

8. Dynamics of change in political parties: An all-island perspective

Jonathan Tonge

This chapter analyses the considerable extent of change across the main political parties on the island of Ireland. It assesses the motivations behind the diminution of once-fundamental positions on Irish unity and explores the modern all-island perspectives offered by each organisation. The main parties in the Irish Republic, Fine Gael and, to a much greater degree, Fianna Fáil, shifted their approach towards Northern Ireland substantially in the 1990s. This reconceptualization of relationships between North and South, stressing the primacy of northern consent for constitutional change, was readily adopted by the main northern parties of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the 'consent principle' was central to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Having offered initial scepticism, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) also came to accept the *bona fides* of Irish nationalist political change and accepted the all-island dimensions of the Good Friday Agreement in the 2006 St Andrews Agreement. Most significantly of all, Sinn Féin's belief in a unitary Irish state embraced the principle of consent within Northern Ireland, a requirement dismissed prior to the Good Friday Agreement as a Unionist or Loyalist 'veto' and once described by the Party President, Gerry Adams (1995: 122) as 'utterly undemocratic both in the Irish and British context'.

Yet the dynamics of change were very different within each party and this chapter assesses the variable geometry of the political and electoral motivations underpinning the recasting of all-island perceptions and relationships. For parties in the Irish Republic, rewards for reappraising attitudes to the North appeared modest: interest in the problem was slight, leading to scant electoral benefit, whilst the economic rewards of all-island cooperation were marginal. In the North, electoral benefits for nationalist parties added to the potential political benefits of problem-solving and recasting all-island relationships in a new setting. The chapter examines political, electoral and internal organisational dynamics in assessing the extent of change within each of the major parties and discusses their motivations for movement on supposedly core principles.

The shifts among republican parties: Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin

The parties with the greatest ideological distance to travel in terms of the Good Friday Agreement's dual consent all-island approach were Fianna Fáil and, more obviously, Sinn Féin. The Agreement's explicit requirement for consent, north and south, for change to Northern Ireland's constitutional status, rendered redundant the territorial conception of a united Ireland long held by both parties. Fianna Fáil's willingness to contemplate such change had nonetheless been heralded for some time. The party had indicated endorsement of the shift in its contributions to the 1993 Joint Declaration for Peace and the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation which followed. Sinn Féin had been more ambiguous over its revised all-island approach in the run-up to the Good Friday Agreement.

Since the Good Friday Agreement, acceptance of northern consent for change has been a routine feature of either party's approach to Irish unity. Yet the two parties' earlier disinclination to countenance this condition for change reflected their anti-Treaty antecedents. Sinn Féin regarded itself as the heirs to the 1918 all-island mandate awarded to the party prior to partition. On this interpretation, the Provisional government established following that victory remained the only true government of Ireland, a status transferred as part of republican 'theology' to successive IRA Army Councils. Sinn Féin's analysis was uncomplicated. Ireland had been colonised by Britain, which, unable to retain all of its colonial possession, had reduced its claim to the north-east corner of the island, on the basis of a contrived majority within part of the island. It was Sinn Féin's task to end this remnant of colonisation, which was abetted by the pro-British settler population. The question of when the British claim to part of Ireland *ceased* to be colonial has rarely been answered, although the support in both jurisdictions for the Good Friday Agreement provides the strongest case.

Fianna Fáil was not noted for ideological introspection. For much of the twentieth century, the party's republicanism regarded the North as 'unfinished business', its illegitimacy unquestioned. The party's difference with Sinn Féin over Northern Ireland was essentially the (admittedly not unimportant) one of method of liberation. Fianna

Fáil's constitutional republicanism rejected the legitimacy of northern self-determination, the 'fourth Green field' instead considered only within the context of national, i.e. 32 county, all-island self-determination (McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 23-6). The traditional Fianna Fáil position was espoused by Sean Lemass, Taoiseach from 1959-66, who insisted that 'Ireland is one nation) with a fundamental right to have its essential unity expressed in its political institutions. The unit for self-determination is the whole country and we do not accept that a minority has a right to vote itself out of the nation' (Horgan 1997: 287).

Whilst neat histories of the 'inevitability' of the Good Friday Agreement might now be written, only thirteen years earlier Fianna Fáil offered the last gasp of civil war politics in opposing the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the grounds that the deal 'copper-fastened partition'. Until the end of the 1980s the party's rhetoric – for it could do nothing of substance – was based upon slavish adherence to the anti-imperial, anti-partition constitutional imperatives of Articles Two and Three of the 1937 constitution, claiming the North as part of the national territory. As Coakley (2004: 186) puts it, 'militant republicanism was also able to rely on a supportive ideology propagated by the state itself', a framework which 'rested on a distinctive foundation myth of the state'. O'Donnell's (2007: 195) analysis of Fianna Fáil's republicanism identified it as a defining feature of the party, alongside three other core features: federalism; the integrity of the nation and recognition of the Unionist tradition but non-acceptance of any veto over constitutional change. Whilst there was variation in the extent to which each party leader promoted, these articles of faith, only under Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahern in the 1990s did Fianna Fáil engage in serious revisionism. The revised approach was made explicit by Ahern in a 1995 speech to the Irish Association:

Irish Nationalism has changed. Irredentism is dead. I know of almost no one who believes it is feasible or desirable to attempt to incorporate Northern Ireland into the Republic against the will of the majority there, either by force or coercion ... Ireland is, in the view of the vast majority of us, one nation which is divided, because its two traditions have by and large chosen up till now to live under different jurisdictions. In my view we have to leave behind the territorial claims and vest the future of Ireland exclusively in the hands of its people, North and South.

Explaining republican reconstructions of an all-island approach

So what changed for Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin? For Sinn Féin, a united Ireland became no longer the territorial endgame of the assertion of IRA firepower. In contrast, unification, insisted the party Chair in 2013, ‘must be a synthesis of processes which unify our people and bring about national democracy’ embracing a ‘new, agreed Ireland’ (cited in Spencer 2015: 240). Cynical or realist interpretations might suggest that what is impossible to take on the battlefield is hardly likely to be attained in negotiations or ‘syntheses of processes’. As such, honeyed words from Sinn Féin cannot hide the failure of the IRA to alter the constitutional position, whilst critics of the party might argue that earlier acceptance of the principle of consent, hitherto the ‘Unionist veto’, would have spared a prolonged conflict. Moreover, the question of what happens if Unionists flatly refuse to move from their grudging acceptance of a very modest all-island dimension in the Good Friday Agreement remains unanswered.

For Fianna Fáil, recognition of the impossibility of achieving a united Ireland was accompanied by determination to achieve a trade-off for the revision of Articles Two and Three of the constitution. The logical arena for Fianna Fáil to achieve this was in the all-island aspect of the Good Friday Agreement. Yet the party leadership conceded substantial ground on Strand Two of the deal, whilst backing Sinn Féin (and SDLP) Strand One positions relating to internal power-sharing aspects and supporting conflict-ending measures such as prisoner releases, to help give the deal ‘stickability’ in republican circles. There was considerable rowing back from the 1995 Framework Documents which promised much more significant all-island political arrangements than those which transpired. Whilst Westminster and Dáil Éireann created all-island bodies, they were to be accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly (O’Kane 2007) which also had veto powers over the creation of further bodies.

Nonetheless, if the all-island arrangements of the Good Friday Agreement were far less than what Fianna Fáil had previously envisioned, the party’s leader had at least preserved the concept of a 32 county Irish nation. Ahern insisted:

We were not prepared to accept a 26 county based definition of the Irish nation which would exclude Northern nationalists we could not ask any Nationalist, North or South, to accept the proposition that Armagh, Antrim or Down or the other counties are no longer Irish as far as we are concerned. It is another matter to claim that the whole island is or should be under the jurisdiction of 26 county State institutions (Dáil debates 449, cols. 1353-5; see Ivory 1999: 99).

The dynamics of Sinn Féin's move from political absolutism can be seen in terms of political necessity and electoral logic. As English (2006: 413) puts it, 'nationalist Ireland – and certainly the nationalist north – has enthused over the 1998 Good Friday Agreement'. Aided by changing demographics, Sinn Féin had most to gain electorally by pursuing moderation and reducing overt support for a deadlocked IRA 'armed struggle' to that of historical memory. The party risked permanent isolation in the Irish Republic and a contained, probably dwindling support in Northern Ireland. The party frontloaded equality and electoral success above the impossibility of enforcing of a united Ireland and accept a very modest all-island dimension.

The altruism of John Hume, as SDLP leader, assisted Sinn Féin. The much-modified outworking of the Hume-Adams dialogue, the Good Friday Agreement, led to a reversal in electoral fortunes, with Sinn Féin overtaking its nationalist rival in the north by 2001. From being a ghettoised working-class party, the structural determinants of Sinn Féin's vote became far less marked, as cross-class backing finally arrived (Evans and Tonge 2009). Far from rejecting the North's current political apparatus, Sinn Féin's own supporters are the biggest enthusiasts for the institutions created by the Good Friday Agreement (Evans and Tonge 2013). Middle-class disdain for Sinn Féin is still evident in parts of the Irish Republic and the lingering whiff of cordite from the party's past, but perhaps more saliently its leftist politics, continue to deter some voters. Sinn Féin's vote in both polities is particularly strong among young voters, with no memory of the Troubles.

Sinn Féin could also present the Good Friday Agreement as part of a perpetual revolution, based on never-ending advancement to the Holy Grail of Irish unity. Moreover, O'Donnell (2003) highlights how Sinn Féin pushed Fianna Fáil into pressing the British government towards a formula for agreement which highlighted the

necessity of Irish self-determination rather than merely the emphasis on consent stressed by the British. On this presentation, the Agreement and subsequent developments were portrayed as incremental all-island gains, even if, to many observers, they appeared political reverses of long-held republican shibboleths, with republicanism being essentially whatever Sinn Féin declared it was in any particular phase. The party insisted that the Good Friday Agreement represented merely ‘an accommodation, not a settlement’, part of a transition towards unity on the basis of agreement (Pat Doherty, in Smith 2011: 374). Yet the only agreement in place was one that potentially allowed the vetoing of unity in perpetuity and a dilution of national self-determination into dual jurisdiction co-determination.

Fianna Fáil’s embracing of the diversity of traditions and acceptance of a dual state polity on the island of Ireland possessed less electoral motivation. The party’s traditional rhetorical republicanism had hardly been damaging, given that it had held office for 53 of the 66 years from 1932 until the Good Friday Agreement. Yet there was internal cognisance that little could be done about partition and there were doubts over whether antagonism over the division of the island could pay dividends. Mansergh (2006) notes how one senior Fianna Fáil figure, as early as 1974, noted how Greek and Turkish aggression on Cyprus cemented partition rather than resolve the issue. Nonetheless the party, in its rare periods in opposition in particular, offered strong assertions of the need for Irish unity. Thus when the Fine Gael administration offered an Irish dimension via the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement, the Fianna Fáil leader, Jack Lynch, opined that the Council of Ireland and power-sharing should not detract from the constitutional assertions of Articles Two and Three (Ivory 2014). Lynch’s successor, Charles Haughey, offered similar sentiments when Fine Gael delivered the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The lack of salience of Northern Ireland was apparent even at the time of the height of the peace process, the Good Friday Agreement referendum. The majority in favour of the downgrading of Articles Two and Three, from a constitutional claim to Northern Ireland to an aspiration to unity, was overwhelming, at 94 per cent to 6 per cent, but turnout was modest, at 55 per cent, some 26 per cent lower than north of the border. Lack of electoral dividend was equally obvious in the first two general elections in the

Irish Republic after the Agreement, in 2002 and 2007. Only four per cent of electors cited Northern Ireland as an issue influencing their vote in each of those contests, placing it the fifteenth most important item of twenty put to electors in 2002 and eighteenth in 2007 (Marsh 2008: 111). Only in the election year prior to the Good Friday Agreement, with much interest in Northern Ireland and apparent distinctions between the approaches of Bertie Ahern and Fine Gael's leader John Bruton, did the issue appear salient, 14 per cent of voters citing it as a factor influencing their party choice, making the North the joint-fifth most important item (Garry et al 2003: 127). More usually, there were few votes *directly* accruing from policy on Northern Ireland (although subliminally it may have been influential) and none garnered within the North itself. Fianna Fáil's brief flirtation with the idea of fielding candidates there, discussed within the party in the early 2000s, appears to have expired.

Thus, whilst Fianna Fáil was often accused in the past of electoral opportunism, the rewards accruing from acceptance of an all-island dimension not a unitary state were always likely to be temporary and slight. The dynamics of all-island change within Fianna Fáil are thus better explained in terms of appraisal of the developments in the republicanism offered by Sinn Féin (i.e. its growing moderation); realism in terms of the contours of what could be obtained in any agreement and, finally a genuine effort to reappraise ideological tenets. This reappraisal did not involve movement towards post-nationalism (Frost 2006) or a reconfiguration of the nation (and according to one wikileaks cable Ahern even threatened to reinstate the old Articles Two and Three if the DUP refused to back power-sharing with an Irish dimension in 2006) (Murphy and Matthews 2012: 297). Instead, Fianna Fáil finally adapted nationalism to circumstance, a pragmatism missing from the rhetorical flourishes of the 1920s until the 1990s.

The triumph of constitutional nationalist parties: Fine Gael and the SDLP

In terms of realpolitik, it may have appeared that there was little difference between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil in terms of all-island politics. Whilst Fianna Fáil offered the stronger anti-partitionist rhetoric, the party in government did little to pursue republican objectives. Moreover, even 'pro-treaty' Fine Gael was perfectly capable of mobilising nationalist sentiment when it suited. As Norton (2014: 83) suggests, 'rhetorical anti-partitionism' was a 'staple ingredient of inter-party competition'.

Nonetheless, the legacy of old Treaty divisions remained considerable. A study of Fine Gael's members revealed that the only significant policy difference they perceived between their party and Fianna Fáil was on Northern Ireland, although the percentage citing this arena (9 per cent) was still lower than that stating there were 'no differences' (12 per cent) (Gallagher and Marsh 2002:183). Similarly Lutz's (2002: 55) study of election candidates led her to conclude that, contrary to perceived wisdom, 'the Belfast [Good Friday] Agreement has not removed 'the North' as a cleavage in Irish politics'. Northern Ireland was the only policy area with significant differences between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael election candidates and the topic was of far greater salience as a long-term policy priority amongst Fianna Fáil's contenders (ibid.). Garry and Tilley's (2003) study of Fianna Fáil activists reached similar conclusions concerning the salience of Northern Ireland among the rank-and-file (well below education and health but the third most important item on the political agenda) and indicated the persistence of nationalism.

Compared to Fianna Fáil therefore, Fine Gael's leadership had less to do in accepting significant revisions to the tenets of Irish nationalism. The party formally adopted the 'consent principle', accepting the need for majority support in Northern Ireland for constitutional change, in 1969. The party leader, Liam Cosgrave, insisted that Irish unity must be worth having, more than a decade before the more substantial revisionism undertaken under the leadership of Garret FitzGerald (Ivory 1999). That revisionism was nonetheless juxtaposed with a constitutional claim which upheld traditional verities (as the courts confirmed) and which any Irish government was reluctant to abandon without the significant returns of a reformed Northern Ireland and an all-island dimension to political arrangements.

Fine Gael's leaders were able to move the party towards revisions of the nationalist position without undue internal resistance. As Gallagher and Marsh's analysis (2002: 55) shows, 'the scope for ordinary members to play a role within the party remains limited' and the leadership broadly had a free hand to shift policy, set against an often marginalised and passive base. There were occasional exceptions; John Bruton's seemingly pro-Unionist position in the mid-1990s caused some internal disquiet and

contributed to Michael Noonan's challenge to his leadership. Bruton appeared reluctant to negotiate on behalf of nationalists and republican parties in the peace process. He preferred an intergovernmental approach and wanted equally respectful treatment of the Unionist position (McDermott 2014), stances at variance with the pan-nationalist orthodoxy of the day.

However, whilst many accounts of the dynamics of the peace process stress pan-nationalism – the coming together of nationalist forces on the island of Ireland in the common pursuit of shared goals – as a crucial vehicle of change, not all northern nationalist perspectives view this as the key all-island dynamic of constitutional change. As one of the SDLP's leading architects of the peace process, Sean Farren, put it, pan-nationalism was hardly new, the Anti-Partition League having existed in the 1940s to try and force the British hand on unification and a similar lack of effect could be anticipated from the model originally envisaged by Sinn Féin in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Spencer 2015: 131-2). The SDLP was certainly prepared to work with other nationalist parties but had its own vision which differed in the 1980s from Fianna Fáil's sometimes bombastic approach. The SDLP cooperated with Fine Gael in developing the proposals articulated in the 1984 New Ireland Forum. The headline proposals of a unitary state, a federal arrangement, or joint authority were all immediately rebuffed by the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. However, the SDLP leader, John Hume, viewed the Forum less as a vehicle for a reheating of traditional nationalist goals and more as a promoter of the reconstruction of the North and a facilitator for the reformulation of nationalist thought on the position of Unionists (Murray 1998). For Hume, cooperation between nationalists and unionists within Northern Ireland, based on persuasion not coercion and accompanied by improved all-island relationships, would create the logic of integration, diminishing old fears (McLoughlin 2006).

The SDLP's approach to Irish unity had always been intent on dealing with three sets of relationships: inter-communal rivalries in the North; cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic; and agreement between Britain and Ireland. This tripartite approach was reflected in the party's support for the Sunningdale Agreement and perception of the exclusively bi-national Anglo-Irish Agreement as merely a staging post towards a three-stranded arrangement. These three tiers were duly assembled in

the institutional architecture created by the Good Friday Agreement, 'a roll call of SDLP demands and proposals' (Maginness 2002: 35) or, famously, 'Sunningdale for slow learners' (Seamus Mallon, in Hennessey 2000: 217). Nonetheless the apparatus was more asymmetric than those hoping for a substantial all-island dimension had desired. Strand One of the Agreement, the management of relations in the North via power-sharing, dominated the deal, at the expense of the comparatively minor all-island aspect.

The SDLP fused a bottom-up, people-based, organic approach of a coming together of two traditions (which has not truly occurred) with a more top-down politics based upon pressure upon the British and Irish government to acquiesce in a substantial all-Ireland component to any political deal. This fusion was first seen in the Sunningdale negotiations. Whilst the party accepted the principle of northern consent for a united Ireland, this did not preclude demands for a significant restructuring of Northern Ireland and the placing of the region in a stronger all-Ireland context. This dynamic, the SDLP believed, was the best way of enhancing inter-communal relations, although Unionists were resistant. It also reflected ambiguities within SDLP thinking over whether Unionists represented a separate (British) nation on the island of Ireland or merely a distinctive Irish tradition (Cunningham 1997; McLaughlin 2010; Murray and Tonge 2005) and divisions over how far the SDLP's gradualist integrationist logic represented a departure from traditional nationalism or indication that the party remained 'wedded to its fundamentals' (Cunningham 1997: 20).

The SDLP believed that party pressure upon the Irish government could bolster the Council of Ireland beyond the minimal role preferred by the Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave (Beattie 2011) as well as the British government, into something much more substantial – essentially the mechanism, as party member Hugh Logue famously declared, designed to 'trundle unionists into a united Ireland' (Murray and Tonge 2005). In 1985, the SDLP strongly endorsed the intergovernmental Anglo-Irish Agreement, given the wide-ranging arenas of consultation granted to the Irish government and the likely bolstering of SDLP support. Whilst party preference remained for local devolution, the SDLP heralded the Anglo-Irish Agreement as a bi-national shift (one which Margaret Thatcher later regretted). The SDLP's condition for the restoration of devolved government was

an Irish dimension to political arrangements; the party rejected 'rolling devolution' in 1982 due to the absence of such a dimension.

In the Good Friday Agreement negotiations, it was left to the SDLP and the Irish government, not Sinn Féin, to agitate over the details of the North-South Ministerial Council and all-island bodies to be created under Strand Two of the deal. Despite efforts by senior SDLP figures to talk up the 'considerable potential' of cross-border bodies and the claiming of 'early successes' of the North-South Ministerial Council (Farren 2006: 119) the embryonic all-island polity and neo-functionalist cross-border dynamics envisaged by the Party have yet to be realised. Both the SDLP and Fine Gael hold a strongly pro-EU outlook which sees borders as permeable. What the SDLP helped embed however, was a more cooperative set of North-South relationships, but ones bereft of expansionary tendencies. The failure to obtain a stronger all-island dimension can primarily be attributed to its 'unsellability' to unionists, weaknesses in the Irish government's negotiating position and lack of focus: in common with the British government, securing peace in the North was the fixation. However, the SDLP's own regionalism was also exposed. It remained very much a party of 'reformist northern nationalism' (McLoughlin 2010: 187) rather than a border-blind political vehicle.

The modest revisionism of unionist parties: the UUP and DUP

There were strong disincentives for Unionist political leaders to end the cold war between the two jurisdictions on the island and embrace an all-island dimension to political arrangements. Tendencies towards compromise had contributed towards the political demise of previous UUP leaders Terence O'Neill and Brian Faulkner, dismissed by hardliners as 'Lundys'. Faulkner's support for the Sunningdale Agreement split his party and his fate was influential in the caution towards constitutional initiatives displayed in the 1979-95 leadership of James Molyneaux. Anger towards the 1985 intergovernmental Anglo-Irish Agreement – described erroneously by Molyneaux as the indicating the eventual end of the Union (McAuley 2010) provided a significant dynamic in encouraging (begrudging) eventual acceptance of the need for power-sharing with an all-island dimension. Without acceptance, Northern Ireland's politicians would continue to be bypassed and direct rule, with a marginally greener tinge, would proceed. The

other key dynamic was the changed politics of republicanism. As Sinn Féin moved into constitutional politics, a worthwhile all-island political deal became possible.

What was absent as a serious political dynamic was pressure from below upon Unionist leaders to embrace an all-island dimension, as neither Unionist voters nor party members have offered huge enthusiasm. This lack of movement from below partly explains the slowness of the DUP, in particular, to embrace the new dispensation. Unionist opinion was sharply divided over North-South aspects of the Good Friday Agreement referendum. Whilst 71 per cent of 'Yes'-voting Protestants declared they supported all-island bodies, only 24 per cent of 'No'-voting Protestants said likewise; Catholic support for the all-island dimension, at 92 per cent, was far higher than that for the revision of Articles Two and Three of the Irish constitution (Hayes and McAllister 2001: 82).

For Unionists, acceptance of all-island institutions and participation within them were requirements of Executive ministerial office. In negotiating the Good Friday Agreement, the UUP leader, David Trimble, was anxious to ensure four things: first, that a North-South Ministerial Council was bereft of executive functions, instead adopting an essentially decorative form – what Faulkner once described as the 'necessary nonsense' accompanying a deal (Bew and Gillespie 1999: 74); second, that all-island bodies were accountable to the Assembly; third, that the expansion of such bodies would require Assembly approval, which, given the need for parallel consent within the legislature, would stymie any prospect of proliferation; fourth, that any North-South axis should be outweighed by North-North and 'British Isles' dimensions (hence UUP support for a British-Irish Council).

Unionist fears at the outset had been considerable. The 1995 Framework Documents offered the prospect of substantial all-island arrangements and, as late as November 1997, the Irish Foreign Minister, David Andrews, declared that his understanding of the North-South body was that it would be 'not unlike a government' (Hennessey 2000: 113). Yet Trimble won all four of his demands, abetted by an Irish government and SDLP cognisant of the political difficulties for the UUP leader, aware of the controversy over the Council of Ireland which dogged Sunningdale and more concerned with conflict

management issues – not least the vexed questions of paramilitary prisoner releases and the decommissioning of weapons. Trimble was not opposed to narrow, sectoral cross-border bodies, even with executive roles, in areas such as fisheries or tourism, provided that there was no overspill into other sectors and that the overarching North-South body could not, alone, decide anything without clearance from the Assembly. With this check in place, the North-South Ministerial Council could not assume any of the trappings of an embryonic government. Trimble was less suspicious than Molyneaux of constitutional reform and relaxed over devolution, recognising that the UK had diverse components (Walker 2004). As such, a deal which offered Northern Ireland autonomy within the UK, with modest links to the Irish Republic, was acceptable.

Trimble's cautious rationality and civic unionism was, however, nonetheless set against two counter-dynamics to change at the time: a chaotic party structure which allowed regular challenges to the leader's authority; and a rival Unionist party avowedly hostile to any form of 'North-Southery'. The excessively large 858-membership of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) governed the UUP at the time, with Orange Order representatives amongst those with voting rights, even though a majority of Orange Order members switched to supporting the DUP after the Good Friday Agreement (McAuley et al. 2011). Many UUC members opposed all-island bodies, even if other aspects of the deal, such as the absence of IRA decommissioning and Sinn Féin in government concerned them even more at the time (Tonge and Evans 2001). The economic logic of better cooperation between North and South was evident, but the politics were trickier and not based purely upon economics. North-South trade accounts for only five per cent of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product and less than half of that in the Irish Republic (Bradley and Birnie 2001). There has nonetheless been a significant growth in cross-border 'exports' from Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement, these now accounting for nearly one-quarter of those in the manufacturing sector (Adshead and Tonge 2009).

The DUP opposed the North-South dimension on similar lines to the 'Dublin is only a Sunningdale away' sloganizing of 1973-4. Following the Good Friday Agreement, the DUP, anxious to keep its own ministers within the Executive, did not boycott the North-

South Ministerial Council, but rotated its participants in an attempt to undermine the body. The Party also criticised the value provided by the all-island implementation bodies (Knox 2010). Yet for all the bombast against Strand Two of the Good Friday Agreement at the time, the DUP quietly accepted virtually all of its provisions in the St Andrews Agreement eight years later. The Party did ensure that any draft decisions of the North-South Ministerial Council had to be circulated to the Northern Ireland Executive in advance of any final agreement, but the DUP also agreed to a *tightening* of the attendance requirements placed upon ministers. Thus the DUP had moved a very considerable distance from its leader Ian Paisley's assertion that 'my party will not at any time be participating in the North-South Ministerial Council with its Republican agenda and its wretched personnel of betrayers' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 13 December 1999). Moreover, having originally dismissed the revisions to Articles Two and Three of Ireland's constitution as cosmetic, Paisley lauded the changes as 'a substantial act of goodwill which 'played no small part in disarming the political justification of the Irish Republican Army's reign of terror' (*Belfast Telegraph*, 25 January 2013). Paisley's dominance of his party from foundation until after entering government with Sinn Fein and hunger for power after the DUP became the largest Unionist force, facilitated such remarkable attitudinal transformations.

The overall results of change

Accounts of the Northern Ireland peace process vary considerably, from those lauding its principles, results and lessons to sceptics prepared, despite considerable evidence to the contrary, to label it a failure. Naysayers point to the lack of change in terms of the party system, societal reintegration and economic dividend. Key tests are whether the electorate and political parties have embraced change and are perceived to be cooperating. In terms of the all-island dimension of the Good Friday Agreement, Table 1 shows that nationalists are predictably overwhelmingly supportive, as they have been since the deal (see also Hayes and McAllister 2013: 142). Unionist voters, who might have been expected to remain hostile, are divided almost equally over whether cross border bodies are a good thing. As such there would be little mileage for modern Unionist parties in opposing the (now routine) 'North-Southery', even if the Unionist electoral dynamic for expansion remains modest. Whilst more DUP voters oppose North-South bodies than oppose them, the difference is small. Among UUP voters, there

is more support for North-South arrangements than there is opposition, indicative of how far that party's base has travelled in recent decades.

Table 1 Attitudes in Northern Ireland to North-South bodies, by party voted for in the 2015 Westminster Election (%)

Q: How do you feel about North-South/all-island bodies?

| | DUP | UUP | SINN FÉIN | SDLP |
|----------------------------|------|------|-----------|------|
| Strongly Support | 14.3 | 16.3 | 28.0 | 30.2 |
| Support | 22.3 | 33.7 | 54.7 | 48.5 |
| Neither Support Nor Oppose | 26.3 | 18.6 | 15.2 | 15.4 |
| Oppose | 14.7 | 16.3 | 1.7 | 5.2 |
| Strongly Oppose | 22.3 | 15.1 | 0.4 | 0.7 |

N 716

Source: Northern Ireland 2015 General Election Survey

In terms of support for political institutions, the 2015 Northern Ireland Election Survey indicated that the electorate offers strong backing for the post-1998 institutions. Despite continuing anxieties over the political arrangements, more supporters of three of the main parties believe parties are cooperating well than do not believe this, although Sinn Féin supporters demur.

Within the DUP however (similar data is unavailable for the UUP membership), old habits die hard. Members overwhelmingly support the Northern Ireland Executive and back (albeit much less overwhelmingly) power-sharing with Sinn Féin, but all-island bodies still attract opprobrium. Only 23 per cent support such creations, with 53 per cent in opposition (Tonge et al 2014). Linkages with the Irish Republic remain problematic for many within the DUP, notwithstanding the control Unionist elected representatives in the Northern Ireland Assembly can assert over such connections.

This repudiation extends to identity. Only one per cent of members identify as Irish and the percentage identifying as Northern Irish is only nine per cent, with many eschewing any Irish aspect to their identity. British identity, held by 80 per cent of members, is dominant, but the DUP remains a regional devolutionist party, watchful of the British government and still slightly wary of its Irish counterpart even two decades after major constitutional change.

Conclusion

All of the main parties on the island of Ireland have undertaken significant new thinking on Northern Ireland and revised their all-island perspective. The changes have reflected much greater moderation on the 'Northern Question' and a determination to create institutions which command allegiance from both communities. This approach has been facilitated by a subsiding of old animosities and 'the passions evoked in the past by partition have abated dramatically' (Coakley 2010: 403). The sequencing can be difficult to determine with precision. The parties which moved most in encouraging moderation helped shape compromise but also reflected the willingness of electorates to endorse political revisionism,.

As the Irish state 'came to terms with its own boundaries' (Hayward 2004: 33) its parties, north and south, were nonetheless keen to preserve the unity of the Irish nation. This entailed two elements: Irish citizenship for all and an all-island political dimension which linked the two jurisdictions. The level of support for the all-island dimension offered by supporters of Sinn Féin and the SDLP offers evidence to support the assertion that the North-South Ministerial Council 'satisfactorily linked northern nationalists to their preferred nation state' (O'Leary 2001: 63). The Council's remit is to develop consultation, cooperation and action on an all-island basis but it does not possess executive powers, whilst the six new implementation bodies 'could be dismissed as embracing very narrowly defined policy sectors' (Coakley 2001: 238).

The extent and impact of changes in attitudes towards all-island cooperation have differed considerably between parties, amid a variable geometry of motivation and dynamic. Electoral rewards for compromise accrued for Sinn Féin, which travelled farthest politically but profited as the party entrusted by nationalists to deliver for their

bloc in Northern Ireland's ethnic party system whilst losing its toxicity south of the border. Temporary political acclaim was acquired by Fianna Fáil at the time of the Good Friday Agreement, whilst Fine Gael and the SDLP could claim ideological and political fulfilment. The UUP claimed the Agreement as a triumph for the Union, in that it limited the dynamism of all-island structures and reinforced the constitutional status quo, although many supporters and members were wary. Even the DUP, after initial belligerence, saw the benefits of a more settled constitutional arrangement, not to mention the previously unlikely conferment of 'statesman' status upon its long-time leader.

For northern parties, there were clear tangible benefits and considerable electoral support for local political control via devolution and the acceptance of the inevitability of cross-community power-sharing enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. This desire for the acquisition of power was a key political dynamic, alongside the electoral concerns of parties. In the Irish Republic, the benefits accruing to revisionism on Northern Ireland were less tangible. However, the importance of the warm glow of international recognition for problem-solving should not be understated and inspired the political leaderships of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael towards formal acceptance of a position that had appeared inevitable for a long time; that an all-island political entity could only be based upon consent in both jurisdictions. That did not require repudiation of previous opposition to the enforcement of partition upon an unwilling population early in the twentieth century. The change in position nonetheless reflected that political parties could not function adequately in the twenty-first century on the basis of ideological positions rooted in a near century-old grievance.

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