems for each segment or group, with the implication that political parties and perhaps also indi-vidual voters can be classified, or have to classify themselves, into one or other

group category. Thus segmental (e.g., ethnic) groups are recognized officially and conflict between them is consensually managed.

Consociationalism has been subject to a variety of telling criticisms (Lustick, 1997). It generally sees national identity in terms of fixed ethnic categories and the most important or even sole basis of political identity (Smith, 1981). Its practical implications are to make reality conform towards such a one-dimensional theory, in a sense forcing people into one or other national 'camp' and foreclosing other options. It is empiricist and fails to address the complex social dynamics of ethnic or national identity (Taylor, 1994). It simply assumes that ethnicity is the independent, pre-existing 'cause' of conflict, rather than questioning why and how ethnic divisions arose, why and how they are sustained and reproduced, and how they might be superseded.[8] It actively excludes other, perhaps more fruitful, social categories, other bases of political mobilization, such as gender and class, which cross-cut ethnic divisions. Where it defines just two main 'ethnic groups', people who do not want to belong to either are forced to 'take sides', and the so-called 'middle ground' of compromise and 'other grounds' of alternative politics are actively eroded, reinforcing ethnic polarization.[9]

This approach to ethnic conflict management endorses a bleak view of humanity in which distrust is seen as endemic (Wilford, 1992). Rather than promoting social contact and cooperation, it effectively argues the virtues of segregation. In short, while its advocacy of 'power-sharing' appears factual, fair and liberal, the model is theoretically weak and generally reactionary in its assumptions and effects (but see Douglas, 1998 for a more favorable view of it in the context of a localized 'politics of accommodation'). From the viewpoint of governments trying to manage national conflict, consociationalism has the great advantage of dealing with symptoms rather than causes and therefore not requiring any fundamental restructuring of state and society. But in pragmatically assuming that ethnic or national identities and divisions are largely fixed, consociationalism in the last analysis further entrenches the divisions and colludes in perpetuating conflict.

Academic Defense and Criticism

John McGarry (1998) has defended consociationalism in the case of Northern Ireland by criticizing 'liberals, Marxists and post-modernists' for being preoccupied, respectively, with the individual, social class, and the fluidity of identities; and all failing to recognize the tenacity of 'nations' and the need to accommodate them.[10] With Brendan O'Leary, he has been an enthusiastic supporter of the 1998 Belfast Agreement and appears to believe that a successful outcome is possible once the proposed institutional arrangements are implemented, forcing unionism and nationalism to 'compromise' and 'moderate' traditional maximalist demands. But their approach is little more than an uncritical and 'establishment-oriented' politics of ethnic regulation (McGarry and O'Leary, 1993). While not apologists for one or other national group in Northern Ireland,[11] they tend to be uncritical of national-

ism, the nation state and territorial democracy in general, and the contradictions of present government policy in particular.

Given the history of mismanagement and military containment taking precedence over political resolution in Ireland, current policy is indeed an improvement should it succeed in transforming a military conflict into a non-violent political one. But to the extent that internal consociationalism has a positive role, it is only as a transitional, enabling tactic in a much broader process, not the centerpiece of strategy. At root, the conflict has been over the existence of Northern Ireland and its exclusively British territoriality, and here an 'internal solution' is a clear contradiction in terms, merely reproducing the British status quo. The cross-border dimension still remains very clearly subordinate to the goal of internal power-sharing. The 1998 Agreement's 'Strand 1' on internal Northern Ireland issues was much more developed and agreed than the rather vague 'Strand 2' about North-South matters.

TOWARDS TRANSNATIONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Despite the 'internal consociational' bias in official policy, most of the ingredients for a pioneering transnational resolution of national conflict are present in Ireland, at least in embryo. But even assuming its full implementation, the 1998 Belfast Agreement's clever institutional attempt (so admired by conflict 'regulators') to 'box in' the North's unionists and nationalists will not deliver a resolution. Instead, their nationalistic preoccupations with the territorial framework for representative democracy will only be superseded when they themselves (or a substantial proportion of them or their supporters) mobilize around and engage democratically with other important issues which cut across national and state borders. And this includes campaigning much more directly for democracy per se, as distinct from its territorial shell. Paradoxically, agreement in the conflict over territorial sovereignty will only come in the process of working through other more substantial disagreements on a non-nationalist basis (Anderson and Goodman, 1998).

Whatever its limitations, the Belfast Agreement begins to open the door to this possibility. Cross-border representative institutions, albeit weakly developed, are a key element in the Agreement, and it even alludes tangentially to cross-border participatory democracy. Moreover, there is an historical growth in the material basis for such political developments in the economic and social dynamics for cross-border integration. These are simply a particular Irish expression of the more general transnationalizing tendencies of European integration and 'globalization'.

In response to such tendencies, theorists of democracy are increasingly having to come to terms with the fact that actions within particular states have direct impacts on supposedly 'sovereign' neighbors, and that territorial electorates are directly affected by decisions made in other jurisdictions. Thus, as David Held (1995) has persuasively argued, various new transnational mechanisms for cross-border and 'cosmopolitan democracy' are needed. Others, such as Richard Falk (1995), put

more faith in the participatory democracy of those transnational movements 'from below' that are 'animated by a vision of humane governance', rather than simply extending liberal representative democracy and the institutional networks of established power beyond state borders. But it is not a matter of choosing 'participation' rather than 'representation', or transnational as against national arenas. While there are undoubtedly tensions between the different forms of democracy and difficulties meshing them together, potentially they have a mutually supportive or 'positive-sum' relationship. The sum-total of democracy would be increased if the monopoly of territorial democracy was broken and conventional representation was supplemented by other forms of democracy more appropriate to a 'transnationalizing' world. This suggests extending territorially-based representative democracy across state borders, combined with the development (partly by institutional means) of participatory and non-territorial forms which deepen the meaning of democracy and are more amenable to border-crossings.

Extending Representative Democracy Across Borders

It can be argued on grounds both of democratic principle and pragmatic politics, that all three electorates of Ireland and Britain should have some say, though not necessarily an equal say, in deciding Northern Ireland's future.[12] This is something precluded by nationalistic mindsets—Northern unionists and nationalists in Britain opposing 'foreign interference' by the South, Irish nationalists 'interference' from Britain (not that unionists would trust Britain's electorate which might well support Ireland's re-unification). However, both sets of nationalists blithley ignore the fact that all three electorates have a democratic right to be involved in decision-making because all are seriously affected by the continuing conflict. Furthermore on pragmatic grounds, all three together are more likely to forge a settlement than the North on its own.

The North-South or cross-border institutions envisaged in the Agreement[13] are a significant advance, beginning to offer an alternative to the mutually exclusive and unattainable demands of traditional unionism and nationalism. A bridging of the disputed border to undercut the mutually contradictory 'zero-sum' alternatives of exclusive British or exclusive Irish sovereignty is indeed essential to a settlement. The institutions would constitute a practical expression of 'parity of esteem' for Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland. This is usually how they are seen by friend and foe alike—alike, that is, in seeing things only in the limited terms of competing nationalisms.

However, cross-border institutions have potentially much more to offer in economic and social terms. Moreover, merely to be implemented in the minimal forms officially envisaged, they need to be tied in much more to the non-nationalist dynamics for cross-border integration already evident in civil society. And that applies particularly if they are to be developed to anything like their full potential—the big 'if'—for they could conceivably bring mutually reinforcing economic, social, cul-

tural and democratic advantages which would in turn bolster their potential for conflict resolution.

Cross-border institutions in Ireland are necessitated not only by national political factors, but by a quite separate 'economic dynamic' for a 'single island economy' (Quigley, 1992). This is being advocated by business and trade union interests, North and South, to meet the new opportunities and threats posed by the Single European Market since the early 1990s, and further boosted by Economic and Monetary Union. This 'economic' dynamic is now probably the most important new element in the traditional equation of North-South relations (Anderson, 1994; Bradley, 1996; Bradley and Hamilton, 1999). It is associated with a related but wider 'socio-cultural dynamic' which points towards an 'all-Ireland' civil society (Anderson, 1998). Indeed, an 'all-Ireland' civil society is implied in the 'single island economy'—one 'economy' but two 'societies' is hardly practical—but the 'socio-cultural' dynamic is also made up of a wide range of non-economic pressures for more or closer social interactions across the border. It encompasses a wide range of different groups and institutions, including cultural and sporting bodies, the extensive voluntary sector and campaigning organizations involved with problems such as poverty, unemployment, and women's, gay and lesbian rights. There is also a growing concern for a democratization of the emerging North-South policy-making process, seen as overly dominated by business interests (Anderson and Goodman, 1997). In general, the economic and social pressures mesh with the nationalist concern for 'parity of esteem', as all three dynamics require an island-wide institutional and political framework.

There is thus an increasing basis for crossborder cooperation focusing on 'issues for *dis*agreement' which cut across national divides. These include the different class interests of capital and labor, the common interests of women, the similar problems faced by various oppressed minorities, and shared interests in protecting the environment These and other issues have the potential to unify people across and despite the national and state borders. They would give substance to the sorts of North-South representative institutions proposed in the Agreement. In turn, the institutions would facilitate further cross-border integration in civil society; and both developments would strengthen the basis for cross-border participatory democracy.

Participatory and Non-territorial Democracy

Democracy involves the prior shaping of political agendas and is not simply the occasional election of representatives. Participatory democracy can encompass a wide variety of organizations some of which are responsive to continuous democratic pressures and are themselves vehicles for participatory democracy. Many people, and perhaps especially women and younger people, are excluded or alienated from conventional 'party politics', but nevertheless actively participate in the 'small p' politics of civil society. Participatory democracy, with its more flexible basis in non-territorial social and political movements, is well suited to crossing territorial boundaries.[14]

Some years ago it was suggested that the networks of business, trade union, community, voluntary and campaigning organizations already active, or potentially active, on the crucial North-South axis should be given their own North-South institution—an 'Island Social Forum'—to make inputs into North-South policy-making (Anderson and Goodman, 1996; followed by a similar idea from Percival, 1996).[15] This suggestion resurfaced in the Agreement where it was suggested that 'Consideration... be given to the establishment of an 'independent consultative forum' drawn from North and South and 'representative of civil society... the social partners and other members with expertise in social, cultural, economic and other issues'. However, in line with the official prioritizing of 'internal' accommodation rather than border-crossing processes, this forum was only an idea 'for consideration', unlike the similar internal forum for the North on its own which 'will be established' not just 'considered' (Agreement, 1998:9 and 13).

Class, Gender and Other Non-national Issues

The various cross-border institutions for representative and participatory democracy being set up or suggested are not simply important in and of themselves. Indeed some may be relatively unimportant—'civic forums', for instance, are open to accusations of being mere 'talking shops' for the powerless and excluded. But the North-South institutions taken together could be very important as a focus and catalyst for the development of cross-border social movements campaigning on a variety of issues. Crucially, this would begin to consolidate a range of cross-border political communities and create more political room for non-nationalist and non-sectarianized politics based on class, gender (see Bell, 1998), and the many other concerns which straddle the sectarian and territorial divides.

The politics of class are particularly important, not least because the national conflict is often sharpest in working class areas. However, the notion that the concerns of class, or of gender and other identities, are 'alternatives' to the national issue, or that they can be seen as separate 'stages' and dealt with first (or last) should be rejected. The national question cannot be simply 'side-stepped' or put off until an unspecified later date.[16] Conversely, non-national issues of class and gender cannot be put off to the 'promised land' of a united Ireland, and attempts to do so can be guaranteed to leave many workers and feminists unimpressed.

The national problem cannot be solved by simply concentrating on it to the exclusion of other major sources of identity and material interest. These other social forces could help to solve the problem, even if—or because—they do not directly address it or use the language of nationalism. There are real grounds for the different 'identities' making common cause. For instance, the interests of trade unionists and women tend to be marginalized by the 'unfinished business' of national conflict, so they have a direct interest in seeing that it is 'finished', though 'making common cause' is often difficult in practice.

Tensions will always exist between the different bases for political mobilization, such as class, nation or gender, with problems about the weighting given to each in

particular circumstances. But these are tactical difficulties, not grounds for adopting a general strategy which fixes on any one concern to the exclusion of the others. In national struggles, whatever the leadership, it is usually working class people, and often working class women, who bear the brunt of the conflict.

The development of such more widely defined politics would be boosted significantly by border-crossing institutional frameworks articulating representative and participatory forms of democracy. Working class and other movements usually have to operate to varying degrees within state-provided frameworks; and, despite significant transnationalization and 'de-territorialization', these will probably continue to be crucial for the foreseeable future. In that sense political movements are not alternatives to political institutions but depend on them. Cross-border/cross-community developments would stimulate various realignments of politics around other 'criss-crossing' conflicts and disagreements—around non-nationalist and non-unionist politics which could help transcend the debate about national sovereignty.

Contrary to unionist attempts to minimize their remit, the more powers the proposed cross-border institutions have, and the more they escape the strait-jacket of state territoriality (moving to directly elected representatives, for instance, as did the European Parliament), the more there will be political realignments which depart from and begin to supplant the traditional 'unionist versus nationalist' divides. There would be greater likelihood of developing other fissures and alliances along lines of class, gender, region and so forth: 'workers versus employers'; 'liberals versus conservatives' on moral or religious issues; even 'North'—including nationalists as well as unionists—versus 'South' on some issues; or the 'West' versus the 'East' of the island on the distribution of economic resources.

CONCLUSIONS

The general lesson from failure and possible success in Ireland is that national conflicts cannot be solved in nationalism's own terms. These terms are shared, not only by the immediate protagonists, but also by dominant state powers which impose 'solutions'. This helps explain their low success rate.

In Ireland, the failures to develop cross-border institutions, and the weakness of those now proposed in the Agreement, reflect collusion between different sets of nationalists. In particular, there is collusion between Northern Irish unionists who wish to separate 'politics' from 'economics' in the hope of preserving their British territorial sovereignty as sacrosanct, and the British and Irish governments who favor some cross-border integration but believe it would be facilitated by avoiding the contentious 'high politics' of national sovereignty. The governments' 'transnationalism' is weak because they share the prevailing nationalist assumptions about sovereignty, at least with respect to their own territories of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In fact, sovereignty, far from being sacrosanct or avoidable, remains the nub of the conflict. Mutually-exclusive conceptions of territorial sover-

eignty have encouraged a 'negative-sum game' and precluded any solution short of the all-out victories traditionally sought both by Irish and British nationalists. Unionists did have a 'winner-takes-all' form of sovereignty, but their assertion of exclusively British territoriality has been a pyrrhic victory.

As it stands, the Agreement can at best produce the replacement of the old failed policy of mainly military containment by a new political strategy of conflict management. This is not a resolution of the conflict, but rather—to reverse Clausevitz's famous dictum—'politics as the continuation of war by other means'. That would of course be a major advance and could create conditions where it becomes possible to develop non-nationalist politics which straddle both the sectarian divide and the state border. While the cross-border institutions envisaged in the Agreement are at present very limited in their extent and powers, they offer the possibility of further development. This could be a mutually reinforcing process between the political institutions and the social, cultural and particularly economic dynamics for cross-border integration which are already on the increase. At the same time as they further economic and various other interests, cross-border mobilizations around common agendas would begin to redefine political identities. They would develop new cross-border political communities and help undercut the fixation with national territoriality, but this is something the state powers involved have barely begun to conceive, let alone deliver.

This article has attempted to step back from the clashing rhetorics of nationalism and representative democracy to look at their common limitations in territoriality. It has argued the impossibility of democratic resolution to national conflict on the conventional basis of bounded national territory. Existing territorial democracy, while it must be defended, has serious limitations and needs transnational supplementation. The favored and apparently 'practical politics' of 'internal consociationalism' turn out to be impractical as the main strategy for conflict resolution. While of limited tactical use to facilitate a transition from violent conflict, consociationalism fails to address the complex dynamics of national identity, uncritically accepts the permanency of ethnic divisions, further entrenches them and marginalizes other bases of political mobilization, such as gender and class. In contrast, transnational border-crossing strategies offer the best hope of resolving national conflicts. At a time of increasing '' and transnational integration, it is ironic that national conflicts are 'flourishing', seemingly as never before. But 'transnationalization' is the only way of transcending them. In this contradictory world, it is 'still all to play for'.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1. The 1920 Council of Ireland foresaw cross-border institutions as an interim measure leading to Ireland's political re-unification, with limited devolved government within the UK and British Empire. The idea was revived in the failed 'Sunningdale Agreement' of 1972, but while the 1998 'Belfast Agreement' was dubbed 'Sunningdale for slow learners', its cross-border institutions are generally seen as a permanent settlement rather than an interim stage to a unitary nation state, though that is still Irish republicanism's long term objective.

2. 'Revisionist' officialdom in the Irish Republic also has an interest in 'forgetting', now playing down anniversary celebrations of the state's violent origins because the violence of today's IRA has to be condemned as illegitimate. Irish nationalists complained that the French and the Americans were proud to celebrate their revolutions, but whereas the latter could plausibly deny that violent origins had contemporary relevance, the Irish clearly could not (see Brady, 1994).

3. For example, Franco's harsh repression in the Basque Country galvanized Basque nationalist opposition. The Scottish National Party has the British (English) nationalist Mrs. Thatcher and her strident centralism to thank for reviving their electoral fortunes; and Irish republicans should be grateful for her 'resolute stance' against concessions to Bobby Sands and the other hunger-striking prisoners which launched Sinn Féin as a successful electoral machine. Her declared policy was to deny Sinn Féin 'the oxygen of publicity', but when Bobby Sands MP died in prison he became known world-wide—counter-productivity on a grand scale from a British viewpoint.

4. This was explicitly formalized by the unionist Cadogan Group (1992) which proposed that for Irish nationalists (but not unionists) 'culture' could be separated from 'politics' and their nationalism could be allowed cultural, but not political, expression. Subsequently, it argued that while political sovereignty is absolute, economic cross-border cooperation could be treated as a separate 'non-political' matter (Cadogan Group, 1998). It admits the basic 'oneness' of Ireland in physical, social and cultural terms, and also that cross-border economic cooperation will intensify regardless of a political settlement. But the 'oneness' is only acceptable if political unity is 'off the agenda'—'politics' can and must be separated not only from 'culture' but all the rest of social life!

5. In the Indian subcontinent, partition was accompanied by an estimated 200,000 deaths, and 5 million people had to migrate across the new Pakistan-India border line; this was followed by several wars and recently the threat of nuclear conflict. The partition of Palestine made three-quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs homeless refugees; and it too has led to a series of wars (Fraser, 1984).

6. 'Mrs. Thatcher's modest ethnic cleansing proposal', *Sunday Tribune* 25 October 1998, Dublin. The paper's political correspondent, Stephen Collins, reported that Douglas Hurd, former British Foreign Secretary and Northern Ireland Secretary, had confirmed that in the 1980s 'Mrs. Thatcher considered re-partition and a massive movement of nationalists south of a new border', but that the Irish Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, had 'knocked the proposal on the head the minute it was proposed to him by Thatcher'.

7. For example, the post-World War II creation of new independent states across Africa and Asia involved remarkably few border relocations or creations, despite colonial borders often being highly arbitrary European impositions. Secession movements, as in Biafra, typically got little encouragement from surrounding states. The recent spate of new state creations and new borders in eastern Europe and central Asia can be seen as the exceptional result of the defeat of Stalin's 'soviet empire' in the 'Cold War'.

8. In Ireland, the sectarian, ethnic 'givens' are in fact contradicted by the formative role of Presbyterian United Irish men and women in establishing Irish republicanism in the 1790s (Section I). Paradoxically, it is the very weakness and general 'invisibility' of 'ethnic' differentiation in Northern Ireland (e.g., same language, same skin color), combined with local patterns of geographically intermingled territories, which gives sectarianism its particular virulence. Rather than being simply the expression of difference, its function is precisely to maintain the differentiations in a situation where the marks of class are generally much more obvious than those of nation or religion.

9. In Northern Ireland, small and cross-community parties tend to be 'squeezed out', and people are forced, sometimes against their will, to declare for one or other 'camp'. Mechanisms intended to deliver 'minority rights' may be (mis)used by the 'majority' in a competition for 'victimhood', thereby nullifying their 'equalizing' potential while simultaneously strengthening the divisions. The pressure for 'balance' can produce a phony or distorting 'evenhandedness' where the (mainly) victim minority has to be apportioned 'equal blame' in what can be a lofty 'plague on both your houses'. Irish republicanism, in principle anti-sectarian, risks being forced into the dominant sectarian mold of 'ethnic politics'; and power may be shared by socially conservative parties from each 'side', to the exclusion of more progressive forces as the 'national question' marginalizes most other issues.

10. These criticisms of (unspecified) liberal/left academia are much too sweeping (if McGarry himself is not a 'Marxist', a 'post-modernist', or a 'liberal', what is he?). So-called 'post-modernists' have, for instance, usefully criticized the essentialist assumptions underlying pragmatic approaches to ethnicity and nationalism—including that of McGarry and O'Leary. Marxists have developed various theoretical understandings which significantly advance on the 'ethno-nationalism' theory implicit in consociationalism. The view that in the capitalist system nationalism is produced and reproduced by the conflicts and contradictions of 'uneven development' (Nairn, 1977) highlights the importance of the wider international setting, and, far from

not recognizing the tenacity of nationalism, it suggests that national conflicts are endemic to capitalism.

11. O'Leary and McGarry are much more 'balanced' and constructive than the one-sided, nationalistic partisanship of academics such as Paul Bew, Arthur Aughey or Graham Gudgin of the unionist Cadogan Group (1992; 1998).

12. Britain's electorate, although financially subsidizing Northern Ireland, has never been actively involved or properly informed, and the British media normally displays biased nationalism or disinterest in Northern Ireland (O'Dowd, 1998). The Southern Irish electorate, while much better informed, is only marginally involved in Northern issues.

13. They include most notably a North-South Ministerial Council, bringing together ministers from the Dáil in Dublin and the Northern Assembly in Belfast, with its own standing joint Secretariat. Accountable to the respective assemblies, it will meet in two full plenary sessions each year. It will oversee at least twelve policy areas for North-South cooperation and the implementation of mutually agreed policy. Whatever the functions initially given to the North-South Council, its scope and powers can later be expanded, but only by mutual agreement. To deal with matters not devolved to the Northern Assembly, a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference is to be established, while a British-Irish Council is to link the parliamentary assemblies in Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

14. Various writers have recently stressed the need to encourage participatory democracy in Northern Ireland (see, e.g., Gallagher, 1998, Wilson, 1998, and Bell, 1998). Gallagher argues that political engagement of this kind would become more multidimensional, transient and developmental, promoting "A different discourse of politics that avoids immutable positions across an extensive range of issues". Bell states that "the possibility of accommodation lies not in constructing a finely split compromise between unionism and nationalism in the hope that it depletes, eliminates, or co-opts paramilitary support. Rather, it lies in exploring the margins within each to find creative re-definitions of what lies at the core. Such re-definitions may provide for mutual accommodation of interests rather than an improbable compromise between political ideologies—unionism and nationalism—whose defining essence is their mutual difference". However, a major limitation of such proposals (Percival, 1996 is an exception) is that (mirroring official priorities?) they are either explicitly or implicitly restricted to the territorial confines of Northern Ireland, ignoring the wider political benefits of promoting participatory democracy on a cross-border basis.

15. The 'National Economic and Social Forum' in Dublin provided the model. It gives representatives of the unemployed, the disabled, women's organizations, young people, the elderly, and environmental groups some say in policy formulation, along with the corporatist 'social partners' of business, trade unions and government (NESF, 1995, Annex 1–3).

16. The mistaken strategy of 'class' before 'nation' was codified in a mechanical Stalinist 'stages theory', adopted in Ireland by 'Official Sinn Fein' in the 1960s and

70s. Essentially it posited two 'stages' in temporal sequence: 'Stage One'—unite nationalist and unionist workers on a purely class basis, within and accepting existing state borders; 'Stage Two'—once they were united—the national question would be raised and dealt with from a united class position. However, in national conflicts there is no 'pure class basis'. The mirror-image 'stages theory', of 'nation first, class later', more typical of nationalists, also has to be rejected.

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