Is it still about 'the split'?
The ideological basis of 'dissident'
Irish republicanism since 1986

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Contents

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is on the evolution of dissidence within Irish republicanism since 1986, the contemporary phase of competing interpretations of the Irish republican tradition and ideology. Across the various strands of Irish republicanism there exists agreement over the ultimate goal of a united Ireland, but the means of achieving this remain highly contested. Republicanism is represented by a broad spectrum of tactics and principles; from those who consider armed struggle to be an essential element of any republican campaign to those who seek reform within constitutional arrangements. This thesis examines the broad spectrum of republicanism in Northern Ireland and considers whether these rival interpretations can all be accommodated under a broad republican umbrella. It examines how dissidents came to reject the Provisional form of republicanism which, at its outset, had itself been perceived as a dissident reading of republican ideology and method.

This examination of intra-republican difference has required assessment of Sinn Féin's evolution from the margins of political existence to becoming mainstream constitutional players and how the compromises associated with these changes have been rejected by republican 'ultras'. The signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the decommissioning by the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and the acceptance of policing exemplified how far Sinn Féin had moved since the 1986 split in the movement, the first fracture which contributed to the emergence of what are today know as 'dissidents'. Amid such changes from Sinn Féin, the party has come to be seen as 'mainstream' republicanism, with 'dissident' groups often considered in relation to what Sinn Féin, in their modern day form, represent. The term 'dissident' is used to refer to those groups, individuals and factions that have dissented from the Sinn Féin 'brand' of republicanism.

This thesis assesses the various groups operating under the 'dissident' republican label. Using in depth interviews and enjoying a level of access to groups not yet evident to others, it has been possible to explore the origins, strategy and goals of the various strands of republicanism evident in Northern Ireland today. Original data from a media analysis has also been utilised to provide an analysis of dissident republican newspapers and their attempts to construct a 'counter' narrative to mainstream media portrayals

In assessing tactics, principles and the balance of political and military elements within the republican tradition, the thesis offers a sceptical critique of notions of a single or 'true' form of republicanism, rendering the label 'dissident' unsatisfactory. Rather it is a label to collectivise a broad spectrum of republican groups attempting to challenge what is seen as 'normal' and the 'accepted' status quo.

Glossary and Abbreviations

32CSM	**32 County Sovereignty Movement**
	Political organisation, created in 1997. Linked to the RIRA.
Árd Chohairle	National executive of a political party
Árd Fheis	Annual conference
CABHAIR	A republican prisoner association. Linked to RNU. Translated to 'assistance'
CCA	**Criminal Court of Appeal**
CIRA	**Continuity IRA**
	Republican paramilitary organisation linked to RSF
Cogús	A republican prisoner association. Translates to 'conscience'
CSI	**Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration**
Cumann	Branch
Dáil Éireann	Lower house of the Irish parliament
DDR	**Disarmament, Demilitarisation and Reintegration**
DPP	**District Policing Partnership**
DUP	**Democratic Unionist Party**
éirígí	Socialist Irish republican political party, created in 2006
Garda Siochana	Police force of the Irish Republic
GFA	**Good Friday Agreement**
	Also referred to in this thesis as the Agreement.
IICD	**Independent International Commission on Decommissioning**
IMC	**Independent Monitoring Commission**

INLA   **Irish National Liberation Army**

Republican Socialist paramilitary organisation, created in 1974 over split in the Official republican movement.

IRA   **Irish Republican Army**

IRPWA   **Irish Republican Prisoner Welfare Association**

LVF   **Loyalist Volunteer Force**

MI5   **Military Intelligence Section 5**

British internal security services

MLA   **Member of Legislative Assembly**

MP   **Member of Parliament**

NILT   **Northern Ireland Life and Times**

NIO   **Northern Ireland Office**

NORAID   **Irish Northern Aid Committee**

OFMDFM   **Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister**

OIRA   **Official IRA**

Republican paramilitary organisation, linked to the Official republican movement.

ONH   **Óglaigh na hÉireann 'Soldiers of Ireland'**

Title claimed by various republican factions.

PIRA   **Provisional IRA**

Republican paramilitary organisation, created in 1969/70. Linked to Provisional Sinn Féin, fully decommissioned in 2005. Also referred to in this thesis as 'the IRA'.

PSNI   **Police Service of Northern Ireland**

Successor police force to RUC, created in 2001.

RAAD   **Republican Action Against Drugs**

Republican paramilitary organisation operating mainly in the Derry area. Engage in violence against suspected drug dealers and other 'anti social behaviour'.

RIRA   **Real IRA**

Republican paramilitary organisation formed in 1997 by those unhappy with the direction of the peace process, especially the Mitchell Principles.

RNU   **Republican Network for Unity**

Irish republican organisation opposed to the direction of the peace process.

RUC   **Royal Ulster Constabulary**

The former police service, replaced by the PSNI in 2001.

RSF   **Republican Sinn Féin**

Republican organisation. Split from the Provisional movement in 1986 over the dropping of abstention from Dáil Éireann.

SCC   **Special Criminal Court**

SDLP   **Social Democratic and Labour Party**

Sinn Féin   Irish republican political party. Also referred to as the 'Provisional movement' to differentiate between RSF and to collectivise the PIRA and Sinn Féin.

Taoiseach   Irish Prime Minister

Teach na Fáilte.   A republican prisoner association linked to the IRSP

TUAS   **'Tactical Use of Armed Struggle'**

UDA   **Ulster Defence Association**

UUP   **Ulster Unionist Party**

UVF   **Ulster Volunteer Force**

Tables and figures

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Those who defend status quo relationships of power, or see them as natural and normal, tend to treat any opposition or critique as tantamount to treason or terrorism. That 'another world is possible', to invoke a popular refrain, is nothing less than an ontological challenge to the world that is today.[1]

Introduction: The Research Questions and Thesis Methodology

As various organisations strive to display their loyalty to the principles of national independence and allegiance to their republican forefathers who provided impetus to the struggle for Irish sovereignty, the centenary commemorations in 2016 of the Easter Rising are set to reflect the multifaceted nature of modern day Irish republicanism. Yet the claim to the mantle of true republicanism, as supposedly embodied in those involved in the Rising, remains contested. Competing military and political organisations emerged in what became the Irish Republic, whilst militarism as a tool of Irish republicanism remained in the form of a continuing Irish Republican Army, was concentrated predominantly in Northern Ireland. For decades, Irish state ideology viewed 'the North' as illegally occupied by the British government, yet rejected the claims of legitimacy of successor IRAs to the 1916-23 version. Dissidence over what constitutes the IRA, the legitimacy of 'armed struggle' and the extent to which British sovereignty over Northern Ireland ought to be acknowledged has long been evident.

The movement of Sinn Féin from the position of abstention to recognising and participating in Dáil Éireann and the Northern Ireland Assembly, accompanied by the removal of the 'party's army', the Provisional IRA, revived the tensions over compromise evident within the republican movement early in the twentieth century. Famously, Brendan Behan epitomised the propensity for the republican movement to generate division by proclaiming that the first item on the agenda for any republican group was 'the split'.[2] Dissenting voices against the compromises of

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[1] R. D. Lipschutz, *Foreword*, in, L. Coleman & K. Tucker (eds.), *Situating Global Resistance: Between Discipline and Dissent,* (Taylor and Francis, Oxon, 2012), p. 1.

[2] See *Irish Times,* 'Debate on republicanism still dominated by the 'split', 08/08/2010.

Provisional Irish republicanism were evident from the mid-1980s and became more significant from the 1990s onwards.[3]

Most peace processes generate organisational divisions. The Taoiseach at the time of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, Bertie Ahern, commented: 'It is an observable phenomenon in Northern Ireland, and elsewhere, that tension and violence tend to rise when compromise is in the air.'[4] Darby and Mac Ginty explain how the groups involved in negotiations are rarely the monoliths presented by their opponents, but instead 'are complex organisms performing different functions and providing umbrellas for different interests. During ceasefire periods these interests diffuse and fragment.'[5] This observation, combined with the republican movement's volatile nature, indicates the likelihood that the Northern Irish peace process and the compromises involved would produce dissenting voices.

Armed conflict remains a popular method of attempting to resolve disputes over territory, sovereignty or other resources.[6] The commonalities between the ethno national conflicts in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel Palestine, such as high civilian casualties and violations of human rights, have highlighted the possibility of comparison between each situation.[7] The intractability of the conflicts in deeply divided societies, along with the high likelihood for inter communal tension, means that these separate cases are often brought together in attempt to form international perspectives.

It is vital nonetheless to remember that each conflict is essentially parochial, with 'its own distinct culture, history and social development.'[8] The task of implementing a peace agreement is

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[3] M. Taylor, *Introduction*, in P.M. Currie and M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011), p. 2.

[4] Bertie Ahern, cited in the *Observer*, 22/09/1997.

[5] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *Coming out of Violence: a comparative study of peace processes*, in, O. Hargie & D. Dickson (eds.), *Researching the Troubles: social science perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict*, (London, Mainstream Publishing, 2004), p. 275.

[6] M. Smyth, *Introduction*, in, M. Smyth & G. Robinson, (eds.), *Researching Violently Divided Societies*, (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2001), p. 2.

[7] See B. Gidron, S.N. Katz & Y. Hasenfeld (eds.), *Mobilizing for Peace: Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland, Israel/ Palestine and South Africa*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002); C. Knox & P. Quirk, *Peace Building in Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

[8] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.

highly reliant on the situation in hand where details vary greatly from one conflict to another. The fact that 'peacemaking processes cannot be lifted wholesale like templates and applied to other locations,'[9] makes the study and comparison of peace processes seem rather futile. However, it is possible to look beyond certain variables to see how 'techniques used in one location may be investigated and adapted for use in another location.'[10]

One of the commonalities is the continuation of violence and the emergence of 'spoiler groups'. As Darby and Mac Ginty note, 'violence precedes peace processes and continues as an unavoidable background during them.'[11] When violence lowers in scale the policy agenda shifts rapidly from military containment towards a new set of problems, such as reforms to policing and the embedding of a new justice system. Approaching such sensitive issues within a negotiated settlement often produces leaders or factions who are unsatisfied with the outcome.[12] Those who use violence, the 'spoilers', to undermine negotiated peace, can be identified in almost all peace processes.

The illustration of 'dissident' republicanism today is used to encompass a range of groups, individuals and political parties. It has also come to encompass those who advocate a range of tactics. The nature of dissidence ranges from those who adopt electoral politics and political campaigning to others who advocate 'revolutionary' tactics and armed struggle. Therefore, 'dissident' has become a term to collectivise all forms of opposition to arrangements under the Good Friday Agreement and the Sinn Féin agenda.

Armed dissident republicanism remains a feature, if mainly at a low-level, of the post GFA context in Northern Ireland. From April 2002 to March 2012 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) recorded 528 shootings and 375 bombings.[13] Today militant republican groups that continue to advocate the legitimacy of armed struggle operate far below the capabilities of the PIRA during the peak of the troubles in the early 1970s, yet have inflicted serious casualties;

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[9] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 1.
[10] *Ibid*, p. 1.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[12] See S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997), pp. 5-53.
[13] Police Service of Northern Ireland, *Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics: Annual Report covering the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012,* (Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, May 2012).

as incidences such as the Omagh bomb in 1998, killing 29, the killing of two soldiers at Massereene Army Barracks and Constable Stephen Carroll in Craigavon in March 2009; the car bomb that killed Constable Ronan Kerr in April 2011 and the killing of a Prison Officer in November 2012 all demonstrated. The Good Friday Agreement therefore failed to signify an absolute, definitive, 'end of history' moment in finally ending armed republicanism. Indeed dissidence predated the 1998 deal. In addition, given the inevitable presence of 'spoilers' within peace processes more generally, it is striking that the continued use of armed tactics by republican groups was underestimated by policy makers and the security services.[14]

In assessing the emergence of anti-state violence and how it is sustained, English indicates that there are two main issues concerning political violence. One is practical, the other is analytical, and our difficulties in responding to the former have been significantly exacerbated by our failings in regard to the latter.[15] This is certainly true in the case of Northern Ireland and armed dissident republicanism; whilst continuous observations of these groups have been made through the media, government reports and intelligence services, few attempts have been made to form a comprehensive understanding of 'dissident' actions.

There is a need therefore to provide further insight into the ideology and functioning of 'dissident' groups in order to expand beyond the descriptive analysis. For example, do these groups have ideological and political purpose or is it simply enough to explain their actions as possessing an affinity to violence? 'Emergent principles' dealing with the problem can be enhanced in their effectiveness by contextualisation via knowledge of local circumstances and causes of violence.[16]

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[14] Security services admitted to being unprepared for the continued republican security threat and having a slow response to dissident violence. See chapter 6.
[15] R. English, *Terrorism; How to Respond*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), p.ix.
[16] M. Smyth, *Introduction,* in, M. Smyth & G. Robinson (eds.), *Researching Violently Divided Societies*, (Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2001), p. 4.

Research Questions

The core purpose of this project is to analyse whether contemporary dissidence forms part of an inevitable cycle of resistance to compromise by republican leaders. Furthermore, what does this reveal about the modern day nature of 'dissent' and does the term 'dissident' have an agreed definition within Irish republicanism?

Within the parameters of the broader research question are a number of sub-questions:

- Is it possible to define Irish republicanism through set principles?
- To what extent has fidelity to principle made inevitable republican divisions?
- Can Sinn Féin, or only the 'dissidents', or all competing groups, be labelled republican?
- Is there such a thing as 'dissident' republicanism?
- How do dissidents defend the continued use of armed struggle as a core republican feature?

These questions represent specific research areas that need to be explored in order to understand dissent (violent and non violent) in the Irish context. At a broader level such questioning may reveal further insight in to the issue of violence during and after negotiations of intra-state conflict.

Chapter outline

The opening chapter provides historical and contextual backdrop to this thesis by examining the existing literature. The discussion opens by considering how the splits and tensions within the republican movement can be explained. This is then followed by an evaluation of the (still very limited) existing literature on dissident republicanism as a modern phenomenon. This is in order to address the gaps that exist in the literature in order to go beyond the description of dissidents as, 'irritants, embarrassing Sinn Féin through the use of traditional rhetoric.'[17]

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[17] R. Mac Ginty, *Irish republicanism and the Peace Process: from revolution to reform*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens, (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 133.

The following chapter will explore the basis of republicanism and consider how republican ideology has been adapted and accommodated within the Irish variant of the tradition. The chapter will continue by considering the evolution of republican political thought and its application within the Northern Irish context. Such an exploration of the roots of the tradition is necessary to determine how the many shapes and forms of Irish republicanism today deviate from the supposed principles, yet claim attachment to the same tradition. The chapter questions whether it is possible to define Irish Republicanism through set principles.

The intent of chapter 3 is to build upon the existing academic analysis examining the extent of ideological and political evolution within Sinn Féin, which contributed to the emergence of the 'dissidents'. It considers the internal and external forces impacting upon the development and electoral rise of Sinn Féin. The chapter will then go on to consider the extent and limits of ideological and policy changes within Sinn Féin and assesses the rationale behind dissolution of the PIRA, exploring how the ascendancy of constitutional politics within what has now become labelled as 'mainstream' republicanism created space for the emergence of dissident groups in opposition to such change.

Chapters 4 and 5 will draw on original data from research interviews with members of a wide range of dissident groups to assess motives and rationale for their membership and to assess their political beliefs. These chapters also examine dissident policy documents to explore the origins, strategies and campaigns of various republican groups. This section attempts to consider the commonalities and differences amongst groups under the 'dissident' banner in terms of their position on electoral politics, the appeal of creating a 'broad front', future challenges, their critique of Sinn Féin and whether they possess an alternative strategy for a united Ireland. This enquiry will ascertain whether 'dissident' republicanism exists as an identifiable entity, assessing whether the term has sufficient meaning in any analytical application of these groups.

Chapter 6 will consider the armed aspect of dissident republicanism. More specifically, it will explore the current nature of the armed campaign, and how (if at all possible), these tactics are justified by dissidents in the current context. Militant republican groups that continue to advocate

the legitimacy of armed struggle operate below the capabilities of the PIRA but have proven their ability to maintain a sporadic yet sustained campaign. This chapter places its focus on several groups that differ in terms of origin, strategy and affiliations to explore what is the aim, if one exists, of armed struggle. It will also consider the state's response to dissident violence and consider the interaction between the two actors in an action-repression-action cycle of violence.

The final chapter will further test some of the arguments outlined in previous chapters by collating and assessing original primary quantitative data, using a content analysis of two dissident groups' newspapers. These results will be explored in parallel to the mainstream discourse to reveal how the actions of dissident groups are framed by the mainstream media and politicians. The intent is to gain insight into how dissident groups try to justify their actions and how they attempt to construct a counter narrative to the critical mainstream narrative.

The parameters of the project

The republican movement's propensity to split and the subsequent array of groups claiming lineage to the same tradition demands that any research into dissident republicanism requires clear parameters. The parameters for this research can be refined by specifying a time frame, geographical area and being selective in regards to specifying the groups under examination. The dissident groups explored in this thesis have emerged since the 1986 division within the Provisional movement on the issue of abstention from Dáil Éireann, a split which led to the formation of Republican Sinn Féin. This date provides a logical and clear moment in Irish republican history to begin to evaluate contemporary dissent within the movement. The exception is a short analysis of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), formed in 1974 after a split in the 'Official' arm of republicanism. Including the IRSP provides an alternative view by offering insight in to the socialist wing of the movement and their opposition to the GFA. The geographical focus of this research is mainly Northern Ireland with some focus on activity in the Republic. The majority of the twenty interviews conducted are with organisations/individuals in Northern Ireland, with five in the Republic of Ireland including three in Portlaoise prison.

The thesis thus covers the following political groups; Republican Sinn Féin (RSF), the 32County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM), Republican Network for Unity (RNU), éirígí, and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP). These groups present a significant presence within the current context, yet have all emerged at different times and from different roots of the republican tradition. They all therefore, provide points for comparison and contrast. The fractured, evolving nature of violent dissident republicanism has forced groups to split as well as merge. As a result, the task of outlining the subject of interest is made difficult for researchers. This project therefore focuses on several key groupings of armed republicanism; the Real IRA (RIRA), Continuity IRA (CIRA), the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH) and Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD).

Methodology

This section outlines and justifies the methodology employed to address the key questions of this research project. It will go on to explore a number of available methods of analysis and detail why a mixed method approach has been adopted, with more reliance being placed upon qualitative analysis.

Methodological Principles

> It is not our job to condemn, to condone, or to find some objective 'truth'. There may be different levels of 'understanding'. And actors may understand themselves differently when compared to the perception that victims have of them.[18]

Before addressing methodological detail it is first necessary to outline the nature of the social and political reality to be investigated in this thesis. Central to the methodological approach advocated in this thesis is the objective to *understand* those who engage in the phenomenon of dissident republicanism. Working within the interpretive tradition, phenomena do not exist independently of the actor's interpretation of them – rather it is the interpretation of social

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[18] R. W. White, 'Issues in the study of political violence: Understanding the motives of participants in small group political violence', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 1 (2000), p. 95.

phenomena or things as they appear which shapes conclusions.[19] Such an approach functions within the notion that the world is socially constructed and emphasises the meaning of behaviour, therefore accentuating the importance of understanding over explanation.[20] In other words, social phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation of them. Such an approach aims to understand the meanings people attach to social action in their own or other societies. This kind of study involves the existential nature of understanding, while recognising it is also embedded in tradition.[21]

Social phenomena are not only a product of social interaction, but are also in a constant state of revision. This approach stresses the active role of individuals in the social construction of social reality. Therefore, rather than tradition being viewed as an external reality that confines people and actions, it is considered to be an 'emergent reality' in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction.[22] The nature of this research focuses on human experience, interpretation and meaning. The social and political reality of dissident groups is co-constructed by the people who participate in the phenomenon. Therefore history, ideology and context all play key roles in the construction of the 'dissident' standpoint. Such research design specifically examines how beliefs 'perform within and even frame actions, practices and institutions.'[23] It therefore aims to gain understanding of 'dissident' groups in order to be able to interpret and empathise with how they conceptualise the world around them.

Methodological Approach

In order to understand the actor's perceptions of a 'social construction', such as dissident republicanism, research design within this area places a strong focus on the use of qualitative data, especially through the use of interviews. The literature review in chapter 1 highlights the

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[19] L. Mabry, *Case Studies in Social Research,* in, L. Bickman, J. Brannen & P. Alasuutari (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*, (London, Sage, 2008), p. 215.
[20] T. Benton & I. Craib, *Philosophy of Social Science: the philosophical foundations of social thought*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.20.
[21] M. Bevir & R.A.W. Rhodes, *Interpretative Theory,* in, D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 135.
[22] See A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods 4th Edition*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 32-35.
[23] M. Bevir & R.A.W. Rhodes, *Interpretative Theory,* in, D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 131.

reliance that has been placed upon qualitative research methods when analysing and exploring previous forms of Irish republicanism, with academics employing in-depth interviews, archival research and scrutiny of policy documents. Yet, whilst the existing literature does contain interview data with some dissident organisations, there is a need to build upon this in order to consider the position of organisations, leaders and grassroot members. Therefore, the use of interviews has the potential to contribute further original data to the literature on dissent. Research output on dissident republicanism is steadily increasing (although very little was written until the mid-2000s) and with it, quantitative methods. Databases of dissident activity (Horgan) and survey data expressing attitudes to dissident groups (Evans & Tonge) are beginning to provide researchers with more demographic and geographic information about violent and non-violent dissident republican activity.[24]

This research is designed to utilise the strengths within both qualitative and quantitative data, yet the limits of both methods need to be acknowledged. Qualitative methods are sometimes criticised for three main reasons: being too subjective, suffering from generalisation and providing unrepresentative results. Qualitative research is sometimes vulnerable to charges of being too impressionistic and subjective where findings rely too much on the researcher's view about what is significant and important. In a similar situation it is likely that another researcher is likely to empathise with different issues. Therefore, qualitative research is also criticised for being too general and unrepresentative. In other words, qualitative approaches do not devote as much attention to generating representative samples as quantitative researchers. In addition, when qualitative interviews are carried out with a small number of individuals in specific areas or amongst a certain organisation, it is claimed difficult to apply these findings to other settings. However, in the context of this research there is no sampling frame in existence from which to draw a sample. Therefore, snowball sampling provides the most viable method from which to draw interviewees. Qualitative data is also dismissed because of bias and the lack of objectivity in the collection of empirical data. The response of participants or interviewees is likely to be affected by the researcher's interpretation. In such instances, rather than attempt to control the

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[24] See J. Horgan & P. Gill, *Who Are the Dissidents? An Introduction to the ICST Violent Dissident Republican Project*, in, P. M. Currie & M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011), pp. 43-64; J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), pp. 61-78.

effects of bias, researchers need to acknowledge it in the collection of field data and consider such effects on substantive findings.[25]

This project focuses on human experience, interpretation and meaning. More specifically it examines how beliefs shape and frame actions.[26] Qualitative data offers the opportunity to provide detail and explore motivations in order to be able to interpret and analyse how dissident republicans conceptualise the world. The intention is that such an approach is conducive to understanding how respondents see the world, which will aid understanding of the logic and rationale behind what might at first seem bizarre beliefs or behaviours.[27]

Quantitative data collection methods also carry a set of different criticisms. Blumer suggests that quantitative approaches fail to consider the process of interpretation or definition that goes on in human groups.[28] For this reason such methodology is described as being reductionist, where a reliance on instruments and procedure hinders the connection between research and everyday life. In such instances the meaning of events is considered in reductionist terms where findings do not necessarily connect to every day contexts. The limitations of quantitative material are evident in that it imposes answers and values on a static interpretation of the world that is separate from individual interpretations.

This project will continue the trend of attempting to add to the qualitative understanding of Irish republicanism by utilising in-depth, semi-structured interviews and scrutinising primary sources such as policy documents, newspapers, pamphlets and speeches. This is in order to draw inferences in relation to how individuals interpret the principles and tactics of republicanism and how this translates in to activity. The outcomes of this approach will be supplemented by quantitative data in chapter 7. This data will come from a content analysis of two dissident newspapers and will aim to enhance understanding of the areas explored within the previous chapters. Therefore, a mixed methodology will be employed to provide a rounded understanding

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[25] F. Devine & S. Heath, *Sociological Research Methods in Context*, (London, Macmillan, 1999), pp. 9-10. See the *Methodological Challenges* section below for further discussion on this.
[26] M. Bevir & R.A.W. Rhodes, *Interpretative Theory,* in, D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 131.
[27] J. Green & J. Browne, *Principles of Social Research,* (Berkshire, Open University Press, 2005), p. 47.
[28] H. Blumer, 'Sociological Analysis and the 'Variable'', *American Sociological Review* 21, (1956), p. 685.

behind support for dissident organisations. In researching small group political violence within Northern Ireland, as well as within other contexts, White advocates the use of both methods within research design:

> Sociologists, and social scientists in general, employ two approaches in research: qualitative and quantitative. There are benefits and detriments to each approach. If we want to understand *why* people engage in small-group political violence, then we, as social scientists, need to combine these approaches. In addition, we need to take a holistic approach in exploring the motives of people who engage in this behaviour.[29]

The purpose of combining the methodological approaches is to 'capitalise on the strengths of the two approaches and to compensate for the weaknesses of each approach.'[30] Some researchers thus argue that combining methodological approaches increases the validity of research, because using a variety of methods means that one serves as a check on the other.[31]

Methodological application

This study uses various means of qualitative data collection in order to adequately gather necessary data for analysis. The qualitative methods used in this project include semi-structured in-depth interviews and analysis of documentary sources and primary data. Interviews are deployed to explore the perspectives of key individuals. They are one of the main collection tools in qualitative data collection and are seen as means to provide 'information not recorded elsewhere, or not yet available (if ever) for public release.'[32] Because of the sensitive nature of this research there is a need to collect in depth, meaningful information to gain access to and subsequently understand the 'private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold.'[33] More specifically, in-depth interviews are described as a 'conversation with a purpose - a conversation between researcher and informant focussing on the informant's perception of self,

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[29] R. W. White, 'Issues in the study of political violence: Understanding the motives of participants in small group political violence', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 1 (2000), pp. 95-96.

[30] K. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches,* 2nd Edition, (London, Sage, 2005), London, p. 240.

[31] M. Read & D. Marsh, *Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*, in, D. Marsh, & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science,* 2nd Edition, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002), p. 237.

[32] D. Richards, 'Elite Interviewing: Approaches and Pitfalls', *Politics* 16, no.3 (1996), p.200.

[33] V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, & T.N. Hays, *In Depth Interviewing,* (Melbourne, Pearson Education Australia 1990), p. 87.

life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words.'[34] An alternative approach, such as the use of a questionnaire, would not provide sufficient depth or interaction, whereas interviews are 'a very good way of assessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others.'[35] Through in-depth interviews it may be possible to establish how republican dissident groups perceive themselves, how they perceive mainstream republicanism, identify their short, medium and long-term goals and gather information on how they intend to achieve their ambitions.

There are varying types of interview methods based on the degree of structure involved. Minichiello et al use a three way classification of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviewing. Structured interviews involve a series of pre-established questions, categorisations allowing little room for variation in response. Such techniques are usually used in surveys or opinion polls, where each research subject is asked exactly the same questions and in exactly the same order to aid comparability.[36] Such a method is not practical for this thesis as there is equal importance placed on the interviewee's interpretation of questions as well as the answers they give, thus there is a need therefore to ask more open ended questions. On the other hand, unstructured interviews are open-ended, non-standardised and in-depth in nature. The main advantage of unstructured interviews is that they allow for understanding the complex behaviour of people without imposing any priori categorisation which might limit the field of inquiry.[37]

With the aim of understanding each respondent's unique experiences or perspective, this thesis deploys face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews. Semi-structured interviews are used as part of the qualitative-orientated in-depth interviewing model. In such a case an interview guide or schedule is developed around a list of topics without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions. There is the risk that this 'may reduce the comparability of my interviews within the

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[34] V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, & T.N. Hays, *In Depth Interviewing,* (Melbourne, Pearson Education Australia, 1990)*,* p. 87.
[35] K. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches, 2nd Edition,* (London, Sage, 2005), p. 168.
[36] *Ibid,* p. 170.
[37] *Ibid,* p. 172.

study but provides a more valid explication of the informant's perception of reality.'[38] Therefore, the justification of the interview approach is that it will provide a focus to the questioning yet allow for interpretation and flexibility. In addition, there is also the advantage that the encounter will be between researcher and informant. In other words, the more equal roles within the interview contrast with the imbalance of power between the roles in survey methods and the remoteness between subject and researcher. Yet more importantly, within my questioning it is the informant's perspective that is being sought, therefore it is possible to suggest that within semi-structured interviews there is movement away from the interrogative process used in a structured interview towards a more conversational approach.[39]

The more unstructured an interview, the more communication skills in general and listening in particular are important. Good interviews have been described as 'a comfortable, conversational one. As in everyday conversations, participants should experience the interview as a pleasant social encounter.'[40] Because of the sensitive nature of my questioning there is a need to be sufficiently enquiring without causing offence. I have therefore attempted to utilise the ordering of questions in order to achieve this medium. General questions will be placed at the beginning of the interview, once a rapport is developed questions concerning the interviewee's own personal views or circumstances will be approached. Such a technique is referred to as *funnelling* which is 'a process of questioning in which the interviewer controls the flow and type of information being asked by starting the interview with questions of a general and broad nature.'[41] Initial questions are designed to start the interviewee thinking about their views of republicanism in more general terms, prior to more specific questions about the role of violence and mainstream republicans.

Because of the sensitive nature of this thesis and the potential disclosure of illegal activity or sympathy for such it is more challenging to gain access and organise interviews. When interacting with anti-state actors or groups that advocate the legitimacy of armed tactics there are

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[38] V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, & T.N. Hays, *In Depth Interviewing,* (Melbourne, Pearson Education Australia, 1990), p. 92.
[39] *Ibid,* p. 93.
[40] J. M. Ruane, *Essentials of Research Methods: A Guide to Social Science Research,* (Oxford, Wiley, 2004), p. 147.
[41] V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, & T.N. Hays, *In Depth Interviewing,* (Melbourne, Pearson Education Australia, 1990), p. 116.

obvious obstacles for researchers who wish to go beyond primary material. For example, when covering any sensitive topic there is a possibility that 'respondents may resist talking about matters they consider too private or personal.'[42] This hurdle, along with other practical challenges of this research, is covered in-depth below in the *Methodological challenges* section.

Sample size and variation

Interviews were conducted with members of dissident organisations, as well as 'mainstream' republicans in Sinn Féin. Interviewees were drawn from RSF, 32CSM, IRSP, RNU as well as independent republicans. Non-probability snowball sampling was used, using initial contacts who then recommended people in similar circumstances to be interviewed. Because of the difficulty in contacting these groups and the security issues involved, using this technique was essential in enabling wider access. Snowball sampling is acknowledged as 'a valuable strategy for generating a sample of people or groups which otherwise would be impossible to access.'[43] Introductions and recommendations by previous interviewees made other potential interviewees more willing to participate. Interviews were recorded in all but two cases[44] and all interview transcripts were completed within 24 hours to ensure a timely familiarisation with the data. Five interviewees wished to remain anonymous.

A popular variation on the one-to-one interview is the telephone interview. Reliance on telephone interviewing has increased (especially with the use of visual software such as *skype*) and is described to be the next best thing to 'being there.'[45] Telephone interviews are much more economical, in terms of both time and money, than personal interviews. However, they are a far less personal exchange and obtaining in-depth answers is more difficult. It is also important to build a rapport in order to encourage trust and confidence which is a much harder task when not face-to-face with the respondent. Therefore, telephone interviews have not been deployed in the thesis.

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[42] V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, & T.N. Hays, *In Depth Interviewing,* (Melbourne, Pearson Education Australia, 1990)*,* p. 155.
[43] P. Burnham, W. Grant, & Z. Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 91.
[44] Carl Reilly and Martin Óg Meehan from RNU preferred not be to recorded.
[45] J. M. Ruane, *Essentials of Research Methods: A Guide to Social Science Research,* (Oxford, John Wiley & Son, 2005), p. 155.

Documentary Sources

A document is described an 'instrument in language which has, as its origin and for the deliberate and expressive purpose to become the basis of, or to assist, the activities of an individual, an organisation or a community.'[46] For this reason documents should not be used to present a factual reality but present a specific version of reality, constructed for a specific purpose. They therefore provide a means of contextualising information. Communication organs such as newspapers and pamphlets are highly useful in this regard especially when used in a comparative context.

The Linen Hall Library provides a wealth of press releases, policy documents, manifestos, other election literature and speeches within the Northern Ireland Political Collection. In addition the British Library holds a Northern Ireland Political Pamphlets Collection offering a range of publications from political and cultural organisations based in Northern Ireland from the middle of the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st Century**.**

Republican dissident group newspapers such as *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* are available via Indiana University on-line database. Sinn Féin's newspaper *An Phoblacht* is also available on-line and in the University of Liverpool Library archives. Other documents have been obtained directly in person from the groups themselves or from their websites.

Primary data has also been gathered and analysed to provide measurements of public opinion in relation to public support for dissident groups, sympathy for the reasons behind dissident violence, support for the Northern Ireland Assembly and community views on the extent of the dissident threat. This data has come from the *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* and the *ESRC 2010 Northern Ireland Election Survey.*

Newspaper articles used include items from national British, Northern Irish and Irish newspapers such as *The Times, Guardian/Observer, Sun, Daily Telegraph, Irish Post, Belfast Telegraph,*

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[46] S. Webb & B. Webb, *Methods in Social Study,* (London, 1932), cited in, P. Burnham, W. Grant & Z. Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 166.

News Letter and *Irish Times.* Also used are local newspapers such as the *Derry Journal, Londonderry Sentintial* and news websites such as *BBC News, RTE News, UTV* and *NewsHound*. Internet sources such as the CAIN website provide a vital resource for voting statistics, archived speeches, policy documents and press releases. The ARK website is also an invaluable resource providing social and political material on Northern Ireland, such as in-depth election results.[47] The *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* provides important longitudinal data in respect of attitudes to Irish unification. Data on attitudes and values in the Irish Republic are not as readily available. There is no equivalent survey data on attitudes of Irish unity specific to the Republic. There exists analysis of the *European Values Survey* (EVS)[48] providing insight into identity and religion but there remains insufficient consistent longitudinal data.

Sources such as security situation statistics have been used to analyse the nature of dissident violence, including Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) Reports from 2004-2011, PSNI statistics and Freedom of Information requests received by the PSNI. These have been used in conjunction with the limited secondary sources in the form of books and journal articles which are reviewed in chapter one. All dissident groups discussed in this thesis have their own websites. They range in their scope and efficiency, but all sites provide the space for groups to express their opinion, respond to current events and offer their analysis and policy documents. In addition, internet blogs often provide space for dissenting voices. Therefore blogs such as *Slugger O'Toole,* Anthony McIntyre's *Pensive Quill* and *Organised Rage* can provide valuable insights into dissident republicanism.

The internet is arguably one of the most significant emerging driving forces with the potential to sustain republican social networks that create and reinforce an attachment to the use of traditional tactics such as armed struggle.[49] There are numerous republican forums that provide the space for debate and the articulation of anti-GFA opinions as well as mainstream republicanism.[50] Such sites therefore provide a potential resource to academics. However, access

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[47] ARK Northern Ireland Elections Website, http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa11.htm.
[48] T. Fahey, B. Hayes & R. Sinnott, *Conflict and consensus: A study of values and attitudes in the Republic of Ireland,* (Brill, Boston, 2007).
[49] See R. Fernett & M.L.R. Smith, 'IRA 2.0: Continuing the Long War—Analyzing the Factors Behind Anti GFA Violence', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.3 (2012), p. 375.
[50] Forums such as IR.NET & Republican.ie.

to these sites is restricted and membership is vetted. Access for researchers is therefore dependent on their ability to be accepted. Internet sites utilised in this thesis will therefore be ones that do not require site approval.

Quantitative Research Methods

The quantitative aspect of this thesis focuses on a content analysis of two dissident group newspapers, *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation.* Literary output has always served as an important means of generating and maintaining support for national liberation.[51] Throughout history republican groups have been associated with the production of their own newspapers, to the point where there exists a tradition of groups possessing their own publication. In addition it is understandable that anti-state groups may look beyond mainstream media sources and towards their own outputs or 'alternative media' to project their own interests and opinions.[52] Dissident republicans are rarely given the space or time within the mainstream media to project their own viewpoints. Des Dalton, President of RSF, explains the importance of producing media output:

> whilst there is no official censorship in the sense that there is no legislation there, the reality is that we don't have the same access to the traditional forms of media, broadcast or print media, that the leading parties have. So we have had to see the new forms of media. Whilst Republican Sinn Féin were often wheeled out if you like why we were opposed to, for instance, the 1998 Agreement... our alternative was never given... you would be asked about your attitude to armed struggle and so on.[53]

Therefore in exploring dissident republicanism, dissident news publications provide a source in which researchers are able gain insight into group aims and objectives and how they justify their own position.

A content analysis is described by Berelson as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.'[54] Conducting a content analysis is beneficial in this case as it helps provide underlying themes in the material under analysis. A content analysis has been favourably referred to as an unobtrusive method or a non-

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[51] See R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), p. 141.
[52] T. Cooke, *Paramilitaries and the Press in Northern Ireland*, in, P. Norris, M. Kern & M. Just (eds.), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, (New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 79.
[53] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

reactive method of analysis. Alongside the use of qualitative research methods throughout the majority of this thesis, quantitative results from a content analysis provides an opportunity to back up or realign previous inferences made with more specific data. However, whilst this method of data collection is less obtrusive and therefore less prone to personal interpretation than qualitative data, there remain judgements to be made about the themes of analysis and how each article should be coded. This aspect has been remedied as much as possible by carefully outlining the definitions of each category being coded and using the same method of coding for each publication. Such an approach allows for the same level of objectivity and is conducive to a comparative analysis between publications.

After coding, results are obtained via a specifically designed database using Microsoft Access and analysed using Microsoft Excel. An in-depth methodological justification of the themes of analysis, sampling and coding of this content analysis can be found in chapter 7.

Methodological Challenges

There are several challenges in relation to the nature of this research and its sensitive topics. The methodological approach of this project demands personal contact with those studied in order to gain an appreciative understanding of how respondents define their situation. The problem here is twofold. Firstly, contact with small anti-state groups is not so easily gained and, secondly, an 'appreciative understanding' may be difficult to attain because, the 'social characteristics of the interviewers themselves might have a biasing effect on results.'[55]

Dealing with the first issue of contact, difficulties emerge from the reliance placed upon dissident groups and their willingness to be interviewed. Pollner and Emerson describe this dynamic as depending 'not only on what the researcher says and does, but also upon the willingness of the observed to sustain the presence of such a marginal member in their midst.'[56] Therefore, whilst access is an obstacle, gaining trust of interviewees is also a significant barrier.

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[54] B. Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, (New York, Free Press, 1952), p. 18.
[55] R. M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, (London, Sage, 1999), p. 99.
[56] M. Pollner & R. M. Emerson, *The dynamics of inclusion and distance in fieldwork relations*, in, R. M. Emerson (ed.), *Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of Readings* (Boston, Little Brown & Co., 1983), p. 236.

As Lee suggests 'in this situation, trust is seen as a condition for continued participation, entry in to closed spheres of interaction and the dissolution of deceptive self-presentations.'[57] There is also reluctance for interviewees to be entirely revelatory, especially if the researcher has previously been unknown to them. When conducting research on sensitive topics, building a positive relationship is essential for successful interactions between researcher and participant. No organisation has to offer access to researchers. As a result there is a need to be as approachable as possible by providing information about the project and what aspects of activity interviews will cover. On one occasion a list of sample questions was offered to a group who were curious of my intentions. However, the interviews were agreed without the offer being taken up.

Ethical issues

Analysing the use of political violence and the justifications behind certain actions raises ethical questions. By giving a hearing to such groups researchers do not want to be seen as condoning or empathising with violent attacks or being used as a voice for such organisations. Yet with certain actions, which are perceived by the majority of the population to be immoral and irrational, the justifications offered by the perpetrators pose important research questions. There is a need therefore from the researcher's point of view to find and attempt to analyse the justifications towards acts of anti-state violence.

Moncrieffe contends that 'researchers who decide to work with perpetrators of violence expose themselves to continual dilemmas and may be forced to take a moral position.'[58] Yet it is not the aim of this research to provide a judgement on the morality of certain actions, but rather to gain insight in to how others justify their own position and seek to maintain a particular republican political position and methodology. In terms of legal compliance, boundaries have to exist, such as not asking interviewees to divulge information on personal involvement in violent incidents. Rather, questions on contentious issues such as armed struggle are asked in such a way to investigate opinion in to why interviewees believe it to be a necessary aspect of republican

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[57] R. M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*, (London, Sage, 1999), p. 142.

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activity. The general outlook supplants the personal positioning in terms of the thrust of questioning.

The issue of trust between these groups and external actors and the need for boundaries is becoming increasingly pertinent as recorded material may be used in legal trials as proof of membership of, or support for, illegal organisations. The situation for academics could also continue to get worse as the PSNI pursue possession of the recordings undertaken for the Boston College project on former paramilitaries.[59] Therefore the issue of trust between researcher and anti-state factions is likely to become even more pertinent in the future.

Within a research area that includes the use or role of violence it becomes even more pertinent that researchers become reflexive when considering their own position and design of their research. Qualitative research may be criticised because of supposed bias and lack of objectivity in the collection of empirical material.[60] Is it possible for a researcher to be immune to influences as well as pre-conceived ideas on the topic of investigation? Peter John suggests that 'researchers can find a way out of this conundrum by accepting that what they observe is partial and limited by their research instruments.'[61] As a result, there is a demand for researchers who engage in interviews or participant observation studies to be cognisant of their own position and possible biases and self-analyse how in turn this may have affected the objectivity of their research.

In summary, the approach and structure of this methodology is the most appropriate means for addressing the given research questions. To further explore the context and set the focus of this project, the following chapter will be devoted to a review of the limited existing literature on dissident republicanism.

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[58] J. Moncrieffe, 'Researching with 'Violent Actors': Dangers, Responsibilities and Ethics', *IDS Bulletin* 40, no.3 (2009), p. 98.
[59] See *The Pensive Quill*, 'The Belfast Project and the Boston College Subpoena Case', 05/10/2012; *UTV News*, 'McIntyre Loses IRA Tapes Case', 02/10/2012.
[60] See A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods 4th Edition*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012), pp. 405-407.
[61] P. John, *Quantitative Methods*, in, D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 218.

Chapter 1

Literature review: Evaluating Historic Splits in Irish Republicanism; is there space for the emergence of 'dissident' republicanism?

From abstentionists to institutional participants, from the margins to the mainstream, Sinn Féin has undergone numerous reincarnations since its founding in 1905.[62] The republican movement has always been a mixture of intellectuals, constitutional politicians, political activists, militants and revolutionaries, although these categories have never been mutually exclusive. It is this versatile and complex nature of the republican movement, allied to the difficulty of realising its core ambition of a united, independent Ireland that has made it so prone to ideological division and political or military splits. Major splits have occurred on five occasions: 1921, 1926, 1969/70, 1986 and 1997.[63] Despite the many ups and downs, splits and schisms that Sinn Féin has gone through the party has maintained its adherence to the principle of self determination. Yet, the means of achieving this goal, whether by armed struggle or electoral politics, has often differed and caused the movement to splinter. Moreover, the *modus operandi* of self determination – and what it constitutes - has been altered by Sinn Féin in recent times. The fact that the movement has been pulled in conflicting directions since its creation has been a major characteristic until the present day.

The literature on both Sinn Féin and the IRA is vast and wide ranging, with the various accounts often highlighting the republican movement's propensity to split. Since the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) a significant amount of literature has been produced in order to form an understanding of where Irish republicanism now stands.[64] The movement of Sinn Féin from

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[62] A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*, (London, Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

[63] B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years*, (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p.10.

[64] See, R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2007); K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007); R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (London, Macmillan, 2003); M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*, (Oxon,

abstentionism into Dáil Éireann and then a Northern Ireland Assembly, followed by the Provisional IRA's decommissioning of weapons, revived tensions within the republican movement. Significant variation within the literature emerges between those who view the phenomenon as a reoccurring cyclical trend which is best explained through generalised models and those who emphasise the importance of contextual realities and stress particular aspects of each fragmentation.

The multifaceted and diverse nature of the republican movement was evident from the time of partition, fragmented between constitutional moderates and those unwilling to compromise. The cyclical tendency within republicanism has been for those willing to moderate their agenda to be replaced by new militants. The divisive issue in 1921, the oath of allegiance to the British Crown, split the movement into moderates and hardliners, pro and anti-treaty factions.[65] It is the nature of this split that is often viewed as prototypical and therefore essential in the understanding of subsequent divisions, which have been played out over the roles of abstentionism, armed struggle and the tacit acceptance of the need for unionist consent for change.

The works of Brian Feeney, Agnes Maillot and Joost Augusteijn[66] examine the history of the IRA and Sinn Féin, highlighting the consistent republican tendency to split in order to identify the common themes and as a result produce a transferable model for each division. Feeney develops comparisons between the various incarnations of Sinn Féin from the early twentieth century through to the 1990s peace process, arguing that 'all the major splits have taken the same form.'[67] He stresses that comprehending the 1921-1922 split is vitally important in understanding the 'theology' of the movement for the rest of its existence.[68] The emergence of the IRA in 1921 as the 'pre-eminent component in the republican movement and its resistance to any political or

Routledge, 2005); J. Ruane & J. Todd (eds.), *After the Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999).

[65] B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years*, (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p. 127.

[66] See B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years,* (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century* (London , Routledge, 2005); J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003), pp. 1-26.

[67] B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years*, (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p.10.

[68] *Ibid*, p.127.

pro-democratic authority'[69] had a profound effect on the republican movement. Feeney associates the impact of the 1921 republican split and the emergence of the IRA as the prominent partner in the relationship with Sinn Féin as key to understanding the republican movement's tendency to fracture throughout the twentieth century.

Maillot also explores the evolution of Sinn Féin and the IRA. She suggests the emergence of a new Sinn Féin with a distinctly changed outlook by the time of the second century of its existence. Despite acknowledging that tactics in the last decade of the twentieth century represented a watershed for republicanism, Maillot also makes the valid point that to truly understand the tensions and divisions within republicanism it is important to go back to the origin of the party and its principles.[70] Whilst both Feeney and Maillot emphasise the importance of understanding the history and origins of the movement as establishing a propensity to split, they both comment on the past through the prism of the peace process. Neither offer discussion of the military breakaway groups caused by Sinn Féin's involvement in the peace process. There is no consideration for the tension caused by the compromises made in the peace process; instead there is a tendency to view the peace process as an end point. This leads to a premature and optimistic interpretation of the unity amid which the agreement was made.

Although those who broke away from Sinn Féin in 1986, 1997 and beyond were small minorities, their justifications are still significant and essential in understanding republican heterogeneity. The form of dissent is also largely neglected as the term tends to be associated with those committed to violent methods. However, dissent can assume various forms and rarely constitutes a single entity. Despite their acknowledgement of the republican tendency to splinter, Maillot and Feeney surprisingly do not appear to countenance the possible 'replacement' of PIRA by an alternative IRA as a likely result of the compromises in which mainstream republicans engaged during the peace process.

The republican tendency to split has long been recognised by political historians yet each split has been treated separately and little recognition has been given to the similarities between them.

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[69] B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years*, (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p.127.
[70] A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*, (London, Routledge, 2005), p. 7.

In analysing the tension within Irish republicanism, Joost Augusteijn attempts to address this by highlighting the similarities and consistencies within republican responses to political change over the past 90 years.[71] Augusteijn presents splits as a cyclical phenomenon where the pressures between political struggle versus military conflict provide the recurring catalyst in dividing the movement. Whilst this 'vicious cycle' provides a helpful visual demonstration of the splits, the comparison element, which Augusteijn himself claims to be so necessary, is somewhat limited. Due to the circular and repetitive description of the splits, they are portrayed as almost identical, providing very little scope for comparison between the contextual realities behind each break.

Feeney, Maillot and Augusteijn all look for generalised models and theories to explain the republican tendency to split. Yet the cyclical description appears one-dimensional as it pays little consideration to the contemporary circumstances which, when looked at individually, highlight distinctive republican approaches adopted at each juncture.[72] Patterson warns that too much emphasis on a supposedly unchanging movement 'can blind us to the need to examine the very specific historical circumstances in which republicans operated.'[73] He instead calls for 'a more discontinuous 'conjunctural' analysis that breaks with the fatalism of traditional approaches.'[74] Therefore, in order to consider the various transformations the republican tradition has undergone it is vital to look beyond an all-serving explanation and consider the evolution of republicanism within each specific context.

The 1969 Sinn Féin/ IRA split epitomises the importance of taking context into account. In the early 1960s IRA Chief of Staff, Cathal Goulding, espoused a neo-Marxist analysis of the troubles and pushed for change in the movement. He argued that the British state deliberately divided the Irish working class on sectarian grounds in order to exploit them and keep them from uniting and overthrowing their bourgeois oppressors. Within five years of Goulding's leadership the movement had turned from one with an often right-wing nationalist and reactionary conservative

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[71] J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003), p. 2.
[72] R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2003), p.133.
[73] H. Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion: A Political History of the IRA,* (London, Serif, 1997), p. 12.
[74] R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2003), p. 12.

outlook (albeit with some left-wing tendencies) to 'one which professed to be socialist.'[75] However, whilst the 1969 split and the emergence of the Provisionals was to some extent the result of antagonism towards socialism, it cannot be over simplified as a left-right division but instead one based on local circumstances.

The Provisionals did not seek reform in the north; instead the motive was one of defence and catholic self protection. After the Catholic demonstrations against discrimination in pursuit of equal citizenry failed, armed activity grew and it was the Provisionals who were at the epicentre of such 'resistance'.[76] It was claimed the PIRA was 'born out of the desire for self preservation rather than from any overtly patriotic inspiration, still less any abstract ideological commitment to socialism.'[77] It is therefore possible to view the emergence of the Provisionals as situational rather than ideational. As Conor Cruise O'Brien aptly noted, 'The formidable thing about the new IRA - the Provisionals - was its simple relevance to the situation.'[78] Yet whilst the Provisionals pursued objectives far more relevant to the working-class Catholic population than those of the Officials they also managed to retain a commitment to the politics and militarism of the 1916 rebellion. Whilst violence rather than politics defined the Provisional self image - 'legitimised' by its protective role - it is important not to interpret this attachment to resistance and military thinking as a severance from republican tradition and history.

Walsh's analysis of the relationship between socialism and republicanism goes further in highlighting the movement's socialist tendencies and the resulting tensions. The Marxist leanings of the movement under Goulding distracted from the need for self protection during the Civil Rights era.[79] With the aim of political change, resources had been redirected towards the Civil Rights movement at the expense of military training.[80] Yet, a significant number of republicans remained unconvinced that the Civil Rights strategy bore any validity to their overarching aims,

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[75] P. Walsh, *Irish Republicanism And Socialism: The Politics of The Republican Movement 1905 to 1994*, (Belfast, Athol Books, 1994), p. 64.
[76] M. Hayes, 'The evolution of Republican Strategy and the 'peace process' in Ireland', *Race Class* 39, no. 3 (1998), p. 22.
[77] *Ibid*, p. 23.
[78] Cited in M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 93.
[79] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA,* (Oxon, Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 371.

which concerned sovereignty and territory, not equality within the northern Unionist state. For many, democratic reform was not a republican objective and the movement's drift leftwards proved too much for a significant number of republicans. The Provisionals developed as a result of an apparent need for self-protection and the resulting philosophy was one which fused localised reactive defence and defiance to broader aspirations of national sovereignty and anti-imperialism. Nonetheless, the Provisionals emerged as a response to the reality of life in the North for nationalists: subordination, discrimination and secondary economic and political status. Without these structural conditions there would have been little growth in the movement. Provisionalism was therefore a fusion of the situational and structural with the ideological. The result was another republican split based loosely upon what Bowyer-Bell acknowledged as a somewhat one-dimensional analysis: that was between Communist Radicals (Officials) Vs Catholic Gunmen (Provisionals).[81] Due to the leadership's misdirection and the resulting failure to 'defend' its northern population, the Provisionals emerged, shaped by the circumstances of that time, even if their antecedents within a long narrative of 'struggle' were also evident.

Similarly, English goes about highlighting the importance of contextual realities. In examining the reasons behind each split he goes deeper than other investigations into republican schisms. English explains how socio-economic realities and the directions taken by the republican movement at various junctures have been influenced by the socialist tendencies of various figures. Irish Republicanism has always attracted a Marxist analysis, from 1916 rebel James Connolly to Peadar O'Donnell in the 1920s and Cathal Goulding in the 1960s. It is therefore possible to argue 'Marx's ideas helped to create a strain of revolutionary republicanism which in turn jolted Irish politics in a powerful - if not quite a desired - fashion.'[82] These figures realised that in order to understand the workings of nationalism in Ireland it was first essential to understand material and social relationships. English goes on to contend that, 'even for those of us who do share Marx's and Connolly's leftist faith, it remains true that nationalism in Ireland can only be explained properly if one takes account of social and economic forces.'[83] This is not

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[80] P. Walsh, *Irish Republicanism And Socialism: The Politics of The Republican Movement 1905 to 1994*, (Belfast, Athol Books, 1994), p. 86.
[81] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA,* (Oxon, Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 371.
[82] R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), p. 174.
[83] *Ibid*, p. 174.

to say that English disregards the importance of the role that history and traditions play in moulding republican strategy. Rather, it is the contemporary circumstances which seemed to highlight and validate certain aspects of the republican tradition to carry forward. As a result English suggests that each split was situational, but also consequential upon aspects of the long-standing republican tradition; fractures were defined by continuities and discontinuities.[84]

In a similar way to English, the literature produced by White and O'Brien stresses the importance of context, claiming that it is only possible to fully understand the splits within republicanism in terms of the time and place specific evolution of the Irish conflict itself. It is therefore essential to look beyond generalised templates or theories.

White and O'Brien account for contemporary circumstances within each split by highlighting the evolutionary nature of the movement. They successfully present each division as logical and necessary for the progression of the movement. The strong focus on oral history by White offers something new in the analysis of republican splits. He points out that 'To understand why people engage in violence we need to understand the actor's interpretation and not the experts.'[85] The evolution of republicanism is therefore very much viewed from a 'bottom-up' perspective and considers 'how the timing of recruitment affects an individual's perception of the republican movement.'[86] White argues that the two social conditions of geography and timing of recruits have a direct influence on the direction of the movement. He goes about explaining this by highlighting the differences between recruits before and after 1969. In the first half of the twentieth century, 'because the recruitment base was narrow and because new recruits shared common social backgrounds, the movement became an insular, tradition bound, conspiratorial clan shaped by the experience of those still involved from the 1920s.'[87] However, post-1969 Republican recruits entered a qualitatively different Republican movement. Events such as internment, Bloody Sunday and the hunger strikes generated relatively large numbers of recruits who were 'less likely to be from republican families and are less likely to be committed to the

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[84] R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), p. 129.
[85] R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicans: an oral and interpretative history*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993), p.10.
[86] *Ibid,* p.131.
[87] *Ibid,* p.131.

traditions and principles that sustained the movement during the bleak years.'[88] Such an analysis exemplifies how response to the reality of political events gives the republican movement an ever evolving characteristic. White therefore adds another dimension to the republican movement's tendency to split. The timing of recruitment is vital to that generation's perception of the republican movement. As a new generation with differing perceptions question the direction, tension is caused and ultimately results in a republican split.

O'Brien provides a detailed account of the Sinn Féin/ IRA relationship and stresses the gradual prominence of politics as an evolutionary, logical step. It is a common conception in many histories of republicanism to describe the divisions as tension between the military and political components. However, O'Brien suggests that rather than the IRA being marginalised it was instead evolving. As he puts it: 'Sinn Féin was not separating itself from the IRA. Rather the IRA was being politicised...the military and political efforts were being fused together.'[89] The military struggle was justified as a response to the political circumstances of that time. Rather than explaining the splits within Irish republicanism as politics versus military strategy O'Brien suggests, that contextual realities have determined the prominence of either tactic.

Sinn Féin justified the actions of the IRA by arguing that violence arose from political conditions that it alone had no power to change.[90] However, O'Doherty makes the valid point that if the 'violence can in fact be switched on and off to suit electoral purposes, it clearly isn't generated by the political conditions, it clearly isn't the passion of the aggrieved in action; rather it is a tool of a thinking movement.'[91] Therefore, whilst the arguments from English, White and O'Brien on the importance of context need to be strongly considered as a deciding factor in which path republicanism chooses to follow at a particular time it is important not to interpret the importance of adhering to contextual realities as the inability to make strategic and tactical decisions, not necessarily upon 'enforced' context. Some decisions may be made to satisfy internal constituencies or because the leadership *wants* change.

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[88] R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicans: an oral and interpretative history*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993)*,* pp.131-132
[89] B. O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1993).
[90] M.L.R., Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p. 2.
[91] M. O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns,* (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1998), p. 157.

In 1986 the key strategic decision was made to drop abstention in respect of Leinster House from party policy, resulting in another republican split. Abstention was judged by some to be a fundamental and basic principle that had been prevalent within republican ideology since the end of the Irish Civil War. In no circumstances short of an independent thirty-two county republic could it be compromised. There was apprehension that the recognition of a 'partitionist parliament' governing the twenty-six counties might be extended to recognising a six county northern variant, once the principle of the thirty-two county sovereign Republic, declared in 1916 and seen as inviolable, was breached. Given this outlook, 'anyone who therefore sought to revive the question of abstention was going to have to face the situation where not only a policy was going to have to be amended, but a state of mind.'[92] From the early 1980s, the epicentre of the movement had started to gravitate away from Dublin towards the North and the Adams-McGuinness leadership who were more willing to relegate republican dogma and replace it with pragmatic judgement and tactical assessment. Under the dual strategy of 'Armalite and Ballot Box' deployed after 1981, Sinn Féin was given a far more equal role to the IRA than had previously been the case.[93] The IRA's militarism and Sinn Féin's traditionalism of the first phase of the troubles had masked the political problems likely to surface as the 'war' dragged on without obvious gains.

The emergence of Republican Sinn Féin (RSF) in 1986 constituted a rearguard restatement of fundamental republican principles. The 1986 split was not because there was unease towards politics *per se*; RSF emerged because of the refusal of fundamentalists to participate in a 26 county parliament, an act which would formally recognise partition and a step towards 'complete absorption in to the British system.'[94] In 1983 Ruariri O'Bradaigh claimed:

> I am very proud of two things: firstly, I regard the period 1969-1983 as having marked a high point on the graph of the Irish people's struggle for freedom, ranking alongside the 1798 Rising, the Land War of 1879-82 and the 1916-1923 period; secondly during my 14

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[92] B. Lynn, 'Tactic or Principle? The Evolution of Republican Thinking on Abstentionism in Ireland, 1970-1998', *Irish Political Studies* 17, no. 2 (2002), p. 75.
[93] B. O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1993), p. 122.
[94] Republican Sinn Féin Poblachtach, *Presidential Address 93rd Ard-Fheis,* (Dublin, Republican Sinn Féin, 1997).

years as head of Sinn Féin there were no splits or splinters-long may it remain so, as it will, provided we stick to basic principles.[95]

It is this delicate balance between ideological fundamentalism and principle which has so often produced splits. A fault line between politics and armed struggle is often highlighted as the fundamental rationale behind each split, but armed struggle persisted beyond 1986 and that fault line, whilst of great importance, has not always run along the same contours. Republican Sinn Féin remains abstentionist, with the principle still firmly part of the group's position that the only true Dáil Éireann was formed by the 1918 all-Ireland elections. The group insists: 'we are not for sale...by any group with one foot in the constitutional grave...we shall maintain our own identity as the republican movement.'[96] The emergence of the Real IRA in 1997 and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM) was predicated more on the centrality of armed struggle and rejection of the six county state. The 32CSM's members had accepted the 1986 downgrading of republican fundamentals amid the leadership's pledge of continuing armed actions. Therefore, whilst the 32CSM attack 'those who have lost their nerve and compromised the republican position,'[97] such criticism is based less on the principle of abstention and more on the perceived role of militarism and opposition to the movement's absorption into the northern state.

Richards places the politics versus armed struggle tension into a wider context. Firstly, he generically discusses the role of political fronts, 'subordinate to the terrorist organisation.'[98] This premise is then applied to Sinn Féin and the IRA. However, from the 1990s onwards Sinn Féin ceased to be a 'political front' and moved to senior partner, providing the driving force of the movement. Whilst Richards is thought-provoking in terms of highlighting the concessions and political weight the threat of violence has brought to the movement, he fails to consider why this relationship between violence and politics has unbalanced and even split the republican movement.

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[95] R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh: The Life and Politics of An Irish Revolutionary*, (Bloomberg, Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 293.
[96] *Ibid*, p. 293.
[97] *Irish Times*, 16/04/2001.
[98] A. Richards, 'Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Féin, the Peace Process and Democracy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.4 (2001), p. 73.

MLR Smith does however explore the friction between politics and armed struggle as ever-present in the republican tradition.[99] He provides a valuable study evaluating the various strategic goals of the IRA and ways it sought to realise them through the use or threat of violence. The emphasis placed on the strategy of the republican movement considers that the use of violence is 'not simply about the crude application of military might, but is a more calculating and competitive environment.'[100] Smith also considers the tension caused within the movement by using tactical violence, suggesting it is 'possible to reinterpret its history as a struggle for and against political control over military.'[101] Agitation among some factions of the movement who can see the potential of political participation causes the movement to split. Whilst within each split the tension between politics and violence is apparent this argument tends to be more descriptive than analytical. The strategic goals that underscore the politics of Sinn Féin and the gradual supplanting of force are to an extent pushed aside in favour of a straightforward dichotomy between armed struggle and political activity.

Munck criticises this tendency of academic analysts and the media to draw upon the simplistic distinction between armed struggle and politics or, as he phrases it, 'hawks' and 'doves'. He argues that these 'categories are simply inadequate to convey the complexity, and often, contradictory component elements, of republican ideology.'[102] Careful not to replace one simple dichotomy for another, Munck proposes the alternative distinctions of 'theological' and 'realists'. The theological is essentially utopian, where ''principles' prevail over tactics, the past appears more real than the present', whereas realists, 'seek pragmatic changes and are less pessimistic about achieving them through institutional means.'[103] Yet, the important observation is that 'within each of these categories we find both 'hawks' and 'doves' according to the prevailing categorisation.'[104] There is a tendency within the media and politics to view the conduct of 'dissidents' as actions with little logic, an analysis that therefore places them in the

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[99] See M.L.R., Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*, (London, Routledge, 1993).
[100] *Ibid,* p. 2.
[101] M. Von Tagen Page & M. L. R. Smith, 'War by other means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy', *Armed Forces and Society* 27, no.1 (2000), p. 100.
[102] R. Munck, *Irish Republicanism: Containment or New Departure*, in, A. O'Day (ed.), *Terrorism Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland*, (Aldershot, Dartmouth Pub.,1995), p. 165.
[103] *Ibid,* p. 165.

'hawks' or 'theological' camp. Whilst the media are happy to reduce the actions of 'dissidents' to simple pathology or criminal activity, an emphasis which obscures any political dynamic, Munck's argument highlights the complex nature of Irish republicanism where various strands within each grouping do not allow for simplistic categorisation. Thus there is a need to look beyond the perspective of 'dissident' groups simply having an affinity with violence and explore the ideological underpinning to armed struggle.

Kevin Rafter has attempted to chart the defining periods within the Sinn Féin and the IRA relationship and, similarly to Richards and Munck, highlights the fault lines between pragmatists and hardliners which he claims became apparent immediately after the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. Rafter explores the history of the party in relation to the politics of pragmatism, where the flexibility of the republican movement under the Adams-McGuinness leadership has been paramount to the success of the ballot box over armed struggle. He states that the 'IRA, for so long Sinn Féin's masters - came to play the role of servant.'[105] Within the Provisional IRA/ Sinn Féin relationship, politics may have triumphed, yet, with comments such as 'acceptance has been signalled that violence did not succeed'[106] it is hard not to assume that Rafter has been too quick to assume the entire erosion of militarism. Yet it was evident from an early stage of the peace process that there remained classic peace process 'spoiler' groups and splinters from the Provisional IRA who believed in the utility of violence. The 32CSM newspaper, *Sovereign Nation,* demonstrates that there is still a strand of republicanism with a preference towards hard-line tactics, in highlighting how 'Pearse and the people who fought with him during Easter week did not view sovereignty as an obscure concept on piece of paper (or an intellectual discussion theologising what should be done) but a crucial issue worth fighting for.'[107] Pragmatism is sometimes portrayed as far too appealing to resist and there is little consideration for those who fail to adhere to the culture of compromise. This is surprising considering that within peace processes it is very unlikely all leaders and factions will see negotiated peace as beneficial, making spoilers a prevalent feature of negotiated settlements.[108]

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[105] K. Rafter, *Sinn Féin 1905-2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen,* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 2005), p. 3.
[106] *Ibid*, p. 242.
[107] *Sovereign Nation,* May-June 2009, p. 4
[108] S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security 22*, no.6 (1997), p. 8.

As Darby and Mac Ginty observe, violence precedes peace processes and continues to remain an unavoidable background during them.[109] The sensitive issues within a negotiated settlement often produce leaders or factions who are unsatisfied with the outcome. As Stedman notes, 'Even the best designed settlements must be prepared for violence from leaders and organisations who decide that the kind of peace in question is not in their interest.'[110] Those who use violence to undermine negotiated peace, or spoilers, can be identified in almost all peace processes. Moreover, the emergence of rejectionists (the modern 'spoiler groups' in the language of contemporary peace processes) is hardly unprecedented in Irish politics. Whilst discussing general trends between peace processes and spoiler group violence, Darby states that during negotiations, 'it is difficult to find any instances when such a move was not accompanied by a split between two main groups- *zealots* and *dealers.*'[111] The *zealots* represent the less compromising and more theological groups who 'picked up the torch - sometimes literally - they believed had been surrendered by the *dealers.*'[112] It is the aim of such groups not to influence the content of any agreement, but to disrupt negotiations to prevent any agreement being reached. Northern Ireland is no exception to Darby's universal observation and, considering the history of republican splits, the emergence of spoilers was not only more likely during the peace process but inevitable.

Evaluating external inputs to compromise

Since the end of the Cold War political and academic focus has shifted from inter-state to intra-state conflict. Such global realignment therefore caused a rush to 'examine critically attitudes and perceptions towards conflict...and the meaning of resolution'[113] in the search for a new paradigm for conflict resolution. The typical nature of such conflict is protracted, deep rooted and runs along ethnic or identity based lines. It is therefore vital to remember that each, 'conflict

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[109] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 8.

[110] S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security* 22, no.6 (1997), p.8.

[111] J. Darby, *A truce rather than a treaty? The effect of violence in the Irish peace process*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 219.

[112] *Ibid,* p. 219.

[113] J. L. Rasmussen, *Peace Making in the Twenty First Century: New Rules, New Roles, New Actors*, in, I. Zartman & J. L. Rasmussen (eds.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques,* (Washington, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 28.

has its own distinct culture, history and social development.'[114] Despite this, apparent commonalities between the ethno-national conflicts in, for example, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel-Palestine have highlighted the possibility of comparison between each situation. The intractability of the conflicts in these deeply divided societies, along with the high likelihood of intercommunal violence, has brought together separate cases in an attempt to form an international perspective. The importance of this comparative function in being able to transfer the lessons learnt from one situation to another has been disputed, but external encouragement to Sinn Féin to compromise its immediate goals was nonetheless apparent.

Guelke and Cox both examine the importance of international influences upon the peace process in Northern Ireland. Cox suggests that a very significant influence on the Northern Irish situation 'was the larger shifts in the international system brought about by the end of the Cold War.'[115] Its closure meant a shift in the focus of global politics towards tension within states. With a conflict ostensibly parochial and deep rooted as Northern Ireland's, it may be hard to see what relationship it may have to events elsewhere. Bearing this in mind Cox is careful not to argue that the peace process was a result of the cessation of the Cold War alone, but contends that whilst 'the IRA may well have been a quintessentially Irish phenomenon it could however, not escape the world or ignore what was happening outside of Ireland. Nor I think did it try to.'[116]

Whilst Cox emphasises the importance of the international perspective to Northern Ireland, Guelke takes this argument a step further by highlighting the connections between various peace processes. Guelke goes about demonstrating a chain of events linking one process to another. South Africa embraced a peace process in the 1990s which culminated in the country's transition to a non-racial democracy, this in turn providing encouragement and a positive basis for comparison in Northern Ireland. By the late 1990s the Good Friday Agreement, 'came to be seen as a model for the resolution of conflict in other deeply divided societies', especially in the Basque region, and 'despite the difficulties and implications the GFA encountered, the example

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[114] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.

[115] M. Cox, *Rethinking the International and Northern Ireland; a defence*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006)*, p. 428.

[116] *Ibid,* p. 429.

of the settlement...was seen as particularly relevant to the continuing quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.'[117] Therefore, whilst the comparison of peace processes helps to provide a framework or predictive function, according to Cox and Guelke it also provides 'encouragement to the process of change in the other'[118] seemingly intractable conflicts lacking solutions.

Whilst the peace process in Northern Ireland did not happen in a vacuum and was therefore inevitably touched to some extent by international events, it is necessary to question exactly how much weight should be attached to the importance of international comparisons. The South African peace process left the ANC as the dominant force in South Africa, where political prisoners were released into a political system of black majority rule. However, in Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin had emerged as one element in a power-sharing coalition in a polity which remains part of the United Kingdom. Sinn Féin had fallen short of their political objectives and had made significant compromises on the road to the Good Friday Agreement. The U-turns made by Sinn Féin have led sceptics such as Dixon[119] to propose that international relations theorists have overemphasised the international dimension. Instead, he argues the international aspect has been utilised 'by political actors to choreograph a settlement in Northern Ireland, creating a theatrical performance to persuade diverse constituencies to accept accommodation.'[120] In other words, the Sinn Féin/ IRA leadership were able to present the gains of the ANC to an important constituency of the republican movement to disqualify the claims of abandoning principles and in turn gain support for unarmed struggle.

The GFA provided a stark example of the top down nature of Sinn Féin's decision making[121] along with the leadership's ability to ensure wide support for political change of such a colossal stature. From Dixon's analysis it is possible to suggest that the republican leadership utilised the

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[117] M. Cox, *Rethinking the International and Northern Ireland; a defence*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 369
[118] *Ibid,* p. 375.
[119] See P. Dixon, *Rethinking the International and Northern Ireland: a critique*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 409-426.
[120] *Ibid,* p.410.

success of the ANC to solely ensure that the 'rank and file' would follow the party line and back the GFA despite achieving far lesser gains for republicans in Northern Ireland than the ANC had attained for the black community in South Africa. Put more simply, it suggests that Sinn Féin were utilising the success of the ANC as a smoke screen in order to disguise the scale of the compromise they were making. For the small minority that were unwilling to follow the leadership's directions there was an ultimatum of 'exiting mainstream republicanism and accepting the "high risks, little rewards" world of continuing militarism, or quitting the republican movement (of all shades) entirely.'[122] Dixon's analysis of the international comparative perspective which highlights the extent of the concessions made by Sinn Féin in turn draws attention to the space for dissident groups to emerge as the minority who were unwilling to be led into such substantial political change.

In addition, sharing a platform with the ANC gave the Sinn Féin leadership the opportunity to bask in some of the ANC's international limelight. For example, a visiting ANC delegation to Belfast described Adams as an Irish Mandela and in addition referred to the Sinn Féin leader as Mr. President.[123] Significant gestures were also made to the party's wider membership; government ministers and officials of the ANC visited IRA prisoners in the Maze prison. While presented as statesmen of a similar stature to Mandela the Sinn Féin leadership benefitted from international adulation whilst the rank and file were in receipt of ANC flattery. Such a portrayal of significance must have been far more appealing than the stark contrast of political isolation that would have undoubtedly resulted from exiting the peace process.

From the early 1990s it was becoming increasingly evident that politics would triumph over armed struggle in the form of a constitutional agreement. At this point Adams admitted 'he could envisage a future without the IRA.'[124] During the 1990s peace process the extent of U-turns made by Sinn Féin and the Provisionals proved remarkable given the adherence to republican

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[121] J. Tonge, *Republican Paramilitaries and the Peace Process*, in, B. Barton & P. J. Roche (eds.), *The Northern Irish Question: the peace process and the Belfast Agreement,* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 179.
[122] *Ibid,*, p. 179.
[123] See, *Independent,* 'The ANC approves Brothers in arms in change's embrace', 03/05/1998.
[124] K. Rafter, *Sinn Féin 1905-2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen*, (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 2005), p. 242.

orthodoxy during the previous two decades, notwithstanding the move away from 26 County abstention.[125]

By the turn of the century the Provisionals had ended their armed campaign and Sinn Féin agreed to share power in a government of Northern Ireland which was to remain in the United Kingdom. These momentous changes yielded the latest splits between those 'prepared to accept the lure of constitutionalism and those for whom fidelity to the supposed principles of republicanism outweighed the benefit of respectability conferred by entry into conventional politics.'[126] The Good Friday Agreement gave an Irish dimension to political arrangements in Northern Ireland but fell markedly short of Irish unity and the IRA's original objective of establishing a 32 county democratic socialist Republic. Even mainstream republicans themselves readily acknowledged that 'the Agreement did not satisfy their aspirations.'[127]

Considering the Compromises

For the majority of the Provisional rank and file, the apparent gains of the peace process such as prisoner releases, the reform of policing and the re-allocation of resources to nationalist communities justified the compromises made by Sinn Féin and the party's full absorption into the political institutions of Northern Ireland. Yet, despite a conscious effort to maintain a consensus within Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA, which to a large degree worked, the GFA was seen as the final betrayal by a small yet significant number of republicans. Whilst there was overwhelming support from the northern nationalist community for the GFA, with 97 percent voting 'Yes' in the referendum,[128] it is important to touch on the diversity of those who opposed the deal. The form of departure from the Provisionals' future political trajectory was diverse. The spectrum of dissent throughout the 1990s ranged from the resignation of local councillors, MLAs and the formation of critical journals and blogs to the continuation of militant activity by certain groups. This demonstrated the range of antipathy and opposition felt towards the Good Friday

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[125] J. Tonge, '"They Haven't Gone Away You Know". Irish Republican 'Dissidents and 'Armed Struggle'', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p.676.
[126] J. Tonge, *Northern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006), p. 131.
[127] R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2007), p.2.

Agreement in a small section of the republican community. As a result it appears a more accurate description to refer to the republican divisions of the 1990s as more of a 'shattering' in their nature, as opposed to a split, which implies a far more decisive and clear-cut mass departure.[129]

There is an abundance of literature attempting to explore the evolution of Sinn Féin strategy leading up to the GFA. Considering the compromises made by Sinn Féin in entering a power-sharing executive is fundamental in understanding the dissident justification for their opposition to the political status quo. Yet, whilst there is a broad discussion considering Sinn Féin's adherence and adaption of republican principles, this is rarely considered in relation to the emergence of dissident groups.

Sinn Féin has been through a period of profound transition, during which the organisations' overall political outlook has been significantly reshaped. The development of a peace agenda from the 1980s onwards and the formation of a pan-nationalist alliance 'brought with it new possibilities and new problems.'[130] Through involvement in dialogue Sinn Féin was able to present itself as the dominant voice in modern day Irish republicanism, yet the party's future became dictated by a process that it helped shape but by no means controlled.[131] For this reason these fundamental shifts can only be made sense of when placed into the wider context. Whilst considering the compromises made by Sinn Féin it is therefore important to consider the impact of exogenous factors such as the economy, external ideological forces and social, political and military circumstances in dictating the shape of 'mainstream' republicanism. Is mainstream republicanism a product of the changing material conditions and a shifting political context? And if so, to what extent?

There is a need to consider the role of macro-level forces in shaping mainstream republicanism. Whilst considering post nationalism within the broader context of western Europe, Bean

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[128] M. Melaugh & F. McKenna, *CAIN: Results of the Referenda in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland*, 22/05/1998.
[129] *Saoirse*, 'Interview with Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, April 2010.
[130] M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class* 71, (2000), p. 135.
[131] *Ibid,* p. 135.

provides a valuable discussion on the 'seismic changes'[132] made by Sinn Féin in both organisational and ideological terms in accepting the GFA. According to Bean, practical politics and the strategic analysis which dominated the Provisionals pre 1980s has been replaced with the politics of identity (which dominated the Good Friday Agreement) and the vague language of transition. As he notes, 'the language of transition and the politics of implicit dynamics contained within the structures established by the agreement have replaced the clarity and simplicity of traditional republican discourse.'[133] Bean draws a parallel with the pragmatic changes made by New Labour in the mid 1990s and proposes that rather than being portrayed as a party of romantic tradition and heritage it is the nature of republicanism to adapt to contemporary events and experience. Amid this redefinition of republican core ideology New Sinn Féin is portrayed as the epitome of post-modern politics. Identity and culture have replaced territory and sovereignty as key issues, the Sinn Féin 'Ireland of Equals' slogan being the embodiment of this.[134]

Similarly to Bean, Frampton proposes that the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement was a time in which the nature of the republican movement became utterly transformed; 'by 2007, Sinn Féin was virtually unrecognizable from the entity of a quarter of a century earlier.'[135] Yet, where these two accounts differ is whilst Bean exposes Sinn Féin's removal of traditional republican discourse Frampton claims that despite this transformation Sinn Féin remains on the 'Road to the Republic'. The crux of Frampton's argument is that, rather than abandoning principles, the tactics of the Adams-McGuinness leadership has in fact been based in realism, which 'demonstrated a willingness and ability to modify its strategy.'[136] With this, Frampton has a tendency to take Sinn Féin very much at their word in their argument that the Good Friday Agreement is an 'an agreement, not a settlement.'[137] According to Frampton, despite making such a strategic transformation Sinn Féin has not abandoned its republican principles, but instead

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[132] K. Bean, *Shifting Discourses of New Nationalism and Post- republicanism*, in, Elliott, M., (ed.), *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 143.
[133] *Ibid,* p. 140.
[134] For more on the Sinn Féin 'Ireland of Equals' rhetoric, see chapter 3.
[135] M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 186.
[136] *Ibid,* p. 183.
[137] P. Doherty, Speaking At Conference on Irish Unity, 19/01/2010.

has evolved to fit into the situational reality in which it finds itself and continues on the onward march to what the party sees as inevitable success.

Such a position allows Sinn Féin to appear very much in an arrangement where the leadership has the ability to dictate and determine the political form it wishes to take whilst leaving very little room to consider the impact context plays in determining the shape of Sinn Féin's 'republicanism'. Whilst considering the seismic changes within Sinn Féin Frampton fails to provide any assessment of the wider context within which change occurred, but rather is fixated on proving the party's 'long march' through an adherence to traditional republican continuity. To clarify this point, Bean highlights how Frampton fails to consider the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of post-ideological politics which has dominated international politics since the 1990s.[138] The result 'is that Sinn Féin's strategy is now designed to operate on a much narrower terrain.'[139] In order to assess any political change context is essential in understanding the result. The transformation of Sinn Féin from a revolutionary party to one of mainstream politics did not occur in a vacuum. To miss the importance of exogenous pressures would be to consider ideological debates within Irish republicanism 'peculiarly immune (if not hermetically sealed) from external influences.'[140] Therefore, an analysis considering Sinn Féin's move from insurgency to electoral politics is somewhat incomplete without considering the wider global political landscape.

In addition there is also a tendency by Frampton to portray Sinn Féin as the sole embodiment of republican principles, despite failing to provide a proper assessment of what republicanism signifies or whether it could be offered by 'outsiders' beyond Sinn Féin. He therefore portrays Sinn Féin as owning the monopoly on republicanism and as a result perceives republicanism as what the Provisionals did and tacitly assumes closure with the Good Friday Agreement. On this reading, there is little political or ideological space for the emergence of 'dissidents'.[141] More specifically there is little cognisance, despite the extent of historical examples, of the likelihood

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[138] K. Bean, 'Book Review: M. Frampton, The Long March', *Irish Political Studies* 25, no.1 (2010), p. 137.
[139] *Ibid,* p. 137.
[140] M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class* 71, (2000), p. 151.
[141] Although Frampton later suggests that there is in his next book, *Legion of the Rearguard*.

of fracture within Irish republicanism as a consequence of Sinn Féin's absorption into the political mainstream.

Whilst political shifts in the wider context have undoubtedly influenced mainstream republican discourse there is also a need to examine factors at a more localised level. Bean's analysis on the changing politics of Sinn Féin does go on to stress the importance of material circumstances in understanding the shape and tactics of the Provisionals.[142] Through direct interaction with the political economy in Northern Ireland the British state managed to define the context within which republicanism manoeuvred, ultimately characterising the nature of republican strategy. In an attempt to marginalise the Provisionals, the British state developed social and economic policies of amelioration. For example, the Fair Employment Act 1989 and the Northern Ireland Act 1998 were introduced to promote the equality of opportunity. In addition Northern Ireland became the recipient of a significant amount of funding from the Peace and Reconciliation Fund and the European Social Fund to help promote and maintain peace. As a result of direct British and European involvement in the political economy of Northern Ireland, 'the Provisionals were well aware that by the 1990s the British strategy was successfully undermining republican influence in the nationalist community.'[143] Consequently, the outcome was that republicans reorganised and reoriented their community activism in an attempt to broaden their electoral base in the 1990s. Although it appeared to be successful in terms of building electoral support, this came at a price. Bean suggests that the success of social and economic change brought about by EU programmes and British government policies effectively meant that the Provisionals failed to establish wider hegemony beyond base areas and ultimately became pulled into state structures.[144] The British strategy changed from one of containment by exclusion to that of co-operation and conciliation. In response, the future trajectory for Sinn Féin was re-tailored to fit the changing socio-economic landscape and took on the characteristics of 'discontinuity and contingency rather than adherence to republican tradition.'[145]

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[142] K. Bean, *The Economic and Social War Against Violence: British Social and Economic Strategy and the Evolution of Provisionalism*, in, A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 165.
[143] *Ibid*, p. 167.
[144] *Ibid*, p. 167.
[145] K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p.251.

Such an assessment of Sinn Féin's movement into constitutionalism on the surface appears to strengthen the argument put forward by 'dissidents' that the Provisional's full absorption into the political structures of Northern Ireland means they cannot be labelled republican in their current form. Yet, republicanism is far from monolithic and has never taken this form. As Bean suggests, 'in some cases it would appear that republicanism was so devoid of political form that it could be argued republicanism was whatever the leadership said it was.'[146] The Provisionals have never been a static, ideology-bound movement, but rather a fluid entity evolving as time dictates. As emphasised by McGovern, republicanism can be viewed as a discursive ideological paradigm offering 'a range of avenues and possibilities for both action and thought which have, in turn, been profoundly influenced by wider developments, both material and ideological.'[147] Irish republicanism does not constitute a single perspective but instead comprises of competing, even at times contradictory, intellectual and ideological influences. What has been left is, 'a range of exemplary models, memories, stories and rational political arguments that can be interpreted and reinterpreted through time.'[148] It is this fluid diversity that enabled the Provisionals to replace revolutionary goals with those of social reformism[149] and maintain the line that they remain adhered to republican principles.

But how does socio-economic context impact 'dissident' groups? Economic stability and social mobility tends to suppress any appetite for militarism. According to such an analysis, in urban Catholic areas, where support for the PIRA and Sinn Féin traditionally emerged, 'dissident' groups can no longer capitalise on socio-economic inequalities, preventing them from gaining a strong foothold in such areas.

Whilst it is difficult to quantify the effects of 'The Troubles' on the Northern Irish economy the persistence of internal unrest disrupted the rate of social and economic change, 'distorting both employment and investment patterns as well as constraining the ambit of urban restructuring.'[150]

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[146] K. Bean, *Shifting Discourses of New Nationalism and Post- republicanism*, in, Elliott, M., (ed.), *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 137.
[147] M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class* 71, (2000), p.145.
[148] *Ibid*, p.146.
[149] *Ibid,* p.146.
[150] J. Smyth & A. Cebulla, *The Glacier Moves?,* in, M. Coulter, & M. Murray (eds.), *Northern Ireland after the troubles: a society in transition*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 177.

In societies of deep rooted and protracted conflict external funding has the potential to initiate dialogue between communities and encourage new relationships. The intention of such funding is that economic assistance will create an environment conducive to peace building by providing the resources necessary to stimulate constructive inter-group contact in an attempt to promote cross-community engagement, encourage local networks and reduce social marginalisation.[151]

In theory, the benefits generated by external economic assistance have the potential to be felt throughout civic society. However, economic uncertainty has demonstrated how peace dividends provide a fragile form of support in propping up the peace. There is a risk that the amount of funding going into post-conflict situations implies a proportionately-sized result. Figures of spending may provide a superficial picture; the prospect of external funding in encouraging peace building is one thing, whereas delivery is another. It is therefore important not to overestimate the ability of external economic aid having a positive and consistent impact across the whole of civic society. Whilst financial aid is undoubtedly important to peace building and reconciliation it is essential to view it as one component within a multi-track approach. Because of the emotional and symbolic roots of ethnic conflict, 'the provision of economic aid must be combined with other peace building approaches that nurture the transformation of relationships and structures through a process of reconciliation.'[152] Whilst financial aid from external sources facilitates peace building and reconciliation, it is essential to consider the effect of such funding.

Shirlow pursues this point by questioning the destination for dividends and whether funds are being directed to the most beneficial areas. He goes on to claim that in the past dividends have tended to bypass local communities and fed straight into private investment strategies, with the aim of economic growth becoming a catalyst for prosperity and the continuation of peace.[153] As a result, middle income and higher income groups have benefited the most from investment

[152] S. Byrne, O. Skarlato, E. Fissuh & C. Irvin, 'Building Trust and Goodwill in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties: The Impact of Economic Aid on the Peace Process', *Irish Political Studies* 24, no. 3 (2009), p. 339.
[152] S. Ryan, *The Transformation of Violent Intercommunal Conflict*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), cited in, S. Byrne, O. Skarlato, E. Fissuh & C. Irvin, 'Building Trust and Goodwill in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties: The Impact of Economic Aid on the Peace Process', *Irish Political Studies* 24, no. 3 (2009), p. 340.
[153]P. Shirlow, *The Economics of the Peace Process*, in, C. Gillingan & J. Tonge, *Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland,* (Ashgate, Universoty of Michigan, 1997), p.136.

opportunities and economic investment, whilst low income groups are excluded from engaging in social mobility and employment opportunities:

> The illusion is one of progress, equality and social advancement. The reality, however, is of unjust class alignments and the perpetuation of the very social and reproductive relationships which produce, stimulate and endanger social unevenness and a sense among those who are socially alienated that, whether there is peace or war, virtually nothing is going to change.[154]

Whilst job creation and the stimulation of enterprise are important they do not directly address the nature and meaning of ethnic conflict. Violence has remained an episodic feature of Northern Irish society since the Good Friday Agreement yet where 'meaningful work is undertaken with regard to discouraging criminality and membership of paramilitary organisations, funding is uneven and limited.'[155] Such points on the unevenness and allocation of resources questions the potential for peace dividends to satisfy all parties involved and therefore aid post-conflict reconciliation.

The interaction between state, civil society and the economy is by no means straight forward. Whilst external economic aid has the potential to transform the context within which Northern Irish politics operates, it is also important to mention that the socio-economic reality for certain sectors of society may not have been touched by the positive effects of external funding. Whilst economic inequality between Catholics and Protestants has closed significantly since the early 1990s, there is still evidence to suggest that parity between the two communities has not yet been reached.[156] Catholic unemployment rates remain higher by two percent[157] and more Catholic areas are found in the top-ten Overall Multiple Deprivation Measures.[158] Unless economic regeneration improves along with enhanced socio-economic prospects for lower income groups there is a risk that they will be unable to connect with the peace process, and as a result any

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[154] P. Shirlow, *The Economics of the Peace Process*, in, C. Gilligan & J. Tonge, *Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland,* (Ashgate, Ashgate, 1997), p. 145.
[155] P Shirlow & B Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City*, (London, Pluto, 2006), p. 50.
[156] Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *2007 Labour Force Survey: Religious Report*, (Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, March 2009).
[157] *Ibid.*
[158] Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005,* (Belfast, The Stationary Office, May 2005).

accommodation among political elites would be based on insecure foundations.[159] Thus, there remains a gap of socio-economic inequality open for 'dissident' groups to exploit. Dissident sympathy is evident in pockets of working-class urban areas of north Belfast and in economically struggling border locations, although the solitary study of such sympathy suggests its ideological basis somewhat outweighs economic variables.[160]

The political context in which Sinn Féin has operated has been heavily influenced by the consociational nature of political arrangements in Northern Ireland. Such an institutional arrangement has resulted in opposing parties on either side of the political spectrum, the DUP and Sinn Féin, becoming the two largest parties in the Assembly.[161] Ruane considers the 'culture of compromise' embraced by both unionists and nationalists in agreeing to the GFA and how each side sold the Agreement to its supporters on the basis that their fundamental concerns would be met. Thus, 'the UUP, PUP, and DUP assured unionists that the union was secure; the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Sinn Féin assured nationalists and republicans that the agreement would secure equality and pave the way to a united Ireland.'[162] Ruane predicts that if both sides cannot simultaneously deliver what they promised and, 'that as trust appears to have been misplaced, the party and its leadership will pay a heavy price.'[163] Against this there is clear recent survey evidence of considerable Catholic contentment with the Union.[164]

But what about those who oppose the political arrangements under the Agreement and are therefore not represented within the political status quo? Those who oppose the Sinn Féin trajectory on the grounds their constitutionalism is a 'sell-out' stress the concession of principles and core values in return for political gains. Asserting the difference between their own

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[159] P. Shirlow, *The Economics of the Peace Process*, in, C. Gilligan & J. Tonge (eds.), *Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland,* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997), p. 147.

[160] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), pp. 61-78

[161] J. McGarry & B. O'Leary, *Power shared after the death of thousands*, in, R. Taylor, (ed.), *Consociational Theory: McGarry and O'Leary the Northern Ireland Conflict*, (London, Routledge, 2009).

[162] J. Ruane, *The (End) of Irish History? Three reading of the Current Conjuncture*, in, J. Ruane and J. Todd (eds.), *After the Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999), p. 164.

[163] *Ibid,* p. 160.

[164] In the NILT 2010 survey the most popular constitutional preference amongst Catholics was 'To remain part of the United Kingdom with devolved government' with 46 percent, the option 'to unify with the rest of Ireland' was the preference amongst 33percent of Catholics.

republicanism and that of the Provisionals is typified by the claim in the 32CSM's *Sovereign Nation* that,

> While republicans emphasise they are for peace they are not for 'peace at any price'; and the view of republicans opposed to the Belfast agreement the 1998 treaty is precisely peace at the wrong price. The real question is not 'peace' but 'peace' on whose terms?[165]

Inextricably bound to the growing electoral success of Sinn Féin was the consequential downgrading of the IRA 'as the "cutting edge" of community resistance.'[166] In parallel to other nationalist and radical movements internationally, the geo-political framework after the Cold War provided a context that was not conducive to revolutionary tactics. The politics of compromise replaced that of the physical force tradition. The gradual shift from a military strategy in the early 1970s, to the dual strategy of 'Armalite and ballot box' in the 1980s, to the gradual decline of the PIRA as an 'armed front' in the 1990s, culminated in the 2005 order to dump arms as the PIRA completed arms decommissioning. The Provisionals found it harder to justify physical force and martyrdom as righteous and necessary. As Shanahan argues, 'the republican world view, with its metaphysics of martyrdom, necessity and destiny, was forced to yield to more pragmatic considerations.'[167]

Reference of Martin McGuinness to dissident groups as 'traitors to Ireland' for pursuing armed struggle, demonstrates the extent to which the Sinn Féin leadership want to distance the party from armed actions, but can also be seen as an attempt to distinguish between the actions of PIRA in the past as being morally justifiable, distinct from unjustifiable contemporary violence. Considering the role of political violence, specifically in the overall evolution of republicanism, Alonso demonstrates how realism and pragmatism defeated the ideological absolutism of the Provisionals, whose previous objectives were considered non negotiable and could only be achievable through armed struggle.[168] Utilising a wealth of interviews with former republican prisoners the justifications of violence are questioned even by some former IRA personnel, epitomised by comments such as: 'I have been involved in military conflict, right, but I also

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[165] *Sovereign Nation*, April–May 2010.
[166] K. Bean & M. Hayes, 'Sinn Féin and the New Republicanism of Ireland: Electoral Progress, Political Stasis, and Ideological Failure', *Radical History Review,* 104 (2009), p. 128.
[167] T. Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 64.
[168] R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2003), p. 193.

believe that war is futile.'[169] Alonso highlights the frustration of many republicans who endured long periods in jail for Sinn Féin to accept major compromises. He therefore indicates (if unintentionally) why 'dissident' groups emerged. As one ex-prisoner puts it, 'I have to say that all those years spent in prison by so many people, all those deaths, I don't think it was worth it, when you add all that up, I would say I think it was a net loss.'[170] Stressing the futility of armed struggle as a means for achieving a united Ireland assumes that by pursuing this militarist logic 'dissident' groups are void of realism and pragmatism. However, it is necessary to point out that for dissidents armed struggle is about continuing resistance to what they view as 'British imperialism'. Therefore, the basis for continued violence by dissidents is a tactic of defiance emerging from the reality that they would rather resist, making life harder for the British, as opposed to compromise on the ambiguous 'long road' to a united Ireland.

Moloney's revealing insight into the inner workings of the IRA provides an invaluable empirical account of modern day republicanism, providing a narrative which details the Provisionals journey towards the peace process. A distinctive theme running throughout Moloney's thesis is the protagonist role played by Adams from the 1980s onwards in constructing an electoral profile for Sinn Féin, whilst building a pan-nationalist alliance with Fianna Fáil and the SDLP largely out of sight from the rank and file. Moloney's argument suggests a very much top-down approach towards the peace process, based upon deception and 'betrayal of the grass roots. Thus, Moloney claims:

> What was striking about the remarks made to the Executive by Adams and McGuinness was the extent to which both men still encouraged the view that the peace process was a just tactical ploy, designed to bring political advantage...They similarly bolstered the view that the IRA would go back to war if its goal of achieving a promise of British withdrawal was not realised...Again actual events have demonstrated how unreliable these assurances were.[171]

When considering the history of Irish republicanism the PIRA/RIRA split of 1997 was hardly unexpected. Indeed, Moloney is correct in his claim that 'the IRA split had been a virtual

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[169] Interview with Ronnie McCartney, in, R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2003), p. 16.
[170] Interview with Martin McKevitt, in, R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2003), p. 194.
[171] E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 470.

certainty from the moment that Adams embarked on the peace process, such was the scale of the departure from traditional IRA ideology that the enterprise implied.'[172] What makes Moloney's narrative invaluable to republican critics of Adams and the peace process is that it identifies the Provisionals as the faction who departed from republican principles.

But was armed struggle ever a principle or simply a tactic – an expedient for promoting the desired goal of a united Ireland? Although labelled 'dissidents' for rejecting the mainstream republican policy, Tonge raises the point that the 'ultra' IRAs are continuing advocates of an armed struggle which had nearly always existed within republican tradition. Irish republicanism has an extensive historical tradition of fusing violence with more peaceful methods. At various times the preference towards either has fluctuated, suggesting 'the "dissidents" of the CIRA and RIRA are merely the residual ultra wing that has always existed within Irish republicanism.'[173] Thus, because the presence of violence is so inextricably bound to the republican tradition these "dissident" groups 'argue that they have remained true to Republican principles and the label 'dissident' is perhaps misleading.'[174] From the viewpoint of these 'dissident' groups it is Sinn Féin and the Provisionals who have dissented from Irish Republican theology. However, the Provisionals defend their movement into constitutionalism stressing how armed struggle was only ever a tactic. Thus, Gerry Kelly claimed: 'As we look back across a century of struggle, we see that each phase on the journey has been different. Each has required different strategies and tactics. Republicans required courage to survive, resourcefulness to find new ways forward.'[175] For the Provisionals, the cessation of armed struggle is presented as a pragmatic move designed to advance republican ambitions. It is this principle/tactic dichotomy that is fundamental in understanding the differing views on armed struggle; as either intrinsically embedded into republican theology or a temporary tool to be utilised according to circumstance.

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[172] E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 470.
[173] J. Tonge, *Northern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006), p. 131.
[174] J. Tonge, '"They Haven't Gone Away You Know": Irish Republican 'Dissidents and 'Armed Struggle'', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p. 672.
[175] *An Phoblacht*, Speech made by Gerry Kelly, 27/03/2008.

For 'dissidents', the continuing need for violence as a tool to remove the British sovereign claim effectively elevates an armed campaign to a principle of republican struggle, even if violence remains a tool rather than part of republican ideology *per se*;

> Republicanism argues that history and experience show that constitutional means alone and on their own are not enough - physical force has evoked a response from the British State, whereas peaceful methods of protest tend to be greeted with indifference. If constitutional methods fail, it is prepared to envisage extra-constitutional means as a last resort to effect political change.[176]

Such a strong alignment to the physical force tradition has led to criticism of 'dissidents' for being 'mired in militarism', or subordinating the planning of Irish Freedom to the visceral urge to fight for it.[177] In reference to the Omagh bomb, *An Phoblacht* commented that there is a danger that 'the continuation of the armed campaign itself becomes the objective.'[178]

The mainstream republican (i.e. Sinn Féin) political condemnation of dissident violence is crucial to the stability of the Northern Irish institutions. Whilst mainstream republicans do not view 'violence as the result of some kind of deep cultural pathology, archaic religious antagonism or straight forward tribal barbarism',[179] they argue that dissidents are bereft of any political strategy.

The Provisionals' criticism of dissident violence has in turn been criticised by commentators who do not support armed struggle. The contributions by Anthony McIntyre, a former member of the Provisional IRA, provide a valuable and eloquent critique of mainstream republicanism. Whilst opposing the continuation of armed struggle he challenges the Provisionals' claim that the shift towards constitutionalism is simply another step on the 'long road' to Irish unity. Instead, McIntyre has the tendency to present the u-turns made by Sinn Féin, especially in reference to their views on armed republicanism, as hypocritical. He highlights this by stressing the

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[176] *Sovereign Nation*, April-May 2010.
[177] K. Bean & M. Hayes, 'Sinn Féin and the New Republicanism of Ireland: Electoral Progress, Political Stasis, and Ideological Failure', *Radical History Review* 104, (2009), p. 134.
[178] *An Phoblacht*, 'The futile path of militarism', 20/08/1998.
[179] M. Hayes, 'The evolution of Republican Strategy and the 'peace process' in Ireland', *Race and Class* 39, no. 3 (1998), p. 25.

commonalities between dissident violence and the techniques formerly utilised by the Provisionals:

> I totally oppose the use of armed force and criticise it most strongly but never forget that the people using it are in the very same mould as those young men and women who resisted tenaciously the British criminalisation policy in the jails.[180]

The continued use of violence and the supposedly negligible political rationale for their violent activities highlights the common conception of dissident groups as simply having a fixation with violence and typically being described as 'irritants, embarrassing Sinn Féin through the use of traditional republican rhetoric.'[181] Whilst McIntyre stresses the futility of violence he does suggest that the Provisionals are largely responsible for the militarism the replacement IRAs have pursued and 'for Martin McGuinness to denounce them as traitors for following the example he set for decades is to commit an act of treachery against truth.'[182]

In addition to his critique of Sinn Féin's involvement in the peace process McIntyre provides insight into connotations the label 'dissident' provides and highlights the tendency for academics when discussing dissidents to only supply the reader with general descriptive accounts. He notes that, whilst there is an abundance of academic literature on loyalist and republican militia 'little has emerged about the phenomenon of dissent'[183] which for the most part is simply mentioned in passing.[184] In exploring the meaning of the term 'dissent' he provides the following definition;

> Dissent has taken different forms. On occasion it has been the emergence of individuals at the grassroots level of an organisation who were unhappy with elements of strategy or elements of leadership. On the other hand dissenting voices may emerge from within a dominant bloc at the centre of the movement. Sometimes it can be violent but quite often

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[180] A. McIntyre, in *The Pensive Quill,* 'Responding To Seán Mór', 14/09/2010.

[181] R. Mac Ginty, *Irish Republicanism and the Peace Process*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke, & F. Stephens (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006)*,* p. 133.

[182] A. McIntyre, in *The Pensive Quill,* 'Who is McGuinness to talk of treachery', 16/03/2009.

[183] A. McIntyre, *Of Myths and Men: Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism*, in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 116.

[184] See A. McIntyre, *Provisional Republicanism: Internal politics, inequalities and modes of suppression in Republicanism in modern Ireland,* in, F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland,* (Dublin, UCD Press, 2003).

amounts to nothing more than the expression of an opinion contrary to the dominant line.[185]

Whilst this description is novel and assists in formulating what the term 'dissent' constitutes, it is in need of further investigation as McIntyre himself is well aware; 'There is such a rich history of dissent within the world of Northern Ireland's militia waiting to be written that one chapter addressed to both "sides" is grossly inefficient to explain it.'[186] There is the possibility that the under-researched phenomenon of dissent may indicate the extent to which unity has been maintained, or alternatively, signify that 'the odd voice that broke the silence was all too easily slotted into the crank category.'[187]

How far does the existing literature on dissidents go?

One of the first comprehensive academic research projects to emerge dedicated to contemporary dissident republicanism is Frampton's, *Legion of the Rearguard.*[188] The book provides a very valuable guide to the origins, current activities and claims of historical legitimacy of both violent and non-violent dissident groups. Whilst offering insight into contemporary dissident republicanism there is an over reliance on certain sources, especially in terms of the evidence of David Rupert. Whilst the FBI informer managed to gain close ties to Michael McKevitt, leader of the RIRA, and therefore may have valuable insight in to the inner workings of the group, the points made by Frampton are overly dependent on Rupert's testimony. There is a lack of grass-roots perspectives, with very few interviews with dissidents utilised.

More recently, further literature has emerged from Sanders and from Evans and Tonge. Research from Evans and Tonge explores the enduring nature of the militant republican tradition. [189] They assess why militant republicanism has never enjoyed popular majority support amongst the Irish

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[185] A. McIntyre, *Of Myths and Men Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism*, in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 117.
[186] *Ibid*, p. 117.
[187] *Ibid*, p. 117.
[188] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011).
[189] J. Evans, & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), pp. 61-78.

people, but has endured, albeit in a limited form.[190] Using original data from the ESRC 2010 General Election Survey this research suggests asymmetric communal dissident threat perceptions and also indicates a modest level of sympathy for dissident violence,[191] nonetheless, concluding that a mandate from the living continues to elude dissident republicanism. For dissidents, their mandate continues to come from the martyrdom of the 'patriot dead'.[192]

Sanders also considers the issue of legitimacy within Irish republicanism.[193] This research considers the historical precedent within Irish republicanism for dissent to emerge. Sanders outlines the complex history of Irish republicanism and assesses the propensity for the movement to split throughout history. He continues to explore how these underlying tensions have persisted beyond the GFA and explains how the fault line between ideology and pragmatism has placed continuing strain on Irish republicanism.

Currie and Taylor's collection on dissident republicanism provides a wide range of analysis from various contributors.[194] This collection provides a detailed overview of the nature of dissident republicanism in terms of origin and the level of threat they pose as well as offering very specific detailed analysis. For example, Horgan and Gill's chapter charts the rise of dissident activity since October 2009 offering valuable geographic and demographic data on dissidents. The statistics and analysis offered by Nalton, Ramsey and Taylor on the use of the internet as means of radicalisation also provides valuable quantitative data, adding to the small, yet growing, research analysing the spread of dissent within Irish republicanism.

Throughout history Irish republicanism has by no means been immune to dissent. Yet, the lack of academic inquiry into the current phase of factionalism has left ideological and empirical aspects untouched. Despite valuable research beginning to emerge, further exploration of dissent

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[190] J. Evans, & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), p. 64.

[191] See chapter 4 for a discussion of these findings as well as the response the data received.

[192] J. Evans, & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), p. 75.

[193] A. Sanders, *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

[194] P.M. Currie & M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011).

as a phenomenon within Irish Republicanism can provide an outline to 'some of its contours...and put an end to the taboos that too often exist in relation to what "mysteries" it holds.'[195]

Conclusion

The diverse spectrum of Irish republicanism has produced a range of academic perspectives attempting to make sense of the movement's volatile nature. Those who are historically determinist in their approach[196], examine the history of the movement in an attempt to identify common themes and construct an explanation of republican splits through generalised theories. This presents an almost cyclical phenomenon which consistently describes the pressures between political struggle versus military conflict as providing the reoccurring catalyst in dividing the movement. There is a tendency here to view republicanism purely through the prism of the past. Such an approach provides very little scope for comparison between the contextual realities behind each break. This intrinsic view of republicanism relies heavily on the movement's internal logic and has the tendency to overlook the impact of exogenous factors such as material conditions and external ideological forces.

Alternatively, there are those who highlight the importance of examining the context within which each division occurred.[197] Such accounts demonstrate which and how certain aspects of republican ideology became prevalent at various times. This has led to various depictions of republican tensions; for example between militarism versus politics, 'theology' versus 'realism', left versus right, and hardliners versus pragmatists.[198] So why the various illustrations?

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[195] A. McIntyre, *Of Myths and Men Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism*, in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 117.

[196] See Feeney, B., *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years,* (Dublin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*, (Oxon, Routledge, 2005); J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003), pp. 1-26.

[197] See K. Bean , *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, University of Liverpool, 2007); R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006); B. O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien, 1993); R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicans: an oral and interpretative history*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993).

[198] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA,* (Oxon, Transaction Publishers, 2003); R. Munck, *Irish Repubicanism: Containment or New Departure*, in, O'Day, A. (ed.), *Terrorism Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland*,

Irish republicanism has never been a static entity. Various strategies and ideas have ebbed and flowed. That republicanism has never been cast in a rigid mould makes it harder to define and therefore easier for Sinn Féin, despite the obvious compromises made, to proclaim they remain the embodiment of republican principles. Similarly, 'dissident' groups fail to represent a monolithic entity, meaning they cannot be easily slotted into simple categorisations and easily labelled. Yet, whilst there has been a large academic contribution on Sinn Féin's pragmatism and compromises in judging the level of adherence to republican principles,[199] to date, 'dissident' republicanism remains largely an under researched area.

In common with most ideologies, Irish republicanism is relational. However, republicanism is not simply a product of material conditions, external ideological forces and social, political and military circumstances. It is also indebted to an inherited spectrum of political ideas. Republican core values differ not only over time but between individuals. As a result the various shades of contemporary republicanism are, to varying degrees, products of the interaction between context and tradition.

Minimal effort has been made to understand the dissident ideological standpoint, or the commonalities and dissimilarities among the various dissident groups and also what the term 'dissident' actually constitutes. Whilst there has been some analysis of the CIRA and RIRA it is mainly empirical and descriptive.[200] This point however, is not intended as criticism, but simply

(Aldershot, Dartmouth Pub.,1995); K. Rafter, *Sinn Féin 1905-2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen,* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 2005); A. Richards, 'Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Féin, the Peace Process and Democracy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.4 (2001), pp. 72-89; M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: the military strategy of the Irish Republican movement,* (London, Routledge, 1995); P. Walsh, *Irish Republicanism And Socialism: The Politics of The Republican Movement 1905 to 1994,* (Belfast, Athol Books, 1994).

[199] See B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 2002); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*, (London, Routledge, 2005); M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[200] See, R. Mac Ginty, *Irish Republicanism and the Peace Process: from revolution to reform* in M. Cox, A. Guelke and F. Stephens, *A Fairwell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement',* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006); A. McIntyre, *Of Myths and Men Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism*, in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008); E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA,* (London, Penguin, 2002); J. Tonge, *Northern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006).

intended as means of demonstrating the need to provide deeper insight. Continuous observations of these groups have been made through IMC reports and security intelligence, yet few other attempts have been made to form a comprehensive understanding. There is a tendency to view 'dissident' group credentials in relation to 'mainstream' republican activities. Instead a more interpretist approach is needed. More specifically, what is needed is an understanding of how the differing interpretations of republicanism held by 'dissident' groups frame actions, practices and tradition. Therefore, whilst general republican principles are an important consideration in discussing the various strands of republicanism, more so is the individual's interpretation or understanding.

The literature is therefore in need of enhancement in providing further insight into the ideology and functioning of 'dissident' groups, to expand beyond descriptive analysis. Only then will it be possible to begin to understand their principles within the contemporary context. So in answer to the question, is there space for the emergence of dissident republicanism? History tells us that there has always been space for the emergence of dissidents within republicanism, whereas context will determine where on the republican spectrum there is space for them to emerge.

Chapter 2

Irish Republicanism as an ideology: are there agreed components?

Irish republicanism is often associated with physical force, separatism and cultural nationalism. However, republican ideas have a much wider foundation and complex history, with many of these ideas adopted and adapted in their Irish variant. Since the echoes of the French and American Revolutions pervaded Irish politics, republicanism has played a protagonist role. Yet, disagreements over the interpretation of Irish history have given way to vast and varying political understandings of republicanism as an ideal and how it should best be applied. It is the purpose of this chapter to link the variants of Irish republicanism to the ideas of republicanism as a whole. This analysis is needed in order to establish how the many shapes and forms of Irish republicanism today deviate in one way or another from its supposed principles and whether it is even possible to define Irish republicanism through set principles. This chapter then goes on to explore the variations in interpretation and the role of historical legitimacy in validating republican lineage. Discussion finally leads on to the application of republican principles in the modern day context by considering where and how variation occurs on the Irish republican spectrum. Such investigation is necessary to establish whether it is possible to define the notion of true 'Irish republicanism' and what this constitutes, or whether such descriptions are unattainable, rendering the term 'dissidents' redundant.

Before discussing the Irish context it is essential to look at the key conceptual apparatus of republicanism per se. Classic republicanism can be traced back to the Roman Republic which was then later revived in the Renaissance via Machiavelli, where the ideas of a mixed government became a political model to balance liberty, political stability and equality.[201] Further strands of republicanism emerged from the English, American and French revolutions. Since the global realignment of the 1990s, republicanism has experienced a revival in terms of

theoretical discussion and as a result emerged as a strand of political theory carrying equal weight to the normative theories which have been central to philosophical debates such as liberalism and socialism.[202]

The institutional core of republicanism has shifted its focus over time. Classical republicanism is usually associated with a form of government that mixed monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements.[203] Within classic republican thought is the idea that republican systems should be small and decentralised. It was believed that a large republic posed a threat to civic engagement by weakening the connection between the people and the decision makers. The French and American revolutions reshaped republicanism by removing its monarchical and aristocratic tendencies and applying it to whole nations rather than just small states or communities, as well as attaching modern democratic principles, such as freedom, interdependence and civic virtue to collectively provide the foundations of liberty, equality and fraternity, which are discussed further below.

Principles and aspirations

Republican political thought goes far deeper than a form of government in which sovereignty rests with the people instead of a monarch. Yet from this simple but fundamental idea the principles of modern republicanism have been developed.[204] The core principles of republicanism may be seen as freedom, civic virtue and interdependence, designed to realise the ambitions of liberty, equality and fraternity. It is the conflation of core principles and tactics in which the definition of republicanism becomes blurred as political thought has evolved.

The first central theme in republicanism is the concern with a particular form of freedom. There are varying interpretations of how freedom should be interpreted and achieved. The concept of liberty questions, what should be the role of the state? What functions or responsibilities should

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[201] See, N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985); J. E.G. Zetzel, *Cicero: De Republica: Selections*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995);
[202] D. M. Weinstock, *Republicanism: History, Theory and Practice,* (Portland, Frank Cass, 2004), p. 1.
[203] P. Zagorin, 'Republicanism', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11, no.4 (2003), p. 701.
[204] F. Cullen, 'Beyond Nationalism: Time to Reclaim the Republican Ideal', *The Republic*, 1 (2000), p. 13.

the state fulfil and which ones should be left in the hands of private individuals? It is within the various interpretations of liberty that the balance between state and civil society is found. Therefore, in discussing liberty, the most fundamental question is; in striving for liberty what kind of freedom is being considered and how may it be realised?

In contemplating the aspiration of liberty, Isaiah Berlin proposed two distinct concepts of freedom: positive (freedom to act) and negative (freedom from) liberty. Berlin's discussion of negative liberty approaches the question, 'What is the area within which the subject - a person or group of persons - is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?'[205] Negative liberty concerns the idea that no individual or group should interfere with individual activity. This individualistic interpretation of freedom is built upon a liberal analysis of the role of liberty. The liberal tradition advocates freedom from constraint where freedom is possessed by the individual with minimal interference from the state. In other words, negative freedom is unimpeded and un-coerced choice to the degree to which no human being or institution interferes with another's activity on an unwarranted bias. Freedom is viewed as the property of the individual and it is the role of law and government to protect this individual right. Liberals therefore strive to create a minimal state to enjoy the widest reach of freedom. It is the role of the state to merely operate as a protective entity, designed to maintain peace and order for citizens to conduct their lives as they see fit. Liberty is freedom from the state, which should not impinge unnecessarily beyond its basic duty of protection.

Yet republicanism is also allied to the aspiration of positive liberty, which is concerned with the protection of one person's freedom against domination from others. The positive concept of freedom approaches the question, 'What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?'[206] Contemporary republicans take into account that threats towards freedom may not always come from individuals but from a range of forces.[207] Economic or political domination also inhibits personal freedom and therefore realising freedom requires political intervention to limit the domination of one group over another. Therefore, positive liberty requires more than the absence of interference; 'While freedom

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[205] I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1969), p.12.
[206] *Ibid*, p. 122.

excludes domination by another human being, it does not exclude the extensive rule of law.'[208] It involves the presence and usually the exercise of the facilities that foster self-mastery and self fulfilment and relies on an effective system of law to safeguard freedom. Overall, republican liberty is based on non-domination, whereas the liberal interpretation of freedom is based upon non-interference. Within republicanism freedom is not understood as a natural given right, but a political achievement.[209] In addition, it is essential that citizens are involved in the political system which safeguards their freedom. It is through civic engagement and a strong legal system that the best interests for all can be recognised and protected.

The second core tenet, developed through classical republicanism is civic participation. The principle of civic engagement centres upon the role of the people as a locus for achieving freedom. Traditionally, republicanism became concerned with the active participation of individuals in political life. The aim of this involvement is to ensure the autonomy of its citizens by encouraging a strong attachment to the political community through active citizenship.[210] Expressed more clearly, 'a large purpose of participation is to monitor the behaviour of representatives in order to limit the risks of factionalism and self-interested representation.'[211] For example, in republican discourse political participants should subordinate their private interests to the public good in a process of collective self-determination.[212] The civic humanist tradition promotes virtue at the level of the 'common people' in an attempt to avoid corruption or self aggrandisement.

It is the intention that through civic virtue the state is inextricably bound to the people, with politics at the epicentre of everyday life. It is through political institutions designed to facilitate debate and discussion amongst its citizens, decentralisation and citizen control of national institutions that civic virtue can promote the aspiration of equality. One of the main attractions of republican political theory is that it offers a direct alternative to individualistic liberalism. Civic

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[207] See P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997).

[208] I. Honohan, 'Freedom as Citizenship: The Republican Tradition in Political Theory', *The Republic*, 2 (2001), p. 9.

[209] *Ibid*, p. 7.

[210] D. Kelly, *Reforming republicanism in nineteenth-century Britain,* in, I. Honohan & J. Jennings (eds.), *Republicanism in Theory and Practice,* (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 41.

[211] C. R. Sunstein, 'The Republican Civic Tradition', *The Yale Law Journal*, 97 (1988), p. 1556.

[212] C. R. Sunstein, 'The Republican Civic Tradition', *The Yale Law Journal*, 97 (1988), p. 1547.

republicanism promotes the idea of active citizens whose instincts are to become involved in political activities. Political arrangements and activities are therefore viewed in utilitarian terms, whereby citizenship is considered in its entirety and the greater good of the whole community is promoted above individual considerations. As a result, citizenship includes the performance of duties and participation in collective action. It is the role, even the duty, of citizens to have the opportunity to participate in the decisions that will determine how they live. The purpose of such action is to promote collective action over self-sufficiency. Such participation offers the reward of honour and respect rather than individual self-advancement or material gain. It is important to note that political solidarity is not viewed as a homogenous formation of people coming together under the auspices of a shared history or language.[213] Republicanism encourages collective action based on civic organisation, distinct from membership of a political community based on exclusively ethnic terms. Cohesion is therefore seen as the result of the pursuit of shared civic values and equality of political opportunity, rather than being a derivative of ethnic or cultural background.

For civic republicanism equality is seen in terms of political equality, covering the right to speak and seek office, as well as equality before the law. Socioeconomic equality is also viewed as a necessity in encouraging interdependence. Economic disparities are therefore viewed as disruptive to the republic's ability to work for a common good. Individual concerns are more likely to be at the forefront of decisions if the parties involved are not economic equals. As a result, achieving political equality rests on limiting economic inequality. Redistributive measures are encouraged to provide a stable foundation for the republic to be built. Yet it is also worth noting that such positive public spiritedness is very optimistic in that it assumes considerable altruism underpinning political participation. Civic virtue relies on the possession of a shared purpose, placing aside calculations of self interest and prioritising intrinsic values as opposed to the accumulation of personal wealth. For civic virtue to promote equality, individuals must demote self interest. Such an approach places a great deal of confidence in human nature, via the idea that individuals will collectively function so that community concerns triumph over individualistic considerations.

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[213] A. Oldfield, *Citizenship and the Community: Civic Republicanism and the Modern World*, in, G. Shafir (ed.), *The Citizenship debates*, (London, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 80.

The third core principle of republicanism is the idea of interdependence as the construct of the political community.[214] The republican tradition of Machiavelli and Madison was understood in terms of those who shared a common political life rather than a cultural homogeneity. Republicanism is based upon the notion of participation as the means of effective representation and articulation of the interests of the citizenry. Being organised to promote interdependence within a political community is to allow deliberation, debate and reflection on how to best run political and social affairs. Interdependence is the realisation of the republican aspiration of fraternity; a brotherhood among a disparate body of people. A republic flourishes from the interdependence of all citizens 'whose survival and flourishing depends on the kinds of social framework they inhibit, and who have common, as well as separate and conflicting, interests.'[215] The aspiration of fraternity is not intended to be homogenous, but instead allows for contributions from a variety of perspectives, to draw on a wealth of opinion. Therefore, the purpose of republicanism is to provide for the common welfare and interdependence between various factions who collectively have the possibility of re-shaping their future.

Such interests mark republicanism as distinct from nationalism, which is built on a common or exclusive identity and culture. In other words republicanism champions citizenship over common background in an all embracing vision, rather than offering a political vision confined to a selection of people on the basis of their national identity. The aim is that, 'By rooting politics in interdependence rather than commonality, it offers a better way of dealing with the cultural and moral differences that are pervasive in modern society.'[216] In other words, republican citizenship is less exclusive than nationality and by allocating sovereignty to the people as opposed to the nation each person has the right to be self determining and share in the role of government. Republicanism is based on interdependence rather than pre-political identity and as a result encompasses more diverse forms of cultural ethnicity than a nationalist-based system which encourages separatism.

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[214] I. Honohan, 'Freedom as Citizenship: The Republican Tradition in Political Theory', *The Republic*, 2 (2001). p. 21.
[215] *Ibid*, p. 7.
[216] *Ibid*, p. 22.

The appeal of republicanism is to provide a positive form of government in the interests of the common good in order to advance the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Whilst these aspirations are at the epicentre of republican thought there are many interpretations of how best to attain them. Rousseau espoused that republics could only flourish in small states as large nation states would lead to corruption.[217] There is also mixed opinion on the need for economic equality. For example, James Madison stressed the possession of property and the separation of powers over participation.[218] In addition, it is very common, although more an indication of social values at the time, for proponents of republicanism to view citizenship in more exclusive terms (many excluded women in political life). Also evident are the differing opinions of how to best organise a republic, providing various combinations of monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements. Even when intent is said to be the same, there are different interpretations and how this can best be achieved.

As with most political doctrines it is generally assumed that republicanism can be defined by an adherence to a set of values or defined principles. The complication in defining republicanism is that its ideals (liberty, equality, fraternity) are those which most political ideologies would claim at least two of the three. For example, socialism appropriates the ideals of fraternity and equality in the creation of brotherhood underpinned by the equality of all citizens. Liberalism emphasises liberty in terms of negative or individualistic freedom and equality through the implementation of equal and indiscriminate laws. Nationalism promotes freedom through self determination on the basis of a single ethnicity, race, nation or culture and fraternity as a homogenous bond based upon national identity. The intent of highlighting such an argument is to demonstrate how the aspirations of liberty, equality and fraternity are fluid and highly adaptable notions that can be made relevant to numerous perspectives and situations. Such a point reveals how defining a republican core is problematic as the political ideas and programmes offered may be partially shared by other ideologies. Moreover, the interpretation and implementation of 'republican' ideals can often be contested. It is also worth highlighting the paradox that despite promoting fundamental ideas which stress the importance of interdependence, common good, collective

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[217] See J. J. Rousseau, *Discourse on political economy and The social contract*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994).
[218] See J. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, no. 51, pp.347-53.

action and the suppression of personal concerns, republicanism has been fraught with division, conflicting interest and separation.

In identifying the central principles underpinning republican ideology it is also essential to consider the context in which it is being discussed. The problem that arises here is that history does not supply conceptions of political life that can be applied mechanically to current problems. Therefore, whilst discussing modern republicanism it is essential to remember that the task is not simply one of excavation. Circumstances change and therefore it is difficult to remove theoretical perspectives out of their context without great risk of distortion.[219] Republicanism as an ideology does not operate in a vacuum, the reality is that 'moral and cultural diversity are increasingly salient in our society.'[220] A politics based on shared values is an idealistic aspiration that ignores the causes of fragmentation within society such as ethnic, racial and cultural differences. Because of such underlying differences republicanism has been forced to adapt to contemporary circumstances, which has led to a fusion of ideological principles with pragmatic reality.

In relation to the contested pliability of republicanism there are two broad lines of argument recognisable in the literature today. Firstly, the work of JGA Pocock highlights the use of republican language found in political thought where both continuities and patterns along with innovations and transgressions can be identified.[221] Pocock attempts to understand political thought not only as an ideology but as a political discourse, specifically in terms of the language used. Not all texts can be attributed to the concern of those people at the time in which it was written; rather they are a function of political or philosophical concern which drives the theorist, hence why they need to be read with a fluid interpretation. Therefore, Pocock argues that historical language can be traced through its various exchanges to the point that it has gradually been reworked and furnished with rhetoric and idioms. As a result of this exchange the meaning

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[219] C. R. Sunstein, 'The Republican Civic Tradition', *The Yale Law Journal* 97 (1988), p. 1539.
[220] I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism*, (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 2.
[221] See P.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, (Princton, Princeton University Press, 1975).

of the text has been influenced; it is for this reason why Pocock deliberately distances himself from the portrayal of a rigid monolithic concept and the use of the term 'paradigm'.[222]

The second, slightly differing perspective is championed by Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner in their work on republican liberty. They argue that republicanism is accompanied by set values and necessary conditions for securing those values. Yet despite these set values there is still a very strong emphasis on the importance of context:

> To endorse republican freedom is not to accept a ready made ideal that can be applied in a mechanical way...it is to embrace an open ended ideal that gains new substance as it is interpreted in the progressively changing and clarifying perspective of a living society.[223]

Whether republicanism is made up of set values or pliable concepts, Pocock, Petit and Skinner have highlighted the importance of flexibility and context. The aspirations of liberty, equality and fraternity are helpful in identifying the basis of modern day republicanism, yet it is also essential to look at the context in which these principles are exercised. Therefore, in order to investigate the appeal of modern republicanism, further enquiry is needed in terms of its social and political contexts.

In terms of political context, the difficulty of applying republicanism to practical policy and the claims to republicanism launched by so many political actors has made the task of definition and identification of what constitutes republican ideals difficult. The use of the term republicanism has been stretched and rearticulated with the use of language and discourse playing a central role. For example, Petit suggests,

> the language of republicanism, rather than providing an integrated and sophisticated explanatory and normative paradigm for politics has become increasingly thinned and accommodated to a wide range of potentially divergent political and philosophical positions.[224]

As a result republicanism can take many forms; abstentionist, pluralist, ethno-geographically determinist, pluralist, civic, accommodationist or militarist. Such diverse embodiments of a single tradition complicate the tasks of definition and explanation. Attention will now turn to the

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[222] M. Philps, 'English Republicanism in the 1970s', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 3 (1998), p. 236.
[223] P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p.147.
[224] M. Philps, 'English Republicanism in the 1970s', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 3 (1998), p. 244.

role of remembering and historical legitimacy in interpretation and application of Irish republican principles.

Claiming the mantle: appropriating republicanism in Ireland

> For national communities, as for individuals, there can be no sense of identity without remembering.[225]

Despite the diverse and broad spectrum of republicanism, all the elements claiming to offer the 'true', 'holy and apostolic' version of the ideology, are united in one sense: they indulge in a deep nostalgia for a similar past. Across the wide republican spectrum in Ireland a great level of importance is placed on recalling the past, to the point where the events of 1798 or 1916 are presented as moments which transcend time.[226] Such recollections of the past have persistently been used to emphasise a shared heritage, common suffering and a united purpose. Such interpretations are commonly provided through the mediums of memorials, commemorations, iconography and propaganda. Recollecting the past and recalling key events which culminate to form a republican precedent performs a significant role within modern day republicanism.

Occasions for commemoration and remembrance are scattered throughout the republican calendar. Key events such as the annual visit to the grave of Wolfe Tone, founder of the United Irishmen and seen as the 'founder' of Irish Republicanism, are used as occasions to deliver significant political messages. The reading of the 1916 proclamation outside the GPO in Dublin and the various Easter Commemorations across the island are also noteworthy occasions in the republican tradition as key events for remembrance.

In the context of Irish history, memory provides a powerful and evocative tool. Within Irish republicanism, historical memory is utilised to justify actions through a mandate provided by past generations. As Ford suggests, 'No one can deny the power of political martyrdom in modern Irish history. The blood of those who died for the nationalist faith has repeatedly been

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[225] I. McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

invoked to inspire and stiffen the sinews of their successors fighting to free Ireland from foreign rule.'[227] Whilst investigating the historical roots of armed struggle Kearney questions what exactly is the native republican tradition that has enabled generations of republicans to justify the rationale behind armed struggle? Is it based upon armed rebellion or peaceful gradualist transformation? He argues that foundational symbols and ideological origins provided the seeds to enable the Provisional republican movement to justify their actions in relation to their historical roots. The Provisionals conceived themselves as the organic legatees of the past generation, an approach which has been followed by their successors, misleadingly labelled 'dissidents'. Kearney asks:

> Is it possible that the guiding motivations of militant republicanism was, and still is to some extent, less the appropriation of the socio-economic means of production, than an exigency of sacrifice to a mythological Ireland: an ancestral deity who would respond to the martyrdom of her sons by rising from her ancient slumber to avenge them?[228]

Such a theological perspective explains republicanism as an often backward-looking movement with little association or reflection of external material reality. Actions in the present day are justified and made sense of through the prism of the past. As a result, armed struggle is elevated to a status of inevitability rather than convincingly articulated as a means of providing tactical progression. As Ford phrases it, 'the criticism was frequently voiced that republicans had made armed struggle an end in itself, that blood-sacrifice was primarily a matter of fidelity to previous generations rather than a means of furthering a practical goal.'[229]

Lineage to past generations was contained in the Provisional IRA's training manual, the 'Green Book'. It insisted that 'For the past 800 years the British ruling classes have attempted to smash down the resistance of the Irish people. Campaign after campaign, decade after decade, century after century, armies of resistance have fought ... to cast off the chains of foreign occupation.'[230] Drawing attention to such heritage is also utilised today, with military groups owing allegiances

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[226] E. O'Brien, *A Nation Once Again; towards an epistemology of the Republican Imaginaire,* in, F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland,* (Dublin, UCD Press, 2003), p. 148.

[227] A. Ford, *Martyrdom, history and memory in early modern Ireland*, in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 43.

[228] R. Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture,* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 211.

[229] A. Ford, *Martyrdom, history and memory in early modern Ireland*, in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 14.

to the past, denouncing settlements short of an independent united sovereign Ireland as 'not what Irish republicans fought, died and went to jail for.'[231] Remembering is not simply about physical representations such as marches or remembrance services; it is also necessary to consider the power of history, and memory in evoking an attachment to former times.

Similarly to Kearney, Moran describes the use of armed struggle as an alignment to a dogmatic theology ascribed to by past generations. He claims, that 'the Irish Republican tradition understands Irish nationalism as a theology with its own morality.'[232] The language identified by Moran is that of martyrdom, self sacrifice and belief; 'By choosing self-immolation, these people, either consciously or unconsciously, confirm a dogmatic theology of violence held by Irish Republicanism...' and 'they intended to kill, and ultimately be killed, in order to resurrect Gaelic Ireland by means of a blood sacrifice which served to expiate sinful complacency and compromise.'[233] The tradition of self-sacrifice and martyrdom is permanently embedded within the republican psyche.

Allegiance to the tradition of republican martyrdom can be seen in discussions concerning hunger strikers. Hunger strikes in Ireland are commonly presented as a feature of political confrontation where the powerless people of Celtic Ireland could force themselves to be heard. Such acts epitomise defiance and self-sacrifice, but most significantly provides martyrs for contemporary and subsequent generations. More importantly, the cult of self-sacrifice can flatter its present day followers because it links them with past historical figures and stresses the longevity and endurance of the republican cause.[234] Therefore, framing actions through a window to the past provides a valuable tool in that it justifies present day actions by highlighting historical continuity, allowing those who utilise such description to claim a mandate from history.

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[230] 'The Green Book', cited in B. O'Brien, *The Long War*, (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1999), p. 401.
[231] *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Dissidents: interview with terror splinter group', 03/11/2010.
[232] S. Moran, *Patrick Pearse and Patriotic Soteriology: The Irish Republican Tradition and the Sanctification of Political Self-Immolation*, in Y. Alexander & A. O'Day (eds.), *The Irish Terrorism Experience,* (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1991), p. 9
[233] *Ibid*, pp. 9, 20.

A 'mandate' from republican history has been utilised during times of high internal tension or at the point when divisions have occurred within the republican movement. The 1986 split saw the Provisionals drop the principle of abstention to Leinster House in an attempt to adopt a more flexible and pragmatic form of politics. Such a move signified a seismic change of direction, as constitutionalism had caused major divisions in the past. It was apparent that dropping abstention from Provisional policy was unlikely to be embraced by the entire membership. In 1986, leading Provisional republican Ruairi Ó Brádaigh continued to reject the legitimacy of Leinster House and Stormont and soon criticised the new 'reformism' of the Provisionals as indicative of how the Adams-McGuinness leadership was being 'sucked into' and becoming part of the colonial system.[235] For Ó Brádaigh and others that broke away from the Provisionals and formed Republican Sinn Féin (RSF), (whose members claimed this was the 'old' Sinn Féin party and that non-abstentionists were part of a new organisation) ideological devotion and loyalty was seen as paramount. For them history played a significant role in legitimising the party's purist position. As Frampton phrases it, 'this was a party, after all, for which the shadow of history loomed large; the present was forever interpreted through the prism of the past (and judged inherently inferior as a result).'[236] Any movement away from full obedience to republican doctrine was seen as a betrayal to past generations who had fought and died for an Irish Republic.

Thus RSF use events such as hunger strike commemorations to highlight the importance of remaining loyal and 'to never, ever give up the struggle for freedom, no matter what the odds are against us. They [the hunger strikers] died rather than submit to British rule!'[237] Such a statement is typical in the way it highlights the dedication and defiance of those who died as being central components to purist republicanism. For those with such dedication and intransigence history takes on quasi-religious undertones where pragmatism and the downgrading of basic principles are seen as blasphemous. Such romantic or spiritual attachment to the republican struggle may have an obvious strength, in that 'vague emotion' can be 'more alluring than more cold measured

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[234] G. Sweeney, 'Self-Immolation in Ireland: Hunger Strikes and Political Confrontation', *Anthropology Today* 9, no. 5 (1993), p. 14.

[235] R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh: The Life and Politics of An Irish Revolutionary*, (Bloomberg, Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 289.

[236] M. Frampton, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 67.

[237] S. Murphy, *Address Given at Bundoran Hunger Strike Commemoration*, Dublin, 26/08/2000.

assessment.'[238] Theological understanding of republican ideals and the eulogising of past events provide an emotive value that surpasses the detached appeal of logic and rationality. Such a statement is epitomised by the Terence MacSwiney quote, 'It is not those who can inflict the most but those who can endure the most who will conquer.'[239]

As Frampton points out, such strong allegiance to past generations and the continued promotion of fundamental republican principles can be juxtaposed to the Provisonals' use of realism. In undertaking the compromises of the peace process Sinn Féin were criticised for being 'indistinguishable from their British master.'[240] For those who broke away from the Provisionals in 1986, integrity and purity was favoured over pragmatism and concessions. The Provisionals, were being directed by those who wanted the course of the movement to be set by present-day circumstances as opposed to deep-rooted principles which were seen to be outdated. As a result, Sinn Féin attempted to reaffirm their political position as being very much placed in the here and now. Consequently, interpretations of republican history, although still used to legitimise actions, varied from those who split from the movement. At the grave of Wolfe Tone in 1986 McGuinness evoked the memory of James Connolly, stating that he,

> ...once remarked that the real danger to republicanism was that it might become a commemorative organisation that mourned its martyrs, that lamented its heroic defeats. There is an element of romanticism within our ranks that, while not consciously defeatist, continues to look at the past for legitimisation.[241]

Whilst McGuinness used the past as a means of legitimising the future of the Provisionals, he also made it clear that he wanted a pragmatic approach that would deliver results rather than a perpetual attachment to a celebrated yet obsolete past.

There is a danger that dwelling on the indulgence of history and the portrayal of republicanism as extraneous to any contextual influences, such as material conditions or political circumstances, may blind us to the conditions explaining the various forms republicanism has taken. In terms of modern day Irish republicanism it is also worth noting that both the accounts of Kearney and

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[238] R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (London, Pan Books, 2006), p. 303.
[239] T. Mac Swinney, Quoted in *James Larkin Republican Flute Band Liverpool Address* 09/10/2010 and *An Phoblacht/ Republican News* 19/06/1997.
[240] S. Murphy, *Address Given at Bundoran Hunger Strike Commemoration*, Dublin, 26/08/2000.

Moran were written before the disappearance of the Provisional IRA. The peace process may have been on the horizon, but it was unknown the extent to which Sinn Féin would compromise or that the PIRA would accept decommissioning, and ultimately cease to exist. It therefore seems hard to justify how the Provisionals had such a dogmatic alliance to the physical force tradition given their subsequent willingness to 'leave the stage' for a settlement far short of their previously uncompromising goal of a united Ireland. Whilst such interpretations remind us of the historical significance of armed struggle, they fail to identify why this is still relevant within the context of today.

The multifaceted and diverse representations of republicanism in Ireland today all claim lineage to the same tradition. Throughout republican history the disengagement from activism and the subsequent pursuit of a new political direction has been followed by the accusations of betrayal to past generations and a 'sell out' of former principles. Hanley notes that such accusations of betrayal have led to a contradictory immediate response, in that 'republicans have often sought to justify a gradual retreat from militarism by reasserting their military and revolutionary credentials.'[242] Despite the choice of tactics through the use of pragmatism being very much based in the present, the reinforcement of republican credentials and the celebration of a military past are often used in an attempt to legitimise a change of course. In tandem with this 'they have also attempted to undermine the physical force records of their opponents.'[243] Such rhetoric leads to a paradox which can be seen today; whilst Sinn Féin are quick to denounce dissidents who continue the tradition of armed struggle as 'conflict junkies' or 'Neanderthals', it is interesting to note how they defend their own past actions of a similar nature, which they justify as necessary on grounds of context and greater public support. Therefore, allegiance to the past may be employed today by Sinn Féin, and mirrored in previous splits to reiterate republican credentials to repudiate claims from dissident groups that they have 'sold out'. This highlights the struggle to claim political ownership over the republican tradition. It is therefore possible to argue that splits in the movement have in turn made republican history even more pronounced as factions present an unwavering allegiance to the past and their own lineage.

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[241] M. McGuinness, *Oration to Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration*, Bodenstown, 22/06/1986.
[242] B. Hanley, *The Rhetoric of Republican Legitimacy*, in, F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 2003), p. 167
[243] *Ibid*, p. 167.

So, whilst emphasising an allegiance to the past can reinforce a mandate from past generations or reinforce republican credentials, what impact does this have on republicanism today? Whilst it is important to highlight the significance of the republican past, there is a danger that such deliberate imagery evokes a rather pious or even cult-like depiction of republicanism, rather than assessing it as an existing political, social or military movement. Whilst analysing republicanism in a way that highlights historical lineage is important in providing a historical context, there is a danger that it may conceal the contextual and relational nature of the movement.

However, what is invaluable about the tradition of remembering is what it tells us about the present rather than the past. As McBride notes, 'What is so striking about the Irish case is not simply the tendency for present conflicts to express themselves through the personalities of the past, but the way in which commemorative rituals have become historical forces in their own right.'[244] Memorials do not just represent a specific circumstance; rather they represent an 'active process', constantly rearticulated and negotiated as historical circumstances alter.[245] Identity is inextricably linked to remembering, and memory is usually selective; resulting in a complex relationship between history and memory, fact and imagination.[246] Therefore, groups tend to express their values through their interpretation of the past. As a result, recollection not only identifies historical significance but can also be utilised to indicate a great deal about the contemporary situation.

Through the use of republican language and iconography it is possible to gain various interpretations of modern republicanism. This returns us to Pocock's point on how various readings of republican history have in turn been used to produce contested meanings and conflicting political prescriptions. McBride suggests that rather than assuming present day actions are determined and ultimately shaped by the past what we choose to remember is dictated by contemporary interests and concerns:

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[244] I. McBride, *Memory and national identity in modern Ireland,* in, I. McBride (ed), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[245] R. Williams, *Marxism and literature*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 115.

[246] A. Ford, *Martyrdom, history and memory in early modern Ireland*, in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 66.

When we recall the past, then, we do so as members of groups – a family, a local community, a work force, a political movement, a church or a trade union. What we remember or forget therefore has as much to do with external constraints, imposed by our social and cultural surroundings, as with what happens in the frontal lobes of our brain.[247]

In other words, interpretations of the past are ultimately viewed and considered through the prism of contemporary circumstances. Not only is the past interpreted differently by various generations, but also through various circumstances at the same point in time. Due to such factors impacting upon human interpretation, it is possible to suggest that memory has a history of its own depending on individual differences. As McBride observes: 'Although remembrance is always selective, the selections depend upon a complex interaction between the materials available and the dominant modes of political and social organisation.'[248] Strong association with the past is maintained through a reconstruction of history as distinct from its recollection. Utilising historical reconstruction to provide a political function may blur historical fact but it does not necessarily mean that modern day interpretations of the past are hollow or meaningless. What history individuals and groups are choosing to remember, how they remember it and why it matters, tells us a significant amount. Such recollections many not provide reliable historical insight or accuracy yet provide us with an alternative angle of which to gain insight into certain groups.

Utilising romanticism and sentiment creates an emotional appeal that possesses the ability to transcend social, economic and political lines. Republicanism is heterogeneous and has traditionally gained support across varying socio-political-economic situations. It is possible to suggest that remembering and iconography has a practical role in mobilising support today. This use of historical figures represents the diverse nature of republicanism. Margaret O'Callaghan explains how through the use of historic icons republicanism has broadened its appeal across various socio-economic divisions in society:

Republicanism was at one level a minority elite movement. At another level, through the forms and iconography, vocabulary and pasted oaths disseminated through defenders

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[247] I. McBride, *Memory and national identity in modern Ireland,* in, I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 6.
[248] *Ibid*, p.13.

adopted at different levels of popular resistance movements, it had a broad political purchase throughout the country.[249]

What is essential to remember here is Petit and Skinner's importance of context. Pettit takes this argument further by describing how through the use of tactics the definition of what it means to be a republican has been stretched and rearticulated. One prominent tactic is that republicanism 'employs only conceptual distinctions and inferential patterns that no one in the community has reason to reject; it offers a medium of debate which no one has a priori ground for dismissing.'[250] In other words, republicanism utilises ambiguous and indefinite rhetoric that allows for a greater and broader acceptance, resulting in a holistic, universal prescription that has the potential to have a more varied and extensive reach.

To demonstrate this point, against the backdrop of the peace process and possibly influenced by the electoral growth of Sinn Féin, other parties have attempted to restate their republican credentials through the use of open ended and almost ambiguous rhetoric. For example, Fiánna Fail aims to secure a united Ireland through peace and agreement, encouraging cross border co-operation. The party affirms its affiliations by incorporating the term 'The Republican Party' in its title. In 1998, its then leader Bertie Ahern, speaking at the Fiánna Fail Árd Fheis, accepted that the party's notion of republicanism was 'perhaps too narrow in the past.'[251] Ahern stressed the civic rather than ethnic aspects of modern Irish republicanism. Whilst eschewing the use of force as a republican tactic, Fiánna Fail's earlier iteration of Irish republicanism had hitherto viewed the unionist tradition on the island as ethnically Irish and effectively an illegitimate political tradition and non-identity. In this narrow outlook, the ethnic republicanism of Fiánna Fail did not differ markedly from that offered by Sinn Féin. The peace process moved Fiánna Fail and, less explicitly, Sinn Féin, to a civic, accommodationist, pluralist republican position.

The SDLP's northern nationalism has embraced civic republican ideals in stressing a 'two traditions' approach. Long prior to the peace process, it formulated the 'agreed Ireland' idea in

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[249] M. O'Callaghan, *Reconsidering the republican tradition in nineteenth century Ireland,* in, I. Honohan (ed.), *Republicanism in Ireland: Confronting Theories and Traditions,* (Manchester, Machester University Press, 2008), pp. 33-34.
[250] P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 131.
[251] Bertie Ahern, *Address to the 63rd Fiánna Fail Árd Fheis*, 22/11/1998.

which both traditions would require accommodation within a political framework. The SDLP argued for the need to engage across cultural divisions and provide assurances to Unionists about their position in a united Ireland. The SDLP, which has always remained on the constitutional path, became the lesser political voice for nationalists as they were overtaken electorally by Sinn Féin in 2003. The party leader from 2010 to 2011, Margaret Ritchie, reasserted this point at the 2010 annual conference, insisting that 'the SDLP remain absolutely, unambiguously committed to a united Ireland, where the border disappears and we are no longer governed by Britain. It is without qualification our number one political objective.'[252] Although the party considers itself as being 'worlds apart'[253] from Sinn Féin, the difference does not lie in ultimate constitutional preferment. Rather it resides in a more explicit form of civic nationalism, historically more cognisant of the different identity of unionists than the ethnic republicanism previously espoused by Sinn Féin. Even within the SDLP's language, there have been problems in terms of the accommodation and identification of unionists. The language of John Hume referred to unionists as being of a different 'tradition', not of a different 'nation'.[254] Republicans and nationalists have thus struggled to fully accept the legitimacy and nationhood of unionists, even amid the shift from united Ireland political projects based on absorption to those of accommodation.

Such a point identifies the fault lines between civic and ethnic based republicanism.[255] Republicanism centres on an individual's membership of a political community, 'in which those who are mutually vulnerable and share a common fate may jointly be able to exercise some collective direction over their lives.'[256] It is in defining the basis of this membership that differences in interpretation occur. Within ethnic republicanism the membership of a political community is defined ethno-geographically. An identity is formed from a common Irish identity which does not recognise an 'artificial' border. Civic republicanism on the other hand, is less deterministic in its composition providing an interpretation of republicanism that emphasises equality and accommodation far more than ethnicity. This emphasis on accommodation has come to characterise mainstream republicanism post 1998.

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[252] Margaret Ritchie, *Address to SDLP Annual Conference*, 07/11/2010.
[253] *Ibid*.
[254] M. Cunningham, 'The Political Language of John Hume', *Irish Political Studies* 12, no.1 (1997), pp. 13-22.
[255] See chapter 3 for a deeper discussion of ethnic and civic interpretations of nationalism and how these have been adopted.
[256] I. Honohan, *Civic Republicanism,* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

These differences reflect alternative approaches to and understandings of the republican ideal. As Kilmurray and McWilliams suggest, 'Republicanism is a word to conjure with in Ireland-whether North or South. Emotions and interpretations around the concept, and more important in relation to its implications, are as divided as the Ireland itself.'[257] In England the label 'Irish Republican' has far more negative connotations, and at times expressed in a manner that simply implies an association with armed struggle or an aspiration that does not go beyond militant nationalism. In Ireland however, it has a more positive connotation. Normatively speaking nationalism as a concept does not provide a prescription for inter communal co-operation, often being criticised for not taking into account the diversity of cultural and religious identities of those living in Northern Ireland. Therefore, whilst nationalism reinforces communal divisions republicanism as a concept is universal and all-embracing. The appeal of republicanism is that it is able to provide a holistic vision, alternative to nationalism which is seen as exclusivist.

That distinct groups are all able to claim republican lineage highlights the propensity for republicanism to be so broad as to allow for huge local variation in interpretation. As Cullen argues:

> Republicanism is ultimately an open political doctrine. It proposes great principles but it is not about providing a blueprint that must be followed detail by detail. Rather than claiming to be the final answer, it tries to provide a route towards those answers. While it is important principles are non-negotiable, space is left for democratic debate about what the meaning and content of those principles are or should be.[258]

Republicanism has been influenced by a wide range of intellectual, ideological and contextual sources, creating a variety of perspectives. As English indicatively phrases it, 'features of the modern nationalist vision also begin to fray at the ideology's edges and tough-minded interrogation might lead one to suspect that the intellectual garment as a whole would unravel without too much pulling.'[259] Such a statement makes it hard not to question whether those

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[257] A. Kilmurray & M. McWilliams, *Republicanism Revisited*, in, N. Porter (ed.), *The Republican Ideal*, (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1998), p. 157

[258] F. Cullen, 'Beyond Nationalism: Time to Reclaim the Republican Ideal', *The Republic* 1 (2000), p. 14.

[259] R. English, ''Defining the nation: Recent historiography and Irish nationalism', *European Review of History* 2, no.2 (1995), p. 196.

tactical concerns highlighted by Pettit have outshone the principles of Irish republicanism, suggesting pragmatic concerns may have surpassed republican principles.

Despite this, it is possible to argue that the central criticism of republicanism as a political doctrine is also its main advantage. Its versatile nature makes it malleable to different context and perspectives. The republic is a form of government, in which sovereignty rests with the people, therefore the principles of modern republicanism were developed over time and are moved along by successive generations. Whilst considering republicanism in the framework of today it is essential to view it as a progressive movement where context and realism play a leading role. Brian Hanley notes that while republicanism is primarily a study of ideas, these are inseparable from the context in which they were formed. This explains why, 'innovation or change in republican thinking has almost always come about as a reaction to defeat or stalemate.'[260] This goes some way to explaining why some argue that the most striking feature of the republican movement in Northern Ireland is the propensity to split amid the absence of progress.[261]

It is the fluidity of republicanism which needs to be understood when considering the dissident ideological position and examining whether splits have been due to disagreements over 'innovation' and 'change' of republican principles. The term 'dissident' is itself contextual, as Sinn Féin, often now portrayed as the embodiment of republicanism, were the 'dissidents' of their day. Such points need to be taken into account whilst considering 'dissident' ideology and justifications of republicans from prevailing republican orthodoxy.

Irish republicanism is relational and shaped by factors within evolving contemporary circumstances. Such arguments propose that Irish republicanism can only be understood once put into context and viewed with consideration for wider influences on a global as well as more localised level. For example, at the macro-level wider geo-political forces such as the end of the Cold War and the British government strategy had a huge impact upon the political landscape

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[260] B. Hanley, 'Change and Continuity: Republican Thought Since 1922', *The Republic,* 2 (2001), p. 93.
[261] J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003), p. 1.

and defined the parameters in which the Provisionals were to operate.[262] At the micro-level, the lived reality on a localised basis, socio-economic circumstances,[263] along with changes within consciousness and ideology,[264] have created many dynamics for republicanism to interact with and be shaped by such contexts.

Today, Irish republicanism is represented by various groups all symbolising a different interpretation of republicanism. Whilst considering such distinctions it is necessary to take into account the impact of wider influences when questioning why such differences have occurred. In order to judge the ideological underpinning of dissident groups today it is therefore important to not only consider the wider context in defining their republicanism but also in understanding why these differences have occurred.

Owing to the malleable nature of republicanism, which has resulted in various interpretations about what the concept actually represents, it is not ideal to construct a scale of 'true' or 'authentic' republicanism. It is not the place of this analysis to state what does and what does not constitute republicanism. Rather each group has the right to be investigated based on their own republican identity and not in relation to any other representation or what may be perceived as any embodiment of republicanism that pre-dates them.

The evolutionary and fluid nature of Irish republicanism makes the task of identifying agreed components highly problematic. Irish republicanism has over time developed into a multifaceted yet intricate concept, where understanding is guided by varying definitions and interpretations of history and influenced by personal experience. It is possible to ask two republicans the question 'what are the core tenets of republicanism?' and be confronted by two varying responses. In

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[262] See K. Bean, *The Economic and Social War Against Violence: British Social and Economic Strategy and the Evolution of Provisionalism,* in, A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), K. Bean, *Shifting Discourses of New Nationalism and Post- republicanism,* in, M. Elliott (eds.), *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), M. Cox, *Rethinking the International and Northern Ireland; a defence*, in, Cox, M., Guelke, A., & Stephens, F., (eds.), *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006).
[263] See P. Shirlow, *The Economics of the Peace Process*, in. C Gillingan & J. Tonge (eds.), *Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland*, (Ashgate, University of Michigan, 1997).
[264] See R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class,* 71(2000), pp. 133- 161.

other words Irish republicanism has not just evolved over time, but is dramatically different even between individuals. Various factions have been formed due to different interpretations of republican history and principles and how they should best be applied. Looking across the various factions which all claim to represent republicanism in Ireland today, republicanism embraces the violent and non-violent, the constitutional and revolutionary, the pragmatic and absolutist.

In the broadest possible sense republicanism can be broken down into the principles of freedom, civic engagement and interdependence to realise the aspirations of liberty, equality and fraternity. The idealistic and vague nature of such objectives embraces a vast political spectrum. Republicanism, in its outworking, has thus taken on a multiplicity of forms. It has been hollowed out by a broad range of modern day representations all claiming lineage to a similar tradition and projecting their visions within a republican framework. Republican principles embrace rights of self determination, universal sovereignty and representative democracy but prescriptions regarding their enactment often clash. Any analysis of dissident republicanism needs to go much further than the consideration of avowed allegiance to republican principles. It needs to understand specific interpretations of the Irish republican tradition.

Translating principles into political action: liberty, equality and fraternity

Republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity now need addressing in relation to the Irish context. When such universal political principles are applied to the aspiration of a united Ireland the result is a diverse range of interpretations and tactics in pursuit of its attainment. The methods used to achieve a united Ireland have split the movement between pragmatists and absolutists. Successive splits signified the cleavage between pragmatists who saw the necessity of compromising, rather than being driven by belief or dogma and purists who retain a strict adherence to particular concepts and ideas. For purists, absolutism is reinforced by tradition.

Liberty and republicanism

Republicanism is allied to the aspiration of positive liberty. Such an interpretation revolves around the need for protection against the domination of an individual or group of individuals against another. Therefore a republic is not simply based on political independence but also the social and economic liberation of its people. The realisation of economic, social and democratic freedom is necessary within a republic. This freedom is put into question when interfering forces adjust people's actions. Republicanism also emphasises that the conditions necessary to achieve freedom can only be realised in a system which limits the domination of an individual or group over another. In such situations protecting freedom requires political intervention in the form of laws or government intervention. Laws are required to protect against domination, where positive liberty is threatened. The sovereign power which implements laws does so on a basis of equality. It is through an equal share of sovereign power that people can be free.

Yet it is important to point out that in realising positive liberty there is an assumption that within the nation-state there is an appropriate framework to facilitate economic, social and political freedom. There is a need to also consider the possibility that the state can also be an oppressive force. From an uncompromising Irish republican perspective it is impossible to attain economic, social or democratic freedom within a divided Ireland, as a 'foreign state' is claiming part of the island. From a moderate republican perspective, two traditions can comfortably be accommodated on the island of Ireland, within separate jurisdictions, although this does not remove the aspiration for ultimate sovereign independence for the entire island. For 'purist' republicans the root to liberty is separatism.

The border dividing the island of Ireland has been consolidated 'as a feature of the economic, political and social-psychological landscape.'[265] Over successive political agreements the practical and political status of the border has evolved. In the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement, the British agreed to support Irish unity should a majority in Northern Ireland indicate such a wish. In other words there was to be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until the

majority of the people indicated this desire. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement reinforced this principle of northern consent. The Agreement saw the institutionalisation of British-Irish political co-operation, whilst leaving British legal sovereignty intact. These arrangements changed the significance of the border by promoting a new level of cross border co-operation and amounted to recognition of its existence, but not full acceptance, by the government of the Republic of Ireland amid its continuing constitutional claim.[266] The 1998 Good Friday Agreement enshrined the principle of northern consent. It also gave everyone the right in Northern Ireland to choose either Irish or British citizenship or both. Throughout the various agreements and the evolving status of the border it was clear that any constitutional route to a united Ireland would be through an agreed Ireland.

However, in parallel to the consolidation, the border became increasingly permeable, straddled by cross-border bodies and North-South co-operation. The result was a paradox. Whilst cross-border activity increased, the border itself has perhaps become more secure, consolidated by constitutional law and the North no longer the subject of an 'irredentist' claim by another government.[267] Partition has taken on a different meaning, where any eradication of the border would have to follow the path of an agreed Ireland and co-determination. Yet the glimpse at the chance of a united Ireland, however remote a possibility in the near future, allowed pragmatic republicans to state that they remained on the long road to Irish unity.[268]

The principle of liberty and the politics of nation are inextricably linked and symbolically fused; the 'core of republicanism, both philosophically and ideologically, is the people. The people are sovereign. That means government of the people by the people.'[269] Liberty and equal citizenship can only be recognised under national self-determination. Whilst partition remains an objective reality, it is possible to suggest that the reaction to it and the

[265] J. Coakley & L. O'Dowd, 'The Transformation of the Irish Border', *Political Geography* 26, no. 8 (2007), p. 878.
[266] *Ibid*, p. 880.
[267] *Ibid*, pp. 877-885.
[268] M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[269] M. McLaughlin, 'A Political Perspective', *Working Papers in British-Irish Studies* 5 (2001), p. 4.

interpretation of partition remains subjective.[270] Such subjectivity allows for the separation in opinions; purist republicans are unable to accept that they have liberty until complete separation from Britain is achieved. They identify Irish republicanism as the route to liberty. If positive freedom is to be obtained, ending foreign 'occupation' and 'oppression', then all efforts should first be directed to the uncompromising separatist goal, dismissing parliamentary politics as ineffective or any compromise to Irish unity as unacceptable. Others have been more pragmatic in how to move towards the eradication of the border and are comfortable with co-determination formulas which 'agree' Ireland.

Fraternity and republicanism

Positive freedom is a pluralistic ideal, spanning across a range of interests, identities and allegiances. Fraternity aims to achieve a form of membership which is polycentric as opposed to ethno-centric and grounds membership on the principle of interdependence. Petit goes further in explaining the ideal of fraternity within republicanism:

> We can surely identify with the republican polity for the fact that it gives each of us to the extent that it gives all, the measure of non-domination that goes with being a fully incorporated member; a fully authorised and a fully recognised citizen. If we cherish our citizenship and our freedom, we have to cherish at the same time the social body in the membership of which the status consists.[271]

The republican tradition realises that freedom in a political and personal sense may be accomplished through the affiliation to, or membership of a political community, united in the recognition that they can mutually exercise social and political action to a greater extent than if they were to work separately.

The republican tradition of grounding membership on common political interests can be traced back to the 1790s and Wolfe Tone's plea to unite under the identity of the people of Ireland. In 1791 Tone published the pamphlet, *An argument on behalf of Catholics*, in which he argued for

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[270] B. O'Leary, 'Analysing partition: Definition, classification and explanation', *Political Geography* 26 (2007), p. 887.
[271] P. Petit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 147.

two main things, the unity of the people of Ireland (to establish interdenominational unity) and severance from England (Irish freedom);

> The people are divided, each party afraid and jealous of the other; they have only the justice their cause to support them, and that plea grievously weakened by the acknowledged exclusion of three -fourths of the nation from their rights as men.[272]

Tone saw fraternity amongst the people of Ireland and popular sovereignty as a means of achieving Irish freedom, arguing the country would 'recover our rank and become a nation in something besides the name.'[273] Fraternity in the republican ideal is polycentric as opposed to ethno-centric where citizenship accommodates the politics of difference under the identity of the people of Ireland.

Irish republicanism promotes a common political life, but not homogeneity, encouraging the principle of interdependence whilst valuing individuality and human diversity. Whether this is done within the framework of a united Ireland or simply though an aspiration to such highlights the difference between the purists and pragmatists. Post-agreement public policy focuses on how to provide favourable conditions to promote a shared future and broaden participation.

In the modern context, fraternity and commonality have been difficult to achieve. Desires for civic republicanism are juxtaposed with an elite-level governing consociation in Northern Ireland which, in the short-term at least, legitimises ethnic division.[274] Two main public policy documents endorsed by mainstream republicanism aiming to address the co-existence of commonality and diversity have been *A Shared Future: Improving Relations in Northern Ireland* in 2003 and *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* in 2010. *A Shared Future* recognises that Northern Ireland is a deeply divided society whilst aiming to encourage the idea of a collective future to replace ethnocentric markers of identity, promoting pluralism, freedom of expression, social cohesion and cultural diversity.[275] The documents emphasise the

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[272] T .W. Tone, 'An Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland' *(by A Northern Whig),* in T. W. Moody, R. B. McDowell, & C. J. Woods (eds.), *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98* (Vol I), (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 126-127.

[273] *Ibid*, p. 127.

[274] See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the consociation versus integration debate.

[275] B. Graham & C. Nash, 'A Shared future: territoriality, pluralism and public policy in Northern Ireland', *Political Geography* 25, no.3 (2006), p. 260.

government's desire to foster mutual understanding and respect for diversity;[276] placing the responsibility for improving relations at all levels of public sector delivery. *Shared Future* emphasises the need for reconciliation encouraging positive relations to be built on equality, partnership and respect in order to accommodate difference within a divided Ireland. The *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (CSI), 2010, recognises that the promotion of equality of opportunity is an essential element of building positive cross-community relations. The document sets out the goals for a shared future, built on the foundations for a cohesive community. The CSI argues for positive relations to be built on equality of opportunity where the Government commits to the recognition that 'the promotion of equality of opportunity is an essential element of building good relations.'[277]

Mainstream republican policy alludes to a broadening of participation and the cohesion of communities. Sinn Féin insists that it would not 'discourage anyone who so wishes from endeavouring to promote their cultural identity socially, culturally or politically by any legitimate and democratic method, including the possessions of British or any other citizenship.'[278] Focus on the tension between communities as the problem, as opposed to British interference in the state of Northern Ireland, has the potential to direct attention away from the tensions caused by what was viewed as an 'illegitimate' interference by the British state. As such, republicans have tended to play down the need for cultural pluralism and acceptance of diversity. Fraternity was previously (crudely) seen as an inevitable consequence of liberty.

Equality and republicanism

Although sometimes parochial, the republican movement in Ireland also possesses an international outlook. The socialist leader, James Connolly, viewed the struggle for a united Ireland as a phenomenon to be explained through the prism of class conflict extending beyond

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[276] Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *A Shared Future: A consultation paper on improving relations in Northern Ireland: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*, (Belfast, Community Relations Unit, March 2005).

[277] Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration*, (Belfast, 2010), p. 75.

[278] M. McLaughlin, *A Political Perspective*, in, Porter, N., (ed.), *The Republican Ideal*, (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1998), p. 5.

the Irish state. The British state divided the Irish working class on sectarian grounds in order to prevent them from uniting under an all-Ireland citizenship, as a result securing British economic interests. In asking the question 'who are the Irish?' Connolly gave the response, 'the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.'[279] Connolly considered the working class to be agents of both national and social freedom. According to this analysis the social situation, in terms of equality, and the national question are inextricably linked.

Despite Connolly's analysis having resonance throughout the history of Irish republicanism, the idea that national revolution can accomplish radical social and economic change has proved a recurring point of controversy within the movement. In the 1960s, Cathal Goulding, the IRA chief of staff, attempted to shift the IRA towards an all-Irish neo-Marxist analysis, an approach which proved a significant factor in the 1969 Provisional-Official split. After the split Goulding continued to argue that the violence utilised by the Provisionals diverted attention away from the ruling-class oppression of the working classes. The Irish Republican and Socialist Party (IRSP), a breakaway group from the Officials founded in 1974, uphold the idea that class struggle and national liberation cannot be separated. The IRSP aims to 'end Imperialist rule in Ireland and establish a 32 County Democratic socialist Republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.'[280] The IRSP provide a version of Irish republicanism that is a working-class vision of an all-Irish citizenship bound by socialism with redistribution at its core.

Nonetheless, a contradiction remains that, the INLA, the 'military' wing with which the IRSP was associated, bore responsibility for some of the worst sectarian excesses: 'The organisation sworn to build a secular workers' republic found it hard on occasion to resist the temptation to get involved in catholic revenge attacks.'[281] Particularly in rural areas, INLA members were often drawn into confrontations with loyalists.

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[279] J. Connolly, *The Irish Flag* (8 April 1916) , in, *Collected Works* (Vol. II), (Dublin, 1988), pp. 383-384.
[280] IRSP, *Founding Statement of the IRSP*, Dublin 13/12/1974.
[281] J. Holland & H. McDonald, *INLA: Deadly Divisions*, (Dublin, Poolbeg Press,1994), p. 227.

Whilst being asked to redefine republicanism from a political perspective Sinn Féin MLA Mitchel McLaughlin stated: 'The Republican vision of the future is one in which the goals of equality, democracy and the maximum welfare of the maximum number will be achieved, with due attention to the needs of the international community.'[282] The post-conflict agenda of Sinn Féin has been projected utilising a language of rights encompassing a broader spectrum of identities beyond the republican / unionist dichotomy. Sinn Féin largely replaced socialism and redistribution as a means of creating an all-Ireland citizenship, but continued to stress equality:

> At the core of our agenda for government is one simple word - Equality. Equality of opportunity and of outcome is central to our priorities…As republicans we are totally committed to ending inequality and to bringing about a society where all are treated equally.[283]

Sinn Féin's stress upon equality often fused socio-economic concerns and conflict-related topics (such as prisoner rights and policing issues).[284] Yet, whilst terminology concerning Irish sovereignty remains, a shift has undoubtedly occurred, giving 'equality' a far more significant role. Moreover, the means of achieving equality have drastically changed. In the 1980s it was stressed by Sinn Féin that liberty could only be achieved via a united Ireland; only once this was achieved could the people embark on political freedom and economic independence. There was a need for 'national independence and a social revolution in all of Ireland.'[285] British withdrawal was a necessary precondition to any equality agenda.

Whilst adaptation to changing political and material circumstances is expected of any political party, Sinn Féin has reconceptualised itself through the party's equality rhetoric. McGovern suggests that 'The concept of equality has become the means of expressing Sinn Féin's worldview in every area of its social, political and economic outlook.'[286] Due to strategic considerations and the altered context leading up to and after the GFA the aspiration of equality has been frontloaded in place of the principle of liberty. The emphasis placed on rights and

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[282] M. McLaughlin, *A Political Perspective*, in, Porter, N., (ed.), *The Republican Ideal*, (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1998), p. i.

[283] Sinn Féin, *Agenda for Government: Sinn Féin Assembly Election Manifesto*, (Dublin, Sinn Féin, 2003). p. 3.

[284] M. McGovern, "The Old Days are over': Irish Republicanism, the Peace Process and the Discourse of Equality', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), pp. 632-633.

[285] G Adams, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, (Dingle, Brandon, 1986).p. 167

[286] M. McGovern, "The Old Days are over': Irish Republicanism, the Peace Process and the Discourse of Equality', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p. 632.

entitlement has dominated the party's image and election campaigns. Sinn Féin's 2007 Assembly Election Manifesto typifies the style of language used:

> The gap has widened between those with massive wealth and those who must work long hours to house, clothe and feed themselves and their families. People in poverty and on the margins of society don't share in this new prosperity.[287]

Such language is especially prominent in discussions concerning the place of unionists within a united Ireland where Sinn Féin has employed the language of equality 'in order to marry its appeal as a party of communalist leadership with universal principles.'[288] The equality agenda is a way for Sinn Féin to emphasise its role as ethnic community advocates, but is also used as a means to appeal to unionists for a 32 county republic based on equality of traditions within a new state (although unionists show little interest). A significant shift has occurred in the way that Sinn Féin no longer claim that Irish unity needs to be achieved before equality can be realised. Whilst the party still has the national question at the core of its agenda, the route to its successful resolution has been drastically altered. In utilising the 'Ireland of Equals' and, more recently, 'national reconciliation' rhetoric, Sinn Féin has adopted a pluralist approach. Mainstream republicanism has become more about a language of priority over dogmatic principle.

Purists versus Pragmatists: a typology

The basic faultline of purist versus pragmatist has always been evident within Irish republicanism; both sides of the divide justify their claims to uphold 'true' republican values. For purists, it is not possible to have full liberty under British rule and parliamentary routes cannot secure freedom. The root to liberty is therefore separatism, backed by physical force if necessary, with the uncompromising goal of self determination and a united Ireland. This is the framework within which other aspirations of equality and fraternity can be realised. Therefore purists frontload the principle of liberty and specify the need for liberty and independence before other goals can be achieved.

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[287] Sinn Féin, *Others Promise We Deliver: 2007 Manifesto*, (Dublin, Sinn Féin, 2007), p.4
[288] M. McGovern, ''The Old Days are over': Irish Republicanism, the Peace Process and the Discourse of Equality', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p. 622.

Pragmatists have relegated the principle of freedom in favour of parliamentary politics and constitutionalism, permissible prior to the establishment of a united Ireland, which is retained as a goal, but with Ireland's constitutional future co-determined by its two traditions, a methodology still dismissed as a 'unionist veto' by militant republicans. Table 2.1 below identifies varying interpretations of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Table 2.1 Purist versus Pragmatist conceptions of Irish republicanism

	PURIST Predominantly ethnic	PRAGMATIST Civic/ethnic
LIBERTY	Independence Self determination	Agreed Ireland Co-determination
EQUALITY	All Irish Citizenship Socialism Redistribution	Pluralist- 'Ireland of Equals' Parity of esteem
FRATERNITY	All Irish 'Nation Again'	Pluralism Accommodation of different traditions An aspiration to unity Acceptance of 'Britishness' on island

There are no political prescriptions providing an obvious, comfortable route to reaching the republican ideal. As Arthur suggests, 'all that has been done in Ireland has been to base everything on action, and we struggle to find route maps of what the republican movement is about.'[289] Whilst the purist versus pragmatist typologies provide a helpful tool in analysing the evolution of republican principles and highlight the broad nature of modern day Irish republicanism it is important not to become too reductionist. There is a danger that simply highlighting two contrasting and almost juxtaposed viewpoints may create the impression that

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[289] P. Arthur, 'An Academic Perspective', *Working Papers in British-Irish Studies,* 5 (2001), p. 10

there is a clear cut and neat division between the two. On the contrary, one has to allow for a blurring between the two positions whilst also bearing in mind that there may be transfers made across by either side. Such groupings are not mutually exclusive nor are they always easily defined. Fianna Fáil and, currently Sinn Féin, have been described as 'extra-constitutional' as they transcended their militarist origins and republicanism more broadly is an eclectic phenomenon.

Republicanism is also an evolutionary and contextual movement. The pragmatist versus purist dichotomy does not provide an explanation of the dynamic relationship between activists, movement organisation and the larger social structure. The political environment in which movements operate may change over time. If they do not respond they are then at risk of being archaic and out of touch. If they do however reassess strategy and drop long-term principles they may be criticised 'sell outs' for betraying fundamental beliefs. Yet the purist-pragmatist distinction can be helpful in two regards. Firstly, it highlights a re-occurring historical trend within the republican movement. Secondly, it identifies the various interpretations of republican principles which go some way in explaining how in modern day Irish republicanism such a vast range of interpretations can exist whilst all claiming lineage to the same tradition. The allure of practical politics has often proven too hard to resist for former purists, with recurring tendencies to divide republicans.

Conclusion

In exploring republicanism as an ideology, is it possible to label Irish republicanism with set characteristics? The foundation of such a question can be laid out by exploring republicanism in general, broken down at base level to the principles of liberty (or positive freedom), equality (the promotion of common good over self interest) and fraternity (with faith in the utilitarian ideal of the political community). The problem in the interpretation and understanding of such principles is that these values are those to which the majority of ideologies subscribe. This raises two key questions. Firstly, is there an agreed way in which to interpret these principles? Secondly is there an appropriate formula or prescription for how to realise such ideals? It is within these two questions where the problem in defining Irish republicanism arises. Republicanism is broad of

principle and multifaceted in terms of application, making it very difficult to define Irish republicanism by a set of established principles. This makes it difficult to ascribe the title of 'true republican' to a single political organisation.

What looking at these principles does do is highlight the fault lines between purist and pragmatist, a faultline which allows the phenomenon of dissent to emerge. It is not for this thesis to state which interpretations are correct, but rather to understand why and in what form these differences emerge. For both purists and pragmatists the goal is the same yet the methodologies differ. Mainstream republicanism relies upon constitutional tactics to change the constitution. Militant, self-ascribed 'purists', believe that in working the existing system, the system changes republicans rather than vice-versa, making it harder to attain their desired goal. Thus, according, to Ruari Ó Brádaigh, such entrants 'end up accepting British rule and collaborating instead of opposing it.'[290]

The evolution of republicanism is often referred to in terms of a collective identity. Such interpretations assume that the understanding and interpretation of republicanism is uniform. It is more appropriate to use an interpretive approach, considering the complex relationship between the social structure, individuals and the group organisation when analysing Irish republicanism. Republicanism, whilst it has a history, core principles and an agreed goal, is a construction relative to individual and group experiences. It is therefore not ideal to provide a description of set characteristics in order to construct a definitive 'true republicanism'. Irish republicanism is a more fluid and adaptable construction that moves and reshapes itself, adopting (for most republicans) a profile that contemporary circumstances dictate. So, in response to the question posited of whether there are agreed components to Irish republicanism, the construction of a model of the 'true republican' runs the risk of providing a shallow and restricted model, unable to provide the space in which to explain the reasons behind why different interpretations emerge. However, studying the faultlines between purist and pragmatist goes some way in beginning to understand why these differences occur.

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[290] *Saoirse*, 'Interview with Ruairi O Bradaigh', 01/04/2010.

Chapter 3

Creating Political Space for 'Dissidents'? The Extent of Ideological Compromise by Sinn Féin and 'Provisional' Republicanism

> I can understand why dissident republicans bristle at being called 'dissidents'. After all, it inescapably defines and anchors them as being dissident relative to a much larger, successful republican organisation with which they disagree.[291]

'Dissident' republicanism has assumed various forms and its heterogeneous nature makes it a difficult entity to define and analyse. Although those who broke away from Provisional Sinn Féin in 1986, 1997 and beyond, or created new republican groups with no previous connections, were small in number, their justifications remain significant in understanding the Irish republican ideology. Whilst those republicans who oppose the Sinn Féin agenda are a small and disunited minority, they are important in resisting the idea that the party has a monopoly of what constitutes Irish republicanism.[292] The range of 'dissent' is reflected today in paramilitary organisations, community groups, blogs, forums and journals. Whilst the form of dissent is broad, a key and often overlooked question is, from what, or who, are these groups dissenting? If Provisional republicanism is the yardstick for which to measure the spectrum of republican manifestations in the modern day context then it is vital to consider the relationship between Provisionalism and traditional republican ideology.

To date, the focus of academic analysis has been upon the extent to which the Provisional movement has compromised traditional republican ideals through its involvement in the peace process and acceptance of political institutions in Northern Ireland. The Provisional brand of Irish republicanism has been through a period of profound transition. The movement has evolved

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[291] D. Morrison in *Daily Ireland*, 'When one doesn't mind being called a Provo', 06/09/2006.
[292] This chapter focuses primarily on republicanism in Northern Ireland and Sinn Féin's position in the North as opposed to the Irish Republic.

and adapted, processes which have brought with them the charge of having 'sold out'. The extent to which Sinn Féin has evolved is indeed startling. This chapter examines the extent of ideological and political contortions within Provisional republicanism, accounting for the changes within Sinn Féin strategy. The chapter considers the impact of exogenous and endogenous pressures, in addition to positive choices, underpinning such drastic change. It then continues to discuss the influences on Sinn Féin as a constitutional party, in order to assess the wider impact of electoral competition on the party's positioning. Within the academic debate surrounding the phenomenon of 'dissent' within modern day Irish republicanism there is a need to create a framework that considers the relationship between the changed political approach of Sinn Féin and the ideological tenets of republicanism.

Tracing the transition

Sinn Féin has been through a period of profound transition. As such it is not surprising that this seismic change is explored in an array of academic literature. A significant amount of academic attention has attempted to understand how Sinn Féin represented continuity and change within the Irish republican tradition.[293] This chapter will dissect these contributions as well as highlight any possible inadequacies within the literature. First however, it is necessary to briefly illustrate the extent of (Provisional) republican transition.

The development of revisionist republicanism within Sinn Féin can be traced to the 1986 decision to drop the long-standing republican policy of abstention from Leinster House. The Provisionals had emerged in 1969 in opposition to taking seats in Dáil Éireann and Stormont, rejecting the political institutions of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland as partitionist in only residing over 26 counties and 6 counties respectively. Those determined to maintain abstention pointed out that the Sinn Féin constitution stipulated that candidates standing on an

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[293] See, as examples R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2007); K. Bean *, The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007); R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2003); M.Frampton *, The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2000*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2009); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century,* (Oxon, Routledge, 2005); E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Penguin, 2003); J. Ruane and J. Todd (eds.), *After the Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 1999); J. Tonge, *Northern Ireland*, (Cambridge, Polity, 2006).

attendance basis for any of the partitionist assemblies were guilty of 'an act of treason.'[294] Considering the existence of the Provisionals derived in part from the safeguarding of abstentionist purism, the recognition, and the ultimate acceptance of the government of the 26 counties by Provisional Sinn Féin from 1986 signified a substantial revision to party policy.

The 1994 PIRA ceasefire provided the catalyst for the next major revision to Provisional republicanism, which, despite a brief breakdown in the cessation of violence in 1996-1997, culminated in the disbandment of the paramilitary organisation. This was finalised in 2005 with the decommissioning of weapons 'finally accomplished.'[295] Considering the previous attachment to the slogan of 'not a bullet, not an ounce' in reference to the surrendering of arms, the completion of decommissioning demonstrated a remarkable revision of the Provisional approach to achieving 'freedom and justice' in Ireland. In 1986 Martin McGuinness had insisted, following Sinn Féin local election successes: 'We don't believe that winning elections and winning any amount of votes will bring freedom in Ireland. At the end of the day, it will be the cutting edge of the IRA which will bring freedom.'[296] The former PIRA prisoner, Tommy McKearney, describes the culmination of (Provisional) change as indicative that the 'leadership had achieved a certain status by surrendering its old programme and being allocated a place within the British system in Ireland. The era of new Sinn Féin was firmly established.'[297] Whilst there had been previous hiatuses in the military campaigns of the IRA, the ability to resume an armed campaign had always been retained. Full decommissioning therefore represented a new departure.

Accepting the terms of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and entering power sharing in Stormont meant the recognition of Northern Ireland as a political entity and the approval of a deal which maintained the existence of a partitioned island for as long as the majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland so wished. This principle of consent, which had previously been vehemently rejected as a 'Unionist Veto', provided the cornerstone of the GFA. Despite the previous demands upon the British government to pledge withdrawal from Northern Ireland as a

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[294] Sinn Féin Education Department, 'The Split', *Republican Lecture Series* No.1 (1979).
[295] *BBC News*, 'IRA 'has destroyed all its arms'', 26/09/2005.
[296] *New York Times*, 'Irish Issue: a look at both sides', 18/02/1986.
[297] T. McKearney, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament*, (London, Pluto Press, 2011), p. 182.

prelude to negotiations over the details of departure, Sinn Féin accepted an agreement without any guarantee of reaching their ultimate goal. The declaration of support for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2007 by Sinn Féin, which restored power sharing after a temporary collapse, signified the party's acceptance that the road to a united Ireland was to be along a constitutional path which fully accepted the institutions of the Northern state it still avowedly wished to dissolve.

For the majority within Sinn Féin and the PIRA, this revision represented the evolution of tactical considerations and a natural development in order to adjust to contextual realities.[298] However, for others this revision went too far and indicated the desertion of principles that are fundamental to republicanism as an ideology.[299] The variation within interpretations of republicanism highlights differences in perception over what is a republican principle and what is merely a republican tactic. It also highlights differences over how, strategically, a united Ireland might be reached. Cognisance of the debate between what are tactics and what are principles is fundamental in understanding the emergence of dissident republicanism.

Whilst the republican movement has generally agreed on final goals, sections have often possessed markedly divergent perceptions of the existing potential of political opportunities. As a result, varying perceptions have existed regarding resources, opportunities, and threats, co-existing with uncertainty and disagreement about which strategies would maximise the potential to secure goals.[300] In addition to the disagreements over the effectiveness and suitability of particular strategies and tactics, there have also been very different views of how ultimate goals and the strategies for obtaining them were related. For some, republicanism constitutes a fixed set of unyielding principles and ideas, whilst others are more likely to interpret republicanism as an evolving movement with adaptive strategies, conditioned by military and political

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[298] See Sinn Féin, *Defending the Good Friday Agreement; Sinn Féin Submission to the Mitchell Review,* 23/09/1999.
[299] See for example RNU, *Critique of the Good Friday Agreement*, 14/04/2011; A. McIntyre in *The Pensive Quill*, 'Republicanism: Alive or Dying?'*,* 01/01/2008.
[300] C. Irvin*, Militant Nationalism*; *Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country,* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 21.

opportunities,[301] British state strategies[302] and public and electoral opinion.[303] Sinn Féin acknowledged in the 1970s that:

> The Republican Movement has always had three tendencies: a militarist and fairly apolitical tendency; a revolutionary tendency; and a constitutional tendency. These terms, as used here, are relative to the conditions, the circumstances and the historical background against which the Movement functions. Throughout the history of the Movement one or other of the tendencies has periodically been in the ascendancy[304]

Despite the rebranding of Sinn Féin's republicanism, the organisation has remained relatively unified in that it has retained most members and indeed expanded. Today, within the mainstream discourse there is a tendency to place Sinn Féin at a level whereby it has complete possession of the republican franchise. As a result, there is a need to understand Provisional republicanism in its own right in order to consider whether there is space, ideologically and practically, for the emergence of dissident groups. Has Sinn Féin's republicanism maintained fidelity to republican principles, travelling on what it perceives as the 'long road' to the Republic, as argued by Frampton?[305] Alternatively, has the scale of change meant that Sinn Féin have vacated republican space so much as to create opportunities for others? Or, do 'end of history' claims go some way in explaining change, as Irish republicanism has entered an endgame, despite protestations to the contrary, incapable of replacement by fragmented and marginalised dissident groups. This lattermost view has been expressed most stridently by Anthony McIntyre:

> There is no crisis. This is so because there is no longer any social phenomenon that we may term republicanism. The present pockets of the faithful exist here and there, for the most part taking cultural form. But as a social phenomenon of any political import republicanism has ceased to function.[306]

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[301] See R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (London, Macmillan, 2003); M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2000*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century,* (Oxon, Routledge, 2005).

[302] See K. Bean *, The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, University of Liverpool Press, 2007); K. Bean & M. Hayes, 'Sinn Féin and the New Republicanism of Ireland: Electoral Progress, Political Stasis, and Ideological Failure', *Radical History Review,* 104(2009).

[303] See G. Murray and J. Tonge, *Sinn Féin and the SDLP: From Alienation to Participation*, (London, C. Hurst and Co., 2005).

[304] Sinn Féin Education Department, 'The Split', *Republican Lecture Series* No.1 (1979).

[305] See M. Frampton, *The Long March: Political Strategy of Sinn Féin, 1981-2007,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[306] A. McIntyre 'Republicanism: Alive or Dying?' *The Pensive Quill,* 01/01/2008.

The key consideration here is whether the Provisionals have maintained old values within a new context, as claimed in a very different framework by 'New Labour'[307] or whether they have adapted to an extent whereby they can no longer be called republican. Or, as articulated by McIntyre, has republicanism expired?

Explaining the transition

Considering this transition is vital in order to understand the dissident rationale. As the opening quote from Danny Morrison encapsulates, the term 'dissident' has been interpreted to view groups in relation to Sinn Féin as opposed to the wider republican framework. As a result, tracing the development of the Provisionals as well as considering how and why this change occurred is fundamental in understanding dissident justifications of their own approach. To understand the dissident ideological standpoint it is necessary to consider Sinn Féin's movement into constitutional politics and to what extent that represented the updating, revising or contorting of Irish republican principles.

There are several lines of reasoning emerging from the academic literature attempting to explain the motives behind the transformation within the Provisional movement. The first argument suggests that modern Sinn Féin is a product of the failure of tactics (i.e. the IRA's armed struggle) which ultimately forced a reassessment of strategy. The centrality of armed struggle to republican strategy in the first two decades of Provisional Republicanism is summed up by the following assertion:

> The IRA strategy is very clear. At some point in the future, due to the pressure of the continuing and sustained armed struggle, the will of the British government to remain in this country will be broken. This is the objective of the armed struggle…we can state confidently today that there will be no ceasefire and no truces until Britain declares its intent to withdraw and leave our people in peace.[308]

The absolutism from the Provisionals on the centrality of armed struggle ebbed away as realism and pragmatism overshadowed the limited potential gains of a military campaign. Emphasis switched to a second front of electoralism. Yet it was untenable to maintain the armed front of

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[307] See K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007).
[308] IRA spokesperson quoted in *An Phoblacht /Republican News*, 17/08/1989.

the PIRA whilst embarking on a project designed to make Sinn Féin become the dominant force within northern nationalism. Within the Provisional strategy there were insufficient resources and an obvious lack of complementarity, for both the ballot box and the armalite as a permanent duality. Alonso explains this realisation from a grass roots level where the frustration of the rank and file over the lack of achievements of a military campaign, allied to the stagnation of Sinn Féin's vote, indicated the failure and futility of armed struggle.[309] However, Moloney offers a top down explanation of change, where the decision to initiate movement away from armed struggle as a tactic was leadership led.[310] Whether this movement away from armed struggle was leadership led or grass-roots driven, the uncomfortable juxtapositioning of militarism with electoralism suggests an inevitability in one element being subsumed. Sinn Féin duly came to surpass the PIRA and became the senior partner in the Provisional movement. Understanding this political versus military friction throughout the history of republicanism is essential in beginning to explain the movement's tendency to split.[311]

An alternative explanation of change is more rooted in the contention that the Provisionals were never fastened by a strong ideological anchor. Rather, the development of the movement relied on pragmatism and therefore the changes made within republicanism were unsurprising.[312] This argument attempts to explain the development of the Provisionals as situational and contextual more than ideational. Under this interpretation, Northern Provisionals were not unduly committed to the traditional ideological grounding of Irish republicanism, and the politics and ideology of 1916 (the indivisible republic) were mere bolt-ons to the street politics of 1969. The emergence of the Provisionals was centred more upon a supposed defence of Northern communities rather than a level of commitment to republican ideals and tradition.[313] The importance of context in understanding the Provisional movement, and ultimately strategy, is explained by English in his assertion that, 'the Provisional IRA's violent nationalism was also

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[309] R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2007).
[310] E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Allen Lane, 2002).
[311] A. Richards, 'Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Féin, the Peace Process and Democracy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no.4 (2001); M. Von Tagen Page & M. L. R. Smith, 'War by other means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy', *Armed Forces and Society* 27, no.1 (2000).
[312] A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century*; (London, Routledge, 2005); A. McIntyre, *The Good Friday Agreement: The Death of Irish Republicanism*, (New York, Ausubo Press, 2008).
[313] M. Hayes, 'The evolution of Republican Strategy and the 'peace process' in Ireland', *Race Class* 39, no. 3 (1998), pp. 21-29.

about a community in struggle; indeed it was one largely defined by a particular kind of struggle. Constitutional politics were held to have failed, reformism to have been proved futile.'[314] If the birth of Provisional republicanism was indeed as a result of situational circumstances as opposed to ideological devotion, it meant that pragmatism and immediate local concerns were placed before the conventional republican mantras of a 32 county republic. As a result, the evolution of the PIRA and Sinn Féin was based in realism as distinct from rigid dogma. Eventually this permitted the displacement of the historical certainties of republican discourse for the vaguer language of transition.

This argument is pursued by McIntyre, who contends that the Provisionals were an organisation shaped by the situational context, notably British Army and RUC repression and second-class socio-economic status, rather than a movement imbued with deep ideological devotion dictating direction. McIntyre goes on to state that armed struggle was not merely a dynamic towards a united Ireland, but also a means for achieving reform in the North:

> The modern republican movement has persistently been the product of British state strategies rather than a body which has existed for the sole purpose of completing the 'unfinished business' of uniting Ireland. It represents the crystallisation of nationalist opposition to structural exclusion within, the North of Ireland.[315]

The existence of the Provisionals on a mainly situational rather than ideational basis, meant that if the situation changed on the ground they too could change, pragmatism displacing purism. Whilst this argument contextualises how the Provisional movement has functioned, there is a need to also question the extent to which they have been devoid of ideological foundation. It is difficult to expand McIntyre's argument across the whole organisation and therefore in considering the creation of the Provisionals one cannot simply dismiss the role of ideology. Whilst ideological shallowness was characteristic of many within the Provisionals, it ignores the commitment of the republican *leadership* at formation in 1969-70 to the politics of 1916-19 and core principles such as the policy of abstention. That leadership was eventually ousted by Northern figures, with Adams at the forefront. Whilst the founders of the Provisionals may have been instilled by republican tradition, recruits after 1969 were more likely to join in response to

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[314] R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland,* (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), p.372.
[315] A. McIntyre, 'Modern Irish Republicanism: The Product of British State Strategies', *Irish Political Studies* 10, no.1 (1995), p. 98.

the situation on the ground such as state violence and socio-economic disparities.[316] Therefore, it is possible to propose that the formation of the Provisionals was based upon ideological alignment; however, it was situational reality and the context on the ground that developed and expanded the movement.

For political movements to gain and maintain support they have to retain relevance. Therefore, an element of pragmatism is essential in order to respond to contextual demands and remain significant. However, it is the balance between ideological adherence and a willingness to adjust to contextual realities that makes Irish republicanism so contested. The dogmatic allegiance to certain principles may force a movement into political isolation whilst the relegation or removal of other tenets may lead to accusations of having sold out. Dissidents allege that the Provisionals relegated principles beyond the point where they could still be considered republican and that republicanism became whatever the Sinn Féin leadership claimed it was on any given day.[317]

Another key argument attempting to explain the shifts within Provisionalism focuses on the impact of structural conditions in determining the shape and nature of modern day mainstream republicanism, emphasising the impact of exogenous factors such as socio-economic and political development. Sinn Féin now operates in a very different socio-economic context compared to when second-class citizenry existed amongst Northern working-class Catholics in the 1970s. Economic growth, investment opportunities and a plethora of anti-discrimination legislative measures meant a decrease in economic disparity.[318] The greater economic parity between communities is a consequence of fair employment legislation; political change; external

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[316] Also see R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicanism: An Oral and Interpretative History*, (Westport, Greenwood, 1993).

[317] K. Bean, *Shifting Discourses of New Nationalism and Post- republicanism,* in*,* M. Elliott (ed.) *The Long Road To Peace In Northern Ireland*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 137*;* also see H. Patterson*,* 'Towards 2016'*, Fourthwrite,* (Spring, 2000).

[318] K. Bean, *The Economic and Social War Against Violence: British Social and Economic Strategy and the Evolution of Provisionalism*, in, A. Edwards and S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008); Bean , *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007*)*; P. Shirlow, *The Economics of the Peace Process,* in. C. Gilligan & J. Tonge, *Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland,* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997), p. 136; P. Shirlow & B. Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City*, (London, Pluto, 2006).

financial support from the British and American governments as well as peace and reconciliation funding from supranational bodies such as the EU.[319]

There is also a need to consider the impact of a changing political context where 'post-ideological' politics, on an international level, and the changes in British strategy, at state level, dictated the arena in which Provisionalism functioned.[320] According to this analysis it was the result of these external pressures on the Provisionals that meant that it was to become inevitable that Sinn Féin would move into the electoral arena and allow itself to become dominated by electoral concerns, rather than be hidebound by outdated nationalist dogma and ideology, anti-colonial rhetoric and futile militarism. The new electoralism and competition for votes allowed revolutionary goals to be replaced by the rhetoric of social reformism and electoral appeal. Sinn Féin became less the self-ascribed government of Ireland, an untenable position, and much more a competitive political actor in a pluralist electoral marketplace. However, for dissidents this absorption into the political mainstream went far beyond the simple adjustment to exterior pressures.

Diversity and multiplicity has come to define the nature of the republican movement throughout history. For some it is within this history where understanding of the movement from the margins to the political mainstream lies.[321] The more 'purist' interpretation of republicanism, by its very nature, has remained so static that any situation that requires adjustment or amendment to policy, (a situation that inevitably presents itself to any dynamic political organisation) has been followed by cries of 'sell-out'. This invariably makes the schismatic tendencies within republicanism an inherent trait. Whilst such an interpretation allows for the emergence of dissident groups, it does not explain with precision the growth of dissent and why the fault line between purist and pragmatist is not always clear, evidenced by the way in which different

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[319] See K. Bean, *The Economic and Social War Against Violence,* in, A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), p. 165. See also for impact of armed struggle on economic stability M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class,* 71(2000), pp. 133- 161.

[320] K. Bean & M. Hayes, 'Sinn Féin and the New Republicanism of Ireland: Electoral Progress, Political Stasis, and Ideological Failure', Radical History Review 104, (2009), pp. 126-142.

[321] J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies,* 18, no.1 (2003), pp. 1-26*; R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicans; an oral and*

factions left the Provisionals at different times. Whilst each of the arguments above frames the evolution of the Provisionals differently they are all linked by a similar line of thought in that they portray Sinn Féin's movement into constitutionalism as inevitable. Whether the shape of mainstream republicanism can be defined by the failure of armed struggle, the arguments that the Provisionals never had a strong ideological anchor, the impact of exogenous forces and the innate nature of the movement to split, all depict revisionism with a sense of inevitability.

The civic / ethnic dichotomy

There is a tendency within some of the existing literature to explain contemporary Provisionalism as a result of the external influences of socio-economic transformation and localised structures of power within the nationalist community.[322] These arguments highlight accompanying processes of institutionalisation, rather than accounting for what Sinn Féin's modern outlook now represents. Whilst the route of transition taken by Sinn Féin is explained, there is a need to reveal more about the current form of Sinn Féin's republicanism. There is a body of a literature that explains the development of Provisional republicanism in relation to concepts of identity and ideas of the nation.[323]

Debates on Irish identity and the concept of the Irish nation are part of a much wider debate on nationalism. In recent years nationalism has been explained through a 'civic' versus 'ethnic' dichotomy.[324] One of the first to articulate this divide between civic and ethnic forms of nationalism was Hans Kohn, who argued that:

> Nationalism in the West arose in an effort to build a nation in the political reality and the
> struggles of the present without too much sentimental regard for the past; nationalists in

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interpretative history, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993); B. O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1993).

[322] K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 135.

[323] See R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge,1997); K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* ,(Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007). See also G. Murray and J. Tonge, *Sinn Féin and the SDLP: From Alienation to Participation*, (London, C. Hurst and Co., 2005), pp. 263-267 for a discussion on post-Republicanism.

[324] For broader discussion on nationalism, see E. Harris, *Nationalism: theories and cases* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009); J. Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism: a critical introduction*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Central and Eastern Europe created, often out of the myth of the past and the dreams of the future, an ideal fatherland.[325]

Civic nationalism, the basis of which is a voluntary constitutional association of people supportive of particular political structures in recognition of ethnic identity, is seen to be a typically western model. Ethnic nationalism, which is distinguished by 'its emphasis on a community of birth and native culture', is identified as an eastern variant.[326] Civic nationalism has its roots in the democratic and secular tradition of the enlightenment and is typically positively valued for being inclusive, identifying the citizen as the basis of the nation state. The nation state is thus defined as civic to the extent that it recognises the nation as a community of 'equal, right-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values.'[327] As a result the nation-state constitutes all those who align themselves to the nation regardless of race, religion or language. Ethnic nationalism has largely been negatively valued for being exclusive.[328] The eastern ethnic tradition defines the nation in terms of a 'homogeneous' people; what unites people is a common identity. Kearney explains this dichotomy:

> Civic nationalism conceives of the nation as including all of its citizens- regardless of blood, creed or colour. Ethnocentric nationalism believes, by contrast, that what holds a community together is not common rights of citizenship (or humanity) but common ethnicity (or race).[329]

Whilst this civic-ethnic distinction highlights variations within nationalism, it is also criticised for being too rigid a framework, misleadingly offering polar positions.[330] Rather, it is more appropriate to distinguish between various forms of nationalism by considering the inclusive and exclusive nature of classification. As Brubecker notes, 'all understandings of nationhood and all forms of nationalism are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. What varies is not the fact or

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[325] H. Kohns, *The Idea of Nationalism*, (New York, Collier, 1967), pp. 330-331.

[326] A. D. Smith, *National Identity*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1991), p.11.

[327] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland*; *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997), pp.2-3.

[328] O. Zenker, 'Autochthony and activism among contemporary Irish Nationalists in Northern Ireland, or: if 'civic' nationalists are 'ethno'-cultural revivalists, what remains of the civic/ethnic divide?' *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no.4 (2009), p. 697.

[329] Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland*, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 57.

[330] See D. Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics,* (London, Routledge, 2000); W. Kymlicka, *Misunderstanding Nationalism*, in, R. Beiner (ed.), *Theorising Nationalism*, (New York, SUNY Press, 1999); T. Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism*, (London, Verso, 1997).

even degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, but the bases or criteria of inclusion and exclusion.'[331] It is more appropriate to define types of nationalism by considering the basis of inclusion and exclusion as opposed to the more rigid labels that come with the civic and ethnic definitions.

Nationalism can be the collectivist politics of 'blood and belonging', centred on the ethnic affiliation of the *Volk*. Alternatively, nationalism can be the expression of association between citizens in a specific designated area/polity they share where the rights of man trump those of the nation. The latter interpretation frontloads the importance of the nation and the concept of universalism, adopting a more civic position. It is this civic interpretation that is argued to have defined nationalism in modern polities, where movement towards the semi-autonomy of nations, as via devolution in the United Kingdom, is defined by the *demos* as opposed to the *ethnos*.[332] This new nationalism reflects the accommodationist, pragmatic politics that came to typify much sub-state nationalism by the late twentieth century. As nationalism moved away from the specificity of ethnically determined characteristics to one which embraces difference within the nation, national identity ultimately became far more flexible, and as a result harder to distinguish who 'we' are as a nation.

The manner in which national identity is defined and explained varies greatly. The concept of the nation is dependent on several factors, such as geography, sovereignty, ethnicity and culture. Within each factor there are different and contested interpretations. As such, the criteria of belonging to that state, or deciding what constitutes the 'we' as a nation, has flexible conditions. Today in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland the question of 'national identity' is under discussion, posing questions such as what is the Irish nation and who is included within that nation?[333] Key to the evaluation of nationalism is not so much the criteria to which a group is identified but more the degree to which other groups are respected. As Harris contends, 'Far from just articulating identity, nationalism articulates political aims and promotes interests in the

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[331] R. Brubecker, *'Civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism*, in R. Brubaker (ed.), *Ethnicity Without Groups*, (Cambridge, Harvard Univeristy Press, 2004), p.141.
[332] *Ibid,* p. 166.
[333] See H. F. Kearny, *Ireland, Contested Ideas of Nationalism and History*, (Cork, Cork University Press, 2007), p. 36.

name of and on behalf of a group it helped to constitute as a national group.'[334] The Irish conflict is indeed most commonly explained as an ethno-national quarrel involving rival concepts of the nation and national identity.[335]

Two communities within Northern Ireland have distinct identities both with a set of traditional ideals and with a definitive aspiration; they therefore have been described as possessing fundamentally opposing national and cultural identities.[336] At this stage it is necessary to look closely at the republican interpretation of cultural difference and acceptance of other identities, particularly in respect of how this has evolved in parallel to wider debates on nationalism. Interpretation of national identity and treatment of 'other groups' within the understanding of 'Irishness', provides a framework in which to explore the development of what is now the mainstream republican movement within a broader geo-political context.

The civic/ethnic divide in explaining Provisional republicanism

The two Northern Irish communities have long held conflicting national and cultural identities as well as polarised constitutional aspirations. The Provisional interpretation of the conflict in the 1970s identified the British presence in the North as a colonial occupation. A British identity was therefore seen as a product of Britain's imperial presence, one held by the 'forces of occupation', whereas the inhabitants of the island were Irish. As a result, Provisional republican thinking of this time approached the question of national identity with an element of solipsism, where the issues that mattered to one's own republican people could be seen as indistinguishable from those affecting the Irish people as a whole, whether unionist or nationalist, north or south.[337] Gerry Adams offered one example of such discourse:

> Ireland is historically, culturally and geographically one single unit. The partition of Ireland, established by the British 'Government of Ireland Act', divides Ireland into two artificial statelets, the boundaries of which were determined by a sectarian head-count and can be maintained only by continuing sectarianism.[338]

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[334] E. Harris, *Nationalism: theories and cases* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 33.
[335] B. O'Leary & J. McGarry, *The politics of antagonism: understanding Northern Ireland*, (London, Athlone Press, 1996).
[336] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997).
[337] See R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006), p. 401.
[338] G. Adams*, The Politics of Irish Freedom*, (Dingle, Brandon, 1986), p. 22.

Republican emphasis was placed on a colonial interpretation of the conflict and the need for a decisive break from Britain.[339] The aim was to force the British out of Ireland after which reconciliation between different *Irish* traditions would soon follow. Unionism, according to the 1970s Provisional interpretation, merely served partitionist interests, whilst unionists were barely acknowledged as a distinct community, let alone a different nation. Unionism was portrayed as a product of partition and represented an artificial construct and therefore constituted an empty ideology. As Kearney and Cullen note, 'proposed solutions to the problem of governing Northern Ireland have been couched in terms of the denial of its national identity to one or other of the communities.'[340] This triumphalism of one community over the other reinforced an ethnically-determined theory of nationalism.

Having initially offered relatively benign views of loyalists as merely deluded during the 1970s, the republican leadership offered harder-line, anti-loyalist rhetoric into the 1980s, stressing that republicanism, 'cannot and should not ever tolerate or compromise with loyalism.'[341] From the 1990s onwards a new discourse began to emerge regarding the republican interpretation of unionism. The Sinn Féin document *Towards a Lasting Peace*, published in 1992 articulated how unionists, could not, and should not, be coerced in to a united Ireland. Unionism was increasingly portrayed as a legitimate identity that could be accommodated within a united Ireland:

> We must be realistic enough to accept that, in the event of a British withdrawal, part of this island will be inhabited by more than 900,000 people whose whole history, aspirations, culture and sense of stability have been formed, nurtured and reinforced within a British political, intellectual and emotional environment.[342]

Such language of acceptance and accommodation marked a clear contrast with earlier assessments. Sinn Féin came to accept that in a 'vision of a united and independent Ireland there must be a place for those who consider themselves British and those who wish to stay British.'[343]

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[339] J. Todd, *Nationalism, Republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement*, in J. Ruane & J. Todd (eds.), *After the Good Friday Agreement, Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999), p. 56.
[340] R. Kearney & B. Cullen, *Rethinking Ireland: A proposal for a Joint Sovereignty Solution*, (Submission to the New Ireland Forum, Dublin Castle, 1983), p. 2.
[341] *An Phoblacht*, 05/11/1981.
[342] Sinn Féin, *Towards A Lasting Peace in Ireland*, (Dublin, Sinn Féin, 1992), p. 4.
[343] J. Gibney in *An Phoblacht*, 02/03/1995.

Asked whether it was possible to accept the Britishness of Unionism, the editor of Sinn Féin's *An Phoblacht*, Peadar Whelan, responded:

> Well that is a hard one for me to answer because I find it difficult to fathom. There is a friend of mine who used to talk about unionism and he used to say to me you would wonder why people would prefer the subjects of a British Queen or a British monarch than be a citizen of a united Ireland...Why would you rather be a subject than a citizen?[344]

Whilst the Sinn Féin position on unionism may have evolved, it has struggled to become fully accepting of Britishness as an identity upon the island of Ireland. Sinn Féin's Alex Maskey offered this perspective: 'I accept there are a lot of people who have an affinity with Britain. But there are some people who think they are British. I don't think they are British. They were born here so they're Irish, so I don't see them as British.'[345]

Rather than implying a complete overhaul of previous interpretations of British identity, Sinn Féin's shift in position signified the recognition of the realisation that dialogue and agreement with unionists is essential in achieving an indivisible Ireland. An example of this discourse was demonstrated by TD and Sinn Féin Vice President, Mary Lou McDonald, who, when asked about working with unionism, rejected the idea of a single sense of identity, asserting: 'The history and tradition of unionism, is the history and tradition of unionism, and as so for nationalism and republicanism.'[346] Consequently the republican strategy became defined by unionist outreach and accommodation of existing identities and traditions, as opposed to the straightforward need for their transformation. The republican position on unionism had not changed dramatically; rather a shift had occurred in how this was presented. Consent and respect therefore became taglines for Sinn Féin to reach out to the unionist community, but as a legitimate political or ideological construct unionism remains contested.

Sinn Féin's brand of republicanism has shifted to the politics of communal equality, rather than the overthrow of the previously conceived 'artificial state' that was Northern Ireland. In terms of defining or expressing national identity, emphasis was given to co-existence between

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[344] Peadar Whelan, interview with author, Belfast 25/09/2009
[345] Alex Maskey, interview with author, Belfast 25/09/2009.
[345] Mary Lou McDonald, speaking at Sinn Féin fringe meeting, *Labour Party conference, Liverpool: Ireland and Britain: Towards a new relationship*, 25/09/2011.

communities. This is typified through the language of Adams, which places less stress upon territorial imperatives and more upon 'Humeite' conceptualisations[347] of an agreed Ireland, with an approved mode of self-determination:

> The vision of an Ireland that is at peace with itself and with our nearest neighbours in Britain is a shared aspiration for most of the people in Ireland...Decisions on these matters, in our view, can ultimately only be arrived at through the most inclusive dialogue, political discourse and negotiation by the people of Ireland. Clearly that includes unionists.[348]

Such language of inclusion and pluralism typifies the reordering of republican principles and the frontloading of equality, agreement and consensus. This process has involved the promotion of a unionist outreach and the centrality of power sharing. Sinn Féin's brand of republicanism evolved from the 1970s interpretation of identity as purely ethnic in terms of definition to that which recognises the island of Ireland as a 'rich tapestry of identities', recognising shared values, shared geography and a shared political culture.[349]

This shift has seen the promotion of the civic republican themes of equality and citizenship, and acknowledgement, at least, of unionist identity and allegiance. As Murray and Tonge explain, 'Sinn Féin had moved towards a civic Republicanism, which acknowledges the plurality of identities in Northern Ireland and recognises an independent existence for Unionists beyond their British "colonial masters".'[350] Sinn Féin has moved from 'ethnically' determined republicanism, which promotes a homogeneous Irish identity, to a more civic and inclusive interpretation. This shift is argued to have 'popularized concepts of Irish identity as malleable and capable of a variety of readings' and, as a result, has created the possibility of remoulding Irish identity.[351]

Whilst the civic/ethnic dichotomy is useful in outlining the changes within Sinn Féin, it does not necessarily add to the understanding of why this shift has taken place. Any attempt to clarify the reasons why changes occurred needs to consider the impact of events on two levels. Firstly, there is a need to take a step back from the Northern Irish context in considering nationalism and

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[347] See, M. Cunningham, 'The Political Language of John Hume', *Irish Political Studies* 12 , no.1 (1997), pp.13-22.
[348] G. Adams Press Release, *Rights for all charter*, Jan 2004.
[349] Mary Lou McDonald, speaking at Sinn Féin fringe meeting, *Labour Party conference, Liverpool: Ireland and Britain: Towards a new relationship*, 25/09/2011.
[350] G. Murray & J. Tonge, *Sinn Féin and the SDLP: From Alienation to Participation,* (London, C. Hurst and Co., 2005), p. 263.
[351] K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin,* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 164.

reflect on the impact of wider political trends. On an international level it is possible to observe how the relationship between nationalism and self determination has evolved, specifically the movement away from centralised homogeneous states towards models of multi-level governance. The devolution of powers and the subsequent exercising of authority across different jurisdictions is demonstrated, in various forms, in Catalonia, Wales, Scotland and Quebec, as examples. Therefore, it is no longer assumed that nation states are in the possession of undiluted authority. This shift is argued to have brought about a reduction in nationalist movements that persist in the aim of building entirely separate states and in its place has emerged the exercising of self determination without constituting a separate space.[352] Ethno-national communities still exist but they do so by functioning as sub-state nationalist entities within the framework of devolution, a trend outlined below;

> The shift [towards civic nationalism] responds to the need to break with the oppressive governance of cultural minorities to avoid the pain and wanton destruction that results from the disaffection of these minorities and their demands to build new states, as well as the need to find ways to provide national minorities with equal rights, governance and political participation- without dismembering existing states.[353]

Within this context it is possible to consider the environment within which Sinn Féin has evolved and placed the civic interpretation of nationalism before more ethnic understandings.

Secondly, running parallel to the impact of wider geo-political trends is the impact of far more localised factors. In explaining transitions within Sinn Féin, it is necessary to consider more direct impacts within Northern Ireland. Contemporary events and situational reality ultimately shaped the context within which Sinn Féin moved from a revolutionary force to a constitutional player. The increasing consciousness that the PIRA was fighting a stalled war and the realisation that unionism could not be defeated meant that Sinn Féin were in a position where they would have to seriously reconsider their position if they wanted to be a serious nationalist force within the contemporary context.

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[352] E. Nimni, *Nationalism, Ethnicity and, Self-Determination: A Paradigm Shift*, in K. Breen & S. O'Neill (eds.), *After The Nation? Critical Reflections on Nationalism and Postnationalism*, (Hampshire, Palgrave, 2010), pp. 21-37.
[353] *Ibid*, p. 24.

The impact of trends on a macro level (such as the shift in nationalisms and the decline of the centralised state) and on a more micro level (the realisation of a stalemate with the armed campaign, plus the evolving stance of the British government and the onset of limited pan-nationalism), both contributed to shifts in Sinn Féin's position. However, Sinn Féin's movement into mainstream politics did not, as some hastily observed, necessarily represent the end of militant nationalism.[354] Rather, as Sinn Féin vacated that space, others were willing to try to fill that void.

In considering the wider debate on the evolution of nationalisms in global politics, there is a need to question, what does this new politics of Sinn Féin represent? As Kearney asks, 'do we mean, finally, new republicanism - post-nationalist and post-unionist - which would allow the inhabitants of Ireland to reaffirm their local identities while embracing a new nationalism?'[355] There is potential for the modern civic interpretation of nationalism to explain 'new' Sinn Féin and provide a framework in which to start understanding the seismic changes within party policy. The relationship with evolving theories of nationalism is summarised by Bean:

> Provisionalism is probably best described as an ideological configuration rather than a unified body of ideas; it has remained a work-in-progress throughout its history because it is a sight of contestation between elements of the universal and the particular, revealed especially in the tensions between civic and ethnic conceptions of identity and the nation.[356]

The shifting paradigm that has come to define the nature of nationalism in the twenty-first century provides a valuable framework in which to analyse Sinn Féin's republicanism. Assessment of the wider geo-political trend towards post-ideological politics is helpful in highlighting the context within which the organisation has changed, especially in terms of how the party can be considered to fit into the theoretical framework of new nationalism. Within this framework, Sinn Féin's contemporary version of republicanism is dominated by post-ideological and pragmatic politics. The politics of identity rather than territory and sovereignty came to typify the new Sinn Féin framework.

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[354] Arthur Aughey in *The Observer*, 'Completely and verifiably beyond use', 07/05/2000.
[355] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997).
[356] K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin,* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007), p. 135.

Republicanism is a fragmented and diverse phenomenon and contemporary versions are articulated by a broad spectrum of groups and individuals beyond what Sinn Féin represent. All these elements claiming the republican mantle have functioned in the same broader political context, yet remain diverse in the analysis they offer and the interpretation they provide. Therefore, whilst contextual analysis is helpful at a macro-level in defining Sinn Féin's modern agenda, it fails to explain why dissidents have not followed the same path. If the context is the same, why has the development of new 'nationalism' permeated Sinn Féin far more than 'dissident' organisations? The analysis of Sinn Féin in light of the evolving nature of nationalism does not consider the ideological or functional political space for dissidents to emerge. Whilst it recognises the pragmatic nature of mainstream republicanism and the possibility of dissidence, it does not tell us how such dissent is formulated.

Republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement fell markedly short of the ultimate republican goal of a united Ireland. As described by McKearney, the Agreement presented a predicament in that:

> The old dilemma for reformed insurgents had resurfaced for Sinn Féin. A group enters parliament intent on making change and finds it difficult to do so without making compromises within the confines of institutions designed to produce glacial progress.[357]

The GFA enticed Sinn Féin into the Northern Ireland Assembly and placed the future of the border within the parameters of the consent principle. In return Sinn Féin retained a commitment to a united Ireland, subject to the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, whilst gaining an all Ireland dimension to the Agreement with the creation of a North-South ministerial council and cross-border bodies. Some vehemently proclaim that the Good Friday Agreement represented the consolidation of partition, a significant defeat for Irish republicanism.[358] Such sentiment was pithily expressed by the sister of hunger striker Bobby Sands, Bernadette Sands

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[357] T. McKearney, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament*, (London, Pluto Press, 2011), p. 190.
[358] See *Slugger O'Toole*, "'The Good Friday Agreement represents a significant defeat for republicanism.'", 14/04/2009.

McKevitt, when she proclaimed that her brother 'did not die for cross-border bodies with executive powers.'[359] For these critics, the deal was seen as a betrayal to past generations.

Sinn Féin was confronted by the position that typically presents itself to previously marginalised organisations once they enter the mainstream political arena. However genuinely intent on delivering change they may be at the time of entering the political mainstream it is eventually revealed how difficult it is to do so without making compromises within the confines of the institutions in which they operate. Peadar Whelan illustrates this delicate balance between ideological devotion and the more pragmatic and tactical considerations that present themselves to political parties:

> But obviously you have to have fundamental tenets, you obviously have to have a foundation and fundamental cornerstones. You have to have your fundamentals and guiding principles... But in the course of government you have to make tactical changes and decisions.[360]

Sinn Féin has attempted to portray the GFA in transitional terms, framing it as a building block towards a united Ireland. The Agreement had massive support North and South within republican and nationalist communities.[361] Sinn Féin therefore did not so much have to sell the agreement, but advocate the settlement on the basis that it was a stepping stone on the path to Irish unity as opposed to the 'endgame'. As explained by Danny Morrison, '...right okay, we have signed off the Belfast Agreement so we are at the end of it so why are you still going on about the next phase, and then the next phase? That's because republicans don't consider business finished.'[362] In attempting to minimise the shift from traditional republican approaches, the Sinn Féin leadership framed the agreement in 'strategic transitional terms.'[363] Accepted on the grounds that it provided a staging post on the journey to Irish unity, the Good Friday Agreement was

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[359] Bernadette Sands quoted in *Magill,* S. Breen, 'The ideals Bobby died for are ideals I hold dear and which have always motivated me', 01/01/1998.
[360] Peadar Whelan, interview with author, Belfast 25/09/09.
[361] See, CAIN; Results of the Referenda in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland, 22/05/1998, The Good Friday Agreement was approved in referendum across communities with 71.12% in the North voting 'Yes' and 94.4% in the Republic.
[362] Danny Morrison, interview with author, Liverpool 08/10/2011.
[363] A. McIntyre, *Modern Irish Republicanism and the Belfast Agreement: Chickens Coming Home to Roost, or Turkeys Celebrating Christmas*, in, R. Wilford (ed.), *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 203.

portrayed as one fragment within an evolving process, or the 'new phase of the struggle.'[364] Sinn Féin's base stresses that no one signed up to the Agreement thinking it was the final piece of the puzzle, emphasising how the 'language of Good Friday Agreement is explicit in this.'[365] In addition, for anyone who thinks the story is over, they have been starkly warned to 'think again and think hard.'[366]

The Provisionals long rejected the constitutional path, arguing that British policies and unionist resistance meant that republican aims needed to be advanced by militarism in addition to politics. The argument was that there was no gradualist path to a united Ireland as, 'unionist resistance and British backing of unionism precluded it.'[367] For Anthony McIntyre this presented a choice between the militant pursuit of anti-partitionism and the constitutional nationalist route of accepting partition.[368] Consequently, for the Provisionals, the militant path dominated. Over time, the context changed, and with it so did the Provisionals' approach, as electoral strategy came to the forefront. However, the key question here is not necessarily the manner in which this change occurred, but rather how to interpret this change. In other words, is it possible to characterise Sinn Féin's acceptance of the Agreement as 'a new phase of the republican struggle' or did it signify decisive movement away from fundamental republican tenets? For McIntyre, acceptance of the Agreement meant that Sinn Féin moved beyond the parameters of what can be defined as republican, positioning themselves as partitionist nationalists. He argues that, 'while a nationalist can be a partitionist a republican never is. It is the primal ground a republican cannot abandon.'[369] According to this interpretation Provisional revisionism indicated the rejection of core republican beliefs. Sinn Féin's endorsement of the GFA reinforced partition. Such an argument rests on taking a binary position (anti-partitionism versus partitionism) as the

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[364] See for example, *An Phoblacht,* 'Plotting course for future- Adams', 18/11/1999, cited in A. McIntyre, *Modern Irish Republicanism and the Belfast Agreement: Chickens Coming Home to Roost, or Turkeys Celebrating Christmas*, in R. Wilford (ed.), *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 210.
[365] Mary Lou McDonald, speaking at Sinn Féin fringe meeting, *Labour Party conference, Liverpool: Ireland and Britain: Towards a new relationship*, 25/09/2011.
[366] *Ibid.*
[367] J. Todd, *Nationalism, Republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement,* in J. Ruane & J. Todd, (eds.), *After the Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999) p. 56.
[368] A. McIntyre, 'Modern Irish Republicanism: the product of British state strategies', *Irish Political Studies* 10, no.1 (1995), pp. 97-122.
[369] Anthony McIntyre, in, *The Pensive Quill,* 'Responding to Seán Mór', 14/02/2010.

fundamental feature in adherence to the core of republican ideology.[370] According to this argument the key objective of the Provisionals was to secure a British declaration of intent to leave, but instead they endorsed the principles of agreement and consensus, forcing the prospect of a united Ireland to become conditional upon unionist consent, which is unlikely to ever be forthcoming.[371] This interpretation therefore refuses to view the GFA in terms of the pursuit of republican goals on a different platform, or as Adams has termed it, a 'new phase of the struggle ... a transitional stage towards reunification.'[372]

In considering the evolution from armed struggle to constitutional politics, a more flexible interpretation beyond the partitionist/ anti-partitionist binary can be adopted.[373] A more benign perspective recognised that the Agreement attempted to acknowledge traditional republican goals whilst accommodating modern democratic principles such as an end to violence, equality, consent and human rights. Sinn Féin followed this lead in frontloading universal principles of democracy, justice, equality and peace.[374] Ultimately, Sinn Féin recognised the need for an agreement which at least provides a possible path to Irish unity and offers advancement for northern nationalists within the existing state. Danny Morrison typifies this far more pragmatic interpretation of the evolution of the Provisional movement, especially in relation the practical aspect of functioning within constitutional parameters,

> Well principles are a guide. It's objectives and aspirations you know, which are important definitions. I know what you mean by principles. When I was involved in the struggle, I was a fundamentalist and I think the only way you can wage an armed struggle is if you believe in ultimate demands and they have to be black and white. Once you engage in negotiations, or in compromise, then a whole new system kicks in called pragmatism or *realpolitik* and that is what we have to engage with.[375]

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[370]See J. Todd, *Nationalism, Republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement,* in, J. Ruane & J. Todd, (eds.), *After the Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999), p. 57.

[371] See L. O Ruairc, 'A Republican Versailles, not an honourable compromise' *Weekly Worker*, 26/05/2005.

[372] 'Gerry Adams: presidential address', *An Phoblacht/ Republican News*, 23/04/1998.

[373] See G. Adams, Speech, *Irish News Service*, 08/01/1999; P. Doherty, Speech at Noraid Dinner, *Irish News Service*, 28/01/1999; M. McLaughlin, *The Republican Ideal*, in, Norman Porter, (ed.), *The Republican Ideal: Current Perspectives* (Belfast, Blackstaff, 1999), pp. 62-84.

[374] For a more in depth discussion on the use of language from the Provisionals, see J. Todd, *Nationalism, Republicanism and the Good Friday Agreement*, in, J. Ruane & J. Todd (eds.), *After the Good Friday Agreement*: *Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 1999), pp. 56-62.

[375] Danny Morrison, interview with author, Liverpool 08/10/2011.

Sinn Féin can propose transition arguments which are difficult to challenge entirely in the absence of ultimate predictive capacities over the outworking of the GFA. However, the early evidence suggests little transition to unity and diminished appetite for such a shift amid improved economic and political status for northern nationalists. McKearney describes how this has relegated the national question:

> Irish unity remains an aspiration for many, but only an aspiration, a pleasant thought, but not something in which most people are prepared to invest time or energy. Certainly it is not something many see as worth spilling the amount of blood, sweat and tears that would be involved in doing so without Unionist consent.[376]

Whilst the centrality of the national question remains for Sinn Féin, the purpose of its being has transformed. For some the ideal of a United Ireland is utilised as a vision, a distant and elusive aspiration, as opposed to a directly attainable reality. As a result, for all republicans the ideal of a united Ireland is not forgotten yet the means by which to achieve this, along with the vision of what unity constitutes, differ from the old physical force methodology and Gaelic territorial sovereign entity once envisaged. Such an analysis reveals the fault line between purpose and aspiration, pragmatism and purism, principles and tactics.

The fluid, malleable approach of Sinn Féin has emphasised the importance of context and tactical considerations above what is considered by some to be fundamental principle and tradition. As early as 1988, Guelke noted how, 'the grounding of the legitimacy of the Provisional IRA's campaign in a traditional republican interpretation of Irish history is now much less emphasised than it was at the start of the campaign.'[377] The growing level of contemplation given to tactical considerations and the consequent evolving relationship with principles is expressed in detail by Sinn Féin's Sean Oliver below:

> Tactically in the last 30-40 years, you know you've judged things and made big departures, you've taken initiatives to get us to where we are today. But, I suppose you could say that to have your underlying principles of what the struggle is about and then tactically you judge things. You know certainly big initiatives in terms of, I suppose one of the big ones was in '86 when we decided that if elected we would take [seats] in the parliament in Dublin....taking seats here in the assembly. The initiative around policing, our engagement with the police, would all be tactics that you would weigh up and say well does it advance

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[376] T. McKearney, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament*, (London, Pluto Press, 2011). p. 188.
[377] A. Guelke, *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, (Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, 1988), p. 41.

the struggle? But you have your underlying principles, maybe three or four, which are what we are about and what we are after.[378]

According to this analysis, change within Sinn Féin centres around the consideration of key principles which are then framed within the parameters of judgement and evaluation. In adapting to context, Sinn Féin uses distinct political strategies on either side of the border. In the Republic, the party remains in opposition and staunchly condemns the fiscal cuts being implemented in the South, yet simultaneously have been criticised for implementing similar policies in the North.[379] Such an illustration demonstrates the difference in projected interests, depending on the position of power, and subsequently the relationship this determines between pragmatism and principles. Danny Morrison acknowledges the questions that would arise for Sinn Féin if they found themselves in a position whereby they held the balance of power in the Republic:

> So there are dangers of coalition in the future and it could well be that Sinn Féin's policies, if they stick to them...that it might be very difficult to form a coalition...I don't know how to handle that, I don't know whether you sacrifice some of your principles and your demands and your well thought out working-class policies in the belief, and it is usually a false belief, that you get in to power and you are going to be a clear sweep through the regime, and you are going to change things so radically, because normally it doesn't turn out like that because people become disillusioned and you are going to lose support. On the other hand, what are you engaged in politics for? To be in power, all politics is about being in power. It is not about being in opposition. It is safe to be in opposition because you can say anything in opposition. But when you go in to power, that is when reality kicks in and you have to make the budget balance.[380]

The emphasis placed on context and pragmatic considerations implies that Northern Ireland has evolved from the days of the troubles and Sinn Féin has moved along with it, acknowledging the alleviation of oppression and inequality and thus articulating new agendas. The movement away from armed struggle and towards constitutionalism is seen as a logical development in such changed circumstances. Such an argument implies that whilst departure from tradition has occurred, there is no political space for dissidents to hold any relevance. Small pockets of 'physical force' republicans remain irreconcilable, and their dejection is understandable. Many participated in the 1970-97 protracted, gruelling and costly struggle against the British state to

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[378] Sean Oliver, interview with author, Belfast 25/09/2009
[379] See *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Sinn Féin's McGuinness defends budget spending cuts', 16/12/2010;
World Socialist Website, *'*Sinn Féin's McGuiness stands for Irish presidency*', 27/10/2011.
[380] Danny Morrison, interview with author, Liverpool 08/10/2011.

break the union.'[381] Sinn Féin implies that the continuation of armed struggle is the single motivating factor for such groups, now arguing that armed action is 'anything but political' and in 'most cases anything but republican.'[382] Alex Maskey asserted: 'It frustrates me actually you know that there are people out there who will either be a Republican or are supposed to be a Republican or want to be a Republican and in my opinion they are doing nothing but undermine what Republicanism worked, fought for, for a number of years.'[383] This discourse refutes that those dissenting from the pro-Stormont line are republican or acting for republicanism, thus avoiding the accusations of an ideological departure for Sinn Féin. Republicanism is essentially whatever Sinn Féin does.

Others do however go further in considering the evolution of Sinn Féin. As Patterson explains, 'the radicalism of Sinn Féin's departures, not what simply might be portrayed as republican metaphysics, but from much of what until very recently they defined as their own strategic project, meant that a reaction was inevitable.'[384] Yet, the scale of departure was relatively low considering the extent of change. Testament to the success of the Sinn Féin electoral project is that they remain overwhelmingly in possession of the republican franchise. Dissidents are therefore commonly considered in reference to what the Provisionals, in their modern day form of Sinn Féin, represent. There is need therefore to analyse these groups in their own right and assess their own republican credentials, in addition to why they disagree with the Sinn Féin interpretation.

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[381] Mary Lou McDonald, speaking at Sinn Féin fringe meeting, Labour Party conference, *Liverpool: Ireland and Britain: Towards a new relationship,* 25/09/2011.
[382] *Ibid.*
[383] Alex Maskey, interview with author, 25/09/2009.
[384] H. Patterson, *Beyond the 'Micro Group': The Dissident Republican Challenge*, in, P.M. Currie & M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011), p. 66.

Sinn Féin as an Electoral Force

> The range of areas covered by the [Good Friday] agreement and the span of political perspectives that assented to it were truly remarkable. The agreement extended not only over constitutional issues of extraordinary sensitivity and complex institutional provisions...it also elaborated fundamental principles in the areas of human rights, policing, criminal justice and equality, and made specific transitional provisions in the areas of decommissioning of weapons, demilitarisation, release of prisoners and reconciliation of people victims of violence.[385]

The above perspective encapsulates the complexity of the Good Friday Agreement. Within the literature that explores Sinn Féin's support for the Agreement and their transition into constitutionalism there is a (historically understandable) tendency to concentrate upon the party's relationship with the PIRA, tracing the changing dynamics between republican political and military fronts.[386] Amid the attention applied to the transition of Sinn Féin, there is a need to assess the impact of external agents in prompting ideological adjustment.[387] The literature also underplays how the universal electoral rules and logic that drive political parties were equally applicable to Sinn Féin.

The electoral dynamics of the peace process encouraged republican political moderation, embracing a willingness to reconsider positions that had for a long time been viewed as sacrosanct. Coakley describes the air of unpredictability that surrounded political positions during the peace negotiations, 'It should be pointed out that in this context the metaphor of

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[385] J. Coakley, *Constitutional innovation and political change in twentieth century Ireland*, in, J. Coakley (ed.), *Changing Shades of Orange and Green*, (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

[386] See R. Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*, (London, Routledge, 2007); B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 2002); J Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003); B O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 1993), p.127; M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: the military strategy of the Irish Republican movement,* (London, Routledge, 1995); A Richards, 'Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Féin, the Peace Process and Democracy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001); M. Von Tagen Page & M. L. R. Smith, 'War by other means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy', *Armed Forces and Society* 27, no.1 (2000); K. Rafter, *Sinn Féin1905-2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen*, (Dublin, MacMillan, 2005).

[387] For some exceptions see, K. Bean, *The Economic and Social War Against Violence: British Social and Economic Strategy and the Evolution of Provisionalism*, in, A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008); K. Bean , *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007); M. McGovern, 'Irish Republicanism and the Potential Pitfalls of Pluralism', *Capital and Class* 71, (2000); G. Murray & J. Tonge, *Sinn Féin and the SDLP*: *From Alienation to Participation*, (London, Hurst, 2005).

political theatre needs to be carefully defined: the political parties (or actors) may be grouped within particular 'traditions', but the characters they play out are complex - sometimes schizophrenic, and always developing over time.'[388] This flexible and responsive nature of political actors needs to be explored and considered in relation to the general battle for electoral support, as competition for votes is the key factor that ultimately influences the final position of parties in the mainstream political arena.

Due to the potential gains for nationalists, the GFA was a relatively easy sell. The Agreement seemingly ended conflict and established political institutions and structures based on an entirely new approach to overcome the exclusion - and the deep-seated alienation – of nationalists.[389] With the implementation of the D'Hondt system the electoral rewards in terms of political office were for the first time transparent. Under the terms of the Agreement the Executive had to be cross-community representative, guaranteeing Sinn Féin political office. It is hard to imagine that the Agreement would have been so attractive to nationalists if rewards on offer had not been so clear-cut.

If Sinn Féin had ignored the appetite for peace and the nationalist electorate's support for the power-sharing arrangements set out under the Good Friday Agreement the party would have been confined to the margins of politics. Instead, Sinn Féin has been rewarded electorally for their movement towards a participatory and constitutional form of political involvement. Therefore, in order to fully explore Sinn Féin's full acceptance of the Northern political institutions there is a need to consider the extent to which electoral forces influenced Sinn Féin's ideological reassessment, leading to the party's overwhelming endorsement (97 per cent to 3 per cent at the 1998 Ard Fheis) of the GFA. Under the consociational power-sharing terms of the Agreement, the rewards for electoral success, in terms of places in government under the D'Hondt divisor, were unusually explicit.

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[388] J. Coakley, *Constitutional innovation and political change in twentieth century Ireland*, in, J. Coakley (ed.), *Changing Shades of Orange and Green*, (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2002), p. 10.
[389] See Sinn Féin, 'Defending the Good Friday Agreement', *Sinn Féin Submission to the Mitchell Review,* 23/09/1999, p. 2.

Realignment of electoral preferences

The results of the first post-Agreement Assembly election saw the moderate nationalists and unionists of the SDLP and the UUP respectively receive electoral rewards for their roles in authoring the historic compromises made. However, Sinn Féin's performance – polling only 4 per cent below the SDLP - was sufficiently strong to indicate a serious threat to the SDLP's position as the largest nationalist party.

Sinn Féin could reasonably assume that, having been rewarded for the PIRA's ceasefires, further movement towards constitutionalism would achieve electoral reward. In October 2001 the PIRA began the process of putting their weapons beyond use. As Arthur explains: 'The significance of the decommissioning gesture lay in the fact that it implied that at long last republicans were prepared to play by the democratic rules of the game. And it was truly historic...never, ever in the history of republicanism had such a gesture been made.'[390] The process of decommissioning was confirmed by General John de Chastelain to have been completed in 2005. Furthermore, by accepting the legitimacy of the PSNI through the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement (a decision confirmed at a special conference in January 2007) Sinn Féin had completed the final phase in their transformative journey. They had moved from a party vehemently opposed to power sharing in a northern state to one committed to working in a cross-community executive and assembly within Northern Ireland. Electoral reward duly ensued. The 2007 Assembly elections saw the DUP and Sinn Féin become the electoral beneficiaries at the expense of more moderate parties in their own bloc as they were made joint leaders of a new power sharing government, positions consolidated in the 2011 Assembly contests.

The Sinn Féin electoral project had been successful in mobilising new supporters[391] (including first-time and previous non-voters) and gained backing from voters previously supportive of the SDLP.[392] Pre-PIRA ceasefire Sinn Féin was perceived as a party of Catholic working class, with

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[390] P. Arthur, *The transformation of republicanism*, in, John Coakly(ed.), *Changing Shades of Orange and Green: Redefining the Union and the Nation in Contemporary Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 2002), p. 85.
[391] I. McAllister, ''The Armalite and the ballot box': Sinn Féin's electoral strategy in Northern Ireland', *Electoral Studies* 23, no.1 (2004), pp. 123-142.
[392] See P. Mitchell, G. Evans & B. O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 57, no.2 (2009), pp. 397-421.

little support amongst middle class nationalists, an area where the SDLP were seen as dominant.[393] In a post-conflict Northern Ireland there has been an increase in cross-class support for Sinn Féin. Whilst the manual classes remain the most likely to vote for Sinn Féin, structural voting determinants have diminished as the party becomes 'partly de-ghettoised' and increasingly draws more middle-class support.[394]

Explaining the electoral rise of Sinn Féin: ethnic outbidding or moderation?

Northern Ireland remains a polity where ethnicity and identity are still very strongly linked to voter preference. Yet twelve years after the GFA, there was still no evidence of a thawing of ethnic bloc voting, only 5 percent of unionists and 9 percent of nationalists claiming to be either 'very' or 'fairly' likely to consider a vote for a candidate from the opposite ethnic bloc.[395] Parties are therefore competing for votes within the same ethnic bloc. Electoral competition is exercised within an ethnic dual-party system.[396] Because of the largely closed nature of both electoral blocs, nationalist parties are considered to be bound by the rules of a two-party system. The DUP and Sinn Féin quickly established themselves as the largest parties with the opposing blocs at the expense of the UUP and the SDLP.

There are two possible explanations for party change. The first is that voters move towards parties that are deemed more able to represent their concerns and protect their interests.[397] Secondly and more cogently as an explanation for Sinn Féin's change, parties move towards the

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[393] See G. Murray & J. Tonge, *Sinn Féin and the SDLP: From Alienation to Participation,* (London, Hurst, 2005); G. Evans & M. Duffy, 'Beyond the Sectarian Divide: The Social Bases and Political Consequences of Nationalist and Unionist Party Competition in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Political Science* 27, no.1 (1997), pp. 47–81.

[394] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Social Class and Party Choice in Northern Ireland's Ethnic Blocs', *Electoral Studies* 23, no.5 (2004), pp. 123–142.

[395] See J. Tonge, J. Evans, P. Mitchell & B. Hayes, 'The 2010 Election in Northern Ireland: Evidence from aggregate & ESRC Survey data', Data Presented at *Elections, Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference*, Belfast 2010.

[396] See G. Evans & M. Duffy, 'Beyond the Sectarian Divide: The Social Bases and Political Consequences of Nationalist and Unionist Party Competition in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Political Science* 27, no.1 (2007), pp. 47-81.

[397] See, P. Mitchell & G. Evans, *Ethnic Party Competition and the dynamics of power sharing in Northern Ireland*, in, R. Taylor (ed.), *Consociational Theory: McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland Conflict,* (London, Routledge, 2009), pp. 146-64; P. Mitchell, G. Evans and B. O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 57, no.2 (2009), p. 402.

median voter (in this case the median nationalist voter). Sinn Féin moved towards a position that could be reconciled with the immediate aspirations of the bulk of the nationalist electorate whilst retaining an image of robustness and promoting continued communal defence.[398]

Whilst most voters want peace and power sharing, they simultaneously want the strongest tribune to protect their ethno-national interests. Policy outcomes therefore depend heavily on inter-ethnic bargaining. Individuals turn to parties that possess a reputation for successfully protecting the interests of their representative bloc, based on policy positions and belligerence.[399] As a result, voters are more inclined to switch their preference from the 'moderate' to the supposedly more 'extreme' parties, as a result of ethnic tribune appeal.'[400] The 2010 General Election Survey found that 61 percent of Catholics were of the opinion that Sinn Féin had been the more effective party for nationalists, with only 13 percent believing that the SDLP had been the 'more effective'.[401] The perception is that Sinn Féin are more successful in representing the nationalist community given their stridency, but this stridency is welcomed within the constitutional sphere, not as support for political violence. Competition creates a centrifugal dynamic of party positioning as parties mobilise 'their' community, engaging in emotive ethnic appeals that suggest that, without the defence offered by a particular party, their group's vital interests are in danger of being 'sold out.'[402] This goes some way to explain why support has moved away from the SDLP to Sinn Féin. However, this argument perhaps over-emphasises the 'extreme' nature of parties such as the DUP and Sinn Féin and does not fully account for the scale of concessions made by either.

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[398] See A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (Harper Collins, New York, 1957); J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'From Abstentionism to Enthusiasm: Sinn Féin, Nationalist Electors and Support for Devolved Power Sharing in Northern Ireland, *Irish Political Studies*, iFirst (2012), pp.9-11; K. Strom, 'A Behavioural Theory of Competitive Party Politics', *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no.2 (1990), pp. 565-98; J. McGarry, 'Consociation and its critics: Evidence from the historic Northern Ireland Assembly election 2007', *Electoral Studies* 28, no.1 (2009), pp. 458-466.
[399] P. Mitchell, G. Evans & B. O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 57, no.2 (2009), p. 402.
[400] *Ibid.*
[401] See J. Tonge, J. Evans, P. Mitchell & B. Hayes, 'The 2010 Election in Northern Ireland: Evidence from aggregate & ESRC Survey data', Data Presented at *Elections, Public Opinion and Parties Annual Conference*, Belfast 2010.
[402] P. Mitchell, G. Evans & B. O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 57, no.2 (2009), p. 400.

The second argument emphasises the need to consider the position of Sinn Féin in the context of a political party subject to electoral logic. Sinn Féin's support base tended to precede the party in terms of expressing support for power sharing political institutions of Northern Ireland. Popular attitudes amongst Sinn Féin's voters were very much in favour of mandatory power sharing and decommissioning at the time of the 1998 GFA referendum, whilst, even on the morning of the GFA, Sinn Féin's Chair, Mitchel McLaughlin, insisted that notwithstanding his party's support for the GFA, it did not support an Assembly.[403] Between the signing of the Agreement in 1998 and the second Assembly election in 2003 support for the Northern Ireland Assembly increased from 76 to 94 percent amongst Sinn Féin voters.[404] This was more than the support demonstrated by any other parties' electoral base. By 2011, Sinn Fein's supporters were more likely to 'very satisfied' with the devolved power-sharing government than those of any other party.[405] In order to explore Sinn Féin's endeavour to encapsulate the desires of the median nationalist voter and overtake the SDLP as the nationalist's electoral preference it is necessary to consider their strategy in terms of the electoral logic that determines the final shape of constitutional organisations.

Within any political context it is the fundamental concern of a party to gain and maintain electoral support. As Downs asserts, 'No party, new or old, can survive without gaining the support of a sizeable fraction of the electorate - a support active enough to be expressed by votes in elections.'[406] The key concern in assessing the ideological shift of Sinn Féin is what influences ideological change or political re-evaluation. Political parties are faced with the dilemma that they wish to capture as many voters as possible whilst also wanting to retain a strong appeal to each voter. They therefore have to present a wide spectrum of policies whilst simultaneously tailoring these policies to the ideological viewpoint of whichever voter is being pursued. During the consolidation of Sinn Féin as a constitutional entity the party has progressed from absolutistism that demanded full independence, 'Brits out' and socialism, to an agreed

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[403] See B. Hayes & I. McAllister, 'Who Voted for Peace? Public Support for the 1998 Northern Ireland Agreement', *Irish Political Studies* 16, no.1 (2001), pp. 73-93.

[404] P. Mitchell, G. Evans & B. O'Leary, 'Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 57, no.2 (2009), p. 409.

[405] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'From Abstentionism to Enthusiasm: Sinn Féin, Nationalist Electors and Support for Devolved Power Sharing in Northern Ireland, *Irish Political Studies*, iFirst (2012), pp. 1-19.

[406] A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York, Harper Collins, 1957), p. 128.

Ireland based on co-determination and a rhetoric that promotes an 'Ireland of Equals.'[407] With the military aspect of republicanism stalled, Sinn Féin became far more pragmatic as the party was increasingly bound by the rules of electoral competition pertaining to other constitutional parties. Whilst Sinn Féin maintains that the national question remains dominant and the goal of a united Ireland retains prominence within the electoral literature, the strategies of attainment have had to be considerably adjusted (in two different jurisdictions) to bolster the party's electoral project.

In terms of electoral competition it is seen as a form of electoral logic for parties to try and be as ambiguous as possible about their precise political positions.[408] If parties are ambiguous about the specific details of individual policies, every policy can therefore cover a wider spread of voters. The result is that this 'vastly widens the band on the political scale into which various interpretations of a party's net position may fall. Ambiguity thus increases the number of voters to whom a party may appeal.'[409] This allows voters to place a different weighting on policies and each individual can also interpret the meaning of each policy differently, considering it in terms of what brings it closer to their own position. Sinn Féin are bound by the rules of electoral competition and have therefore moved their positioning in order to attract the median voter. The party has had to redefine what republicanism constitutes in practical policy terms, leading to the overthrow of positions that were once viewed as non-negotiable. For 'dissident' groups, rather than viewing Sinn Féin's transformation as a reinterpretation of republicanism in an attempt to function within an electoral marketplace, the party's pursuit of voters has been at the expense of republican principles.

These electoral concerns are of no importance to dissident groups whose appeal remains very narrow and localised.[410] Indeed there is almost a sense of pride in being relatively small and conspiratorial. Mainstream criticism that dissident groups have little support does not necessarily have as hard-hitting impact as intended. That these groups do not endeavour to appear electorally

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[407] For a more detailed description of the policy shifts within Sinn Féin see chapter 2.
[408] A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York, Harper Collins, 1957), pp. 135-137.
[409] *Ibid*, p. 136.
[410] 32CSM affiliated Garry Donnelly stood as an Independent in the 2011 elections polling 612 votes, placing him fifth.

attractive in turn means there is less pressure on dissidents to accommodate a wider spectrum of individuals. It is far easier for dissident groups to present a more continuous and uninterrupted interpretation of republicanism.

Conclusion

An analysis that considers the impact of electoral logic and competition on political parties is beneficial in that it highlights the space Sinn Féin vacated in their move towards the constitutionalism where lay the median nationalist voter. As the party gained support, there has been a minority of republicans left behind that refuses to go along with the Sinn Féin electoral project. Consideration of the electoral rationale underpinning the transformation of Sinn Féin is vital in order to understand fragmentation within Irish republicanism. It is common within modern political discourse to utilise the term 'dissident' in reference to groups being considered in relation to Sinn Féin, rather than deploy a broader and less restrictive republican framework. In order to begin understanding the dissident ideological standpoint it is necessary to consider Sinn Féin's movement into constitutional politics and to what extent that represented the updating, revising or contorting of Irish republican principles.

Changes within Sinn Féin have involved the broadening of ideas (such as a more pluralist conception of identity), the rearranging of principles (equality has been frontloaded ahead of freedom, with self-determination and territorial sovereignty demoted in favour of a vaguer 'Ireland of Equals'), a change of tactics (full movement into constitutional politics) and the relegation of imperatives (British withdrawal and a united Ireland) to aspirational ultimate objectives, albeit still prominent in Sinn Féin discourse. The sum of these parts is considerable transition. Yet, no representation of republicanism across the broad spectrum would deny that the tradition is evolutionary and contextual. Ultimately, it is unrealistic to expect political parties to remain static over time and unchanged in policies. When bound by laws of electoral competition (as Sinn Féin became) with office-seeking priorities, parties have to respond, to external (e.g. electoral, governmental) and internal (e.g. incentives to achieve tangible results) pressures that develop. The academic literature that considers the evolution of Sinn Féin is wide-ranging in assessing the impact of military fortune and British state strategy, but has appeared reluctant to

comprehend Sinn Féin as essentially an ordinary political party in modern times, conditioned by the rules of the electoral game and successfully adapting to those rules.

Sinn Féin appears in a position of dominance in their representation of the republican tradition. Such a position is testament to the overall success of the re-branding of the party. As a result, the party is often portrayed as standing as the mouthpiece or the single representation of the Irish republican tradition, possessing the republican franchise. Other groups and individuals who claim to represent republicanism are considered in relation to what Sinn Féin represent. As McGovern observes, 'it is necessary to understand the extent to which Sinn Féin has successfully recast itself as the primary political mouthpiece for this complex northern Nationalist outlook. In doing so they have rearticulated the meaning of Republicanism.'[411] Yet a restricted understanding of Irish republicanism is risked via exclusive concentration upon Sinn Féin. The party has a dominant position within the republican community, but for some this has come at the cost of ideological commitment and full absorption into a state the party once vowed to defeat.

Whilst considering the splits within the republican movement it is not so much a question of creating a distinct division between firstly, Sinn Féin having adapted their strategy according to contextual demands, and secondly, others who have remained loyal to a rigid republican mantra. Rather, whilst considering dissidence within modern day Irish republicanism, it is more important to question whether the scale of change within Sinn Féin has created space for others to move in and occupy. Whilst it is important to consider the ground that Sinn Féin now occupies, it is even more important to consider the space that they have left behind. Rather than considering republicanism in binary terms, that is to suppose that groups fit in to one of two categories, 'Sinn Féin republican' or 'other', it is more beneficial to adopt a multi-dimensional model when considering the republican tradition. In order to contemplate further the range of groups that proclaim a republican heritage it is necessary to consider republicanism as a spectrum that demonstrates the possibility of groups representing a multiplicity of ideals, concepts and beliefs.

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[411] M. McGovern, ''The Old Days are over': Irish Republicanism, the Peace Process and the Discourse of Equality', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p. 628.

In order to explore the possibility of constructing such a paradigm the following chapters will consider several groups and their position on a broad spectrum of ideas, concepts and beliefs. For example, there is a need to explore the context in which 'dissident' groups emerged along with their claims of legitimacy and possession of a mandate. In addition it is also necessary to consider these groups' goals and objectives, strategy, membership and future trajectory along with their position on key topics such as their attitudes towards unionism and the use of armed struggle as a tactic. The intention is to construct an understanding of groups across the contemporary republican spectrum, in order to consider their position in their own right, as distinct from measurement merely in relation to modern Sinn Féin.

Chapter 4

Continuity or Dissidence? Assessing the 'dissident' republican standpoint: origins and mandates

> Republicanism is discursive in that it offers an internally differentiated series of ideological possibilities. It contains within it a range of exemplary models, memories, stories and rational political arguments that can be interpreted and reinterpreted through time. The 'Republican tradition' may therefore be conceived as a discursively constituted, culturally and politically specific collective resource by which power is contested at the level of the idea.[412]

Dissident republican groups are often described as having no support and no political or electoral mandate amongst the republican community. They are seen as out-of-touch, antediluvian and labelled as anti-republican. In a typical denunciation, the Tánaiste referred to 'these deluded criminals [who] fail to comprehend the true meaning of republicanism and quite clearly have nothing but contempt for this country and its people.'[413] Currently, dissident groups either refuse to stand candidates in elections, or fail to register a significant impact on the rare occasions when they do enter the electoral arena. The idea that these groups may have support in Northern Ireland is dismissed amid the apparent absence of even a modest mandate. As one example, the actions of dissidents sparked the following collective reaction from a range of political representatives following a bombing in Derry:

> The latest bomb attacks on Londonderry/Derry demonstrate the contempt in which you hold each and every citizen of this city. You have chosen to exclude yourselves from the political process and because of this you have no voice, and certainly no mandate.[414]

The decisions of dissidents to avoid the mainstream political arena mean they are portrayed as 'cowards who are afraid to face the electorate.'[415] However, for dissident groups, their self-

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[412] M. McGovern, ''The Old Days are over': Irish Republicanism, the Peace Process and the Discourse of Equality', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no.3 (2004), p. 638.

[413] *Irish Times*, 'Dissident groups have no mandate for violent campaign, says Tánaiste', 27/04/2011.

[414] *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Our message to bombers: An open letter to dissidents', 21/01/2012.

[415] *RTE News*, 'Eamon Gilmore 'disgusted' by Real IRA threats', 29/04/2011. See also, *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Real IRA will not win: McGuinness', 26/04/2011.

ascribed 'mandate' goes beyond the remit of constitutional political representation and is instead based upon historical claims of legitimacy, drawn from the 'right' to oppose British rule in Ireland amid loyalty to previous generations of republican dead. The concerns for fidelity and continuity are often placed before the need for modern popular consent within the current political dispensation, tendencies one might ascribe to previous Irish rebellions from 1798 onwards and certainly since 1916. The irony here is that in highlighting the absence of an electoral mandate for dissidents, former PIRA members, most notably the Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, have been accused of deploying the same arguments against dissidents which were dismissed by him when used against the Provisionals in the 1970s and, to a much lesser extent, the 1980s and 1990s.[416] During the PIRA's violent campaigns of the 1970s, Sinn Féin, which declined to contest elections, was accused of lacking a popular mandate on similar grounds to that of dissident groups today. Even when republicans contested elections from 1981 onwards, their 'mandate' was confined (with the exception of the hunger strike crisis) to support from a minority of the minority Catholic community in the North. Those groups who in today's political context reject the constitutional transition of Sinn Féin can find some refuge in the context of history. Support for dissident groups today is considerably smaller than it was for the PIRA/ Sinn Féin. Yet, support for the PIRA or Sinn Féin was never a majority taste amongst nationalists in Northern Ireland when the PIRA's armed campaign was operational, but the 'armed struggle' of that era has not been retrospectively delegitimised by Sinn Féin despite that lack of mandate.

Sinn Féin has however increasingly acknowledged the hurt caused during the PIRA armed campaign. In *An Phoblacht,* Sinn Fein's National Chairperson, Declan Kearney expressed the following,

> Regardless of the stance of others, we should recognise the healing influence of being able to say sorry for the human effects of all actions caused during the armed struggle. All sensible people would wish it had been otherwise…The political reality is those actions cannot be undone or disowned. It would be better they had never happened.[417]

Whilst Sinn Féin are open in expressing regret in terms of the hurt the actions of the PIRA caused it remains a step too far to retrospectively render their campaign as illegitimate. Such a

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[416] See *News Letter*, 'Sinn Féin chief switches tactics', 01/07/2008.
[417] *An Phoblacht*, 'Uncomfortable conversations are key to reconciliation', 05/03/2012.

claim would render their war as having been futile and wrong. Kearney is also keen to stress that the socio-economic and political conditions that contributed to armed struggle are no longer present in the current context, also insisting: 'Armed struggle is not a point of principle or an end in itself. It arose from political conditions, as a last resort and those conditions no longer exist.'[418] According to this analysis the conditions that justified the existence of the PIRA no longer exist, even though British sovereignty over Northern Ireland – which the IRA was supposed to have been about ending, not making more pleasant its application – remains in place. Kearney's analysis leans towards a perspective that recasts the IRA as a reformist, civil rights vanguard movement, one more concerned with equality than national sovereignty. However, the more important point at this stage is that neither Sinn Féin nor dissidents today have ever enjoyed majority popular endorsement - but at what point and to what extent is minority support large enough to claim a mandate and legitimacy? Or is, as the dissidents assert, the 'right' to bear arms against a 'foreign occupier' an item not reducible to such electoral considerations?

The emergence of republican violence at the end of the 1960s is justified by Sinn Féin as a response to social inequality, discrimination by the state and lack of political representation. This feeling of defencelessness supposedly justified violence to 'counter-balance the feeling of weakness.'[419] Today, those who defended the use of violence between 1969 until almost the turn of the century, claim that the context has changed and armed struggle can no longer be justified. In July 2005, the PIRA called off its campaign stating, 'All volunteers have been instructed to assist the development of purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means. Volunteers must not engage in any other activities whatsoever.'[420] According to the Sinn Féin narrative violence was justifiable between 1969 until 1997, but in today's context it is no longer a credible position.[421] In response, dissidents offer historical determinism – that the 'lessons of history' suggest that armed struggle is inevitable and that such armed struggle will not enjoy popular support at the time, but may be viewed more favourably retrospectively. It is

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[418] *An Phoblacht*, 'Uncomfortable conversations are key to reconciliation', 05/03/2012.
[419] C. Hueckel, 'Sinn Féin Without the IRA: Legitimacy or Loss of Popular Support', *The Osprey Journal of Ideas and Inquiry* 31, no.6 (2007), pp.4-5.
[420] *BBC News*, 'IRA Statement in Full', 28/07/2005.
[421] See J. Tonge, 'No-one likes us; we don't care': 'Dissident' Irish Republicans and Mandates', *The Political Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2012), p. 219.

certainly not the first time in the history of the republican movement that 'renegades' have been relegated to the past, with the supposed vanquishing of the IRA in 1921, 1923 and 1962 offering obvious examples.

There is a need to consider the interaction between ideological, structural and personal factors such as historical interpretation, background and individual motivation, which may explain why individuals join dissident organisations. This section acknowledges the influence of wider networks and the dynamics between localised and historical context. Accordingly, emphasis is placed on human experience, interpretation and meaning. In considering groups such as Republican Sinn Fein (RSF), the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32 CSM), the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and éirígí, the analysis of this chapter focuses on why dissent occurs, the political and ideological context that sustains it and the capacity for participants to envisage a possible solution to key issues. It is therefore important to not only consider the wider context in defining the republicanism of supporters of dissident groups, but more specifically examine how beliefs frame certain actions, practices and organisation, as well as understanding the differences under the umbrella label of 'dissident'. This section will explore the different origins of these dissident organisations, their claims of a mandate, their interpretation of Sinn Féin's position and their stance on electoral politics.

Who are the 'dissidents'?

The term 'dissident' should be utilised with caution. The term is ambiguous on two counts. Firstly, the term does not provide insight into what dissent actually constitutes. Does it mean dissent from Sinn Féin, or from peace, or from a political process, or a constitutional process, or does it constitute all of these things? Secondly, it denies any acknowledgement of republicanism as a heterogeneous entity, a varied and diverse phenomenon, reducing it as an ideology to what one particular party (Sinn Féin) offers, even though those offerings have varied hugely in recent times. The term 'dissent' indicates that there is a settled and definitive checklist of what constitutes republicanism, a creed from which 'dissident' groups have strayed. Dissent is

therefore somewhat hollow in a description, a term lacking in substance and explanation.[422] It is commonly used to denote those republican groups and individuals who oppose the Good Friday Agreement.[423] As demonstrated in Figure 4.1 the term dissident is also used to incorporate those groups who have, at different times, splintered from the Provisional movement and those who have been formed since the end of the Provisional IRA (PIRA). It is also used to include organisations that are linked to paramilitary groups and those which are not.

Figure 4.1: The Roots of Irish Republicanism since 1969
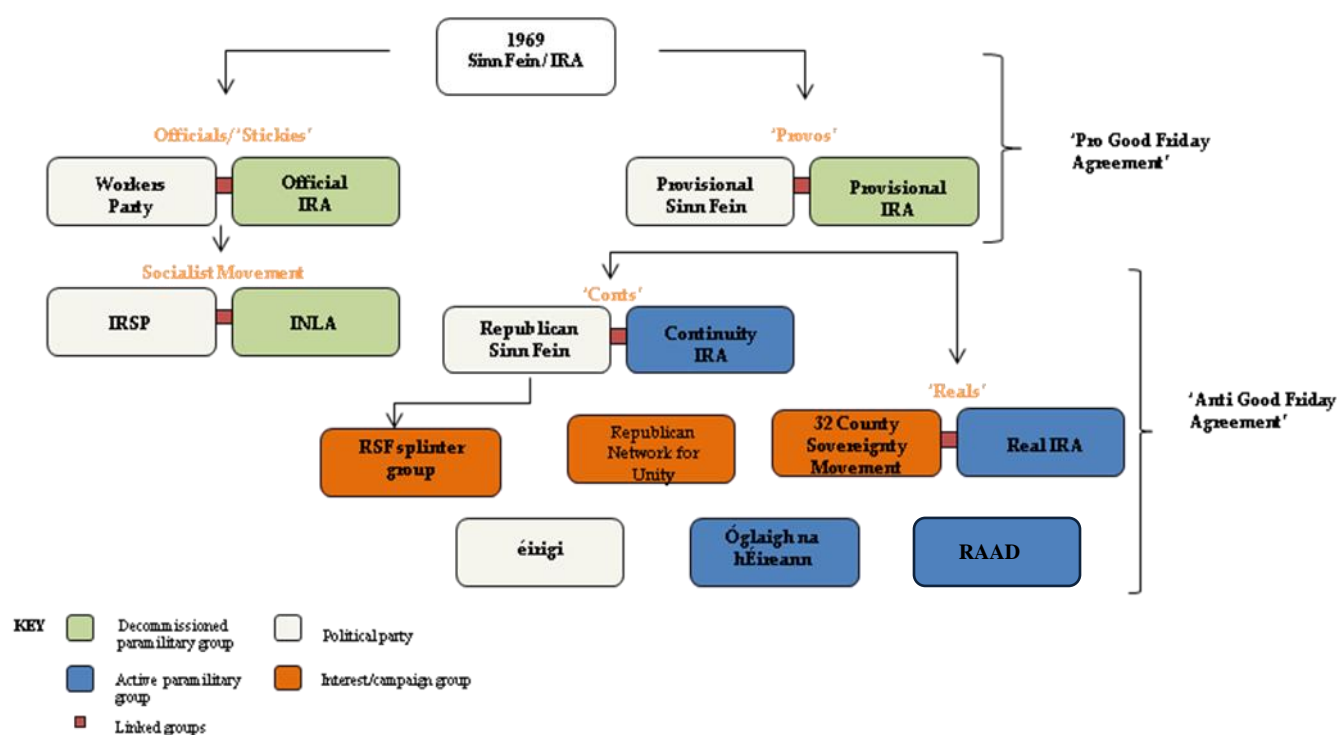
[422] It is also necessary to note that there is concern within the mainstream media that the term 'dissident' may also add some kudos or respectability. For example, the term dissident in the past has been attached to citizens in the Soviet Union who dared to criticise the authoritarian regime under the Communist Party. The term therefore carried positive attributes that meant the actions of these individuals were brave and positive. Whilst media outlets are also aware of the positive connotations attached to the label used in Northern Ireland today there is a sense that there were no alternatives.
[423] For further insight in to the meaning of the term 'dissent' see J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace Without Mandate? Is There Any Sympathy for 'Dissident' Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), pp. 64-65; A. McIntyre, 'Of Myths and Men: Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism', in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (ed.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic*

It is worth noting at this point that in July 2012 three main dissident republican groups in Northern Ireland merged to reclaim the name of the IRA. Through the *Guardian* newspaper this new formation released a statement announcing that the RIRA were to be joined by Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD), and a coalition of independent armed republicans. In the statement it was revealed these groups had formed a 'unified structure, under a single leadership, subservient to the constitution of the Irish Republican Army.'[424] This was the first time since the GFA that militant dissident factions had openly announced a merger. This will be discussed further along with military aspects in chapter 7.

Origins

Republican Purism? The origins of Republican Sinn Fein

In 1986 a split within the Provisional movement saw the formation of Republican Sinn Féin (RSF). Many of those who broke away to form RSF were those who led the walk out in 1969-70 to form Provisional Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA. The 1986 split was led mainly by pre 1969 southern-based individuals, such as Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, his brother Sean, Des Long and Denis McInerny. Of the twenty-one members of the first RSF Árd Chomhairle (national executive) only two came from north of the border.[425]

Similar to the earlier split in 1969, abstention was again the key to their walk out at the 1986 Árd Fheis. The tension within the movement was evident from the early 1980s. At the 1981 Árd Fheis, the 'armalite and ballot' speech by Danny Morrison confirmed that the future of the Provisional movement was one where armed struggle and electoral politics would be merged. According to White's analysis, this was a key moment in that it undermined a decade's worth of work by people like Ó Brádaigh, who, although not opposed to elections, argued that the IRA

Politics, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008); M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), pp. 1-9.

[424] *The Guardian*, 'New IRA: full statement by the dissident 'Army council'', 26/07/2012.

[425] See R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh*: *The Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2006).

and Sinn Féin were separate and distinct organisations whose roles could not be married.[426] However, it is important to question the extent to which the PIRA and Sinn Féin were ever truly separate organisations. Whilst in structural terms this was true in that two distinct entities existed, the membership was often overlapping, with individuals spanning both organisations. In addition there was no distinct separation within the decision-making process, given that the IRA approved Sinn Féin's actions and the political party was hardly autonomous. It is therefore possible that the 'ballot box and armalite' strategy actually separated the organisations further by outlining their distinct roles, designed to complement each other.

By 1986 the younger, more dominant northern-based leadership had created a forceful argument for dropping abstention to Leinster House. For those who went on to form RSF the dropping of abstention indicated the abandonment of fundamental principles, a betrayal of republican martyrs, amounting to a catalyst to an inevitable chain of events. Abstentionists charged that recognising Leinster House would shift the movement away from revolutionary struggle and would lead to the ultimate acceptance of Stormont and Westminster. As a result the walkout during the 1986 Ard Fheis was depicted by RSF as a movement in defence of traditional republicanism. As vice- President Geraldine Taylor explains:

> The very basis of the republican movement, the rock on which republicanism was founded on was not to recognise Stormont, Westminster or the Dáil and they in 1986 decided to recognise Dáil Éireann by saying they would take their seats there. That was the first step down that road, that was the time we moved away from them. We walked out but we walked out with the republican movement intact.[427]

According to the Taylor interpretation, because the Provisionals moved away from the Sinn Féin constitution by accepting an ending of abstention, RSF alone is representative of the continued republican tradition. This timeless and uncompromising claim was epitomised in 2005 when RSF celebrated their centenary; therefore, placing their origins in the 1905 creation of Sinn Féin as opposed to the more recent 1986 division.

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[426] See R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh*: *The Life and Politics of an Irish Revolutionary*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2006).
[427] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.

'There is no room for another Sinn Fein'[428]: The beginnings of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement

The 32CSM initially took the form of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee (32CSC), a pressure group within Sinn Féin organised to lobby against the direction Sinn Féin was moving in and persuade them to refocus on the key issues of national sovereignty. The 32CSC came into existence in Fingal in December 1997. Most of those individuals involved were members of Sinn Féin who were finding themselves 'increasingly marginalised due to their open concerns at the direction which the party was being led.'[429] These members were soon expelled from Sinn Féin and were barred from entering the 1998 Árd Fheis.[430] Prominent members included former Sinn Féin district councillor Francie Mackey, who became chairperson, Bernadette Sands-McKevitt who took the role of vice-chairperson, Rory Dougan, Joe Dillon, Ciaran Dwyer, Michael Burke and Marian Price.[431]

The creation of the 32CSM centred on what they termed 'the ideological retreat within Republicanism preceding the signing of the Belfast Agreement in April 1998.'[432] Departure from Sinn Féin focused on the direction of the peace process, most specifically acceptance of the Mitchell Principles of non-violence (adherence to which removed the prospect of a re-ignition of the IRA's armed struggle even if the outcome of talks was unsatisfactory) and the principle of Unionist consent.[433] Minutes from the first gathering point out that 'it was felt that the peace talks, based on the Mitchell and joint framework documents which guarantee a Unionist veto, will ensure an internal Six-county settlement and prohibit the probability of the end to partition.'[434] The 32CSM offers a republican critique of the peace process and Good Friday Agreement, arguing that they produced a 'partitionist solution that would only pump the life

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[428] The 32CSM, *Background*, www.derry32csm.com, accessed 28/11/2011.
[429] *Ibid*.
[430] In 1998, there were two Ard fheisanna. One was held in April, another in May. The 32CSC were barred from both.
[431] M Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 98.
[432] The 32CSM, *Background,* www.derry32csm.com, accessed 28/11/2011.
[433] The PIRA were not present at the GFA discussions. Sinn Féin may have been there but there was never any acceptance that they were representing the PIRA. All they were asked to do was use any influence possible to engage paramilitaries in the decommissioning process. This meant that Sinn Féin could no longer support any form of armed activity by the PIRA.

force back into the rotten 6 county corrupt state.'[435] A 32CSM member explained their perspective:

> Republicanism is about ending British rule in Ireland, ending parliamentary and modern day accommodation in Ireland, that's quite clear. Stormont, the British can put up as many puppet parliaments as they want in East Belfast, it's not going to change the nature of a republic.[436]

The 32CSM describes itself as a movement rather than a political party and insist that they have no intention of running in elections.[437] They therefore do not promote themselves as the original republican party, or, explain their roots as being in the 1905 creation of Sinn Fein, 'We do not claim to be the 'Real Sinn Féin' and we are not trying to steal the thunder from any group that does. The 32CSM is democratic; there is no room or no need for another Sinn Féin.'[438] Thus the 32CSM set themselves apart from the new moderation of Sinn Féin (although their policies are very similar to the 1980s offerings of that movement) and the militant dogmatism of Republican Sinn Féin. Leading members of the 32CSM have refuted the accusation of being members of the RIRA. However, it has been suggested by Frampton that the 32CSM was set up purely as support for the RIRA, and was always the subordinate of the partner. Frampton states that:

> From the outset, then, the 32CSC/32CSM was close ideologically - and personnel-wise - to the RIRA. Indeed, the founder of the Real IRA, Michael McKevitt, would at one point confide to the FBI agent David Rupert that the '32 were all military people and they were put there for that purpose to keep army politics in the hands of the military.'[439]

Due to legislative restrictions on the advocacy of terrorism and terrorist groups, the 32CSM does not seem to be as active in presenting itself alongside the RIRA in its literature or statements as it may have been when the group first emerged. In recent years there has been a toning down, but not complete removal, of reporting RIRA activity within 32CSM publications and on their website.[440]

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[434] The 32CSM, *Background*, www.derry32csm.com, accessed 28/11/2011.
[435] Interview with Bernadette Sands McKevitt , *Radio Free Eireann*, 32CSM, 30/12/1997.
[436] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/10.
[437] However in the 2011 Assembly elections 32CSM affiliated Garry Donnelly stood as an Independent candidate and polled 612 votes, placing him fifth.
[438] The 32CSM, *Background*, www.derry32csm.com, accessed 28/11/2011.
[439] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 100.

Eschewing Electoral Politics

The most frequent criticism facing dissidents is the fact that they are unable to demonstrate their legitimacy in representing any section of society in terms of possessing any form of electoral mandate. The following statement from Martin McGuinness epitomises the questioning of the lack of a mandate for groups such as RSF and the 32CSM:

> I suppose it begs the question, given that they would say they're committed to Irish reunification, how do you bring about Irish unity without the support of the people of Ireland? That is the big question they need to answer.[441]

In terms of creating an effective electoral alternative to Sinn Féin, dissident groups fail to register even a minor threat. RSF occasionally stand candidates as independents in local elections and on an abstentionist ticket in Westminster and Assembly elections, but the 32CSM eschews such contests. Beyond the obvious lack of votes, it is difficult to measure if there is any support, or sympathy (the 'sneaking regarders') for 'dissident' groups. In the BBC Northern Ireland *Hearts and Minds* poll in 2002, 3.3 and 3.8 percent within the nationalist community claimed that the 32CSM and RSF respectively, would best represent their views.[442] This was at a point when support for the GFA was at its lowest since it was signed in 1998, with the Assembly suspended amid considerable intra-Unionist division and allegations of a PIRA 'spy ring' at Stormont. In 2006 however, these figures for support fell slightly showing 2.4 percent RSF support amongst the overall electorate (circa 4 percent of nationalists) and 0.6 percent for the 32CSM (1 percent of nationalists).[443]

It is thus easy as demonstrated below, for critics to dismiss the legitimacy of such groups in reference to them failing to secure support from the electorate:

> They have no mandate. The arrangements in this country have been settled by the Good Friday Agreement. It has been voted on by the people of this country and nobody has any right to challenge that in the way that these people are doing.[444]

Although they rarely engage in such terms, dissidents argue that democratic methods of full Irish 'self determination' have never been permitted and that those stressing democracy need to

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[440] See chapter 7 for further discussion on legislative restrictions and reporting of RIRA activity.
[441] *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Real IRA will not win: McGuinness', 26/04/2011.
[442] *BBC News*, 'BBC Hearts and Mind Poll: Detail', 17/10/2002.
[443] *BBC Hearts and Minds Poll 2006*, available at
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_11_06_nireland_poll2.pdf, accessed 27/10/2012.

examine the dubious democratic credentials of partition, implemented despite an absence of electoral mandate for such following Sinn Fein's1918 final all-Ireland election victory. Eighty years after that election, the GFA referendum did not allow Irish electors, north or south, to express their support for a united Ireland, as this was never an option on the ballot paper. Ireland was partitioned at a time when Sinn Féin held three quarters of the parliamentary seats on the island.[445] Dissidents highlight that Republicans today could also hold the majority of seats but a united Ireland would be prevented by the 'unionist veto'. In the most unlikely event that the Irish Republic's electors had voted to retain Articles 2 and 3 in 1998, it would not have mattered in terms of creating a 32 county Republic: the North retained a 'veto'. Even Gerry Adams noted this at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in May 1998, insisting:

> It is clear that the referendums do not constitute the exercise of national self-determination. Self-determination is universally accepted to mean a nation's right to exercise the political freedom to determine its own social, economic, and cultural development without external influence and without partial or total disruption of the national unity or territorial integrity. These criteria are not observed in Ireland.[446]

Voters in the Irish Republic were, however, permitted a choice between whether to maintain a claim, however unrealisable, to Northern Ireland by rejecting amendments to Articles 2 and 3 of the constitution, or downgrade unity to a mere aspiration. Voters in Northern Ireland were permitted a choice between the GFA or an unspecified alternative in the event of rejection. Effectively, this choice was between partition with devolved power-sharing government or partition with direct British rule.

Yet, in the Irish Republic, when questioned in the European Values Study (1999-2000) shortly after the GFA referendum on the constitutional preference of the island of Ireland the most favoured preference was for a united Ireland with 54 percent support. Second preference was for an independent Northern Ireland with 32 percent and lastly the retention of Northern Ireland within the UK with only 10 percent.[447] Religious identification had an impact in terms of the level of support for each constitutional preference but all (Catholic, Protestant and non-

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[444] *Irish Times*, 'Dissident groups have no mandate for violent campaign says Tanaiste', 27/04/2011.
[445] Sinn Féin won 73 of the 105 seats in Dáil Éireann at the 1918 Irish General Election.
[446] Gerry Adams, *Presidential Address to Sinn Féin Ard Fheis*, May 1998.
[447] European Values Studies, 1999-2000, in, T. Fahey, B. Hayes & R. Sinnott, *Conflict and Consensus: A Study of Values and Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland,* (Dublin, Institute of Public Administration, 2005).

affiliated) viewed them in the same preferred order. This trend on constitutional preference is considered to be relatively constant over time.[448] Despite opinion polls demonstrating a United Ireland as the number one constitutional preference in the Republic of Ireland this option has never been put to the people. Therefore, the GFA was not an exercise in self-determination, but rather the opportunity for expression of support to an agreement that would give Northern Ireland an element of autonomy within a UK structure and would give northern nationalists a role within the polity. For obvious practical reasons, the British and Irish governments were not prepared to put the option of an independent Ireland to an electoral test. This is *not* to suggest that there would have been an overall majority for an independent, united Ireland had those governments ever dared put such an option. Support for unity appears soft; much may depend on how the question is asked, sympathy for the idea appears conditional upon a lack of political or economic cost (e.g. in terms of taxation), there might be few takers for unity in a referendum, as distinct from an opinion poll. Nonetheless, the point is simply this: the GFA referendum was an endorsement mechanism for a particular constitutional arrangement to which no alternative was offered to the electorate; whilst the endorsement was overwhelming, that does not constitute full constitutional 'self-determination'.

A key question is whether the possession of a mandate can only be expressed through electoral support, or, can groups such as RSF and the 32CSM function in alternative arenas that grant them an element of representative legitimacy? Firstly, however it is necessary to consider the extent and success of dissident electoral endeavours. For RSF the sacrosanct policy of abstention has shaped the nature of their electoral endeavours. The policy followed by RSF to stay out of Leinster House, Stormont and Westminster – in the inconceivable event of the party attracting sufficient support to exercise its abstentionist credentials - is not based on their rejection of parliamentary politics *per se*. Rather the rejection of these institutions is based on their 'partitionist' nature. RSF consider the present constitutional arrangements to be a result of a betrayal of the All-Ireland Republic of 1916 and the First (32 County) Dáil and the forced

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[448] See T. Fahey, B. C. Hayes & R. Sinnott, *Conflict and Consensus: A Study of Values and Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland,* (Dublin, Institute of Public Administration, 2005), pp. 87-113.

imposition of partition.[449] Whilst partition remains, abstention is viewed by the organisation as an uncompromising cornerstone of Irish republicanism. In addition, RSF have been consistent in the position that fusing militarism with constitutional politics is a contradiction; for them it is not seen as possible to be both a revolutionary and a reformist. In explaining this position Ó Brádaigh has often used the metaphor that it is impossible to ride two horses at the same time, the revolutionary and constitutional steeds. The feat cannot be performed because they are two horses going in opposite directions.[450] Far removed from the bicephalous characteristics of Provisional Sinn Féin post 1986 (increasingly constitutional yet still preaching armed revolution), for RSF, it is impossible to adopt contradictory approaches.

That RSF have not shifted their position on the policy of abstention provides them with a sense of exceptionalism and pride in not having compromised their stance whilst others have radically altered their policies. Those who have compromised are therefore portrayed as functioning within and supporting a system that reinforces partition. As Party President Des Dalton explained:

> You don't work the system, the system works you. Ultimately, once you accept that and once you accept the parameters of the state you accept everything that accompanies that...We have never dallied in any way with constitutional politics to a greater, lesser extent we have maintained our position... and our analysis of our relationship with the state has remained constant over those years and I think it has been justified in the out playing of events with others who have been tempted to go on another route. I think that has been justified.[451]

Such an obdurate attachment to abstention centres upon the pure and unchanging republican interpretation offered by RSF. Whilst some would claim this has made them static and rigid, RSF take pride in their consistency and loyalty whilst others, in their view, have conceded.

Having only broken away from Sinn Féin in 1997/98 the 32CSM had no issue with the 1986 dropping of abstention to Leinster House. Today the 32CSM do not participate in institutions for reasons other than the obvious fact that they would not get elected, although they attempt to ignore their rejection, claiming that their 'mandate will not be measured by gerrymandered

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[449] Presidential Address of Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, Republican Sinn Féin 93rd Ard Fheis, 9/11/1997.
[450] D. Sharrock & M. Davenport, *Man of War, Man of Peace*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997), pp. 421-422.
[451] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

votes...For us the ballot box means more than just numbers.'[452] Despite not standing candidates as an organisation they have recently however shown their approval for members to stand as independents. A prominent 32CSM member, Gary Donnelly, stood as an Independent Republican, in the 2011 local elections, garnering 11 percent of the vote (612 votes) in Cityside in Derry, a low, but not negligible figure and one which fell only 19 votes short of winning a seat.[453] Donnelly is a prominent member of the 32CSM, often being the individual to represent the organisation in media appearances. He was imprisoned in August 2010 for committing an offence under terrorism legislation,[454] and in September 2011 was arrested in connection with the 2006 murder of Denis Donaldson but was then released the next day without charge.[455] The issues raised by Donnelly during the 2011 Council election campaign reflected the 32CSM local agendas, including rates of pay for local workers, challenging anti-social behaviour (specifically drugs), disdain at Derry being the UK City of Culture, the conduct of the PSNI and the treatment of 'political prisoners.'[456] After the campaign Donnelly refused to shake hands with Martin McGuinness, outside the polling station, on the grounds that McGuiness had 'abandoned the republican community.' Donnelly's gesture brought a significant amount of press attention.[457] It is possible that his bid for election signifies the beginning of more 32CSM members standing as independents. What is clear however, is that as an organisation, the 32CSM do not seek legitimacy through representation in the current political institutions. Such a point was exemplified when asking 32CSM member Michael Gallagher whether the organisation's goals can be achieved through political mechanisms:

> Republican goals cannot be achieved through political mechanisms as they stand in Ireland, i.e. there is a denial of democracy in Ireland. There is no democracy in this country...I have no business for political mechanism as British machinery. My personal opinion is that there is going to be some sort of military solution to the problem.[458]

[452] 32CSM, *32 Country Sovereignty Movement New Year Statement*, 01/01/2010.
[453] Elections results available at www.ark.ac.uk/elections/lgderry.htm, accessed, 17/07/2012.
[454] *BBC News*, '32CSM man charged under terrorism legislation', 20/08/2010.
[455] *RTE News*, 'Dissident released over Donaldson murder', 12/09/2011.
[456] *May 2011 Council Election*, Election Communication, www.irishelectionliterature.wordpress.com, accessed 02/02/2012.
[457] See *BBC News*, 'Dissident refuses to shake hands with Martin McGuinness', 06/05/2011.
[458] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/10.

For the 32CSM the pursuit of a political mandate through the electoral arena is outmatched by the need for the continuation of an armed campaign. As John Murphy, a 32CSM member in Cork explains:

> The 32 County Sovereignty Movement can have thousands of members, if that was the case Britain wouldn't take any notice but if they thought for a moment that there was twenty members of the IRA successfully attacking British forces they would look up and take notice...So, I think then people recognise...you needn't have a vote to have a successful movement.[459]

The 32CSM therefore do not view constitutional politics as the arena which can ascribe them legitimacy. For them there is far more emphasis on gaining a mandate through 'community activism' and what they term creating an interface between themselves and the people.[460] Whilst the 32CSM are clear in their dismissal of an electoral mandate and their desire to prove the possession of democratic legitimacy through community representation they fail to present an obvious strategy in how this can be demonstrated. They state their wish to 'define and secure such a mandate as a tangible expression of sovereign democracy envisaged by the 1916 Proclamation. The mandate must be defined in terms of its democratic integrity and not simply in terms of electoral percentages.'[461] Despite wishing to possess a mandate as a 'tangible' expression, they are derided by constitutional politicians for failing to demonstrate evidence that they are capable of achieving serious backing.

Despite refusing to take seats within Stormont, Leinster House and Westminster, Republican Sinn Féin candidates do participate in local elections in the Irish Republic. The abstentionist principle is not applied to local government assemblies because, 'they do not claim sovereignty over the territory they administer. It is therefore possible to participate in these bodies without prejudicing the right of Ireland to freedom and unity.'[462] Therefore, if elected (a very rare occurrence), RSF candidates do participate on councils. RSF candidates have been unable to stand on their party label in local elections north of the border due to the introduction of the 'Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act' in 1989. Under the Act candidates had to declare

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[459] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.
[460] See *Derry Journal*, '32CSM vow to 'provide leadership'', 05/01/2010.
[461] The 32CSM, *Dismantling Partition*, www.32csm.info accessed 02/08/2010.
[462] Republican Sinn Fein Poblachtach, *Elections and Abstention*, (Dublin, Republican Sinn Fein, 2000).

their support to certain conditions, such as declaring they would not support terrorism, before they were permitted to contest in elections. The declaration read as follows:

> I declare that, if elected, I will not by word or deed express support for or approval of − (a) any organisation that is for the time being a proscribed organisation specified in Schedule 2 to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978: or (b) acts of terrorism (that is to say, violence for political ends) connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.[463]

Because RSF refused to sign such a document that declared they did not approve the use of armed struggle, their nomination papers were refused, making them ineligible to stand. Therefore, RSF were left to only contest elections in the South.

In 2009 RSF fielded nine candidates in Irish local council elections, candidates having to stand as independents as the organisation is not registered as a political party. Throughout the campaign RSF promoted Éire Nua and Saol Nua as the alternatives to the failed free market capitalism of the 26 County establishment.[464] RSF were successful in one area, Tomás Ó Currain winning a seat in Galway County Council with 1,387 votes, or 8.4 percent.[465] Following this solitary win Ó Currain was described, without irony, as RSF's 'most prominent elected candidate.'[466]

The last Northern Ireland Assembly election contested by RSF was in March 2007 where candidates were registered as 'Independents' in response to the Elected Authorities Act. In February of that year RSF announced they would field candidates in eleven of the eighteen constituencies in the forthcoming Stormont elections on an abstentionist ticket but eventually only six party members contested seats[467] RSF's showing was negligible, polling a paltry total of 3,880 votes or 0.6 percent of the votes across all the Northern Ireland constituencies.[468] At the same election Sinn Féin received 180,573 votes, 26.2 percent of the overall total.[469] Such disparity demonstrates the inability of RSF to mount a meaningful electoral challenge to Sinn

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[463] 'Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 - Chapter 3', *Opsi.gov.uk*, accessed 02/02/2012.
[464] *Saoirse*, 'Local Election Manifesto 2009', May 2009.
[465] *The Irish Times,* 08/06/2009.
[466] *Irish Republican News*, 07/06/2009.
[467] *Saoirse*, 01/02/2007.
[468] See Northern Ireland Elections, www.ark.ac.uk/elections, accessed 15/02/2012.
[469] *Ibid.*

Féin.[470] It was clear from the rhetoric surrounding the RSF campaign that opposing Sinn Féin and the current political dispensation was the main intention, as demonstrated by Michael McManus, candidate for Fermanagh South Tyrone:

> Those who shamefully use the honorable [sic] name of Sinn Féin ... have no right to call themselves Republicans. I appeal to the Republican people of this historic constituency to reject British rule, reject the RUC [sic] and send a clear message to the crown that we will neither be bought or broken.[471]

The main intention was to provide a political challenge rather than offer serious electoral rivalry, RSF fails to register an electoral impact at local or assembly level either side of the border, whilst Sinn Féin remains on an upward trajectory, albeit at a slower pace than the spectacular gains of the early 2000s and amid greater nationalist abstention. Both RSF and the 32CSM are more concerned with other campaigns such as rights for political prisoners. However, this focus cannot disguise the lack of support, blamed by the Party President, Des Dalton, upon the media's unwillingness to air republican alternative perspectives:

> Whilst the media were at times quite willing to give a window there to say we are opposed to this...We were never given the opportunity to present our alternative. This is what we believe this step forward; this is the opportunity to have a debate about the kind of Ireland we want. I even experienced that myself in media interviews where you would be asked about your attitude to armed struggle and so on, at times, the media interviewer, when you start talking about things like Eire Nua and the vision of the kind of Ireland you would like to see they tend to dismiss that and are not really interested in that at the time. They just want to move on and talk about rejectionism if you like.[472]

What is important for RSF is not a mandate represented by electoral support but a mandate from history. This is reflected in the preservation of Tom Maguire's 'last political will and testament.'[473] Tom Maguire was a member of the army executive within the IRA and the last surviving member of the first Dail. During the 1969/70 split Ó Brádaigh and fellow republican leader Daithi Ó Conaill secured Maguire's recognition of the Provisional IRA as the lawful successor to the previous Army Council. Again after the 1986 split the side that would go on to form RSF sought Maguire's approval to make the Continuity IRA the legitimate successors. Maguire approved whilst simultaneously rejecting the same request from the Adams' delegation.

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[470] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011),p. 69.
[471] *Saoirse*, 01/03/2007.
[472] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[473] R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh: The Life and Politics of An Irish Revolutionary,* (Bloomberg, Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 327.

For RSF such a symbolic act is invaluable in terms of providing historical legitimacy. Geraldine Taylor of RSF explained its importance:

> Throughout the history of the republican movement, there is [was] always somebody from the First Dail Eireann...to recognise they were the caretakers of the republican movement. In 1969 when the split took place with the sticks and that, they wanted to go political, the Provos were founded then and Tom Maguire recognised them as the legitimate government of the republic. In 1986 when the split took place again, the same Provies went back to this man and he chased them. Republican Sinn Féin is the legitimate government of the republic. We were the caretakers. Now Tom Maguire has died. But these other groups do not have this history that we have. We are the republican movement. They aren't.[474]

For Taylor, history and republicanism form a symbiotic relationship where one cannot exist without the other. The precedence given to history and tradition can be clearly identified in RSF's newspaper, *Saoirse,* where more coverage is dedicated to history and commemorations than current events or direct political expression of the organisation.[475] As a result, it is unsurprising that RSF have attained a 'Dad's Army' stereotype.[476] Joe Barr, a younger member of the 32CSM in Derry, was a previous member of RSF and left due to what he describes as the group's lack of productivity:

> I was with Republican Sinn Féin probably for about two years I would say but...they don't do anything. There was nothing to do apart from we would have a meeting once a month and they would give me ten *Saoirse* to sell...That's all it was, 'there you go, see you next month. Don't forget to bring that ten pounds.' I think there was one commemoration I went to and that was it.[477]

Beyond using electoral performance as a judgement of support, the Northern Ireland General Election Survey in 2010 was a rare measurement of public opinion on dissident groups. It aimed to 'analyse whether there are particular categories of the Northern Ireland population, identifiable via demographic and attitudinal exploration, which offer a modicum of sympathy to dissident Republicanism.'[478] One of the key questions within the survey relating to dissident groups enquired about the level of sympathy ('a lot,' 'a little', or 'none') with:

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[474] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.
[475] See Chapter 6 for an analysis of the contents of *Saoirse.*
[476] See M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011)*,* p. 69.
[477] Joe Barr, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.
[478] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), p. 3.

the reasons why some Republican groups (such as the Real IRA and Continuity IRA) and often called 'dissident Republicans' continue to use violence, even if you don't condone the violence itself.[479]

The figures that emerged were seen as surprisingly high and gained a considerable amount of media attention.[480]An overall figure of 8.2 percent of respondents stated that they have sympathy for the reasons why some republican groups continue to use violence, but within the nationalist community, this figure constituted 14 percent. This approximated to almost one-third of those self-identifying as nationalists as distinct from merely being from a nationalist community background (using previous census labelling).[481] However, it is also important to put these quantities into perspective. In the same survey only 24 percent of people identified themselves as nationalist[482] (low nationalist self-identification [only 20 percent] is also confirmed in the 2010 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey).[483] Therefore those who demonstrated sympathy for republican groups which continue to use violence amounted to one-third of less than one quarter of the population.

The extensiveness of dissident sympathy was nonetheless perhaps higher than might have been anticipated, yet the figures of sympathy for dissident groups did not markedly differ from two earlier, largely unnoticed, BBC Northern Ireland Hearts and Minds polls conducted in 2002 and 2006. These indicated combined support for RSF and 32CSM of 7.1 percent[484] The 2010 Northern Ireland Election Study question asked about the level of 'sympathy' for dissidents, a much softer term than 'support' and the results therefore do not assume a substantial amount of backing for dissident violence. Sympathy for the reasons behind dissident violence, which could include simply that there is no united Ireland, is some distance removed from outright support. The findings do however challenge the mainstream narrative that dissident groups elicit no

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[479] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without Mandate? Is there any sympathy for Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), p. 10.

[480] See as one example, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 'Up to 30 percent supporting dissidents', 14/10/2010.

[481] *ESRC 2010 Northern Ireland General Election Survey*, results available at http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/snDescription.asp?sn=6553 and at www.liv.ac.uk/politics/staff-pages/ESRCSurvey/index.htm. accessed 04/03/2012.

[482] *Ibid.*

[483] *Northern Irish Life and Times Survey*, 2010, available at www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2010/Political_Attitudes/UNINATID.html,accessed 12/05/2012.

[484] *BBC Hearts and Mind Survey*, available at, www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland, 12/11/2002.

regard whatsoever within the nationalist community. It may be more accurate to assert that they attract a very low, but not negligible, quantity of sympathy.

In addition, it is usually the case survey respondents tend to produce answers perceived as socially acceptable. For example, during the troubles there was a constant under reporting of Sinn Féin electoral support due to the party's links with the PIRA; a trend coined as the 'shy Shinners' syndrome.[485] Given the 'socially acceptable' conditioning of answers, it is *possible* that the 2010 results on attitudes to 'dissidents' could under-report sympathy, although this is mere conjecture and the limited electoral evidence suggests otherwise . The 2010 General Election Survey may have indicated that the picture frequently painted by the media and mainstream politicians that these groups are 'a tiny minority with little support' and made up of 'marginalised, disaffected young people'[486] perhaps needs a little qualification. RSF President Dalton commented:

> It is vital for people like Republican Sinn Féin to give that voice, and represent that strand of revolutionary republicanism because it is very much painted that there was this 99.9% of people who have signed up to this [Good Friday Agreement], this is not the case. There are you know, and I think even Professor Jonathan Tonge's study on that showed, there still remains that core...who would from a greater to a lesser extent uphold revolutionary republicanism...that base of republicanism remains there...it is important, that strand of republicanism continues to be voiced and we see that as our primary duty.[487]

Despite usually downplaying the need to indicate a contemporary electoral mandate and instead emphasising their legitimacy as coming from history, Dalton is keen to highlight a survey that does hint at some backing.

The 'Dissident' Critique of Provisional Sinn Fein

> They sold out their republican principles, ideals and everything else. Now and again you will hear, 'Oh we will get you a united Ireland' but they are not really concerned about there being a united Ireland.[488]

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[485] See F. Cochrane & J. Tonge, *Old Extremism or New Moderate Centrism? The 2001 Election in Northern Ireland*, in L. Bennie et al, *British elections & parties review*, *Volume 12: 2001 General Election,* (London, Frank Cass, 2002), p. 57.
[486] Column Eastwood Mayor of Derry, quoted in *The Irish Post*, 15/10/2010.
[487] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[488] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.

'Dissident' republicans are frequently considered purely in 'rejectionist' terms. Their actions are viewed as a negative reaction to the peace process. It is necessary to explore further the dissident critique of the current Sinn Féin position to reveal further what specific aspects they focus on and whether the groups emphasise different features, and if so, why? Given these critiques, why has Sinn Féin been so successful in maintaining considerable unity within the organisation?

The dissident critique of Sinn Féin tends to centre on their acceptance of partitionist institutions, acceptance of the GFA, PIRA's decommissioning and endorsement of policing. Whilst both RSF and the 32CSM utilise these acts to demonstrate the 'sell out' of republican principles there are distinct differences. The 32CSM and RSF agree that Sinn Féin has abandoned republican principles. However, in detailing this abandonment they highlight different aspects in order to expose this betrayal. RSF's Dalton recounts the steps of Sinn Féin's submissions:

> The first big step was obviously recognising Leinster House. People like Ruairí Ó Brádaigh warned of the consequence of this. They were all you know 'Ruairí is out of touch and he is bringing an old analysis to an all new situation', and it just doesn't add up. Then the first IRA ceasefire came in and then they were decommissioning. Then ultimately they signed up to the acceptance of the unionist veto. Where in that situation they effectively recognised that Ireland isn't a nation in the unitary sense. You are accepting that there is the six county state with a legitimacy and so on.[489]

For RSF, Sinn Féin removed their claims to the republican tradition by agreeing to take seats in Leinster House. Yet RSF has struggled to articulate an alternative. The party is considered in relation to its opposition to mainstream politics and Sinn Fein's full absorption into 'partitionist' institutions. It is difficult for RSF and other groups to project their own opinions. Ultimately, as Taylor explains, the actions and language of Sinn Féin has a direct impact on other republican organisations:

> It means that the struggles are harder to achieve now that it was years ago because of the sell out by the Provos. It is most difficult for republicans because former republicans are now part and parcel of administering British rule...So it is more difficult now that it was years ago.[490]

Due to the frequent portrayal of Sinn Féin as the archetypal form of republicanism, other groups' fidelity to the ideology is often considered in relation to what Sinn Féin represent. This has

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[489] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[490] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.

obviously had a damaging effect on RSF by inhibiting their scope to represent the enduring and perpetual republican tradition. Dalton describes the impact of the Sinn Féin agenda on RSF:

> Now in 2011 it's not a particularly easy time to be a republican. Now when I say republican, I mean, a lot of people use that label I would mean republican in the traditional sense of that word and what it means, what it really means, which is a revolutionary tradition...they [Sinn Féin] subvert the revolution in the name of the revolution if you like. And that is what they have been doing; they have been invoking the republican in the name of the republic. Because as I say, they are using all the right language, they obviously come from a background of having been activists themselves and so on. For a lot of people they would still view them as representing republicanism. So if they hear a contra argument to that it is quite confusing.[491]

For RSF, who are described as demonstrating a 'commitment to an unchanging, almost theological version of Irish republicanism'[492], the critique of Sinn Féin is focused on their removal of principles justifying the label 'republican'. RSF are frequently presented as an organisation that has little to offer beyond their rejection of the Sinn Féin agenda. They do not have the means to generate public interest based on their own aims and objectives. Instead they are only offered a window of opportunity if it is in relation to their links to paramilitaries or their opposition to Sinn Féin. They have been placed in a rejectionist 'box' where they are given very few occasions to express anything else beyond the narrow topics that can rally human interest outside the parameters of the RSF membership.

For the 32CSM, whilst their critique of the Sinn Féin position questions the extent to which the organisation can still be considered republican, it is based more on the u-turns made by the organisation in relation to 'armed struggle', a position typified in the assertion of one member; 'I mean to me personally, just to be a republican, even just to be considered a republican the first thing you have to do is recognise the right to bear arms against a repressive force.'[493]

It is unsurprising that members of the 32CSM portray an almost symbiotic relationship between armed struggle and republicanism considering the timing of their departure. The 32CSM members that split from Sinn Féin did so at a time when the continuation of a military capacity

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[491] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[492] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011)*,* p. 59.
[493] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

was being seriously threatened. Considering they had already accepted the 1986 downgrading of abstention, their departure was based less on constitutional issues and more on the future of an armed capability.

A key aspect of the 32CSM critique consists of highlighting supposed hypocrisy from Sinn Féin in denouncing the continued use of armed struggle. Shortly after McGuinness's 'traitors to the island of Ireland'[494] comments in 2009, the 32CSM highlighted the u-turns made by Sinn Féin by posting video clips from the 1980s of McGuiness claiming that armed struggle will be the ultimate yielder of a united Ireland, as he stated 'We don't believe that winning elections and winning any amount of votes will bring freedom. At the end of the day it will be the cutting edge of the IRA which will bring freedom.'[495] John Murphy, from the 32CSM in Cork outlines the contradiction of the Sinn Féin position on denouncing armed struggle,

> Well basically, you talk about irony. You might often see *Youtube* clips from the '70s and '80s with things the likes of Adams and McGuiness have said and turned things totally on their head. There is actually an ironic clip of Martin McGuiness telling a reporter that no amount of votes for Sinn Féin will bring Irish freedom at the end of the day it will be the cutting edge of the IRA that will bring freedom. These were his words and now I think they got tired, individuals, but I don't think they had a right to make decisions then for the rest of the movement. I have never lived in the six counties but I can imagine, you know, every day fighting a war, politics in your face. But I don't think they had the right to talk to everyone and draw the movement down that road.[496]

Considering such a reassessment on behalf of McGuinness in relation to the role of the IRA and the position of armed struggle, it is unsurprising that the 32CSM utilise such u-turns to demonstrate the duplicity of the Sinn Féin position. When questioned about the denunciation of armed tactics by former members of the PIRA, Michael Gallagher from the 32CSM responded with the following:

> I would say it was just hypocrisy, it's just hypocrisy. It's people who have had enough, who have been compromised and decided ... to try and take the movement whatever direction while they have an easy life for themselves. I don't believe that for one minute people like Martin McGuiness or Gerry Adams have the desire for peace at their heart ... Personally, Martin McGuiness, for me would have been cold blooded, he would have been ruthless....A lot of people went to their graves, particularly in the eighties, fighting for an

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[494] *News Letter*, 'Murderers are Traitors to Ireland-McGuiness', 10/03/2009.
[495] Martin McGuiness quoted at, www.derry32csm.com/2009/08/cutting-edge-of-ira-will-bring-freedom.html?z#!/2009/08/cutting-edge-of-ira-will-bring-freedom.html, accessed 16/03/2012.
[496] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

Irish Republic, and he was at the helm of the movement, the military and political movement.[497]

RSF also considers the denunciation of 'armed struggle' as a betrayal, but as an inevitable consequence of the compromises that preceded such condemnation. Geraldine Taylor argues:

> The very foundation of which the republican movement was founded on is still intact and that is the situation that we see now. The Provos went further and further down that slippery slope, which we knew they were going to do. Recognise Stormont, they do recognise Westminster, make no mistake in that. They have offices over there, the only thing they haven't done is take their seats. They surrendered all their weapons, they surrendered them and no army that has been victorious has ever surrendered their weapons. Those weapons were acquired by the freedom fighters of Ireland, they didn't just belong to the Provies, yet the Provies just handed them over. Now they are part and parcel of administering British rule.[498]

Despite these claims of dissident republicans, Sinn Féin has remained remarkably united whilst going through such profound transition. Considering the republican movement's propensity to splinter it was not surprising that dissent would emerge (the only surprise perhaps was that MI5 claimed to be surprised). The scale of Sinn Féin change was far greater than the number of departures, whilst the party demonstrated its capacity to attract new backing. The relative unity of Sinn Féin has been the result of a long-term strategy which began in the 1970s. In order to avoid major blocs of opposition forming and causing a serious threat to the continuity of the movement the strategy had to be a long-term project. Dalton uses the following analogy to describe the gradual implementation of change,

> Those who were unhappy with it were being siphoned off piece by piece by piece so that ultimately there was no major bloc of opposition left. I think that, from their point of view, was quite clever and it was a long strategy and it was well thought out. I know that the analogy that Adams used around that time in the 80s, this project was like a bus from Derry to Cork. The bus would stop, some people would get off and other people would get on. By the time the bus arrives in Cork you might have a whole new set of people on the bus but the driver was still the same. You can see an element of that.

> I think that has been the genius of what Adams has done, that he has managed to do that. What he has done, is that he looked at the various schisms along the way, the various splits, and he learnt the lessons from those. Particularly what the Workers Party did. They attempted to do it all in one block. He certainly wasn't going to do that.[499]

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[497] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/2010.
[498] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.
[499] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

Dalton recognises the inherent characteristic of the republican movement to split but credits Adams with limiting the departures in comparison to the scale of change. Whilst he pays tribute to Adams for an adroit and well-planned strategy, Dalton's reference also alludes to the result of such a transition being a hollowed-out entity, represented by the shell of a vehicle devoid of a consistent ideology and a membership that are only on board for the ride.

There is another thread of republicanism that espouses more of a socialist element within their politics. In addition to groups that emerged from the Provisionals, the label of dissident has been used to describe those groups that emerged post GFA and groups that emerged from earlier splits in the movement pre 1969. Both of these republican strands contain groups that are keen to promote themselves as being socialist revolutionary as well as republican organisations.

The Socialist Revolutionary Thread of Republicanism

Through the twentieth century republicans have, to varying degrees, espoused a social radical tendency. Some have been careful to stress that the priorities of the struggle for Irish freedom need to remain with the national question. As Jack Bennett made clear, 'It may be considered valid in today's conditions to set some form of socialism as an ultimate objective - so long as socialism is not made a pre-condition for achieving national freedom.'[500] This has at times conflicted with a form of Irish republicanism which has been more convinced in its political and social analysis of providing a remedy to the Irish national question, espousing the view of 1916 Marxist rebel James Connolly that 'the cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland. The cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour. They cannot be dissevered.'[501] On this analysis, a united Ireland and establishing a socialist republic are inextricably linked. The organisations that retain a socialist interpretation of Irish republicanism are groups such as the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and éirígí. Despite neither being linked to paramilitary groups, both are commonly labelled 'dissidents' for their rejection of the Good Friday Agreement.

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[500] J. Bennett, 'The Northern Conflict and British Power', *Irish Sovereignty Movement Pamphlet*, no. 1973 cited in MLR Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement,* (Routledge, New York, 2003), p. 22.
[501] James Connolly, cited in éirígí, *From Socialism Alone Can the Salvation of Ireland Come*, available at http://www.eirigi.org/pdfs/socialism.pdf, accessed, 26/06/2012.

The Irish republican socialist movement, or the 'Irps', emerged from the Official wing of the republican movement (see figure 4.1) in the years after the split with the Provisionals in 1969. In 1972 the Officials called a ceasefire. Several senior figures, most notably Seamus Costello, retained the belief in needing traditional 'physical force' Irish republicanism whilst promoting a socialist political programme. Costello clashed with the Officials' leadership and eventually formed a breakaway group, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and led their militant wing the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). Costello was elected chairman of the IRSP and became the INLA's first chief of staff.[502] The IRSP, formed in 1974, brought together many socialist and republican fighters.[503] Therefore, the new grouping aimed to combine a left-wing struggle whilst pursuing an armed struggle through the INLA.

Whilst the tensions within republicanism around the late 1960s and early 1970s were to some extent the result of antagonism towards socialism and working-class politics it should not be reduced to a left-right division. Rather than seeking reform in the North through a socialist programme and a redefinition of power relations, for the Provisionals the immediate priorities were of communal defence and catholic protection. Fra Halligan, member of IRSP Árd Chohairle (national executive) and long-term member argues that the division between the Officials and the Provisionals was based upon the latter's desire to use force as a means of defending northern nationalist communities whilst the Officials possessed an element that advocated reform within a socialist dimension:

> The politics, there was no politics. It was devoid of any politics [in the Provisionals]. The Official IRA and their leadership, who went on to become the Workers Party, yes there was politics being talked then and people saying why haven't we achieved our aims or our objectives through a different fashion. But it was too early and we believe it was far too raw to do that.[504]

The IRSP declares itself a revolutionary socialist organisation standing in the tradition of James Connolly.[505] The aim of the IRSP is to bring together as many of the working class as possible-

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[502] M. Hall (ed.), *Republicanism in Transition: (1) The need for a debate*, (Belfast, Island Publications, 2011). p. 5.
[503] IRSP, *Republican Socialist Programme for Ireland*, (Belfast, IRSP, n.d.), p. 3.
[504] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[505] IRSP representative, in M. Hall (ed.), *Republicanism in Transition: (1) The need for a debate*, (Belfast, Island Publications, 2011), p. 5.

Protestant and Catholic in a broad front and 'to end imperialist rule in Ireland, and establish a thirty two county democratic socialist republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.'[506] For Halligan, the socialist aspect of his beliefs takes prominence over his republican values:

> To me now, my republicanism has a small 'r' and the socialism has a very large 'S'... If all these societies, the 32CSC, RNU, these 1916 societies that seem to be springing up, if they were to come together, what would they be coming together for? What would be there intention? I didn't join the republican movement at all in my life. I joined the republican socialist movement.[507]

Whilst the IRSP are no longer aligned with an organisation pursuing physical force republicanism, they are considered to be dissidents based on their rejection of the Good Friday Agreement. Their analysis was that the GFA would copper fasten the division of Ireland and institutionalise sectarianism and that as republicans it was not possible to accept the Agreement on the grounds that it would be accepting partition:

> The causes of the conflict have never been addressed...The good folk up on the hill at Stormont, will look after everything. If Martin and Peter are running about hand in hand that doesn't make any difference to the Falls road or South Armagh or Derry or wherever. Basically what you are seeing here from what they would call the dissidents, we would call them 'dissenters', is really a core of republicanism, you can't accept Stormont and the partition of your country.[508]

Despite the IRSP's denunciation of armed struggle in the current context, they still recognise that the negative connotations connected to the label of 'dissident' are hard to escape, especially given their past associations with the INLA and their current stance against the GFA. As such, the connotation is that those groups who are anti-Agreement are also anti-peace, despite announcing that the 'war' is over. An IRSP member expressed it thus: 'the problem was that two elements were deliberately linked - the Good Friday Agreement and peace. If you weren't fully behind what was in the Agreement, it was made to look as if you must be for a continuation of the war: indeed, there must be something wrong with you.'[509] Even though the IRSP emerged from a split in the socialist arm of Irish republicanism, distinct from the Provisional wing, their republicanism is still considered in relation to what Sinn Féin represent:

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[506] IRSP, *Republican Socialist Programme for Ireland*, (Belfast, IRSP, n.d.), p. 4.
[507] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[508] IRSP member A, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[509] IRSP member B, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.

Martin McGuinness would stand up and say 'I am a republican and I am very proud to be one'. There would be a big chorus of 'no you are not Martin'. For me it doesn't matter. Martin was involved for an awful long time. I would see Martin now and his party as constitutional nationalist. I have told them that. They have argued with me, but what does it matter. I was never a man to wear a badge. Are you trying to convince yourself because you are not convincing anyone else?[510]

The rigid label of dissident therefore does not, allow for an alternative interpretation of republicanism, in this case an interpretation that rejects the legitimacy of armed struggle yet refuses to agree to the terms of the GFA. At no time have the IRSP directly split from the Provisional movement, yet they are placed in to the dissident box, a label that is based on their ideological departure as opposed to the result of a physical split or division in the movement's membership.

A left-wing dimension to republican politics remains divisive. Post GFA saw the emergence of the group éirígí who describe themselves as an Irish socialist republican political party, committed to ending British occupation of the six counties and establishing a 32 county Democratic Socialist Republic. The nearest translation for the name éirígí is 'rise up' or 'arise' and is taken from the socialist and trade unionist James Larkin's famous quote: 'The great appear great because you are on your knees – let us rise.'[511] Éirígí was founded in Dublin by former Sinn Féin activists who had become disillusioned by the direction of the party in April 2006. Éirígí Chairperson, Brian Leeson, a former Sinn Féin Árd Chohairle member, left over 'their [Sinn Féin's] gradual abandonment of the core national position on the national question' and their 'their gradual movement away from the correct left socialist position.'[512] Leeson was accompanied by other former Sinn Féin activists in opposition to the changes within the party, especially around the time Sinn Féin's endorsement of policing became increasingly inevitable.

Éirígí stress the centrality of socialism and the working-class struggle in answering the national question, arguing that the campaign for a united Ireland and class action cannot be separated. Believing that electoral politics alone cannot successfully bring change to Irish people and

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[510] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[511] Éirígí, *For a Socialist Republic*, available, www.eirigi,org.about_us/faq.htm, accessed 15/12/2009.
[512] Brian Leeson, interview with the author, Dublin, 24/06/2009 cited in M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 230.

society, éirígí promotes active campaigning on a range of political, economic and social issues and encourages participation as a means to empower and mobilise the working class.[513] Éirígí has been involved in a range of campaigns. One of the first was, *Reclaim the Republic,* launched in May 2006, to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising. This involved the distribution of 60,000 colour copies of the 1916 Proclamation nationwide, with the aim of encouraging people to visibly display the poster with pride.[514] A number of individuals were asked to contribute to a collection of writings on the theme of 'What The Proclamation Means To Me'. The contributors come from a variety of backgrounds including the arts, journalism, trade unionism, political and community activism. It appeared from the outset that éirígí were intent on marrying the core historical ideals and thinking of the republican tradition with 'a revolutionary current that has distinguished itself historically from the predominant conservative nationalist tendency.'[515] By associating themselves with the pinnacle of republican scripture, the 1916 Proclamation, éirígí attempted to identify itself as a leftist revolutionary party with its roots firmly in the republican tradition.

Other campaigns include, *We only want the Earth!,* protesting over the Dublin government handing over the rights to all Irish oil and gas explorations to a host of domestic and foreign private energy companies. In addition the organisation ran the *Different Name Same Aim* campaign against policing in Northern Ireland. Éirígí distributed leaflets and displayed banners to highlight that despite policing reform the PSNI remain a sectarian force who are still carrying out an anti-republican agenda. The battle against supposed 'political policing' is a key part of éirígí's campaign for a British withdrawal.[516] They also protested against the British Queen's visit to Ireland in 2011.

Despite its youth, éirígí appears to offer organisational coherence with an emphasis on grass roots political campaigning. The IMC described éirígí as a grouping based on revolutionary socialist principles, 'with a focus on aggressive protest activities', but had 'no information to

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[513] See Éirígí: *New Year Statement*, 02/01/2010, available at www.eirigi.org/latest/latest010110.html, accessed 02/01/2010.

[514] Éirígí, *Reclaim the Republic,* poster available at www.eirigi.org/pdfs/campaigns/reclaim_republic_campaign.pdf, accessed, 17/07/2012.

[515] Éirígí: *For a Socialist Republic*, available, www.eirigi,org.about_us/faq.htm, accessed 15/12/2009.

[516] See Éirígí: *Republican Newry Says No to the PSNI*, 14/02/2010, available, http://www.eirigi.org/latest/latest140210print.html, accessed 15/02/2010.

suggest that it is involved in paramilitary activity.'[517] Éirígí's niche area is revolutionary socialist and anti-GFA, yet, unlike the IRSP, it is not tainted by former links to any paramilitary grouping.

The fringes of local electoral politics

Both the IRSP and éirígí have recently stood candidates in local elections and intend to pursue this path in the future. In reference to electoral politics however, the IRSP makes the claim that 'we don't want to be politicians, we are radical community activists, we are not politicians.'[518] Unlike Republican Sinn Féin, the IRSP does not uphold abstentionism as being fundamental to republicanism and adopts a more pragmatic approach towards electoralism and participation. The founding statement of the party in 1974 stated, 'The Irish Republican Socialist Party is not an abstentionist Party, and will decide its attitude towards the contesting of any particular election, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the conditions prevailing at the time.'[519]

In May 2011, for the first time in thirty years, the IRSP stood in elections, contesting five local wards. The best performance being in Strabane with 3.8 percent of the votes, the least amount of votes being in the Lower Falls with 0.6 percent.[520] Paul Gallagher, standing in Strabane, missed out on securing a seat by one vote whilst the IRSP overall were the party with the highest number of votes not to get a seat.[521] The IRSP demonstrates the multifaceted nature of 'dissident' Irish republicanism. With the party's clear emphasis upon socialism as the republican core, it rejects armed struggle yet remains against the Good Friday Agreement and stands in local elections but claim not to believe that there is a 'parliamentary road to socialism in Ireland.'[522] Such a combination of characteristics is recognised by the party itself as potentially 'contradictory in its nature. We are involved in an ex-prisoners group and we are involved in

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[517] *Twentieth Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationary Office, Nov. 2010), p. 9.
[518] IRSP representative, in M. Hall (ed.), *The need for a debate (1): Republicanism in transition* (Island Pamphlets, Belfast, 2011), p. 5.
[519] Founding Statement of the IRSP, 13/12/1974, http://www.irsp.ie/Background/history/founding.html, accessed 21/06/2012.
[520] For full results see ARK: Northern Ireland Elections, http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa11.htm, accessed 21/06/2012.
[521] *Ibid*
[521] IRSP, *Republican Socialist Programme for Ireland*, (Belfast, IRSP, n.d.), p. 6.
[522] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.

peace building and reconciliation. Then we are highly critical of the GFA.'[523] The result is a curious mix of republicanism, socialism, community activism and pragmatism within a political party.

At the éirígí Árd Fheis in May 2007, the decision was taken to move from being a campaigning group to becoming a political party. In 2009 the group adopted a written constitution outlining the 'inherent weaknesses of the current electoral process'[524] whilst maintaining a sense of realism by accepting the need to embrace this 'process' and the centrality of existing political institutions. Éirígí continues to fuse socialist politics with the national question, arguing that its philosophy is based 'on the firm belief that the people of Ireland, and indeed, the wider world, have the fundamental and inalienable right to economic, political and national self determination and independence.'[525]

Éirígí stood in the 2011 Assembly Elections on a radical social and economic agenda and as an alternative to the SDLP and Sinn Féin, claiming to provide an opposition to the government's fiscal cuts. Éirígí's claimed its decision to contest this election was to protest against governmental cuts to public services. John McCusker,[526] éirígí's West Belfast chairman and candidate in Lower Falls for Belfast City Council, stated that éirígí was 'providing a platform whereby a radical voice could be given for this community that somebody that was not part of implementing the cuts or agreeing the cuts could give some kind of credible voice against it.'[527] Another éirígí candidate, standing in the Upper Falls, was Pádraic Mac Coitir, an active trade unionist and ex-prisoner.[528] The organisation gained 11.3 percent of the vote in the Upper Falls and 6.6 percent in the Lower Falls.[529] Although these results demonstrate the existence of pockets of support, this may also be confined to the small areas contested by éirígí.

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[523] *Bunreacht eirigi*, Nov 2011, p. 1, available at http://www.eirigi.org/pdfs/eirigi_Constitution.pdf.
[523] *Ibid.*
[524] *Ibid.*
[525] *Ibid.*
[526] For more information and campaign literature see
http://www.eirigi.org/pdfs/poblacht_na_noibrithe/Poblacht_na_nOibrithe_apr11_jmc.pdf
[527] *Slugger O'Toole*, 'Catching up with éirígí's John McCusker – starting "a community fight back"', 16/04/2011, available at http://sluggerotoole.com/2011/04/16/catching-up-with-eirigi-john-mccusker/.
[528]For more information and campaign literature see
http://www.eirigi.org/pdfs/poblacht_na_noibrithe/Poblacht_na_nOibrithe_apr11_pmc.pdf
[529] For full results see ARK: *Northern Ireland Elections*, http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa11.htm, accessed 21/06/2012.

Conclusion

Exploring further the origins of several dissident groups has revealed the multifaceted nature of modern day Irish republicanism. The groups explored here in this chapter all emerged at different times, for different reasons and from different branches of Irish republican lineage. They all express differences in their interpretation of republicanism and demonstrate different approaches to electoral politics.

The mainstream emphasis upon mandates has dictated that the political relevance of such groups can only be expressed through electoral politics. According to this analysis, which is commonly expressed by politicians and the mainstream media, the groups mentioned in this chapter fail to pass the criteria and clearly lack the democratic mandate required for serious consideration. However, for those who are members or support these groups, demonstrating an electoral backing is by no means a primary concern.

Despite being placed under the same banner of 'dissidents', these groups all have their own niche on the republican spectrum. Each of the four groups promote a different interpretation of the tradition. RSF, who consider their 'mandate' as a product of the past, are rooted in an unyielding politics of 1916-19. The 32CSM are more pragmatic in their political approach in terms of acceptance of the 26 county state and being cognisant of the need for campaigns of contemporary relevance, yet still demonstrate a reluctance to stand candidates in elections, an aversion partly derived from the likelihood of abject failure and partly due to the group's inherent faith in militarism as a necessary and justifiable tactic. Instead of promoting an electoral strategy, the 32CSM express the need for an armed campaign in being central to the republican strategy. The IRSP however, are keen to move away from their association with paramilitarism and instead push forward a socialist agenda. They still appear to be a group in transition, eager to build on their support base and develop more of an electoral strategy. Éirígí on the other hand have never been linked with a paramilitary organisation. Because those members who left Sinn Féin and went on to join éirígí did so after acceptance of the GFA and PIRA decommissioning, it is possible to assume that their departure was not over the basis of maintaining armed

republicanism. They therefore, have the benefit of starting a new organisation with a 'clean slate', aiding the impression that they are a genuinely novel republican socialist organisation. The next chapter, which explores the strategies, campaigns and future challenges of various republican groups, will assess further the dissident standpoint.

Despite the differences in these groups' origins they are still referred to with the collective label of 'dissidents', overlooking heterogeneity within the broad republican movement. Whilst the 32CSM and RSF emerged directly from the Provisional branch of republicanism, the IRSP emerged out of the split in the Official movement and éirígí, whilst containing some former members of Sinn Féin, emerged eight years after the signing of the GFA. The dissident label is utilised mainly in reference to departure from Sinn Féin's avowed republicanism, which has become elevated to the template for all others. As such, the term dissident represents Sinn Féin's ability to take ownership of the republican franchise.

Chapter 5

Continuity or Dissidence? Assessing the 'dissident' republican standpoint: strategy, broad fronts and campaigns

Exploring the origins of various dissident republican groups is important in assessing the catalysts behind their formation. In order to explore their contemporary political outlook and strategic rationale (assuming this might be identified), it is necessary to assess the avowed goals and objectives of each group and how each considers these might somehow be attained. It is also necessary to assess what, if any, political resources or advantages might be available to each group. In the previous chapter, the dissident critique of the Provisional movement was considered. However, it is also imperative to question whether, beyond the critique, dissidents are capable of presenting a viable alternative to Sinn Féin policies. It is easy for dissident groups to criticise the constitutional path taken by Sinn Féin, but do they themselves possess a convincing substitute? How do various groups feel towards the creation of a 'broad front' and what are the challenges for these organisations? These questions need to be addressed in order to consider what threat dissidents pose to Sinn Féin's possession of the republican franchise and to assess the potential longevity of militant republicanism.

Strategies for Irish unity amongst dissident organisations

Éire Nua (New Ireland) is the RSF policy document that outlines their proposed vision for a united Ireland. Despite existing in previous formats, the programme was given a revamp by Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and Dáithi Ó Conaíll and then formally launched as a Provisional policy in 1971. It was then updated again in 1972 to apply the idea of federalism to the vision of a unified

Irish state.[530] Éire Nua proposed to redraw the Irish state by establishing a unified four province federal structure. The four provinces of Ulster, Connacht, Munster and Leinster would all have their own self-governing parliament. The system proposed a three-tiered political system that would bring with it a complete reordering of governmental structures at federal, provincial and local level. The idea is that through a federalist structure maximum devolution can be transferred to the lower levels of governmental organisation to create strong regional local councils. It would also give unionists in the north a slight majority.[531] RSF contends that, 'a federal system, with strong regional and local government, will make it possible for unionists and nationalists to co-operate in the common interest, pooling the talents of all and working together to build a new and prosperous Ireland.'[532] Therefore, the primary concern of Éire Nua is for the creation of a secular decentralised Ireland that protects the rights and traditions of all communities, although the removal of the Union would, by definition, remove the core of unionism, notwithstanding a strong 'unionist' presence in a nine county northern legislature.

The federal policy caused tension within the Provisional movement throughout the 1970s. The Northern contingent was unconvinced by a proposal whereby unionists would retain a majority in an Ulster parliament. With Northerners increasingly controlling the IRA Army Council, Éire Nua caused a division between Sinn Féin and IRA policy. The policy therefore became part of the wider power struggle that emerged within the Provisionals by the end of the 1970s.[533]

It is unsurprising, given previous allegiances to Éire Nua, that federalism was placed at the centre of the RSF strategy after the 1986 division. RSF continue to promote it as the only document which proposes an alternative to the 'failed arrangement' under the Good Friday Agreement, the key criticism being that the peace process provided the consolidation of English

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[530] R. White, *Ruairí Ó Brádaigh: The Life and Politics of An Irish Revolutionary*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 165
[531] Republican Sinn Fein representative in, M. Hall (ed.), *Republicanism in transition (1); The need for a debate*, (Belfast, Island Publications, 2011), pp.9-10.
[532] Republican Sinn Fein Poblachtach, *Éire Nua: A New Democracy*, (Dublin, Republican Sinn Féin, 2000).
[533] E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Allen Lane, 2002), p. 183.

rule in Ireland and ultimately the denial of Irish sovereignty. [534] As described by Geraldine Taylor below, RSF still have continued commitment to Éire Nua;

> That is why we are trying with our policy document. We even went over to Downing Street a lot of years ago and handed in our policy document to try and move towards a united Ireland but they didn't respond at all. We have also sent them to unionist politicians and everything else. No feedback on them at all, but we intend to get it updated and we intend on doing the same thing again. To call on them and to talk about, we are prepared to go anywhere to discuss this document and any queries any of them have. It is the only document which is out there.[535]

RSF are unable to stir interest for Éire Nua outside their own parameters. Whilst the plan indicates a genuine willingness to offer autonomy to the unionist community, unionists will clearly not accept a federal Ireland, given its severance of British sovereignty. In addition, despite being reformatted for relevance within a twenty-first century context Éire Nua is criticised for being regressive and out-dated, a relic of a romantic, agrarian (there is little indication of industrial policy) vision of an Ireland of a bygone age, one which is also bereft of serious cognisance of the existence of two nations on the same island. Frampton notes RSF's consistency in that 'what had been judged appropriate to 1971 was held to be no less appropriate for the post 2000 world.'[536]

In 1991 RSF began drafting a new social and economic programme for the organisation. Soal Nua called for an economic system that would put human interests and development before the interests of finance and concern for profit, viewing 'conventional economics as an unsustainable discipline which must be subordinated to social, environmental, ethical and spiritual values.'[537] The document attacks 'free-rein transitional capitalism [which] is a denial of true democracy, is outside any democratic control, is predatory and dehumanising.'[538] Similar to most RSF political thought, Soal Nua is very idealistic in the sense that it projects a rather mythical vision of a desired Ireland, drawing upon a nostalgic version of pre-capitalist Ireland for inspiration. Rather

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[534] Republican Sinn Fein Poblachtach, *Éire Nua: A New Democracy*, (Dublin, Republican Sinn Féin, 2000), pp. 11-12.
[535] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.
[536] M Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 61.
[537] Republican Sinn Fein Poblachtach, *Saol Nua: a new way of life,* (Dublin, Republican Sinn Fein, 2004), p. 2.

than providing a prescriptive document to remedy the ills of modern day capitalism, RSF offer a romanticised ideal. It is indicative of the party's isolation, however, that even amid an acute crisis of capitalism within Ireland the party has made scant impact.

The 32CSM have created several policy documents that address issues such as Irish democracy, republican unity, dismantling partition and the politics of policing. Most intriguing of these documents is the group's submission to the United Nations in April 1998, resubmitted in 2001. The intention of the submission was to promote internationally the contention that British sovereignty over Northern Ireland is illegal, a 'colonial' claim breaching political, economic and social rights.[539] The submission argued that the denial of Ireland's national sovereignty contravenes the mandate provided by the last all-Ireland elections in 1918 and the subsequent establishment of an all-island Republic.

The submission was an unusual construction with its focus ranging from an in-depth nostalgic republican historical analysis to the assertion of rights of sovereignty in international law. The majority of the submission's focus is upon historical background with the inclusion of arguments from the Nobel Peace Prize winner and Irish politician Sean MacBride, emphasising the rights of self determination and Irish sovereignty:

> Ireland's right to sovereignty, independence and unity are inalienable and indefensible. It is for the Irish people as a whole to determine the future status of Ireland. Neither Britain nor a small minority selected by Britain has any right to partition the ancient island of Ireland, nor to determine its future as a sovereign nation.[540]

The stated aim of the submission was to investigate the breaches of UN covenants and request an appropriate ruling:

> ...we respectfully request the United Nations Commission on Human Rights strongly urge the Government of Britain to comply immediately and unconditionally with its international obligations and respect the democratic wishes and that most fundamental and non negotiable right of the Irish people, the basic right to self determination.[541]

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[538] Republican Sinn Fein Poblachtach, *Saol Nua: a new way of life,* (Dublin, Republican Sinn Fein, 2004), p. 2.
[539] 32CSM, *United Nations Submission* (1998), www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.
[540] Sean MacBride, cited in *32CSM United Nations Submission* (1998), www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.
[541] 32CSM, *United Nations Submission* (1998), www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.

Despite making the above 'request', the overall practical intention of the UN submission was unclear, other than as profile-raiser for the 32CSM which might at least put Britain on the defensive over its claim to Northern Ireland and emphasise that this claim remained contested regardless of the contents of the GFA.

Beyond pleas to the UN, the political strategy for the resolution of the Anglo-Irish conflict, *Irish Democracy, A Framework for Unity,* was launched in 2005. The 32CSM intended this to prove the veracity of their own position as well as provide a template for discussion and debate. Within the document they separately addressed the British government, the Irish government and Unionists.[542] Overall, the document reflects the organisation's opposition to the Good Friday Agreement, viewing Sinn Fein's support for the deal as preventing the realisation of national sovereignty, whilst also portraying the current political arrangements as a denial of democracy to the Irish people. Predictably, the GFA was criticised as ignoring the historical basis of the political problem:

> The 32 County Sovereignty Movement's objections to the political process which culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement lay in the fact that the cause of the conflict between our two nations, the violation of Irish sovereignty, was not to be addressed by the process but was used to be a precondition for entry in to negotiations in that those wishing to take part had to concede that no such violation existed.[543]

For the 32CSM, conflict resolution within the current context will never be successful. The organisation views constitutional change as the catalyst in creating the political and ideological circumstances in which 'empowerment can be facilitated.'[544] The current arrangements are considered deficient and redundant in terms of providing the basis of conflict resolution due to the fact that their existence is a denial of democracy to the Irish people. The 32CSM asserts that the violation of Irish sovereignty has not been addressed. The organisation also criticises Sinn Féin for entering talks based upon the acceptance of the Mitchell Principles of non-violence, which were to lead to IRA decommissioning, without making discussions of British sovereignty an equal pre-condition for talks. The Mitchell Principles committed participants to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues and to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations, with such disarmament verifiable to the satisfaction of an

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[542] 32CSM, *Irish Democracy A Framework for Unity* (2005), www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.
[543] 32CSM, *Preparing an Irish Democracy*, www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.

independent commission. They required participants to renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations. Moreover, the Mitchell Principles removed vetoes over the outcome of talks. All parties had to agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and to urge that 'punishment' killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.[545] These principles, which were pre-conditions to entering negotiations, thus amounted to a repudiation of armed struggle and a commitment to peaceful methods regardless of outcomes. For the 32CSM, such movement in advance of the removal of British sovereignty was entirely unacceptable.

Notwithstanding supremely optimistic forays to the UN, the 32CSM, unlike RSF, appears more willing to apply an element of pragmatism to their approach in calling on the need for debate and consultation with other republican groups and individuals (Sinn Féin are no longer considered by the 32CSM as republican). In an attempt to separate themselves from RSF, the 32CSM aimed the criticisms of exclusivity and isolation in their direction, arguing that there are 'those who interpreted principles in an overtly restrictive way severely restricting our ability to propagate the practical benefits for people which these principles are meant to deliver.'[546] In contrast to RSF, the 32CSM recognises the need to maintain ideological principles which also allow for the practical pursuit of politics. As an example, they are not interested in RSF's arcane contestation of the legitimacy of Leinster House. Thus, 32CSM Publicity Officer Ciaran Boyle contended:

> If you put Republican Sinn Féin in the context of now, they have become dinosaurs. They have got principles but there's a thin line between principles and arrogance...You sort of have to progress and move with the times...people change, their mindsets change and things about you change.[547]

Thus, the 32CSM appear more tolerant of alternative interpretations and are more welcoming of debate, although the militarism of the organisation and association with the RIRA, notwithstanding ritual denials, tend to obscure the more flexible aspects of the organisation's

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[544] 32CSM, *Preparing an Irish Democracy*, www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.
[545] *British and Irish Governments Document on UDP Participation at Talks*, 26/01/1998, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/bi26198.htm, accessed 06/08/2012.
[546] *Ibid.*
[547] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.

outlook. Yet, similar to RSF, the language utilised and the arguments of the 32CSM offer clarity of ideological dogma, but imprecision concerning how the organisation intends to realise ideas and objectives. The lexicon used often encourages this ambiguity, via, for example, use of terms such as facilitating 'empowerment'. Whilst these documents allow one to gain a deeper understanding of the organisation as a whole in terms of ideas and opinion, they do not provide a clear and distinct outline of each organisation's intended strategy. Dissidents tend to offer critical analysis rather than prescription (beyond 'Brits Out' mantras) and *A Framework for Unity* fails to provide much more than a political critique.[548]

Broad fronts versus isolation

With the emergence of more groups opposing the Sinn Féin agenda since the Good Friday Agreement, 'dissident' republicanism has become highly fragmented. Such a diverse and disparate picture might seem illogical considering the relatively small nature of each group. It is therefore understandable why there has been a consistent level of debate around the creation of a so called 'broad front'. Beyond the obvious numerical advantages of bringing groups together it is unclear what would be the practical arrangements of a 'broad front'. For example, would it mean cross-group leadership? Does it constitute just the sharing of resources? Or, does it require the supporting of similar causes such as the political prisoner campaigns? What is clear is that some groups are far keener to promote unity amongst and between groups than are other organisations.

RSF have remained opposed to the idea of uniting the various strands of 'dissident' republicanism in a broad front that can together contest the direction of Sinn Féin and the peace process. RSF have re-affirmed they do not intend to become a part of any other republican grouping that does not completely share their vision of an Irish republic, disdaining other groups which stayed with Provisional Sinn Féin post-1986 for the downgrading of republican principles through the removal of abstention in respect of Leinster House. For RSF, their republicanism represents the unbroken and continued tradition:

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[548] 32CSM, *Irish Democracy A Framework for Unity* (2005), www.32csm.info, accessed 02/08/2010.

From the point of view Republican Sinn Féin we would see ourselves as Sinn Féin, we celebrated our centenary in 2005 and so on. When Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and Dáithí Ó Conaíll left over Leinster House in the Ard Fheis in 1986 they brought with them the constitution of Sinn Féin intact and reconvened in the West Country Hotel as the Sinn Féin organisation. The use of the word continuity is very important in it. We are very aware of that historic continuity and an unbroken link right back. So we would see ourselves from that point of view as representing that strand of revolutionary republicanism which is unbroken.[549]

The emphasis within RSF as *the* embodiment of the republican tradition is drawn from their unbroken tradition and continuity in the face of concession. RSF celebrates that they have not been tempted by the potential electoral rewards of constitutionalism. RSF are proud of remaining loyal, where others have strayed. For this reason the party's President, Des Dalton, insists that he could only work with those who were in total alignment with RSF policies and beliefs. He criticises other groups for refusing to say:

'look we got it wrong in '86, our analysis was wrong, but rather than establishing another organisation we accept that there is a republican movement there, let's try and build that and let's try and work on that'.
Instead of that [these groups claim] 'we are going to try and justify ourselves, that we were right ... we are just going to set up another organisation'. If you like, the ideology is not there. The ideological base is not there because you can't just wish away all the other stuff.[550]

Therefore, if individuals did wish to move over to RSF, such a transfer would clearly involve some form of acceptance that RSF were right in 1986 and onwards and 'they' were wrong.

The 32CSM is far less hostile to cooperation, being less bound by republican self-ascribed 'purity'.[551] It is not uncommon for the 32CSM to join forces with the Republican Network for Unity (RNU) and Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) at political rallies, meetings and debates. The reasoning behind their support for the creation of a broad front is that together groups can be stronger and develop influence. As distinct from RSF's need to address the past in order to ascertain, 'who was right, and who was wrong', the 32CSM adopt a broader approach more embracing of all anti-GFA republicans. This point is demonstrated in the following *Sovereign Nation* editorial:

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[549] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[550] *Ibid.*
[551] The 32CSM, *Dismantling Partition*, www.32csm.info accessed 02/08/2010.

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2004 must mark the year of republican unity and previous dissensions must be consigned to the rubbish bin of history. As we all know to our cost, the republican movement is unmatched anywhere for its propensity to fragment and fractionalize...The 32 County Sovereignty Movement is intent on promoting unity amongst ALL republicans.[552]

Here the 32CSM are demonstrating that their continuation with Sinn Féin post 1986 should be resigned to irrelevance in terms of demonstrating their dedication to republican principles. Unlike RSF, the 32CSM argue that it is unnecessary for them to justify their loyalty to Sinn Féin up until 1997. In addition in agreeing to consign history to the 'rubbish bin' of the past, the 32CSM are reaching out to disaffected Sinn Féin followers. Such a statement demonstrates to the grass roots that they could move over across and join the critics of Sinn Féin without having to justify their previous continued support for the organisation.

By pushing forward a socialist agenda ahead of a republican analysis the IRSP are interested in a different kind of broad front, one bringing together the working class and trade unionists:

> At the end of the day the IRSP is committed to a 32-county socialist workers' republic – that is our goal, we haven't diluted that for thirty-six years and are not going to now....We don't want to achieve it in isolation because we know we can't. We want to bring together as much of the working class as we can – Protestant and Catholic - in to a broad front.[553]

The IRSP are not as sceptical of the broad front idea as RSF but there is still reluctance. Its difficulty behind the creation of a broad front seems to be based upon their intent to move away from their previous association with an armed group. When asked about the IRSP's views on a united front, party representative Fra Halligan responded in a cautious manner, sceptical of the purpose and motives of the other republican groups:

> There is also a more sinister element to it as well. If that car bomb in Newry had made its way to the centre for example. When it goes off it has a life of its own, it is indiscriminate. It is going to kill kids and old people. So you are saying to yourself well if you want to come together and that is your object, then we would be saying, 'well, no thank you'. If you are going to come together to come to the streets and protest about what is happening today then we will be with you every step of the way.[554]

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[552] *Sovereign Nation*, Feb/March 2006.
[553] IRSP representative, in, M. Hall, *The need for a debate (1) Republicanism in transition* (Island Pamphlets, Belfast, 2011), p. 5.
[554] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012. The quotation makes reference to a 600 pound car bomb that was discovered by police in an abandoned van in Newry, close to the Irish border in April 2012.

The creation of a broad front has the obvious appeal of presenting unity amongst those republican groups who oppose the arrangements of the GFA and the direction of Sinn Féin. Whilst being typically described as small factions with little, or no, support, a united opposition to the political status quo would be harder to ignore. The 32CSM and the IRSP both acknowledge the need for discussion and claim to welcome debate on the future direction of Irish republicanism. RSF on the other hand, are more interested in their own interpretation, and new members embracing that position, than providing space for discussion or debate.

Republican Network for Unity

Another group that is keen to promote unity amongst republican factions is the Republican Network for Unity (RNU). Originally formed in opposition to Sinn Fein's endorsement of the policing in 2007, RNU emerged out of the former pressure group known as 'Ex-POW's and Concerned Republicans against RUC/PSNI & MI5'. At the Wolfe Tone memorial in Bodenstown, it was announced that the former pressure group had 'served its purpose when constitutional nationalism betrayed the Republic by endorsing the British Crown forces. Today, RNU, having contributed greatly to the process of wider republican re-alignment, establishes itself as an entity in its own right.'[555] Therefore RNU's opposition to the path taken by Sinn Féin was based upon the perceived failure of Adams' party to challenge the 'British war machine', symbolised by the building of a large new MI5 headquarters in Belfast.[556]

RNU are not a political party and state they do not have any immediate plans to stand in elections. They do however adopt a pragmatic approach towards electoral politics by acknowledging that it could be a possible avenue to be explored in the future.[557] Many of the members are former 'political prisoners' and ex-combatants with well known high profile republicans such as Carl Reilly, Martin Óg Meehan and Tony Catney. Some of these figures are

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[555] Republican Network for Unity, Bodenstown Address, 2007, available at www.republicannetwork.ie, accessed 26/04/2012.

[556] See also H. Patterson, *Beyond the 'Micro-Group': The Dissident Republican Challenge*, in, P. M. Currie & M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011), pp. 78-79.

[557] Carl Reilly and Martin Óg Meehan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.

recurrently linked in the media to armed groups such as ONH and the RIRA, claims vehemently denied.[558]

Although the bulk of former prisoners associated with RNU are from outside Belfast (drawn in disproportionately large numbers from Tyrone) the group has become particularly active in West and North Belfast. RNU are very active within the Greater Ardoyne Residents Collective (GARC), an organisation committed to organising peaceful opposition to the Orange Order parades marching through republican areas. RNU are often mistakenly described as an umbrella organisation for other dissident groups to come together. They refute being the driving force behind the creation of a dissident republican united front, but they do encourage the coming together of republican groups especially over the rights of republican prisoners and opposition to the PSNI.[559] RNU states that they 'recognise that Unity is strength ... for this reason we urge solidarity between all Revolutionary and progressive forces in Ireland. We strongly value the prospect of future unity between disparate republican organisations in particular, however we are an entity in our own right, and contrary to popular opinion are not an umbrella group'.[560]

Such an interpretation of republican unity is very much in line with the adage of 'together we are stronger'. For groups that adopt a more pragmatic approach, such as the 32CSM and RNU there appears to be a more relaxed and practical interpretation towards the coming together of the various dissident groups, especially in relation to prisoner campaigns.

Republican Prisoner Campaigns

Despite the GFA the rights and status of republican prisoners remains an active and powerful subject, centred around their status as being politically motivated, distinct from common criminals. The republican interpretation of the conflict considers the British state as an oppressive and aggressive actor. Republicans are therefore involved in reactionary violence where imprisonment is an unfortunate repercussion in their fight for civil rights and self determination. Today, republican dissident groups remain highly active in campaigning for the

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[558] See, *Belfast Telegraph*, 06/10/2011; 09/08/2011.
[559] Carl Reilly and Martin Óg Meehan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[560] Republican Network for Unity, *About Us*, available at www.republicannetwork.ie, accessed 24/07/2012.

rights of political prisoners. There is also a strategic rationale, as the imprisonment and treatment of Irish republicans by a 'foreign state' is one of the few potential providers of sympathy for dissidents.

Many of the prisoner campaigns have rested on defining the motivation behind certain actions. Such a definition depends upon the interpretation of a prisoners actions being 'purely political' not ordinarily criminal. Therefore, awarding the label of 'political prisoner' involves some judgment about what acts can be considered as politically motivated. The past actions of the British state in categorising the status of republican prisoners proved to be emotive and contentious.

'Special category status' existed from 1969-76, *de facto* treatment as prisoners of war. Under such status prisoners did not have to work whilst they were in prison, they were allowed to wear their own clothing as well as have other privileges such as additional food and tobacco. To a backdrop of increasing paramilitary activity, in 1971 the decision was made by the British government to bring back internment. Authorities were given the power to detain suspected terrorists without trial. Between 1971-75 2,060 republicans and 109 loyalists were detained.[561] The right of trial by jury was suspended for certain offences, where instead the court consisted of a single judge, a 'Diplock Court'. In 1975, the Gardiner Report suggested that anyone convicted of terrorist offences was to be treated in the same manner as ordinary prisoners, including wearing prison issue uniform and doing prison work.[562] This change brought with it a re-categorisation of the status of paramilitary prisoners, henceforth treated as ordinary criminals. The policy was subsequently endorsed by the Conservative government from 1979 onward, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declaring: 'We are not prepared to consider special category status for certain groups of people serving sentences for crime. Crime is crime, it is not political.'[563] Such change provoked considerable local resistance as well as significant international condemnation. The re-categorisation of prisoner status by the British government was met with (eventually) vigorous campaigns from the republican community, both within and

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[561] G. Hogan & C. Walker, *Political Violence and the Law in Ireland*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 94.
[562] See Great Britain Parliament, *Report of a Committee to Consider, in the Context of Civil Liberties and Human Rights, Measures to Deal with Terrorism in Northern Ireland* [Gardiner Report], (London, HMSO, 1975).
[563] P. Taylor, *Behind the Mask: The IRA and Sinn Fein*, (New York, TV Books, 1998), p. 282.

outside prison walls, which, by the 1980s, increased support for the IRA and, as it entered electoral mode, Sinn Fein.[564]

In response to the government's ending of special category status, republicans refused to wear prison uniform opting instead for prison issue blankets, which evolved in to a 'dirty protest'. It is estimated that by 1978 between 300 to 400 republican prisoners engaged in this form of protest.[565] In addition, by 1981 a second wave of hunger strikes began, led by Bobby Sands. After 66 days on hunger strike Sands passed away. His death produced a negative reaction against the British state internationally and an estimated 100,000 people attended his funeral.[566] Following Sands' death nine more hunger strikers died. The protests, in respect to the political status of republican prisoners, had a profound impact, leading directly to 'the political development of Sinn Féin and this was ultimately to transform the nature of Irish Republicanism'.[567]

Along with decommissioning and demobilisation of paramilitary groups, demilitarisation and policing reform, prisoner releases presented a potentially significant obstacle in negotiations for the GFA.[568] It was agreed that under the terms of the deal qualifying paramilitary prisoners, from those organisations remaining on ceasefire, were to be released from prison within two years. The provisions for the release of prisoners in Northern Ireland and the Republic permitted for the exclusion of these groups initially opposed to the peace process and those still engaged in armed action.[569] Therefore, those who were excluded initially on the republican side from early release were the INLA (although this changed), CIRA and the RIRA. By 2008, 449 prisoners had been released (196 Loyalists, 241 Republican and 12 non-aligned) under the provisions of the 1998 Agreement. These numbers joined the thousands of former prisoners who had already served

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[564] See F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H Block,* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2011).
[565] P. Shirlow & K. McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire: Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Pluto Press, London, 2008), p. 38.
[566] P. Taylor, *Provo: The IRA and Sinn Fein*, (London, Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 282.
[567] P. Shirlow & K. McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire: Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Pluto Press, London, 2008), p. 39
[568] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[569] K. McEvoy, 'Prisoners, the Agreement, and the Political', *Fordham International Law Journal* 22, no. 4, 1998), p. 1561.

their time; estimates calculate the overall number of those imprisoned approximate totals of 15,000 Republicans and between 5-10,000 Loyalists.[570]

There is existing material on the fate of politically motivated prisoners after their release, looking at the impact of imprisonment and the role of individuals in conflict transformation and reconciliation from both the republican and loyalist community.[571] However, there is a void in the literature when it comes to considering those current 'political prisoners' who refused to accept the 'carrot' provided by the GFA of prisoner release and those who subsequently have been imprisoned for dissident republican activities. 'POW'('Prisoner of War') campaigns, pickets and demonstrations make up a great deal of the literature and publications produced by dissident groups.[572] Prisoner rights are still a major part of the republican campaign. For example, the newspapers of RSF and the 32CSM contain statements and articles from CABHAIR[573] and the IRPWA (Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association) respectively, asking for donations, reporting on conditions and information about upcoming demonstrations. RNU have a POW department named Cogús[574] campaigning on issues of prison conditions and have called for the donation of books to Maghaberry, whilst the IRSP also have their own organisation, Teach na Fáilte.

Promoting the current prisoner campaign is an important aspect of dissident propaganda. For dissidents there are several beneficial reasons in promoting the campaign for republican prisoners. Firstly, highlighting alleged poor treatment of republican prisoners contradicts the claims of normalisation in Northern Ireland. In May 2011, republican prisoners in Maghaberry prison began a 'dirty protest', using similar tactics to those used by PIRA prisoners in the 1970s

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[570] P. Shirlow & K. McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire: Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Pluto Press, London, 2008), p. 2.

[571] See P. Shirlow & K. McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire: Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, (Pluto Press, London, 2008); P. Shirlow, J. Tonge, J. McAuley & C. McGlynn, *Abandoning Historical Conflict? Former political prisoners and reconciliation in Northern Ireland*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2010); K. McEvoy, 'Prisoners, the Agreement, and the Political', *Fordham International Law Journal*, 22, no. 4, 1998), pp. 1539- 1576.
Character of the Northern Ireland Conflict

[572] See chapter 7. Within *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* prisoner campaigns made up 7.8% and 9.9% respectively of the newspapers coverage.

[573] Cabhair translates to 'assistance'

[574] Cogús translates to 'conscience'.

and 1980s. Prisoners protested over strip searches, lock up times and freedom of movement. There are frequent reports within dissident newspapers describing the treatment of republican prisoners as degrading and inhuman.[575] Such coverage claims that despite the signing of the GFA life has not changed for some republicans. Coverage of the republican prisoner campaigns also provides an opportunity to challenge Sinn Féin, questioning the ability and willingness of Sinn Féin to act on this issue. As Carl Reilly, national chairperson of RNU, states, there are individuals in Stormont administering power who are former prisoners and ex-combatants: 'From their own experience they should understand that these men are suffering.'[576] However, it should also be noted that whilst the prisoner campaign is featured highly in the publications of dissident organisations these issues do not manage to seep into the mainstream news as important matters.

Secondly, being such an emotive subject, the prisoner issue has the potential to mobilise a broader range of support. Highlighting the condition of prisoners and their campaign is likely to appeal to human interest. This has especially been the case with the imprisonment of Marian Price. Famous for her role in the bombing of the Old Bailey in London in 1973, Price was released on licence in 1980 after serving seven years. This licence was revoked in May 2011 as Price was charged with supporting an illegal organisation after holding a speech for a masked man to read at a 32CSM Easter rally. In June 2012, the Northern Ireland Prison Service confirmed Price had been moved from Hydebank prison to hospital after increasing concern over her health.[577] Her situation is described (not just by dissident republicans) as a form of internment without trial.[578] Another active campaign is for the release of Martin Corey. Corey was released in 1992 on licence for the murder of two RUC officers. His licence was revoked in 2010 on the basis of evidence from 'closed material'.[579] Such campaigns attempt to encompass a

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[575] See *Sovereign Nation*, April/May2011, pp. 1&12; *Saoirse*, Feb 2004, p. 3.

[576] B. Rowan, *Is there a key to unlock the dissident protest in Maghaberry?*, 18/12/2011, available at www.eamonnmallie.com/2011/12/is-there-a-key-to-unlock-the-dissident-protest-in-maghaberry-by-brian-rowan, accessed 26/07/2012.

[577] *UTV*, 'Marian Price Moved to Hospital' , 22/06/2012, available at http://www.u.tv/News/Marian-Price-moved-to-hospital/0552df8e-e579-4e16-b9ad-4b84a4912d86.

[578] A letter discussing the violation of human and civil rights of Price was signed by numerous community activists, politicians and academics, see *Irish Times*, 'Detention of Marian Price', 17/07/2012, available at http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/letters/2012/0717/1224320253375.html.

[579] BBC News Northern Ireland, 'Martin Corey must remain in jail ahead of appeal', 10/07/2012, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-18787982.

broad range of support beyond political difference. As a member of the 'Release Martin Corey' committee stated, 'People don't have to agree with Martin Corey's politics to see what is happening to him is wrong.'[580] The subject of prisoner release is promoted as a human rights issue broader than an exclusively republican campaign.

Sinn Fein has felt obliged to respond to dissident pressure from prisoner releases and better conditions, although mainly only in respect of the Price and Corey cases, given that the party supports law and order and, by definition, has to now back the incarceration of 'militarist' republicans engaged in attacks upon the police or Army. For dissident groups, some of the largest demonstrations have been in aid of prisoner campaigns. As a subject it has the potential to mobilise support and raise awareness on a humane level. Sinn Féin recognises the possible danger in such campaigns gaining traction, challenging its own republican narrative and thus has been anxious to portray itself as active on the Price and Corey issues. Sinn Féin are obliged to respond to these situations yet the difficulty for them in adopting such a selective approach is that it highlights that the party believes that all other dissident republicans deserve to be in jail, a logical consequence of the party's decision to support policing in 2007.

Finally, promoting the prisoner issue associates groups with the fight for a united Ireland. The subject of prisoner treatment is imbued with great historical significance, being an issue of importance at key moments such as following the Easter rising, the Civil War and the 1956-62 border campaign. [581] Such moments have a poignant position in Irish republican history.[582] Therefore, by replaying tactics of the past dissident groups are able to directly associate themselves with a continuing struggle. When faced with the accusations of being traitors to republicanism[583], the campaign for political prisoners provides an opportunity for dissident groups to present themselves as being part of continuing struggle for the republican cause with considerable antecedents.

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[580] Cait Trainor in *Belfast Telegraph,* 'Campaign to push for release of dissident republican', 25/07/2012.

[581] See for background of republican prison campaigns, K. McEvoy, *Prisoners, the Agreement, and the Political, Fordham International Law Journal* 22, no. 4 (1998), pp. 1539- 1576.

[582] See G. Sweeney, 'Self-Immolation in Ireland: Hunger Strikes and Political Confrontation', *Anthropology Today* 9, no.5 (1993), p. 14.

The future challenges

It is unsurprising that there are those within the republican movement who reject the need for a political mandate in order to challenge the status quo. The claims of possessing a mandate that emerge more from historical determinism than the current context are not dissimilar from the Provisionals' arguments from 1970 to 1981. Violence was then also articulated as an historical right of the people of Ireland to resist their British oppressors, a position not dissimilar to today's dissidents.[584] However, the context within which republicanism functions has been utterly transformed by the Good Friday Agreement. The actions of the PIRA may not have ever been met with mass approval yet the response to their actions was rarely met with the same scale of condemnation as the RIRA's 1998 Omagh bombing.

This is not to say that armed action during the troubles was never met with disapproval from the republican community, La Mon, Enniskillen and Warrington being three of several examples. Today however, the protest seems to be broader in scope. The universal reaction against Omagh in 1998 seemed to demonstrate how the North was no longer 'unfinished business', or merely the difference between anti-partitionist Fianna Fail and anti-partitionists through armed Provisionalism; republicans post-GFA now had a stake in the North. The protest about violent activity post 1998 was therefore not so much about the numbers involved in the demonstration, but, because the context had changed, those involved appeared broader in scope. Today, the support for Sinn Féin's constitutional role continues to grow as their electoral success increases. It is no longer enough for groups to proclaim resistance to the British state as their *raison d'être*. They now also have the task of convincing people of their positioning as opposed to the popular desire to bring about an end to the armed conflict.

Accused of wanting to protect the memory of past generations as opposed to seeking a mandate from the living, RSF are aware of the narrow description given to them and express the need to broaden the narrow stereotype that they have been awarded:

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[583] See Chapter 7 for a discussion on the traitors discourse by the mainstream media and politicians.

I think our biggest challenge if you like is getting that message out there and getting past the narrow box which we have been placed in. Given the opportunity to articulate that we actually have a vision of the kind of Ireland, it is not simply a 'Brits out' organisation. We actually have something that is much more profound than that, much deeper than that. We have a vision for an Ireland and it is one that is very clearly thought out and set out there as well. But I think that would be a strength that we have to bring to a new, young generation.[585]

Whilst keen to broaden their reach, RSF still view their representation of the revolutionary republican tradition as the true faith essential to the organisation's existence. Insiders see their organisation's consistency of rejectionism as a virtue, not a handicap:

Again, I think we are one of the only true revolutionary organisations that are out there...Rather than tinkering on the edge of the system, we are the people who are saying the whole system is rotten. Things need to change. There has to fundamental radical change. I think that is what we have to say to a new generation and I think for a lot of young people who are looking for something new, something fresh, something radical, I think we bring that. We bring that fresh new message. I think that to an extent that is ultimately one of the strengths that we have.[586]

A more downbeat assessment of recruitment possibilities is offered by the 32CSM. Asked 'what is there to attract younger members', he responded:

There is nothing attractive about being a republican. To be honest with you, it's a life of hardship and misery. People try and romanticise it, but to be honest with you the republican movement in Ireland has never been short of recruits... And that will always be the case and it's been proven over eight centuries...What attracts people to is, attract might be the wrong word, because there is nothing attractive about it, but why? There are always people in Irish Republicanism in the pursuit of justice, in the pursuit of democracy in this country.[587]

Such an answer presents a picture of resistance and self-sacrifice. Other 32CSM members responded that the best recruitment possibilities are still provided via antipathy to state forces, a common theme being that nothing has changed in terms of policing:

Resistance, the police. We can put recruitment posters out but the police around the town do the recruitment for us. It's still a sectarian police force, it's still the RUC.[588]

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[584]See J. Tonge, 'No-one likes us; we don't care': 'Dissident' Irish Republicans and Mandates', *The Political Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2012), pp. 219- 226.

[585] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

[586] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

[587] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/10.

[588] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.

My friends are starting to ask now. What is the movement? What are you's all about. The thing that attracted me was just watching Irish men being abused in the street, young children being abused. People can't walk through town without hands up, without friggin guns pointed at them. Their houses are being raided daily and I thought no.[589]

I can tell you, there is nothing romantic about it. It is nothing but hardship. You become a social leper, you lose work, you lose friends. So people might think there is this big romantic story, but I can assure you, it is not...To be fair if I am meeting someone that wants to join for the first time I give them the worst scenarios. I tell them about the harassment, I won't draw someone in under false pretences. You know I tell them exactly what is involved.[590]

The 32CSM and RSF are often met with the accusation of lacking popular support, but resistance to the current arrangements or demonstrating unwavering allegiance to the republican tradition is of more importance than acquiring an electoral mandate. It may be a challenge for these groups to attain further members but whilst the desire for resistance to the status quo or the affiliation to historical determinism remains, so dissident groups may endure, albeit on a small scale.

Conclusion

In an attempt to explore further the politics of dissident groups rather than merely military aspects, this chapter focuses on strategy, broad fronts and campaigns. There is a need to consider what these republican groups have to offer. Do they provide a serious threat to Sinn Féin in any way and to what extent? Presenting a critique of the mainstream republican movement is the easy part. The problem for dissidents comes in advancing a credible alternative strategy.

The dilemma for dissident groups is that whilst a significant proportion of their campaign involves critiquing the direction of Sinn Féin, they do not back it up with a clear and workable different route. Policy documents such as *Éire Nua* and *Irish Democracy, A Framework for Unity* serve as a rebuttal to accusation of dissidents not attempting to present their own strategy, yet neither provide a viable alternative. Dissidents fail to explain, or even address, how abstention or continuing armed struggle might work when these strategies failed to achieve a

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[589] Joe Barr, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.
[590] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

united Ireland from 1920 until the 1990s. There is no guarantee that the current 'third phase' of participation will bring the intended result either, but the costs are less and the political rewards greater. Therefore, from a political perspective, dissident groups ostensibly serve little purpose other than to annoy to Sinn Féin by highlighting that party's u-turns and hypocrisies.

The negatives facing dissidents are ultimately their lack of support and the feeling among most nationalists that Sinn Fein presents the only credible political vehicle for republicanism. This is a credit to the party's ability to remain relatively unified despite the scale of transition. Other damaging aspects are the unremittingly negative media coverage surrounding dissident groups, which are uniformly portrayed as fixated with violence (the legacy of Omagh remains strong) and as a blight upon communities (although dissidents also of course live within those communities). Dissidents are seen as out of time and out of step with political transition.

Where dissidents may be able to register an impact is on localised issues such as prisoner campaigns, parades, anti-social concerns, historical lineage and lack of economic progress. Therefore, whilst forming and presenting a critique of Sinn Fein is important to the dissident strategy they also need to locate their own niche on the republican spectrum and publicise this as what they are about. Republican groups in Northern Ireland are able to grab attention using violence, but not so much in reference to their politics. The next chapter will focus on the military aspects of the dissident campaign.

Chapter 6

Militarism as a component of dissident republicanism

> There is no 'republican violence. Republicanism is a non-violent phenomenon that merely strives to implement the rights of an oppressed people - the right to freedom from British rule is denied by ... British military policies and propaganda. Violence in Ireland is a British thing, resistance to that violence, to ensure an end to violence once and for all is an Irish response.[591]

The actions of the Provisional IRA (PIRA) earned them the label of 'the most ruthless terrorist army in the world.'[592] It is therefore unsurprising that the PIRA campaign has attracted much academic attention. Such accounts include historical narratives, investigations into strategy and tactics and examination of the balance between the military and political arms of the Provisional movement.[593] The decommissioning and exit of the Provisional IRA tends to be seen (in the media most obviously) in 'end-of-history' terms, the neat closing of a historical era, despite the evidence from most global peace processes of continuing violence long beyond ceasefire agreements and peace deals, accompanied by the emergence of new violent 'spoiler' groups.

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[591] Tarlach McConnell, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 16/07/2010.

[592] J. Adams, R. Morgan & A. Bambridge, *Ambush: The War Between the SAS and the IRA*, (London, Pan Books, 1998), p. 21. The claim is highly contentious however. The LTTE (Tamil Tigers) in Sri Lanka, for example, was classed by many states as a 'terrorist group' and used a far higher level of violence than the IRA, even possessing its own naval and air units.

[593] See for example, R. English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2003); J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1(2003); J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA,* (Oxon, Transaction Publishers, 2003); M. L. R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: the military strategy of the Irish Republican movement,* (London, Routledge, 1995); M. O'Doherty, *The Trouble with Guns,* (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1998); A. Richards, 'Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Féin, the Peace Process and Democracy', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001), pp. 72-89; M. Von Tagen Page & M. L. R. Smith, 'War by other means: The Problem of Political Control in Irish Republican Strategy', *Armed Forces and Society* 27, no.1 (2000); R. Munck, *Irish Republicanism: Containment or New Departure*, in, A O'Day (ed.), *Terrorism Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland*, (Aldershot, Dartmouth Pub., 1995); K. Rafter, *Sinn Féin 1905-2005: In the Shadow of Gunmen*, (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 2005); T. Shanahan, *The Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009); E. Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*, (London, Allen Lane, 2002).

However, armed groups are still in evidence in Northern Ireland. From April 2011 to March 2012 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) recorded 67 shootings and 56 bombings related to the security situation.[594] From 2005, when the Provisional IRA 'went away' until March 2012 there was a total of 528 shootings and 375 bombings, the vast bulk perpetrated by republican dissidents.[595]

Militant republican groups that continue to advocate the legitimacy of armed struggle such as Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), Continuity IRA (CIRA) and Real IRA (RIRA), operate far below the capabilities of the PIRA, but have developed a limited campaign of violence. This has been mainly at a low-level with a few glaring exceptions, the most obvious being the worst atrocity ever in Northern Ireland when the RIRA killed 29 civilians plus a small number of killings of British Army and Police Service of Northern Ireland officers and that of a Territorial Army volunteer.

Therefore, whilst the Northern Irish peace process is praised for its delivery of a much more peaceful security situation and its political inclusivity, there remains the presence of those who refuse to reject the utility of violence as a modus operandi and join an exclusively political process. Northern Ireland is often presented as a model of conflict management in terms of its DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) processes and for its political progress, a rare example of a functioning consociation.[596] Yet dissent over the terms and conditions of peace agreement is a common feature within peace processes. As Darby put it:

> Disaffection within paramilitary organisations is perhaps the most obvious threat to peace processes. Such organisations are rarely monoliths presented by their opponents; rather they are complex organisms performing a variety of functions and providing an umbrella for different interests.[597]

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[594] Police Service of Northern Ireland, *Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics: Annual Report covering the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012,* (Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, May 2012).
[595] *Ibid.*
[596] See for example, R. Mac Ginty, 'Irish Republicanism and the Peace Process: from revolution to reform', *in* M. Cox, A. Guelke & F. Stephens, *A Farewell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement',* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006); S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', in, *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997); J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000); A. Guelke, *Political comparisons: from Johannesburg to Jerusalem*, in, M. Cox, A. Guelke and F. Stephens, *A Fairwell To Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement,* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006).
[597] J. Darby, *A truce rather than a treaty? The effect of violence in the Irish peace process, op. cit*., p. 218.

Those who use violence to undermine negotiated peace, often referred to as 'spoilers', can be identified in almost all peace processes. There is a common tendency to draw on international comparisons when discussing the Northern Irish model of peace negotiations, particularly when considering how parties in conflict elsewhere can be brought into the political process and abandon their weapons. What features less in those international comparisons is the emergence of spoiler groups, dissenting from the emergent political consensus and reverting to more 'traditional' modes of operation. Despite the obvious successes of its peace process and the understandable determination of local politicians and press to construct a positive narrative, Northern Ireland has not been an area of exceptionalism. Spoilers were in place even before the Good Friday Agreement was signed. Given the claims to historical longevity and to ownership of the IRA title the emergence of spoiler groups was arguably even more likely in the Northern Irish case than in other conflicts.

This chapter will discuss how these groups attempt to justify the continuation of armed struggle in spite of the peace process. It will attempt this by discussing the perceived utility of violence, drawing partly on existing theories of dissident groups or 'spoilers'. This is in order to answer what role armed struggle, in its limited form, might play for dissidents. Secondly, attention will turn to a critical evaluation of this strategic rationale and the tactics of dissident groups, considering contextual aspects such as the impact of the economy on political violence and the nature of state counter measures, as well as the historical relevance of armed struggle within the republican tradition.

Contextualising movement from violence: the spoiler debate

The post-GFA context now finds Northern Ireland the subject of inspiration to peace processes in other conflict areas, most especially, but far from exclusively, the Basque region. President Obama paid tribute to the peace process during a visit to the Republic of Ireland, stating how the reconciliation in the North provided hope to other areas, demonstrating that peace is attainable even in such unlikely places as the Middle East.[598] As an example of the attempts at peace

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[598] See *Guardian*, 'Barack Obama in Ireland praises peacemakers for 'ripple of hope'', 23/05/2011, *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Northern Ireland peace can inspire Middle East, says Obama', 26/05/2011.

process policy transfer, in 2007 Martin McGuinness and the DUP's Jeffrey Donaldson attended talks in Finland with Iraqi politicians to discuss principles of inclusivity and non violence. The recommendations made are described as containing clear comparisons to the Mitchell principles on non-violence, which set the context for negotiations towards the Good Friday Agreement.[599] In addition, directly after the signing of the GFA a cross-party delegation of Northern Irish politicians held talks in Spain on whether their experiences could be adapted to resolve the Basque conflict. In October 2011, the Basque separatist group ETA called a ceasefire a few days after a conference attended by Northern Irish politicians urging them to lay down their weapons.[600]

In the search for solutions to conflict elsewhere Northern Ireland is often presented as a successful model for others to follow, especially in terms of negotiating with paramilitaries to put down their weapons. Inclusion in the peace talks served as a carrot to incentivise co-operation, the abandonment of violence and the continuation of peaceful means. Providing a space for paramilitaries at the negotiating table is vital to any peace process. As O'Kane argues, 'key to successful inclusion can be identifying the players in the violent groups who may be more moderate than the wider group they belong to and therefore potential partners for peace. Groups are not homogenous.'[601] Such a point highlights the importance of inclusion in reference to 'violent groups', but also underlines the problem that these groups are not necessarily politically or ideologically cohesive. There is a need to consider those who do not necessarily agree with the compromises attendant to any peace process and how this shapes dissident groups in Northern Ireland.

When violence ends, the policy agenda shifts rapidly from military containment towards addressing a new set of problems beyond principles of non violence. These include 'how to include ex-paramilitaries in political negotiations; how to handle such sensitive issues as amnesties, political prisoners, the decommissioning of weapons and the policing of divided

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[599] See E. O'Kane, 'Learning from Northern Ireland? The Uses and Abuses of the Irish 'Model'', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12, no.2 (2010), pp. 239- 256; *The Irish Times*, 'NI politicians coach Iraqis on building peace process', 04/09/2007.
[600] *BBC News*, 'International negotiators urge Eta to lay down weapons', 17/10/2011.
[601] E. O'Kane, 'Learning from Northern Ireland? The Uses and Abuses of the Irish 'Model'', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2010), p. 242.

societies.'[602] These sensitive issues within a negotiated settlement often produce leaders or factions who are unsatisfied with the outcome. As Stedman notes, 'Even the best designed settlements must be prepared for violence from leaders and organisations who decide that the kind of peace in question is not in their interest.'[603] Indeed violence 'precedes peace processes and continues as an unavoidable background during them'.[604]

Peace processes create spoilers who perceive their political interests as being undermined by accommodations falling short of traditional goals. Having invested heavily in armed struggle, there may be a desire to continue this path. Stedman identifies spoilers as being inside or outside the process. An inside spoiler 'signs a peace agreement, signals a willingness to implement a settlement, and yet fails to fulfil key obligations to the agreement.'[605] Such groups utilise strategies of stealth and are willing to keep the peace process going as long as it is beneficial to them. Outside spoilers use strategies of violence and are '…outside parties who are excluded from a peace process or excluded themselves.'[606]

The utility of spoiler theories is to allow comparisons between conflict areas to 'evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of different strategies of spoiler management.'[607] The literature on spoiler groups and spoiler management therefore focuses on creating a typology for categorising the different actors based on their motivations and tactics. Spoiler management is therefore set in the context, asking important questions such as: How might preventative action be taken? How have these renegade groups emerged? Are there strong structural determinants? What do they want to achieve?

However, what is distinct in terms of the spoiler debate in relation to dissident republicanism is the lack of consideration for the historical determinism used as a justificatory force that drives militant groups. Considering the scale of change within Sinn Féin and the historical propensity for the republican movement to split, it was inevitable that during the Northern Irish peace process dissent would emerge. For the majority within Sinn Féin and the PIRA, agreeing to the

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[602] J. Darby & R. Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.
[603] S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997), p.8.
[604] J Darby & R Mac Ginty, *The Management of Peace Processes,* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2000), p. 8.
[605] S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997)*, p. 8.
[606] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[607] *Ibid,* p. 6.

GFA represented the evolution of tactical considerations and a natural development in order to adjust to contextual realities.[608] However, for others this revision went too far and indicated the desertion of principles that are fundamental to republicanism as an ideology.[609] It signified a betrayal of previous generations who lost their lives fighting for Irish freedom. The works of Stedman and of Darby and Mac Ginty are useful in explaining opposition to peace processes and resistance to accommodation. Spoiler group theories provide useful criteria in managing the risk of spoilers emerging; such as high inclusivity, strong leadership and coercion to deter or alter unacceptable spoiler behaviour.[610] The inevitability of spoilers is recognised in all peace processes, but such groups may be containable.

Spoiler theories require considerable contextual adjustment for the Northern Irish case, which had an additional obstacle for negotiators. Republicanism has a long tradition of armed struggle that arguably other groups involved in peace negotiations elsewhere may not possess to such a degree. Other organisations such as FARC, the Tamil Tigers, ETA and Hamas all have traditions and offer a historical narrative of their own struggle, but none can base their creation as far back as the IRA, whose own antecedents arguably can be traced back to 1798. In addition, spoiler theories assume a fresh challenge to peace. The Northern Irish case relies upon historical myth-making as justification for armed struggle and determination to acquire rights of ownership to a famous 'brand name' - the IRA. Such historical validation is highlighted in the following comment from a 32CSM member:

> People only listen to the likes of Adams and that saying that they [dissidents] have no support. The IRA, it never needed the acknowledgement from people...The leaders of 1916, they were spat on by the people of Dublin as they were marched through the streets with Dublin people waving Union Jacks in their face. The IRA is always legitimate as long as there is a British occupation in this country. That can never be taken. People say it's boring, it's the same old spiel. It is the same old spiel, but it is the same old situation.[611]

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[608] See Sinn Féin, *Defending the Good Friday Agreement*, Sinn Féin Submission to the Mitchell Review, 23/09/1999.

[609] See for example RNU, *Critique of the Good Friday Agreement*, 14/04/2011, A. McIntyre, 'Republicanism: Alive or Dying?', *The Pensive Quill,* 01/01/2008.

[610] See S. J. Stedman, 'Spoiler problems in peace processes', *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997)*,* pp.5-53.

[611] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

The memory evoked by republican movements is appropriated to shape a sense of belonging, carve out an identity and legitimise the present.[612] Often these symbols, situations of remembrance and commemoration become distorted as a new political or ideological setting urges a new emphasis or different interpretation of this narrative. As a result, remembering has the potential to reveal a conception of the present, as the past is selected and redefined to fit the current context. There is also over-indulgence of history and republicans may be impervious to contextual influences, failing to respond adequately to changed material conditions or political circumstances. However, to ignore the importance of history completely would obscure any possibility of understanding the forces behind the phenomenon. History and remembrance have a justificatory service and need to be seen in this sense; a useful tool in which to frame and justify actions and beliefs.

A key purpose of the politics of war memory is to strengthen the bonds between those inside the organisation whilst connecting to departed comrades. It also has the potential to glorify the sacrifice of past republican militants. Militant dissident groups today therefore define the hardship suffered by republicans throughout history as martyrdom. The commemoration of such endurance has the potential to maintain support via emotional rhetoric and supposed 'lessons of history' for continuing armed struggle. Commemorations provide a highly emotive tool for younger generations or new members. As a result, suffering or imprisonment are not necessarily viewed as a defeat but as a continuing phase of the struggle.

To over-stress historical significance would be to suggest that dissident republicanism is immune to contemporary political reality and oblivious to the context within which they function. However, to ignore the importance of history completely would obscure any possibility of understanding the forces behind the phenomenon. History provides useful lessons and rhetoric to justify the continuation of armed struggle despite the peace process. A mandate for such action is therefore justified as likely to be received retrospectively. The 'spoiler debate' does not account for the historical determinism underpinning republicanism; yet this is not to assume the

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[612] D. Muro, 'The Politics of War and Memory in Radical Basque Nationalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no.4 (2009), p. 675.

irrelevance of contextual realities such as the nature and tactics of the security forces, public opprobrium, or economics.

Analysis of Armed Groups: Origins and Strategies

Accompanying the GFA was optimism that physical force republicanism might be consigned to history. Much analysis focused on the evolution of the Provisional movement into constitutionalism, followed by assessment of the relegation of armed tactics and the eventual disbandment of the PIRA. Considering the republican propensity to split, especially around the position of armed struggle, there was surprisingly little attention awarded to the possibility of other groups continuing in the militant tradition. The capacity of the PIRA far outweighed that of any other republican faction at the time and it was assumed that it had a near-monopoly on republican force. It was also assumed that PIRA held the capability of 'dealing' with splinter groups – 'internal housekeeping' as it was described by the Secretary of State at the time of the GFA, Mo Mowlam. Thus although republican splits were evident in 1986 and 1997, eventually leading to the formations of the Continuity and Real IRA, the significance of those splits was not necessarily fully realised at the time.

The threat from dissident groups has remained a consistent backdrop to the transformed constitutional arrangements. In evidence to the House of Commons, Chief Constable of the PSNI from 2002 to 2009 Sir Huge Orde stated, 'Without question, the intensity has increased. The determination of the main groups, Continuity IRA [CIRA] and Real IRA [RIRA], is clear by the evidence of the level of attacks and variety of attacks.'[613] Director General of MI5 Jonathan Evans, admitted having an initial evaluation that as time elapsed and the new constitutional arrangements took root, the dissident threat would decline. Yet by 2010, Evans acknowledged;

> we [secret services] have seen a persistent rise in terrorist activity and ambition in Northern Ireland over the last three years. Perhaps we were giving insufficient weight to the pattern of history over the last hundred years which shows that whenever the main body of Irish republicanism has reached a political accommodation and rejoined constitutional politics, a

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[613] Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde OBE, House of Commons Northern Ireland Select Committee (HC 1174-i), 5 November 2008.

hardliner rejectionist group would fragment off and continue with the so called 'armed struggle'.[614]

There existed a gap in the knowledge of policy makers and security services in understanding these groups. Recently however, more research on armed dissident republican groups has begun to emerge.[615] Dissident groups are also referred to in the literature as 'ultras'[616] and violent dissident republicans (VDRs).[617] This next section will focus mainly on the following: the decommissioning of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), and the continued use of armed struggle by CIRA, RIRA, ONH and Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD). This account is not intended to provide insight into the inner working of these covert organisations, but rather provide an outline in to the nature of their activity, aims and objectives and to place them in a historical context.

Dormant dissidence: the case of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)

An organisation that remains associated with the label 'dissident' is the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), despite their armed wing, the INLA, having decommissioned. The IRSP opposes the GFA but declines to back violence, believing it has no utility and no support. The INLA carried out the car bomb attack that killed Conservative politician Airey Neave in March 1979 and also took responsibility for the bombing at the Droppin' Well Bar in County Derry in 1982 that killed eleven soldiers and six civilians. In one of its final acts, in 1997, the organisation killed Billy Wright, leader of the loyalist 'dissident group' the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF),

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[614] *Daily Telegraph*, 'Jonathan Evans' Terrorism Speech', 17/09/2010.
[615] J. Tonge, '"They haven't gone away you know". Irish Republican 'Dissidents and 'Armed Struggle', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (2004), pp.671-93; J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without mandate? Is there any sympathy for dissident Irish republicanism in Northern Ireland?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-18; M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011); J. Horgan & J. Morrison, 'Here to Stay? The Rising Threat of Violent Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no.4 (2011), pp. 642-69; A. Sanders, *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011); R. White, 'Structural Identity Theory and the Post Recruitment Activism of Irish Republicans: Persistence, Splits, and Dissidents in Social Movement Organizations,' *Social Problems* 57, no.3 (2010), pp. 341–370; A. McIntyre, 'Of Myths and Men: Dissent within Republicanism and Loyalism', in A. Edwards & S. Bloomer (eds.), *Transforming the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From Terrorism to Democratic Politics,* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2008), pp. 114-132.
[616] J. Tonge, '"They haven't gone away you know". Irish Republican 'Dissidents and 'Armed Struggle', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 3 (2004), pp.671-93.
[617] J. Horgan & J. Morrison, 'Here to Stay? The Rising Threat of Violent Dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no.4 (2011), pp. 642-69.

inside the Maze prison. The INLA were described as being ruthless and responsible for the most 'dreadful spectacles' of the troubles.[618]

After a 24 year campaign, the INLA called a ceasefire in August 1998[619] and one year later stated that 'There is no political or moral argument to justify a resumption of the campaign.'[620] In October 2009, INLA confirmed its armed struggle was over and argued that the group's aims would best be advanced through exclusively peaceful political struggle. Despite this announcement and no evidence to suggest that the INLA had been involved in subsequent terrorist activity, the IMC stated in 2009 that they 'remain a threat' and that it was no less capable of violence than it had been in the recent past and 'remained deeply involved in serious crime, notably extortion.'[621]

Fra Halligan of the IRSP is quite clear in expressing his belief that there is no justification of the continued use of armed struggle:

> What we are saying is that conditions don't exist any longer for armed struggle. The jails are full of young lads facing ten or twenty years. The graveyard could be full of them again and we are saying just hold on. Sit down and talk. Explore, 'is there not a different road to take?'
> They do explore that with us but there is a diehard pure republican tradition or tendency out there and that is tunnel vision, and that is my personal belief. It doesn't leave any room for discussion or dialogue...I don't believe that Massereene or Ronan Kerr or Stephen Carroll in Craigavon moved anything one iota.[622]

The IRSP proclaim that 'there is no militarist road to socialism'[623], yet they remain anti-Good Friday Agreement on the basis that it 'copper fastened partition'. Despite the INLA having decommissioned, the IRSP are still labelled as dissidents. Such a label therefore does not take into account the differences between the anti-GFA groups that may or may not engage in military action. The term dissident has been used to describe groups that emerged before and after the GFA, those who focus on community-based action and local concerns, and those who see the benefits of a broad front and those who do not.

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[618] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA*, (New Jersey Transaction, 2004), p. 535.
[619] *BBC News*, 'UK and Ireland welcome INLA ceasefire', 23/08/1998.
[620] *BBC News*, 'INLA 'declares war is over', 08/08/1999.
[621] *Twenty-Second Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationary Office, Oct. 2010), p. 9.
[622] Fra Halligan, interview with author, Belfast, 01/05/2012.
[623] IRSP, *Republican Socialist Programme for Ireland*, (Belfast, IRSP, n.d.), p. 6.

Continuing the tradition of armed struggle

Spoiler group theories tend to assume the presence of groups amid or after the arrival of a peace deal. Yet, as the oldest of anti-GFA armed republican groups, the CIRA's formation long preceded the climax of the peace process. It emerged as the military wing of RSF, but did not become active until 1994. The group announced their arrival via the newspaper *Saoirse* in February 1994 by releasing a statement and pictures of a 'firing party' in commemoration of the last surviving member elected to the Second Dail, Tom Maguire.[624] This also coincided with the 75th Anniversary of the First (All Ireland) Dáil Éireann. Such symbolism was a deliberate attempt to directly associate the organisation as descendants of Óglaigh na hÉireann, or the Irish Republican Army.[625] From the outset, the CIRA presented themselves as traditionally minded and from the same lineage as their political wing, RSF.

In July 1996 the CIRA committed its first attack, detonating a 250 pound car bomb outside a hotel in County Fermanagh. Other attacks followed in Belfast and Derry that same year. The CIRA was accused of playing a role in the 1998 Omagh bomb along with the RIRA (see below).[626] Unlike the RIRA, the CIRA did not declare a ceasefire and vowed to continue a campaign of attacks, including the targeting of the police.[627] The CIRA claimed responsibility for the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll in March 2009 in Craigavon, the first killing of a PSNI officer.

The response from Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness to this attack and the Real IRA's killing of two British soldiers two days earlier (see below) was to label the perpetrators as 'traitors to the island of Ireland.'[628] The use of the term 'traitor' by McGuinness, on the basis of the lack of mandate for dissidents and the support for the Good Friday Agreement expressed by Irish people was both logical yet startling.[629] It positioned Sinn Féin firmly within the constitutional arena

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[624] *Saoirse*, Feb 1994

[625] For further discussion on the republican legitimacy associated with Tom Maguire see chapter 4.

[626] *The Independent*, 'Omagh bomb legal victory: The men behind worst atrocity of the Troubles', 09/06/2009

[627] *The Irish Times*, 'The Continuity IRA Pledges Attacks', 12/12/1998.

[628] *News Letter*, 'Murderers are Traitors to Ireland-McGuinness', 10/03/2009.

[629] See chapter 7 for further discussion on McGuinness' use of the word 'traitor' in this speech.

(the party's initial statement had merely described the killings of the soldiers as 'wrong' and 'counter-productive'); implied somehow that a previous national mandate for PIRA violence had existed and caused anger amongst dissidents and even some unease within remaining hardline elements within Sinn Féin – the next edition of *An Phoblacht* made no reference to the 'traitors' comment.[630]

By the end of 2009, the IMC reported that the CIRA sought to enhance its capabilities by increasing its numbers through recruitment and increasing efforts to train members, including the use and manufacture of explosive devices.[631] The CIRA therefore remains determined to maintain opposition to the political dispensation via the use of violence. The group regards the changes to policing as cosmetic, demonstrated by its political associates (despite denials) RSF, continued use of the old 'RUC' label to describe the PSNI.

In 2010 there were reports of factionalism within the CIRA. A group of CIRA members claimed a new Army Council had been elected, which were described as, 'more militant and more Northern based.'[632] In an interview to the *Irish Times* the new, younger CIRA breakaway group described those they had moved away from as the 'old guard' and 'pensioner' leadership.[633] In response a statement released to the newspaper *Saoirse* stated how the demands of the breakaway faction had been refused by the original CIRA leadership who claimed to have dismissed members, including two who previously held senior positions. The statement also claimed that the Army Council was intact and in control whilst warning against others using their name.[634] There was clearly frustration amongst some younger members of the CIRA who appeared keener to promote co-operation with other organisations and labelled the 'old guard' as 'tired, weary, old men who are refusing to hand over the reins.'[635]

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[630] See *An Phoblacht*, 01/03/2009.
[631] *Twenty-Second Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationary Office, Oct. 2010), p. 9.
[632] *Irish Times*, 'CIRA leaders deny ousting claim', 07/07/2010.
[633] *Irish Times,* 'Militant faction claims it has taken over leadership of the CIRA', 28/07/2010.
[634] *Saoirse*, 'Army Council intact and in control', June 2010.
[635] *Irish Times,* 'Militant faction claims it has taken over leadership of the CIRA', 28/07/2010.

The emergence of the Real IRA (RIRA) followed the PIRA's 1997 reinstatement of its ceasefire declared three years earlier and fractured in 1996. The PIRA Quartermaster General, Michael McKevitt resigned and led a breakaway group. McKevitt's wife, Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, the younger sister of Bobby Sands, along with former PIRA volunteer Marian Price, also demonstrated support for the breakaway faction, accompanied by a few other significant former Provisionals.[636] Carrying such republican credentials the breakaway faction had the potential to prove a serious irritant to Sinn Féin. The armed faction that opposed the ceasefire labelled itself Óglaigh na hÉireann. The group later became labelled the Real IRA, when during a road block in South Armagh, 'a few of the lads were making a propaganda video and having a bit of a laugh, telling people that they were the 'real' IRA...it's just a soundbite...the group has always been Óglaigh na hÉireann'.[637]

The paramilitary group emerged in parallel with the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. The 32CSM publish statements from the RIRA and report on their activity. Members accept that there is a military track pursued in parallel to a more political, community-based agenda.[638]A 32CSM member explained the relationship when asked about the dynamics between the political front and the RIRA:

> It runs alongside the political element. You can't have an armed group and just have an armed group. You have to have political thinking beside it. I'm not saying that the 32 County Sovereignty Movement are the Real IRA, or hand in hand, but we support them and they support what we think.[639]

From late 1997, the RIRA began (without using the title) to plant large bombs in towns. In August 1998 the RIRA opposition to the PIRA ceasefire was made graphically evident by the Omagh bomb, inadequate warnings contributing to a death toll of 29 civilians. In a decisive break, Sinn Féin condemned the bombing, Gerry Adams stating, 'I have condemned it without equivocation. This appalling act was carried out by those opposed to the peace process.'[640] Three

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[636] See M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), pp.98-100.

[637] 32CSM member, Dublin, 26/03/2010, cited in A. Sanders, *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 209.

[638] See chapter 4 for more insight in to the balance between politics and armed struggle for the 32CSM.

[639] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry, 08/03/2012.

[640] G. Adams, Keynote Statement on the Current State of the Peace Process, 01/09/1998, CAIN, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/ga1998.htm, accessed 09/08/2012.

days after the Omagh tragedy the RIRA released two statements. The first, argued that they had given sufficient warning about the location of the bomb (directions that they claim had then been mistakenly followed and resulted in more harm than intended) and offered apologies to the civilians.[641] The second statement announced a suspension of military operations.[642] Omagh demonstrated the harmful and self-defeating nature of such tactics.

The hiatus of RIRA activity did not last, despite private meetings between RIRA's part-founder, Martin McKevitt, and the Fianna Fail government's envoy, Martin Mansergh. In January 2000, the RIRA released a statement via the 32CSM, under the banner of Óglaigh na hÉireann, 'In every generation the Irish people have rejected and challenged Britain's claim to interfere in Ireland's affairs.'[643] This statement was followed up by several incidents, including a bomb explosion underneath Hammersmith Bridge in London. Considering the blast came four years after the PIRA had failed in an attempt to bomb the same bridge, this incident announced the RIRA had returned and Britain could be targeted via the use of similar tactics. In March 2001, the RIRA detonated a car bomb outside the BBC studios in West London and in August the same year carried out a similar action in Ealing Broadway, also in West London.[644]

This was the last time the RIRA launched attacks in Britain, although the desire may remain. As republican prisoner, Tarlach McConnell claimed, 'One bomb in England is worth a thousand in Ireland.'[645] Despite the threat level of a dissident republican attack on the British mainland being raised by the Home Office from 'substantial' to 'severe' in March 2010, at present, the RIRA have failed to prove a capacity to carry out such attacks.[646]

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[641] *Irish News*, 'First Statement issued by the "real" IRA', 18/08/1998, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/rira18898a.htm, accessed 09/08/2012.
[642] *Irish News,* 'Second Statement issued by the "real" IRA', 18/08/1998, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/rira18898b.htm, accessed 09/08/2012.
[643] 32CSM, 'For immediate release: statement by Óglaigh na hÉireann', 01/01/2000.
[644] *BBC News*, 'Bomb Blast Outside BBC', 04/03/2012.
[645] Tarlach McConnell, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 16/07/2010.
[646] See *BBC News,* 'Irish terror attack a 'strong possibility'', 25/09/2010.

In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the RIRA carried out a sporadic campaign.[647] On 6th March 2009, Chief Constable of the PSNI Sir Hugh Orde, announced that the threat posed by dissident republicans had reached 'critical level' and was at its highest since 2002.[648] A day later Sappers Mark Quinsey and Patrick Azimkar were killed in a gun attack at the Massereene army barracks. The attack was later claimed by the RIRA.[649] A year later the RIRA claimed responsibility for bomb attack at MI5 headquarters in Holywood April 2010. The group may be unable to launch a successful campaign on the British mainland, but they have proved an ability to target high profile locations, such as army barracks and the secret service headquarters in Northern Ireland. Other targets have included PSNI stations and individual members of the police service. The RIRA have also targeted locations involved in Derry's hosting of the UK City of Culture in 2013, the event is viewed as reinforcing Derry's role within the UK. [650]

Since the RIRA's inception, there has been collaboration between the different militant groupings.[651] This was formalised at the end of July 2012 when several republican factions announced they had come together within a unified structure under a single leadership via a statement released to the *Guardian* newspaper.[652] Those republican factions that joined together were the RIRA, RAAD and a coalition of disparate republican groups. The groups collectively referred to themselves as the Army Council of the IRA and pledged to pursue a campaign targeting police officers and soldiers, declaring:

> In recent years the establishment of a free and independent Ireland has suffered setbacks due to the failure among the leadership of Irish nationalism and fractures within republicanism...the Irish people have been sold a phoney peace, rubber-stamped by a token legislature in Stormont.[653]

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[647] For timeline of armed activity see appendix of, M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011).

[648] M. Frampton, *The Return of the Militants: Violent Dissident Republicanism, A Policy Report for The International Centre for the study of radicalisation and political violence*, (ICRS, London, 2010), p. 43.

[649] Henry McDonald, in the *Guardian*, 'Real IRA claims' murder of soldiers in Northern Ireland, 08/05/2009.

[650] *Guardian*, 'Real IRA blamed for Derry bomb', 13/10/2011, available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/oct/13/bomb-explodes-derry-northern-ireland.

[651] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 93.

[652] *Guardian*, 'Republican dissidents join forces to form a new IRA', 26/07/2012.

[653] *Guardian*, 'New IRA: full statement by the dissident 'Army Council'', 26/07/2012.

In reference to dissident groups, Frampton observes that 'the boundaries across these entities often appeared fluid: it was not always easy to tell where one ended and another began.'[654] This is especially true for the RIRA and RAAD. Therefore, is the announcement of a fusion of dissident groupings anything new? Does the announcement of a new coalition represent simply a re-branding exercise or publicity stunt? One of the other groups involved in this announcement is RAAD, an organisation whose actions in seeking community control means they are often described as being a vigilante group.[655]

The struggle for community control

Republican dissidence has also involved a struggle for community control, a battle for legitimacy in working-class nationalist areas once dominated by the PIRA. Public support for dissident activity is essential for the groups' survival and effectiveness. Throughout 'The Troubles' both republican and loyalist paramilitaries provided an alternative to the criminal justice system enforced by the state and employed their own system of punishment as a form of social and political control. The physical aspect of the violence ranges from verbal warnings, exile, physical beatings and shootings for crimes that are criminal (drug dealing) or political (informing) in nature.[656] Beyond the physical aspect of such campaigns these acts are also utilised as a form of community control. However, there is a danger such punishments could be seen as excessive and alienate the perpetrators from the targeted community. To counter the possibility of alienation it is possible to observe the use of 'defensive' propaganda, a strategy that justifies violent actions whilst reducing the loss of support. Such propaganda is designed to;

> minimise the loss of support that results from such actions, elaborate campaigns are constructed that detail the alleged activities of the target and thus create the conditions in which the republican movement can engage in an act of community repression under the guise of community policing.[657]

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[654] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 246.

[655] See for example, *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Fears mount after police uncover RAAD weapons', 16/07/2012.

[656] See A. Silke, 'Rebel's Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the IRA, Sinn Féin and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11, no.1 (1999), pp. 55-93.

[657] K. Sarma, 'Defensive Propaganda and the IRA Political Control in Republican Communities', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, 12 (2007), p. 1074.

Such tactics remain an important aspect of the dissident campaign within working-class communities. John Murphy, a 32CSM member in Cork claimed:

> So, I think that even in the working class areas such as Cork and Dublin the IRA have taken it upon themselves to execute drug dealers and that went down very well with the people. So, I think then people recognise...you needn't have a vote to have a successful movement.[658]

Such tactics are also utilised by the armed group RAAD, formed in 2008 and operating mainly in Derry, where activity is greatest in the nationalist/republican areas of Creggan and the Bogside.[659] RAAD have been accused of building up or playing on hysteria concerning the spread and use of drugs in the local community. In their first interview, in the *Derry Journal* a year after their formation, the group stated:

> Our objectives are very simple. We are determined to rid the local community of these individuals. We view them as career criminals whose activities have ruined the lives of so many young people in the past and we're not prepared to tolerate that any longer.[660]

RAAD has warned numerous young men, accused of drug dealing, to leave the city or face the consequences. From April 2011 to March 2012 there were 33 paramilitary-style shootings, all attributed to Republicans, as have been the vast majority of all such shootings since 2007/08.[661] From 2009 to 2012 around 200 men have been forced to flee their homes in the area whilst there has been 85 punishment-style shootings.[662] The groups have been responsible for one death. In February 2012 Andrew Allen, from Derry, was shot in Buncrana, Donegal. Allen had been forced out of Derry after warnings from the group who accused him of being involved in the selling of drugs.

The RAAD campaign is designed to spread concern about the use of drugs within the local community and as a result provide sympathy for the group's actions, in that they are pro-active in the fight against such a threat to the area. The group state:

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[658] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

[659] See M. Frampton, *The Return of the Militants: Violent Dissident Republicanism*, *A Policy Report for The International Centre for the study of radicalisation and political violence*, (ICRS, London, 2010).

[660] *Derry Journal*, 'Only way to eradicate drugs scourge is to remove the dealers', 18/08/2009.

[661] Police Service of Northern Ireland, *Police Recorded Security Situation Statistics: Annual Report covering the period 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012,* (Belfast, Northern Ireland Statisticcs and Research Agency, May 2012).

[662] See John Lindsay, quoted in the *Guardian*, 'Derry: fear and republican vigilantes stalk new city of culture', 13/05/2012; *RTE News: Prime Time*, 'Shooting by Appointment', 22/05/2012; *BBC News*, 'Two men in custody after major PSNI operation against RAAD', 13/07/2012.

There is absolutely no political agenda within our organisation...Our only aim is to eliminate drug dealers from our society and put an end to them destroying our community. Our only concern is to end the threat posed by the supply of both illegal and prescription drugs, a threat which has already claimed the lives of a number of young people, ruined other lives and torn many families apart. There is no political agenda whatsoever within our organisation.[663]

By making the drugs issue the focal point of their campaign, RAAD also aim to highlight the inaction of others. The group is clear in stating that it does not intend to challenge the peace process on a political level, but rather it is contesting Sinn Féin and the police in terms of their standing in the community and their ability to deal with local concerns. A younger member of the 32CSM from the Creggan commented on this inaction when discussing a recent incident where RAAD had shot a 17 year old in the Derry Waterside area. The victim was accused by RAAD of being 'heavily involved' in anti-social behaviour in the district and was subsequently shot in both legs after four men forced their way into his home.[664] The 32CSM member expressed the 'inevitability' of such events occurring:

> Obviously it was terrible he had to get shot in the leg or his mother and father had to watch. But even people have been shot and their brothers and sisters would associate with us and say well they deserved it. It's wrong. I would rather have an Irish police force that could take people to the courts but we don't. We have the militia. They are not Irish they are British.[665]

Such events attempt to usurp the PSNI and Sinn Féin in 'protecting' communities. Therefore, whilst exerting community control by explicitly targeting 'anti-social behaviour', RAAD are simultaneously able to undermine the police and their position in the community. In addition, RAAD have increasingly targeted security forces, including by throwing blast bombs at PSNI vehicles.[666]

The changing nature of armed republicanism

In early 2006 the IMC noted the presence of a group in the Strabane area. This group had labelled themselves as Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), which translates to Soldiers of Ireland, and

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[663] *Derry Journal*, 'Only way to eradicate drugs scourge is to remove the dealers', 18/08/2009.
[664] *Derry Journal*, 'RAAD Claim Waterside Gun Attack', 19/10/2009.
[665] Joe Barr, interview with author, Derry, 08/03/2010.
[666] *Derry Journal*, 'RAAD Targets PSNI Vehicle', 13/08/2012.

was believed to have splintered from the CIRA.[667] The group were responsible for several attacks including attacks against PSNI officers and members of the District Policing Partnership (DPP) and Strabane PSNI station.[668] The title of ONH was used by the PIRA in the past, but more recently the name had been used by a faction of the RIRA.[669]

It was this faction from the RIRA that emerged in 2005, and claimed to have recruited members from across the spectrum of groups, such as ex-PIRA, INLA and RIRA.[670] This faction has been involved in several attacks upon police officers. In October 2009, a bomb exploded under the car of a female partner of a PSNI dog handler in East Belfast. The target was intended to be her partner.[671] In January 2010 the group claimed responsibility for a car bombing near Randalstown. The target was Constable Peadar Heffron, who was an Irish language specialist for the PSNI and captain of the PSNI GAA team.[672] Heffron sustained critical injuries and as a result had his leg amputated. These targets were deliberate and based on the victims' roles in the security forces. After these incidents, 10,000 mirrors were distributed to officers and civilians employed by the police to check under their vehicles.[673]

This dissident faction is aware they do not have the capacity to maintain a sustained campaign. They have stated, 'To go at it full steam would increase momentum short term, but we believe ultimately would fail within a very short period of time.'[674] The nature of armed republicanism therefore has to be more sporadic and infrequent yet precise and calculated in its targets.

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[667] *Sixth Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationary Office, September 2005), p. 14

[668] *Seventeenth Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationary Office, Nov. 2007), p. 9.

[669] See P. M. Currie & M. Taylor (eds.), *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, (London, Continuum, 2011), pp. 14-15; *Twenty Second Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission*, (London, The Stationery Office, Nov. 2009), p. 7. By 2009 the IMC announced it would no longer use the name on ONH to refer to the Strabane based group.

[670] B. Rowan, in *Belfast Telegraph,* 'Dissidents: interview with terror splinter group', 03/11/2010.

[671] *Belfast Telegraph,* 'Bomb allegedly was the work of dissidents', 21/10/2009, available at http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/community-telegraph/east-belfast/bomb-allegedly-was-the-work-of-dissidents-14537754.html, accessed 29/08/2012.

[672] *BBC News*, Injured officer Peadar Heffron 'regains consciousness', 24/01/2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/8477845.stm, accessed 29/08/2012.

[673] *The Telegraph*, 'Oglaigh na hEireann profile: police issued with bomb mirrors to counter splinter group', 04/04/2010.

[674] Brian Rowan in the *Belfast Telegraph,* 'Dissidents: interview with terror splinter group' , 03/11/2010.

As a response to the PIRA cessation of 'armed struggle', there appeared a 'new wave' of militant republicanism that seemed harder to define, more fluid in its membership and more sporadic in its attacks. The 'new wave' of armed republican activity from 2007 onwards was connected to Sinn Féin's decision to support the PSNI, the final leg of its constitutional journey in Northern Ireland. It brought some new members (and expertise) to the dissident groups and helped bring closer co-operation in terms of membership, resources and know-how. The attack at Massereene barracks in 2009, which resulted in the death of two British soldiers, indicated a pooling of resources in terms of guns, bullets and gunmen.[675] It is therefore necessary to question whether dissidents pose more of a threat now they are pooling their resources, or does it just confirm what was already known, that the membership between some military groups is flexible and pragmatically fluid?

Whilst the announcement of a merger in July 2012 between certain groups formalised structures, the arrangement represented little new. However, it did represent the changing nature of armed dissident republicanism. Even combined, the groups do not possess the capacity to pursue a sustained campaign, yet this limited capacity is acknowledged internally. As Michael Gallagher from the 32 CSM observes,

> Armed republicanism, i.e. the IRA campaign can resist British rule in Ireland. Now forcing a British withdrawal? I can't see it happening. But it can make it uncomfortable in Ireland, you know, resist...People decided to resist and armed republicanism is an option.[676]

Despite having limited capacity, by engaging in sporadic attacks, groups such as the RIRA, RAAD, ONH and CIRA do have the capacity to at least challenge normalisation. Within the modern context armed republicanism is unable to pursue a sustained campaign or pose a direct threat to the current status quo, but it can attempt to destabilise it through sporadic attacks. A republican prisoner commented on this nature of a campaign, 'They pop up, do something, and disappear again. That's why it's so good.'[677] It would therefore be unwise for the security services to attempt to purely understand these groups in terms of their capacity to fight their way to a standstill or in a belief they can create British withdrawal. Rather, militant republicanism's short and medium-term goals are to resist current political arrangements and stop Northern

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[675] See Brian Rowan in the *Guardian*, 'Analysis: coalition of terror may talk big but it cannot deliver', 31/07/2012.
[676] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/10.

Ireland embedding as an entirely secure, peaceful and normalised political entity. A 32CSM member articulated the hope that the limited campaign could be further developed;

> Well at the moment they think we are criminals...What we have to do are create a revolutionary movement and align everyone in the country to that mindset, that occupation is wrong. Especially as the status quo at the minute is that it is OK to have two states and it's wonderful. That's why the IRA are shooting people and resisting.[678]

When asked further about the extent to what armed republicanism can achieve that unarmed republicanism cannot, resistance was again key to this rationale:

> To me from my personal point of view unarmed republicanism is pointless because of the British. You could have 10,000 people tomorrow on a march and no one would take us on. But when you blow up a courthouse or you shoot a member of the armed forces they have to react. They have to react because everyone starts looking in and saying what is going on. You can have as many pickets as you want but on their own, it's nothing, they are not going to achieve anything... You have to stand up to the mark; do you know what I mean? Resist.[679]

Whilst violent dissident republicanism is often discredited for lacking capacity and support[680] there is realism amongst these groups in terms of what they can and cannot achieve. For them, like many republican generations before, resistance is viewed as more alluring than what they state as the alternative, surrender. As a republican prisoner put it:

> Well for me armed republicanism can get the point across. I think that people see you as more willing to resist. Whereas unarmed republicanism to me is a surrender. As, 'well then OK, we will just do as we are told.' Whereas armed republicanism says 'we are here, we are ready to fight.'[681]

Whilst there is realism that the dissident armed campaign cannot 'fight the Brits out of Ireland', there is also the presence of romanticism in attempting to resist the current arrangements.

Keeping the flame alive

Rather than marking their foundations within the recent republican divisions, dissident groups tend to draw their credence from the republican tradition and claims to being the IRA. The

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[677] Republican Prisoner A, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 16/07/2010.
[678] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry, 08/03/2012.
[679] *Ibid*.
[680] Sinn Féin, Dissidents behind destruction at New Lodge bonfire, 09/08/2012, available at http://www.sinnFéin.ie/contents/23927, accessed 31/08/2012.

continued use of violence is presented by dissident groups as a continuation of the Irish revolutionary military tradition with its history in the Easter Rising and the War of Independence (hence the confusion over the title of Óglaigh na hÉireann, which has been used by various groups including the PIRA). Armed groups portray their existence as continuation of the armed tradition as opposed to a struggle that is detached from the historical continuity of the IRA. Such continuity offers credibility, allowing dissidents to employ the credence attached to the claim of being the IRA, reinforced by a long historical tradition.

As result, there exists an element of wanting to 'keep the flame alive' with the continued use of violence by dissident republicanism. This aspect focuses again on remembrance and history, especially in terms of remembering those generations that lost their lives fighting for Irish freedom. Such an interpretation suggests that by surrendering weapons and ending an armed campaign for less than a united Ireland is treacherous, a betrayal not only of republican principles but to the previous generations of the republican dead. A member of RSF, articulated such sentiment,

> Well you think of those men and women who aspired to getting their country free and it is important to remember all that. It was a hard slog and a lot of them paid the price with their lives and everything else and will do in the future until we acquire a united Ireland. I mean the unfortunate thing about it is that there is a price to pay; there always will be a price to pay.[682]

Such a statement typifies the use of martyrdom within modern day republicanism, especially within RSF. Retelling the hardship suffered by republicans has the potential to legitimise actions through the prism of the past, emphasising the need for endurance and keeping the flame alive no matter what the odds are against them. Therefore, a dominant theme for militant dissident republicanism is that of no compromise. Whilst this theme of historical continuity runs through all dissident groups, it is represented in varying degrees. Those who broke away in 1986 are far more likely to stress the historical significance of an armed campaign, even regularly claiming, via detailed features in *Saoirse*, that Operation Harvest, the failed 1956-62 Border Campaign, did have utility in keeping the struggle alive. The 32CSM, aligned with RIRA, focus on the centrality of armed struggle and the right to bear arms as a republican principle. As the following

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[681] Republican Prisoner A, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 08/03/2010.
[682] RSF member, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.

statement from 32CSM member John Murphy demonstrates, the right to pursue an armed campaign is central to republican principles,

> I mean they [Sinn Féin] have totally turned their back on republican principles. I mean to me personally, just to be a republican, even just to be considered a republican the first thing you have to do is recognise the right to bear arms against a repressive force. It doesn't matter if it is a sustained campaign, but the first thing you have to do is recognise the right to bear arms against an oppressive force...individuals need to have the right to protect themselves against the British forces where and when the opportunity arises.[683]

For Murphy, it is acts such as the decommissioning of weapons and being unable to form a defence against a 'repressive force' that are betrayals. RSF's Des Dalton claims that, whatever differences exist between groups, 'resistance' may always exist in some degree to British rule in Northern Ireland:

> Whether Republican Sinn Féin was saying this or not, if Republican Sinn Féin went out of existence in the morning it wouldn't change the fact that there would be a section of people there who were not prepared to accept British rule. I think history has shown that, I think in every generation as long as there is British rule in Ireland there is always going to be a section who are prepared to resist that.[684]

Prevention of normalisation

Key to understanding the continued use of violence by armed dissident groups is the desire to prevent the impression of Northern Ireland being a normalised state. There is a desire to emphasise that Northern Ireland is still under British 'occupation'. Highlighting the continued presence and scrutiny of security forces can potentially create the impression that republican violence is reactionary. According to RSF's Geraldine Taylor, little has changed:

> The Brits are still here. They keep telling us there are no troops on the streets, but they are still here. They are in barracks. But anyway we are still under occupation.
> And when the people react and do something about it, they are called terrorists. How can you be a terrorist in your own country when you are fighting for the freedom of our own country. The terrorists are the British government.[685]

Anti-state organisations engaged in armed resistance often invoke the rights of self defence in justification of their actions.[686] Therefore, by paramilitary groups claiming the right of self

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[683] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork 02/03/2011.
[684] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.
[685] Geraldine Taylor, interview with author, Belfast 21/10/2011.

defence, violence is presented as a reaction to state oppression. Such an argument is typified by the assertion of a 'dissident' prisoner:

> All armed struggle is, is a response to the armed presence of the British government and the violent refusal of the British government to allow the Irish nation its freedom. Republicanism does not in any form promote violence nor does it support the initiation of violence. Armed struggle comes to exist only due to the armed actions of those who attack republicanism's advance.

> When armed actions are taken they are not undertaken as core republicanism. They are a response to armed action against usually peaceful people's offensives aimed at implementing the rights of the nation.[687]

Framing the actions of state security forces as the catalyst of the conflict is an attempt to justify the past, present and future actions of republican violence. After an attack on two off-duty Police Officers in the areas of Derry and Dungannon[688] in November 2007, the RIRA issued a threat that it would 'continue to target Crown Forces at a time and place of our choosing.'[689] Between March 2009 and May 2012, 43 police officers were re-housed because of the threat from dissident republicans,[690] with far more having to increase their home security.[691] The targeting of the police is at one level a physical attack on security services, but is also an attempt to attack the impression of normalisation.

In 2008 Hugh Orde claimed that the chief objective of dissidents was to kill a police officer and thereby fuel political instability.[692] A successful attack on the security forces in Northern Ireland grabs attention. It provides an opportunity for the dissident campaign to be in the international

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[686] See C. J. Finlay, 'Legitimacy and Non-State Political Violence', *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 18, no.3 (2010), pp. 287-312. For more information on the role of self-defence as a justification for armed struggle, see chapter 7.

[687] Tarlach McConnell, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 16/07/2010.

[688] M. Frampton, *The Return of the Militants: Violent Dissident Republicanism*, *A Policy Report for The International Centre for the study of radicalisation and political violence*, (ICRS, London, 2010), p. 16.

[689] *Irish Times*, 'Real IRA' Issues Threat to North Police', 28/11/2007.

[690] Freedom of Information Request, Request Number: F-2012-02338, available at http://www.psni.police.uk/police_officers_rehoused.pdf, accessed 24/08/2012.

[691] See *BBC Newsnight*, 'Files reveal growing NI terror threat', 28/10/2009 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8328309.stm, accessed 29/08/2012.

[692] *Oral Evidence of Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde OBE, Assistant Chief Constable Judith Gillespie and Chief Inspector Sam Cordner*, House of Commons Northern Ireland Select Committee (HC 1174-i), 05/11/2008, available at, http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmniaf/c1174-i/c117402.htm.

media, spreading the message that there remains the presence of those in Northern Ireland intent on resisting the status quo. Thus according to one dissident:

> If you talk about the six counties we are somewhere below the pecking order when it comes to decision makers in Ireland. They decided to pay attention to us because the IRA were a problem, they had to, it was crucial.[693]

It is suggested that the armed republican campaign is no longer concerned with planting an indiscriminate bomb in a high profile target, but more about specific targets, especially in reference to the targeting of the police.[694] Therefore, whilst at one level the targeting of police represents opposition to the Sinn Féin agenda it also demonstrates a physical threat which has the potential to gain greater media attention and ultimately presents Northern Ireland as a non-normalised entity.

Action-Repression-Action Cycle

In order to consider the reasoning and justifications behind the continued use of violent tactics it is necessary to explore the effect dissident attacks have upon the security situation. Studies exploring the state response to political challenges in the form of dissent and rebellious insurgency find that when authorities are challenged by violence, they engage in some form of repressive action often responding with force.[695] State-violent actor dynamics have been presented as an action-repression-action cycle. In such a cycle the catalyst of a terrorist attack is usually followed by government deterrent policies. This is followed by the vindictive action of the armed group until the government enforces a law, resulting in the group's retreat. Finally, the government and armed group negotiate a ceasefire.[696] In the context of Northern Ireland whenever the final round is approached there has always been the presence of those unwilling to negotiate. In terms of the action-repression-action cycle there appears to be those trapped between first and second phase and, as Dalton describes below, the cycle continues to repeat itself:

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[693] Republican Prisoner B, interview with author, Portlaoise Prison, 16/07/2010.
[694] See J. Mooney in *The Times*, ''Critical' Threat to Troops in North', 07/02/2009.
[695] See M. I. Lichbach, ''Deterrence or escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent,'' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31, no. 2 (1987), pp. 266–297.

Our history if you like is a cycle of conflict. It is a cycle of resistance followed by repression, followed by an attempt at pacification be it the various agreements that we have had going right back to 1921 and even before that whereby there have been attempts made to pacify a sizeable section of the population. What more than often happens is that the cycle just begins and repeats itself again, it just continues on.[697]

An example of the state response to the threat posed by dissident groups is the use of the Terrorism Act (2000) in Northern Ireland. This act aimed to make temporary provisions for Northern Ireland about the prosecution and punishment of certain offences, the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order. The Terrorism Act allowed Northern Ireland to continue using non-jury trials for certain offences and granted controversial stop and search powers replacing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (1989), which was considered outdated. Stop and search powers of the Terrorism Act came under Section 44, which grants any uniformed police officer the powers to stop and search persons and vehicles without suspicion if the police are operating in a designated area under special authorisation.[698] This power has been criticised by human rights groups such as *Liberty* for being too broadly drafted to intimidate those who do not pose a terrorist threat.[699] The European Court of Human Rights eventually ruled in January 2010 that the powers were a violation of human rights.[700] Authorisation to use Section 44 stopped in Northern Ireland in July 2010.[701]

However, the stop and search powers were used at a rapidly increasing rate during the time Section 44 was authorised, rising dramatically between 2005 and 2009 (see table 6.1). From February 2001 till March 2010, 309 charges were made under the whole of the Terrorism Act.[702] Considering the number of searches under Section 44 in comparison to the number of subsequent

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[696] For contextual analysis of this cycle in reference to ETA, see L. A. Gil-Alana and C. P. Barros, 'A Note on the Effectiveness of National Anti-Terrorist Policies: Evidence from ETA', *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27, no.1 (2010), pp. 28-46.

[697] Des Dalton, interview with author, Dublin 21/10/2011.

[698] See Terrorism Act 2000, 21/07/2000 available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/pdfs/ukpga_20000011_en.pdf, accessed 28/08/2012.

[699] In September 2003 journalists and peace protestors were subject to lengthy stop and search and prevented from attending a demonstration in London.

[700] *Guardian,* 'Stop and search powers illegal, European Court Rules', 12/01/2010.

[701] See *From War to Law: Liberty's Response to the Coalition Governments Review of Counter- Terrorism and Security Powers,* (London, 2010) available at http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/pdfs/policy10/from-war-to-law-final-pdf-with-bookmarks.pdf, accessed 29/08/2012.

charges under the whole of the Terrorism Act, brings in to question the efficacy and purpose of such legislation. This is especially pertinent considering that witnessing stop and search scenarios have been used as a justification and a motive for joining dissident groups, as a younger member of the 32CSM explained:

> I joined the 32 County Sovereignty Movement just watching people such as himself (Ciaran Boyle) walking through town, and I didn't even know who he was but they were being stopped three or four of them with their hands up and one of the member's daughter. She was being lifted off her baby seat and being searched and all. And I thought; I can't support that. This is British militia attacking Irish people on Ireland's soil.[703]

Deterrent policies introduced by the state and control measures such as the Terrorism Act are not necessarily effective in restricting support for dissident groups, especially if the rate at which such actions encourage individuals to join organisations is greater than the numbers charged under the legislation.

Table 6.1: Number of persons and vehicle searches under section 44 of the Terrorism Act.[704]

Period	No. of persons stopped and searched under TACT S44	No. of vehicles stopped and searched under TACT S44
2005	204	156
2006	948	791
2007	2,167	1,801
2008	6,922	6,016
2009	24,519	24,521

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[702] Figures taken from M. McKibbin, *Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2009/10*, (Northern Ireland Office, London, 2010). Includes all persons charged with offences under the Terrorism Act (2000), regardless of the arrest used.

[703] Joe Barr, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.

[704] Figures taken from M. McKibbin, *Northern Ireland Terrorism Legislation: Annual Statistics 2009/10*, (Northern Ireland Office, London, 2010). Includes all persons charged with offences under the Terrorism Act (2000), regardless of the arrest used.

In the Republic of Ireland, membership laws also provide a point of contention. For example, John Murphy, a member of Cork 32CSM, was arrested in December 2003 along with four others and charged with membership of the IRA. All were subsequently tried in a non-jury Special Criminal Court (SCC) and were charged. [705] Murphy described this process as a modern form of internment:

> Since 1998 there have been laws amended, like the membership laws in the 26 counties which is basically a modern form of internment. Where they basically bring a republican before the court, it's a three judge court. You're not entitled to a jury and basically it is the words of a Chief Superintendent that convicts you added with small bits of evidence like republican books and CDs they find in your house. Literally ridiculous stuff like that.[706]

In May 2008 the Court of Criminal Appeal (CCA) found the SCC did not have the jurisdiction to try and charge the five in question because they were not charged 'forthwith' after being arrested.[707] Using the above two examples from both sides of the border, such measures imposed by the state have potentially fuelled support for dissident groups and provided legitimation for using violence as a form of retaliation to state repression. Counter measures from the state can therefore be utilised by dissidents to represent state repression where any further dissident violence is framed as a reactionary form of self defence, ultimately fuelling the action-repression cycle (see figure 6.1) .

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[705] *Belfast News Letter*, 'Real IRA Boss Munster Given Prison Sentence', 14/06/2005, p. 15 and *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Real IRA and four active members jailed', 14/06/2005.
[706] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.
[707] *Irish Examiner*, 'Real IRA convictions overturned on appeal', 07/05/2008.
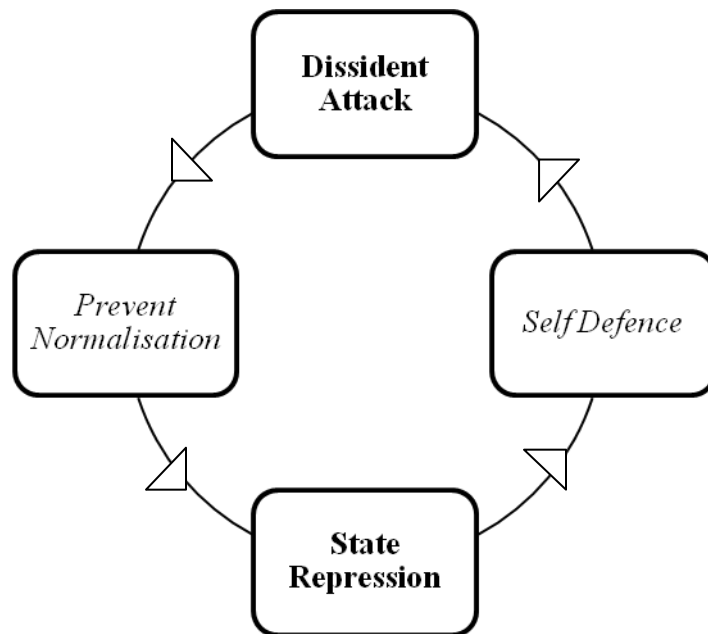
Figure 6.1: Dissident cycle of resistance.

Public Perceptions of the extent of the dissident threat

Dissident groups are commonly referred to as small, insignificant and possessing an intent to disrupt the peace that outweighs their capacity.[708] Their threat is often judged in terms of numbers and capacity. The result is the downplaying of any tactics or purpose. Thus Sinn Féin's Gerry Kelly, in a typical assertion, insists that 'they have no strategy and their aims are as clear as mud.'[709] Yet in parallel to the downplaying of the dissident republican armed capacity was the raising of the threat level of a dissident attack from 'substantial' to 'severe' and MI5 allocating a growing proportion of its resources to the threat.[710] It is logical to assess the threat of armed dissident republicanism by the modest physical force capabilities of the groups themselves. However, it is reductionist to judge the problems posed by terrorism solely by the depth and use of armed force. Rather than focusing on capacity to measure threat level, it is the kind of threat

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[708] See Jon Tonge, cited in *The Scotsman*, 'Peter Geoghegan: New IRA same old stance', 01/08/2012; Andrew Sanders, cited in *Daily Telegraph* 'A handshake for peace, but discord in Northern Ireland remains', 29/06/2012.
[709] Gerry Kelly, cited in *An Phoblacht*, 'Dissidents' cannot achieve a united Ireland, says Sinn Féin's Gerry Kelly', 27/07/2012.

that terrorism poses that makes it terrorising.[711] In other words, the threat of a group should not necessarily be measured merely by their direct capacity and ability to strike at will, but also by the perception of that threat.

In broader research evaluating the nature of terrorist threats, the perceived threat level differs depending on various factors, the most important of which is whether group objectives can be contained and the threat reduced. As Zarakol notes, 'claims to legitimacy that can be accommodated within the modern state system's ordering principles are the least ontologically threatening.'[712] Consequently, the threat is greater when the current arrangements cannot accommodate the group's objectives. According to such an analysis a change in the political system is not necessarily enough to secure the end of terrorist activity. Thus Wilkinson asserted that: 'In political terms the Good Friday Agreement created a unique opportunity to build a lasting peace...But, sadly, politics is not enough to secure the end of terrorist conflicts. It is important to recognize that the new agreement was only a document.'[713]

Unionists continue to hold an image of the 'IRA bogeyman', always present in the psyche throughout the history of the northern state, even though the major armed conflict of 1970-97 might be seen as an era of exceptionalism, a deviation from a more peaceful norm. In the 2010 *Northern Ireland General Election Survey*, the perceived threat from dissidents was seen as much greater by the Protestant community.[714] A majority (53 percent) of Protestants believed the dissidents constituted a major threat; only 17 percent of Catholics thought likewise. Few in both communities thought the dissidents offered 'no threat'.[715] Whilst dissident violence will not achieve a united Ireland in terms of sending the 'Brits home', it is also about perception. In creating a perceived threat, dissidents have the potential to prevent the impression of Northern Ireland being a normalised, consolidated state. Therefore, in response to the rhetoric that

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[710] See *The Economist*, 'The Curse of the Conflict Junkies', 02/12/2010.
[711] A. Zarakol, 'What makes terrorism modern? Terrorism, legitimacy, and the international system', *Review of International Studies* 37, no.5 (2011), pp. 2311-2336.
[712] *Ibid*, p. 2315.
[713] P. Wilkinson, 'Politics, diplomacy and peace processes: Pathways out of terrorism?', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no.4, (1999), pp. 66-82.
[714] See chapter 4 for further discussion of the survey findings, results available at www.liv.ac.uk/politics/staff-pages/ESRCSurvey/index.htm. accessed 04/03/2012.
[715] Preliminary findings from the DUP membership survey.

'violence will not work', and that 'armed struggle will not achieve a united Ireland', dissidents are aware they are not going to fight the British Army 'into the sea' but they can pose a *perceived* threat, whilst the asymmetry in threat perception is potentially damaging for community relations

The economic impact

The issue of causality between economic performance and terrorism is multifaceted. For example, whilst terrorism may have a negative influence on inward investment, economic factors may also play an important part in explaining the causes of terrorism. Economic activity is affected by the reduction in international trade and investment, the disruption of tourism flows and the relocation of resources away from private investment.[716] Even in advanced western countries the uneven nature of economic growth is able to fuel social and political unrest.[717] Periods of downturn result in fewer economic opportunities and when collective frustration within communities or areas of society over economic discontent surface, political violence is more likely to emerge.[718]

The Northern Irish economy suffers from long-standing weaknesses, such as a swollen public sector, low employment and under productivity alongside a weak private sector, none of which have been fully addressed via the peace process and its supposed economic dividend. As the UK government acknowledges;

> Northern Ireland is one of the UK's most disadvantaged regions on many measures. It has the lowest wages and one of the lowest labour productivity rates. It has a weak private sector, with strong dependence on the public sector. These weaknesses reflect a number of unique factors, not least the legacy of 30 years of conflict, the demographic structure and the peripheral location of Northern Ireland, as well as issues surrounding deprivation and rurality.[719]

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[716] See S. B. Blomberg, G.D. Hess & A. Orphanides, 'The macroeconomic consequences of terrorism', *Journal of Monetary Economics* 51, (2004), pp. 1007–1032; N.V. Crain and W.M. Crain, 'Terrorized economies', *Public Choice* 128, (2006), pp. 317–349; K. Gaibulloev & T. Sandler, 'Growth consequences of terrorism in western Europe', *Kyklos* 61, no.3 (2008), pp. 411–424.

[717] M. Olson, 'Rapid growth as a destabilizing force,' *Journal of Economic History* 23, (December 1963), pp. 529-52.

[718] T. R. Gurr, 'Sources of Rebellion in Western Societies: Some Quantitative Evidence', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 391, (1970), pp. 128-144.

[719] HM Treasury, *Rebalancing the Northern Irish Economy*, (London, December 2011), p. 11.

Over 30 percent of all Northern Ireland jobs are in the public sector compared to a UK average of around 21 percent.[720] In 1992 this figure was 37 percent; therefore the economy has managed to rebalance slightly.[721] The bloated public sector appeared vulnerable, even ripe, for pruning, as the Prime Minister appeared to hint at the start of the 2010 general election campaign.

Northern Ireland has the highest proportion of inactive people of working age at 28.4 percent, which is 5 percentage points above the UK average.[722] During the recession, between the years 2007-2011, unemployment rates in Northern Ireland were broadly in line with the UK average. However, looking beyond the average statistics, it is possible to correlate the figures for social deprivation by ward against areas of rioting.[723] It is therefore not difficult to make connections between social disadvantage and political unrest.[724] The key question is, has the economic downturn created a climate in which dissidents can prosper? The fear is that certain working-class nationalist communities will feel a growing alienation from Sinn Féin and the current status quo, to the extent of questioning, 'what benefits has the peace process brought?' Such alienation might provide fertile recruiting ground for paramilitaries.[725] Ciaran Boyle from the 32CSM demonstrated such a point when asked what bearing the economic situation had on support for dissident republicans,

> the people who are more likely to be disillusioned are the ones who cannot get a job. They are the ones who are going to spread support. They are not going to go to pickets or protest, they will probably join the IRA. If people go for months and months and months without a job and their weans are starving. What are you going to think then? 'The problem is with the status quo'.
>
> ..There is no doubt that if the economy is bad then republicanism benefits. If people have their backs against the wall, if they have nothing to lose, then republicanism will be

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[720] Office of National Statistics, *Public Sector Employment Statistical Bulletin Q4 2010*, (London, ONS, March 2011).

[721] H M Treasury, *Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses*, (London, July 2010).

[722] Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, *Labour Market Report*, (Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, March 2011).

[723] See Northern Ireland Executive, *The 100 most deprived small areas in Northern Ireland – Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010*, (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Belfast, March 2010).

[724] K. Bean, 'New dissidents are but old Provisionals writ large'? The Dynamics of Dissent Republicanism in New Northern Ireland*, The Political Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2012), pp. 83-98.

[725] See *Financial Times*, 'A Peace to Protect', 15/08/2012, p. 7; *The Sunday Business Post*, 'Last-ditch bid to snuff out Northern normality', 05/08/2012.

attractive because technically you have nothing to lose. It's the same in any context, in any struggle. Once the going gets tough people start to take action.[726]

There is a correlation, between socio-economic status and dissident sympathy in nationalist areas, with the working-class and unemployed most likely to offer sympathy.[727] Whilst historical determinism plays a large role within republicanism, there is a need to place this within the boundaries of context. The difficulty for dissidents is that, unlike PIRA once did, they cannot harness relative disadvantage as a resource, given the diminution of inter-communal economic differentials (although Catholic unemployment remains higher than that found amongst Protestants).

Conclusion

The Northern Irish peace process is used as a model for conflict resolution, especially in reference to its inclusivity and engagement with republicans. The inclusion of Sinn Féin in the peace talks served as a carrot to incentivise co-operation, the abandonment of violence and the continuation of peaceful means. Despite the rebranding of Provisional republicanism, Sinn Féin remained relatively unified in that the party has retained most members and indeed expanded. It is now the second largest party in Northern Ireland and is growing on both sides of the border. However, the scale of change within Sinn Féin and enforced dismemberment of the PIRA meant that it was inevitable that dissent would emerge; the surprise lies in the lack of anticipation. A broad spectrum of small groups have emerged resistant to compromise, still maintaining, against much evidence, that an armed campaign possesses some utility. Armed republicanism does not have the domestic or international support (ideological, financial or political) it possessed during the PIRA campaign, capacity and volunteers are much more limited and the range of attack narrow. However, groups have demonstrated an ability to adapt to these restrictions where attacks are more likely to be localised and targets are specific. Despite the low level of campaign, all groups that engage in armed struggle have to attempt to justify and rationalise their actions. In terms of dissident republicanism it is possible to explore these justifications in terms of contextual and historical factors.

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[726] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2012.
[727] J. Evans & J. Tonge, 'Menace without mandate? Is there any sympathy for dissident Irish republicanism in Northern Ireland?' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no.1 (2012), pp. 1-18.

Historical aspects such as the credence attached to the name of IRA and the desire to keep the flame of armed republicanism alive play a significant role within the rationalisation of dissident activity. The mainstream discourse attempts to condemn the actions of groups such as ONH, CIRA, RIRA and RAAD by claiming they have no mandate in reference to their lack of electoral representation. However, whilst such an argument might damage the broader public perception of dissident groups, such arguments about lacking a mandate are somewhat futile in preventing the continuation of armed struggle by some groups. These groups take their legitimacy from the refuge of the past and republican history. For them, republicanism does not, and never has, needed a mandate from the living.

Contextual circumstances, such as the desire to prevent normalisation, the claimed need for self defence (where violence is a response to security service oppression) and the need for more community control are also employed as means to rationalise dissident violence. Whilst some individuals have expressed an appreciation for the effects of the economy in making individuals support and/or join dissident groups this is not necessarily utilised by armed organisations as much as it is by leftist political representatives, notably éirígí or the IRSP, never or no longer linked to an armed group.

The use of violence does not lie in the belief it will force the British government to relinquish sovereignty. Palpably, given the failure of PIRA's much bigger campaign, that would be preposterous. The strategic rationale, insofar as it exists, is to stop Northern Ireland embedding as an uncontested state, in the hope that a campaign of resistance may grow due to, as yet, unforeseen episodes, such as security force mistakes, which may help grow support for the 'dissidents' in their claims to the title deeds of the IRA. Dissidents have attempted to utilise measures enforced by the state to highlight the lack of normality. The introduction of counter-terrorism measures such as Section 44 have been framed by dissidents as state repression. Violence is then subsequently portrayed as reactionary, or as a means of self defence. In addition the use of force within communities is also framed as a form of protection. For groups such as RAAD that emphasise the need for community control by targeting specific individuals, they are able to highlight the inadequacy of the state, whose legitimacy is any case rejected, in responding to issues such as drug dealing and anti-social behaviour.

Dissident violence can be narrowly explained as a continuous cycle of resistance. Dissidents utilise violence to resist the current arrangements and prevent normalisation. These actions are then met with counter measures from the state. Groups can then utilise these measures in order to demonstrate state repression and present further action as reactionary or as a form of self defence. The cycle is fuelled by the desire to represent resistance to the current status quo. Whilst armed dissidence is accused of being 'deluded' there is a vein of realism in acknowledging that the continued use of armed struggle is not to force the British out of Ireland, but it is about resistance. Dissident groups are seemingly locked into this cycle of resistance, where armed action is framed as reactionary and is justified through the enduring republican tradition of defiance and struggle.

Chapter 7

'The Discourse of Defence': 'Dissident' Irish Republican Newspapers and the 'Propaganda War'

> …its [the Provisional movement's] political objectives can only be reached by a complex psychological-military process in which propaganda and violence can be compared to a boxer's two fists. It is operational propaganda that needs to be better understood and countered, for without it terrorism would be fighting with one hand tied behind its back, and ought, therefore, to be more easily defeated.[728]

The communication activity of the Provisional republican movement was recognised as among the best organised and most effective of any group associated with 'armed struggle' and was credited with keeping the movement alive and active.[729] The opening quote by Colonel Maurice Tugwell, Head of the British Army's Information Policy department, set up in 1971 to counter Provisional propaganda, is testimony that the fight against armed Irish republicanism was one of mind and opinion as well as military force. The offices of major aspects of the Provisional propaganda machine, the weekly newspaper *An Phoblacht* and *Republican News* were subject to repeated raids, which confiscated papers and episodically arrested personnel involved in production.[730] The two publications merged to form *An Phoblacht/Republican News* and continued to propagandise effectively on behalf of the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and Sinn Féin, fusing political rhetoric with support for 'armed struggle', the latter epitomised in the 'War News' column.

With the PIRA having long 'left the stage' the context of republican propaganda is much different. In a political climate where dissident violence continues as a sporadic presence,

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[728] M. Tugwell, 'Terrorism and Propaganda: Problems and Response', *Conflict Quarterly 5,* nos. 1-2 *(*Spring, 1986), pp. 5-6.
[729] R. G. Picard, 'How Violence is Justified: Sinn Féin's *An Phoblacht', International Politics and the Press, Journal of Communication* 41, no.4 (1991), p. 91.
[730] L. Curtis, *Ireland and the Propaganda War, 'The British Media and the Battle for Hearts and Minds',* (London, Pluto, 1998), pp. 266-267.

mainstream republicanism's condemnation of dissident activity is essential to the future stability of the Assembly. Today, therefore, *An Phoblacht* mirrors Sinn Féin's support of the peace process in rejecting the use of force as a legitimate tactic. As one editorial insisted:

> Some of the individuals who are involved in these small militarist factions may genuinely but mistakenly believe they are furthering a republican cause. Some are using such groups as flags of convenience for criminality. Others are – without a shadow of a doubt – working to sabotage the republican movement.[731]

As part of its broader political and electoral, analysis, *An Phoblacht* is used to strongly denounce the existence and actions of dissident groups and reinforce the idea of 'dissidents' being alien to republicanism, a barrier to republican advancement and, simultaneously an electoral and political irrelevance. *An Phoblacht* tends to act as part of the 'normal' media in promoting peace and highlighting the isolation of dissidents. The offering of a voice to those who oppose the current political dispensation is met with accusations of irresponsibility in that it provides dissidents with 'the oxygen of publicity', or exaggerates their capacity, or creates unnecessary fears amongst the public.[732] It is the intention of this chapter to, firstly, investigate the discourse from the mainstream media and politicians surrounding dissident groups in order to explore the construction of the 'dissident' profile. The second part will then consider the composing and transporting of the political messages from two republican groups, Republican Sinn Féin and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. This will reflect on a content analysis of their newspapers, *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* respectively, to analyse the success or failure of their attempts at a counter narrative to the mainstream discourse.

Previous research has recognised the importance of providing a voice to marginalised republican groups through the medium of print media, through both mainstream and the groups' own publications. By utilising republican print media, Richard Picard explored how the justification of violence was communicated in the Provisionals' *An Phoblacht*.[733] By carrying out a content analysis of the newspaper at the end of the 1980s, Picard focused on the political justifications for IRA activity. Within this research a key advantage of examining republican print sources was

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[731] *An Phoblacht,* 'The militarist campaign: "Who's pulling the strings?" asks ex-POW Bobby Storey', 02/07/2010.
[732] See B. Rowan in, *Belfast Telegraph*, 'Dissidents: interview with terror splinter group', 03/11/2010; *Belfast Telegraph,* 'Editors Viewpoint: Dissidents Pose a Serious Threat', 03/11/2010.

that it goes beyond what he terms 'opinion and anecdotal evidence from dominant media outlets'.[734]

Kevin Rafter's examination of *Magill* magazine, from 1977-1990 highlights the importance of providing space for marginalised groups in mainstream media publications.[735] Rafter describes that the unique aspect of *Magill* was that,

> The interviews with representatives of paramilitary organisations provided editorial material not featured in the mainstream media, and operated as a counterpoint of sorts to the restrictive broadcasting ban on the republican representatives.[736]

Magill's coverage was far from typical of the mainstream media's coverage of the Northern Irish conflict and therefore provided a rare outlet for hard-line republican voices during the broadcast ban. Although a broadcasting ban on direct republican voices was lifted many years ago, it is difficult for marginal groups to gain access to media on their own terms. Therefore, alternative forms of media are still an essential source for groups and individuals dissenting from the pro-Stormont line to voice their opinions. As a 32CSM member emphasised 'I often say I don't blame people for not caring or not knowing, I feel it is our job to educate them and show them which is where the likes of the paper and leaflets come in to play.'[737] Other organisations such as RNU have also noted the need to reverse the 'media spun terminology used to distort perceptions.'[738]

A significant challenge facing those who wish to examine modern day Irish republicanism is making sense of the many groups claiming to be the 'true' or 'pure' representation of the tradition. Utilising the media output of such groups as an area of investigation is both beneficial and worthy to broader research on dissident groups, as it provides an opportunity to explore key areas of questioning. Such investigation has the potential to provide greater insight into how groups proclaim themselves as 'true' republicans. For example, at an empirical level ideas and

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[733] R. G. Picard, 'How Violence is Justified: Sinn Féin's *An Phoblacht',* International Politics and the Press 41, no.4 (1991), pp.90-103.
[734] *Ibid*, p. 92.
[735] *See* K. Rafter, '*Magill* magazine's coverage of Northern Ireland, 1977-1990', *Media History* 17, no.1 (2011), pp. 63-77.
[736] *Ibid*, p. 75.
[737] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork 02/03/2011.
[738] RNU member, interview with author, Belfast, 31/07/2011

beliefs of what constitutes Irish Republicanism are contested through the individual messages of each group. Therefore, examining the packaging and transportation of a group message provides insight into a key arena of contestation. Firstly, however, it is necessary to consider the construction of the 'dissident' profile from the perspective of the mainstream media.

Mainstream media discourse

An increase in dissident republican activity has produced a rise in media coverage. In a deliberate attempt to construct a profile of dissidents as the 'enemy other' the language utilised clearly defines the Self and the Other. The Other denotes a person different to, or external from, oneself. Ultimately the construction of the Other is part of what defines the Self. The definition of 'us' is important because the creation of 'One's own identity is impossible without the external other; the very notion of the 'self' depends on the enabling other.'[739] The Self and the Other therefore work in a symbiotic relationship where the construction of responsibilities and roles for the Self are created in direct relation to the Other. In other words, the Self is a responsive creation and the Other is therefore one half of the construction of the Self.[740]

Three main themes can be identified as running through the discourse which has emerged from politicians and the mainstream media. These are, firstly, that dissidents are obsessed with violence and want to take us back to the 'bad old days'; secondly, that they are 'traitors'; and, finally, there is a common tendency to depict dissidents as being, evil, inhuman and backward.

'Obsessed with violence' and 'want to take us back to the bad old days'

The strong alignment to armed struggle held by some dissidents has led to criticism that they are obsessed with armed struggle, rather than utilising force as a strategic means to reach an agreed end. Therefore, republican groups that continue to advocate the legitimacy of armed struggle are often depicted as subordinating the planning of Irish 'freedom' to a primitive urge to fight. Such

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[739] R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 61.

discourse that these groups are 'obsessed with violence' is epitomised by the abstract taken from *An Phoblacht,* the Provisional newspaper, directly after the 1998 Omagh bomb. It commented:

> The Omagh bombing was carried out by a splinter group which claims to be republican. The group brought about this tragedy because it is mired in militarism. Any struggle which adopts the tactic of armed force is in danger of succumbing to militarism. Militarism means that military considerations come before all others. The political nature of the struggle is obscured. The continuation of the armed campaign itself becomes the objective.[741]

Surrounding this discourse is the association that because the Provisionals have taken the constitutional path, those republicans who continue to advocate the course of armed struggle do so because they are locked into a vicious cycle of violence. In exploring the moral and political aspects of war Von Clausewitz observed:

> Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also duration. Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow.[742]

Transferring this reflection to the present socio-political context in Northern Ireland implies that the armed struggle pursued by republicans is driven by a 'senseless passion' rather than being controlled by a group's 'political object'. The use of armed struggle is therefore portrayed as having an obsession with violence which, as a result, reduces the dissident reason for existence to the rejection of the peace process.

Surrounding the discourse that these groups are marred in militarism is also the idea that these groups want to take us back to the darkest days of the past or return Northern Ireland to the days of the troubles. For example, *The Sun* insisted that 'Terrorists are back. The lessons from history haven't been learnt'.[743] The idea within this discourse is that the majority of society can remember the 'troubles' and support for dissident groups can be damaged by evoking the memory of the past and the atrocities it brought, along with highlighting how gains from the peace process far outweigh a return to the past.

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[740] R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 76
[741] *An Phoblacht*, 'The futile path of militarism', 20/08/1998.
[742] K. Von Clausewitz, *On War,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989), p.92.
[743] *The Sun*, 'Terrorists are back. The Lessons from history haven't been learnt', 23/02/11.

The culmination of such discourse is the implication that dissidents cannot link means with ends, where an obsession with violence has overtaken any rational political objectives, and the memory of the past stands as a reminder of the lengthy conflict which managed to span decades. The memory of this past and the PIRA campaign from the 1970s until the late 1990s is now utilised by Sinn Féin to deter those who maintain that armed struggle is still a legitimate tactic. From the viewpoint of the dissident such discourse highlights the hypocrisy that whilst Sinn Féin denounce the continued use of armed struggle today they are doing so by indirectly highlighting their own physical force tradition.

Another consequence of this discourse is that it clearly defines those who are pro-peace versus those who are anti-peace. For example, Kevin Myers insists that 'The nihilists can only propel us back to the worst bits of the past, never the best thing.'[744] The result of such a statement is that it collectivises those who are anti peace, therefore defining dissidents as the 'enemy other'. An additional distinction is also drawn by uniting those who are actively supporting peace. Thus 'the Government, police and military must work together to stamp out the dissident threat and ensure the darker days of the Troubles are never revisited.'[745] Such a polarised distinction reinforces the distance between 'us' (the self) and 'them' (the other).

'Traitors'

Another frequent occurrence within the discourse on dissident groups is the use of the term 'traitors'. Such discourse suggests that these groups have rejected the teachings of their own ideology, or alternatively that they have no ideology and are utilising republicanism as a facade. After the murders of two British Army soldiers and the PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll by the RIRA and CIRA respectively, Martin McGuinness stated:

> These people are traitors to the island of Ireland, they have betrayed the political desires, hopes and aspirations of all of the people who live on this island. They don't deserve to be supported by anyone.[746]

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[744] *Independent*, 'Kevin Myers: The nihilists can only propel us back to the worst bits of the past, never the best thing', 14/04/11.
[745] *Irish Post*, 'No Return to Ireland's Bloody Past', 11/04/11.
[746] *News Letter*, 'Murderers are Traitors to Ireland-McGuinness', 10/03/09.

As McGuinness stood on the steps of Stormont Castle with the DUP leader and the Chief Constable of the PSNI, condemning the republican dissident groups who were responsible for the murders, such remarks demonstrated the distance the Provisional movement had travelled. In addition, the use of the ad hoc, yet politically loaded term, 'traitor' provoked comment from across the political spectrum.[747] Whilst it may have been a welcome remark in the eyes of the establishment, it also incensed previous victims of the PIRA campaign and many republicans rejecting the pro-Stormont line. It is also important to note that whilst such remarks sparked a broad range of responses this did not come as an official response from Sinn Féin. Having initially described the killings of the British soldiers less stridently as 'counter-productive and wrong' Gerry Adams refused to comment on the use of the term 'traitors'.

What such language does do, whether calculated or improvised, is highlight the attempt to distinguish between the 'just' violence of the PIRA and the 'treacherous' and illegitimate violence of those who have chosen to maintain the tactic of armed struggle. This moment confirmed the stance of McGuinness and Sinn Féin that a United Ireland can only be brought about through peaceful and democratic means and that armed struggle of the past can no longer be justified in the present context. Such discourse presents Sinn Féin's republicanism as the archetypal form. This point was also demonstrated in a *Guardian* editorial: 'Gerry Adams says he has no idea who these people [armed dissidents] are and, more to the point, no idea who they think they are: they are masquerading as republicans, whatever letters of the alphabet they use to describe themselves.'[748] Thus, other republican groups' adherence to the tradition is frequently considered in reflection to what the Provisionals, in their modern day form, represent.

Given Sinn Féin's entry into power sharing at Stormont, former Provisionals argue that there can be no justification or support for republicans to continue armed struggle. McGuinness stated that 'The war is over. It is time these people woke up to that reality.'[749] Although McGuinness referred to '*the* war' it is quite explicit that he is referring to the troubles as a war fought by the Provisionals, again placing that movement at the centre of the republican project, leaving

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[747] *The Times*, 'McGuinness's 'traitor' remark opened the door to a dark place', 13/03/09.
[748] *Guardian, '*The IRA is a tradition, not an army. It hasn't gone away', 26/04/2011.

dissidents to exist on the periphery. The inference here is that the Provisionals, in contemporary form as Sinn Féin, are in possession of the republican franchise and dissidents have perverted the ideology or alternatively have no beliefs at all and are utilising republicanism in an attempt to legitimise contentious actions.

In addition to the reference to these groups as traitors to republicanism, they are also labelled as anti-peace. The actions of such groups have been labelled a war on 'peace', the perpetrators portrayed as 'enemies of peace'.[750] Within such discourse 'peace' has been made the dissident object of resistance. In other words opposition to peace has been made the basis for the continuation of armed struggle, where resistance to peace is therefore labelled as the raison d'être of dissident existence. These groups are portrayed as being obsessed with violence at the expense of political co-operation. For example, 'the Real IRA, ONH, and Continuity IRA were condemned by McGuinness for waging a "useless war against peace".'[751] This discourse consequently provides a clear distinction between those who are anti-peace versus those who are pro-peace, again collectivising those who are anti-peace as the 'enemy other'.

'Evil'

Another common discourse within the mainstream media and politicians is reference to dissident groups as 'evil' and 'irrational'. For example, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Owen Paterson, stated that the 'bombers were evil and insane', and insisted that 'they will not achieve whatever their misguided aims are by violence.'[752] The use of the term 'evil' to label groups themselves or their actions is not particularly novel to this context and is perhaps the most frequent within the rhetorical construction of the 'dissident' enemy.[753] The use of the label 'evil' firstly provides a moral judgement that certain actions or beliefs are unethical or unjust. For

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[749] *Belfast Telegraph,* 08/11/2007.
[750] *BBC Northern Ireland*, 'Ronan Kerr murder: Killers 'enemies of peace'', 04/04/2011.
[751] *Guardian*, 'Omagh bombing informants must come forward, says Martin McGuinness', 04/04.2011.
[752] *BBC Northern Ireland, '*Bombers are 'evil and insane' says Paterson', 06/08/2011.
[753] See J. A. Aune, 'The Argument from Evil in the Rhetoric of Reaction', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, no.3 (2003), pp. 518-522; R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Palgrave, 2005), pp. 66-70.

example, the *Daily Telegraph* insisted that '...the bombers were driven by a 'blind, morally wrong and sinful ideology.'[754]

Secondly, 'evil' implies the deepest betrayal of human rationality.[755] Deployment of the term suggests that the antagonist is not merely mistaken but wantonly destructive and damaging; displacing the possibility that anger has the potential to be a rational human reaction to political or social discontent. Therefore aims and goals are portrayed as futile, where good and moral righteousness will ultimately triumph. Thus, the First Minister, Peter Robinson, insisted that 'This is a battle of wills between the political class and the evil gunmen – the political class will win.'[756]

This language conforms to an explicitly individual theory of evil, where evil exists as a force or principle residing within specific human beings, rather than in a complex set of structural conditions or as the moral outcome of a chain of events.[757] In addition the use of the term evil also implies the possession of a trait that cannot be altered or appeased. As Jackson argues:

> the clear implication of this language is that identity rather than deliberation is the basis of human action: terrorists behave as they do not because they are rationally calculating political actors but simply because it is in their nature to be evil.[758]

The use of the label evil therefore ascribes an innate trait of immorality as distinct from the actions of calculating revolutionaries or political dissidents.

In an attempt to construct such discourse, those republicans who reject the legitimacy of the political status quo are also depicted as inhuman, insane and cruel,[759] with the implication that these groups are only marginally human, possessing a different set of social values. Cloud highlights a key criticism of utilising evil and inhuman characteristics as a rhetorical formulation: 'There are such things as goods and virtues; we just have to be asking whose goods

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[754] *Daily Telegraph*, 'Omagh bomb: return to violence 'like a bad dream', 04/04/2011.
[755] R. Hariman, 'Speaking of Evil'*, Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 6(2003), p. 514.
[756] *BBC News*, 'Officer's murder condemned', 10/03/2009.
[757] *See,* L. Rediehs, *Evil*, in J Collins and R. Glover (eds.) *Collateral Language: A Users Guide to America's new war*, (New York, New York University Press, 2002).
[758] R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 59.
[759] BBC Northern Ireland, Visit part of new anti dissident strategy, 12/10/2010.

they are and what and whose ends they serve. At the end of the day, it comes down to which side we are on.'[760] As a strategic tool, attaching the evil tag to dissidents places them on the opposing side, distinguishing them as the 'enemy other'. This transforms the conflict between one of political ambition, grounded in issues of contested sovereignty and territoriality, into a dichotomy of good and evil. With evil people, only punishment is appropriate and there is no reason to address their grievances. This approach therefore displaces the need to understand more complex socio-economic and political events.

Dissidents as the 'enemy other'

An important consequence of this language is the creation of a collective identity, clearly establishing that those who are pro-peace are those who deserve to belong within the community. These discourses culminate in the construction of dissidents as the 'enemy other', clearly defining them as a separate entity to the rest of society. The formulation of 'us' and 'them' polarises dissidents and the pro-peace community. Whilst constructing dissidents as the 'enemy other' is significant, equally so is the creation of a shared identity amongst the internal/national self. This discourse not only sets the boundaries of those who are excluded from society by labelling them as the Other, but also sets the borders for those who belong, or the Self.

The creation of the Self as the internal force is argued to be important as the creation of a shared identity is a pre-requisite for the creation of nationhood. That is, in order for a nation state to remain intact and retain some form of unity its membership must believe or at least 'imagine' they belong to a common community.[761] Therefore, the creation of a sense of belonging is important in encouraging the idea that nations are exclusive with clear boundaries that define the scope of the group. As Jackson explains, '...like all political groups, nations are exclusive and can only function whilst maintaining strict boundaries between citizens and non-citizens, the

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[760] D. L. Cloud, 'Beyond Evil: Understanding Power Materially and Rhetorically', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, no.3 (2003), p. 537.
[761] See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, Verso, 1983).

domestic and the foreign, the inside and the outside'.[762] Therefore, an intended result of defining those who belong within the community also reinforces those who do not.

Taken as a whole the discourse surrounding dissidents as being 'obsessed with violence', 'traitors' and 'evil' has the potential to bolster support for the peace process and political status quo. The discourse clearly defines us and them, good versus evil and most importantly in this case pro-peace versus those who are anti-peace. It is possible to observe three key consequences of such discourse. This mainstream narrative, firstly, ascribes set characteristics to 'dissidents'. As a result, 'dissident' has become a term of convenience to collectivise a diverse and multifaceted range of groups into a homogenous entity. Secondly, it depoliticises 'dissident' aims and goals, where the sole purpose of being can be reduced to the opposition to peace and the obsession with armed struggle as opposed to the result of deeper political or social discontent. Finally, it portrays Sinn Féin as the archetypal form of republicans. Other groups' credentials are viewed in relations to what the Provisionals, in their present form, represent.

Beyond the Mainstream Media

Whilst the activities of dissident groups are often the subject of mainstream media reports, like other marginal groups they themselves lack the capacity and influence to gain access to mainstream media on their own terms. Mainstream reports tend to focus on paramilitary violence as a form of journalistic appeal as opposed to providing an outlet for the articulation of perspectives and ideas.[763]

It is a common assumption that the use of violence as a calculated tactic is a powerful tool for generating support for violent extremist movements by securing attention, recognition and

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[762] R. Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Palgrave, 2005), p. 61

[763] See D. Miller, The *Northern Ireland Information Service and the Media: Aims, strategies and tactics*, in . J. Eldridge (ed.), *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power*, (London, Routledge, 1993), pp. 73-103; T. Cooke, *Paramilitaries and the Press in Northern Ireland*, in, P. Norris, M. Kern & M. Just (eds.), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, (New York, Routledge, 2003), pp. 75- 90; P. Wilkinson, 'The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no.2 (1997), pp. 51-64; D. Paletz et al, 'The IRA, the Red Brigades, and the F.A.L.N. in the New York Times', *Journal of Communication* 32, no.2 (1982), pp. 162-171.

legitimacy through media exposure.[764] For example, violence committed by anti-state groups accomplishes little in terms of nearing an ultimate goal or intending to bring about an immediate result. Acts are therefore often described as being symbolic, aiming to enact a state of fear within the wider population which may bring about change in society or government policy and also draw attention of the wider world to themselves and their reasons for the use of violence. In response, the state needs to deny legitimacy to terrorists. As Margaret Thatcher, famously declared, 'democracies must find a way to starve the terrorists and hijackers of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend.'[765]

Such a position stems from the belief that the mass media can effectively serve as a propaganda platform for terrorists and their cause. The media response which inevitably follows violent action is part of the paramilitary objective, sending a message to both enemy and supporter of the armed group's political intent, technical ability and military determination. As a result acts of violence and their effectiveness can be greatly increased through the potential use of the media as a means of 'advertising'. Yet media coverage typically fails to provide explanation, reason or political motive behind acts of violence. It is far more likely that the generality of media coverage grants violent acts and their consequences decontextualised attention, bereft of explanation behind the actions which would provide the perpetrator with the opportunity to advance their political aims or claims for political legitimacy.

Marginalised groups are wary of talking to the media, cautious of how they may be portrayed. The result is a 'catch 22' situation, whereby the media is cautious of its role in reporting groups linked to terrorist activity and groups are reluctant to speak to journalists and may be misrepresented. Understanding the way in which paramilitary organisations view themselves is therefore not possible through analysing mainstream media. Insight into their self-perception is far more likely through the media they are likely to have more control over, such as their own

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[764] Y. Alexander, 'Terrorism, the Media and the Police', *Journal of International Affairs*, 32 (1978), p. 102; R. A. Pape, 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism', *American Journal of Political Science Review* 97, (2003), pp. 343-361; P. Hollander, 'Contemporary Political Violence and Its Legitimation', *Society* 46, no.3 (2009), pp.267-274, P. Wilkinson, 'The Media and Terrorism: A Reassessment', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no.2 (1997), pp. 51-64.
[765] Quoted in S. Cottle, *Mediatized Conflicts*, (Berkshire, Open University Press, 2006), p. 144.

newspapers.[766] Therefore, it is understandable that anti-state groups may look towards their own media outputs or 'alternative media' to project their interests.

In defining alternative forms of media often utilised by marginal groups, Chomsky refers to 'media that are or could be citizen controlled as opposed to state - or corporate - controlled.'[767] Alternative forms of press not only provide freedom from corporate control and influence, but also freedom to circulate views and subjects that would not be presented in the national or mainstream press. Therefore, alternative forms of media provide marginalised groups with the space to reject and/or challenge institutionalised politics as well as providing a means in which to advocate the change that they see as necessary. Unlike the mainstream media, which is constrained by social and demographic influences on the nature of reporting, dissident publications are under the sole control of their respective organisations. As a result alternative forms of media allow for the construction of news based on alternative values, which may 'proceed from a wish to present other interpretations of stories and to present stories not normally considered as news.'[768] Therefore, alternative forms of media have the potential to provide republican dissident groups with an outlet for publicising their actions and values on their own terms.

The utilisation of media by dissident groups is integral to intra-group communication and, most crucially, in giving voice to hardline republican messages. This communication activity is paramount to marginalised factions for several reasons; firstly, it provides a potential outlet in which to justify their political position; secondly, it allows the dissemination of principles and beliefs and, finally, it conveys the *raison d'être* behind more contentious perspectives. Through analysis of newspapers, it is possible to reveal further information in how each group wants to portray their own form of republicanism and how they defend this as the 'real' or 'authentic' republicanism.

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[766] T. Cooke, *Paramilitaries and the Press in Northern Ireland*, in, P Norris, M Kern & M Just (eds.), *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public*, (New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 79.
[767] Quoted in M. Achbar, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, (Montreal, Black Rose, 1994), p. 197.
[768] C. Atton, *Alternative Media*, (London, Sage, 2002), p. 11.

Alternative Forms of Media

The increasing use of the internet within social movements on a mass level as well as within smaller more specific interest groups has generated an increase in academic interest.[769] Whilst the changing role of political participation has gained attention, in conjunction to this is the recognition that anti-state groups have become increasingly innovative, using the internet in various ways to communicate effectively with multiple audiences. In addition to groups utilising the internet to create their own websites, there are also social networking sights such as blogs, forums and bulletin boards; the result being an ever expanding area for interaction and the creation of a 'virtual community'. Communities are commonly conceptualised by geographic proximity, but 'virtual communities' go beyond spatial restrictions and allow the dissemination of information and ideas beyond what has previously been possible. As Bowman-Grieve explains:

> Virtual communities in support of terrorist movements are real social spaces where people interact on a regular basis to disseminate their views, share their knowledge, and encourage each other to become increasingly supportive of movements that use terrorism to achieve their goals.[770]

As a result, for researchers, the broader the 'virtual community' the wider is the potential scope for analysis.

The fragmented nature of modern day republicanism is mirrored in the vast array of forums, blogs and social networking pages available via the internet. In terms of providing a resource for researchers these virtual communities have positive and negative aspects. An initial advantage is the fact that these forums are often private, where prospective members have to register and be approved to view posts and partake in discussions. This selection or screening process means that members may feel more private and secure and therefore feel that they can speak more freely. Such a mindset is therefore important in terms of openly discussing opinions on more contentious areas, such as the role of paramilitaries. As a result, such an uninhibited form of

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[769] See, L Bowman-Grieve, 'Exploring "Stormfornt": A Virtual community of the Radical Right', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no.11 (2009), pp. 989-1007; M. R. Torres Soriano, 'The Road to Media Jihad: The Propaganda Actions of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23 (2011), pp. 72-88.

expression provides the researcher (as long as they themselves can be approved to access the site) with a unique and profound insight that may not be as forthcoming in interviews or group observation.

However, whilst the potential autonomy of the approval system may bring a level of secrecy or security this point is not to be taken for granted. The security services are utilising such sites as areas for observation. In June 2011 a man was arrested and charged with distributing material that was threatening or offensive over comments allegedly posted on a social networking site about the murder of Constable Ronan Kerr.[771] Consequently, there is reason to believe that in the future individuals are less likely to act in such an inhibited manner, questioning the actual benefit of utilising social networking sights as a source for academic research.

Another advantage in utilising social media as a route for investigation is the fact that it has the ability to provide up-to-date information. Therefore the researcher is able to judge the initial response of the virtual community to certain events. In addition, such instant communication can be utilised by individual groups to allow them to publish or post their responses to relevant events. The important point here is that access to social media provides small groups with a voice that fifteen years ago they may not have been able to express so loudly or as widely. Considering the fractious nature of Irish republicanism, such access is very important. Therefore, technological advances along with the cheap availability and lower production cost than print media means smaller groups have a space for interaction that may not have previously been available.

Overall, internet forums, blogs and sites provide researchers with a different angle in order to gain access into a microcosmic setting in order to view the discourse that stimulates republicans as they discuss matters in a setting they believe to be uncensored and unrestricted.[772] Therefore, where researchers previously relied on interviews and primary documents this area of investigation has the potential to provide further opportunities to gain further insight especially into grass-roots perspectives.

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[770] L. Bowman-Grieve, 'Exploring "Stormfornt": A Virtual community of the Radical Right', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no.11 (2009), p. 989.
[771] *BBC News*, 'Man charged with Ronan Kerr internet comments' 30/06/2011.

A key criticism of utilising newspapers as a source for analysis as opposed to social media is that practical and financial considerations mean they are limited in scope and circulation. In addition there is also the reality that the publications of marginal groups tend to be more sporadic in their release. Because newspapers only provide a one-way form of communication they have been criticised for providing a less insightful or dynamic interaction. However, in this instance newspapers have advantages that outweigh using social media.

In comparison newspapers are less user generated and centre on the transmitting of information as opposed to encouraging a more accessible and dynamic interaction. However, the intention of this analysis is to examine the dominant dissident group message and investigate this message from a collective position, as distinct from an individual or user-generated stand point. Furthermore, whilst social networking sights are a relatively recent phenomenon, newspapers allow for a systematic analysis over a longer period of time, therefore providing a more rounded set of results that can be quantified and compared. In addition whilst the internet allows for up-to-date information to be accessed or analysed, in this instance consideration of immediate responses to events is not essential. It is how this information is considered and packaged in line with the overall group message that is of interest.

Overall, the analysis of social networking sights, forums, web pages and blogs provide a valuable source for researchers investigating support for groups at an individual level. However, this analysis focuses on the packaging and dissemination of group messages over a period of seven years to investigate how dissident groups transport their message. Newspapers therefore provide an appropriate source for analysis. Whilst considerations such as circulation and readership are of interest it is the transmitting of the group message, rather than the interpretation or audience response, that is the primary concern.

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[772] Examples are *republican.ie* and *IR.NET*.

Exploring the Dissident (Counter) Narrative

The production of text is often explained as culturally constructed which as a result cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. Taking such analysis into account suggests that studying the propaganda of anti-state factions has the potential to provide valuable information concerning the goals and strategies of smaller, unfamiliar and marginalised organisations. As Torres Soriano puts it,

> The manner of a group's communication actions affords information that enables us to add to and deepen knowledge on issues as diverse as the group's organisational strength, capacities, resources, and the skill level of its members.[773]

Exploration of the media output of dissident groups has the potential to reveal further underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of dissidents by highlighting occurring themes, omissions, and patterns of the text. As Philo suggests: 'In any contentious area there will be competing ways of describing events and their history. Ideas are linked to interests and these competing interests will seek to explain the world in ways which justify their own position.'[774] Therefore, investigating the messages within media output assumes text is a form of vessel containing messages and meaning which lends itself to a systematic form of analysis in which to go beyond the obvious content of mainstream news outputs. This provides an opportunity to examine how dissident groups defend and justify their position in relation to the media narrative. Secondly, it may be possible to discover more about the groups in terms of how they want to portray themselves. In addition it provides an opportunity to discover how these dissident groups differ.

This analysis focuses on two groups, the 32CSM and RSF. These groups have been selected as both emerged from the Provisional Movement and therefore provide a good point of comparison to evaluate different interpretations of the republican tradition. Secondly, both are linked to military organisations, providing an opportunity to explore how they justify continued use of armed struggle. Finally, no other groups produce such frequent publications.

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[773] M. R. Torres Soriano, 'The Road to Media Jihad: The Propaganda Actions of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no.1 (2011), p. 72.

[774] G. Philo, *News Content Studies, Media Group Methods and Discourse Analysis: A Comparison of Approaches*, in, E. Devereux, *Media Studies: Key Issues and Debate*, (London, Sage, 2007), p. 107.

Republican Sinn Féin and *Saoirse*

Two significant splits in the Provisional movement led to the creation of organisations which developed their own publications. Firstly, the result of the 1986 Provisional division saw the creation of Republican Sinn Féin. Its initial publication, *Republican Bulletin: IRIS NA POBLACHTA*, was first produced in November 1986. *Republican Bulletin* attempted to explain the reasons behind the split stating that Republican Sinn Féin 'uphold the Declaration of Independence proclaimed in the National Parliament Dail Eireann, on January 21st, 1919 and heroically defended in arms by succeeding generations of Irish Republicans.'[775] From the outset it was evident that Republican Sinn Féin was to retain a purist interpretation of republican politics, eager to communicate this quality as the key difference between themselves and the Provisionals. The *Republican Bulletin* was published monthly until May 1987 when it was replaced by *Saoirse* which has continued up until the present day. The typical content of *Saoirse* includes news of Republican Sinn Féin activity and their policies, Irish republican history, world news and reports and statements from the Continuity IRA (CIRA).

The 32CSM and *Sovereign Nation*

The Provisional split of the late 1990s, out of opposition to the direction of the peace process, emerged via the emergence of the 32CSM and their bi-monthly publication *Sovereign Nation*. First published in 1998, *Sovereign Nation* focused on the u-turns made by Sinn Féin in the run up to the Good Friday Agreement, especially in regard to the acceptance of the Mitchell principles and decommissioning. Both gestures were viewed as 'selling out' key republican tenets, *Sovereign Nation* contending that the Provisionals had 'permanently removed themselves from the Republican family.'[776] In addition to highlighting the change of direction made by Sinn Féin, *Sovereign Nation* contains a republican analysis of domestic and foreign news and 32CSM activities, whilst also containing 'war news' and statements from the RIRA.

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[775] *Republican Bulletin: IRIS NA POBLACHTA,* 01/11/1987.
[776] T. O'Hanlon, in *Sovereign Nation* 'A Farewell to Arms: After Weston Park, Is Provo Decommissioning Imminent?', 01/08/2001.

Methodology

Although dissident groups today utilise a wealth of media, with many avenues of communication open to them through the use of internet forums, social networking sites and the blogosphere, newspapers are still a vital form of communication, allowing them to have sole control over what content they present. Conducting a content analysis of 'dissident' newspapers provides a key insight into their interpretations, self-justification and desires. It is also illuminating to examine dissident views on the current political situation and their justifications for the use of armed struggle. It is also important to point out that this analysis focuses on the message of republican media outputs, rather than the response elicited. Because the intent is to explore how the 'dissidents' portray themselves and the world around them, this analysis will focus on content of republican newspapers as opposed to the audience's perception or understanding.

Between 2001 and 2004 there was a break in the production of *Sovereign Nation*. Because of this *Sovereign Nation* has been sampled by selecting the first publication after the break in production (Feb/March 2004) to the most recent publication (Jan 2011) of which there are sixteen available. *Sovereign Nation* is a bi-monthly publication, whereas *Saoirse* is produced monthly, therefore the sample of *Saoirse* has been selected from the corresponding editions of *Sovereign Nation* (see Table 7.1). Photographs will also be included in the topical content analysis.

Sample

Themes for categorisation have been selected and organised in a manner in which to allow for the analysis of a wide range of subjects. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilised within the analysis and the subsequent discussion of results. Within the quantitative aspect frequency counts of themes, along with column inches and page numbers were recorded. *Expression of IRA* activity refers to the reporting of paramilitary activity. This also includes statements from armed groups and expression of support for armed struggle. *Reports of Victimisation*, refers to the reporting of physical persecution as well as political discrimination against the group as a whole or individual members. *Direct Political Expression*

refs to campaigns and sympathies of the groups whereas *Organisational Expression* is more specific to the organisation's origins and objectives in the modern republican and political context. Other categories or themes are self-explanatory. Each theme is then divided into separate sub-themes to allow for a more accurate and precise analysis. In total there are 42 thematic categories. Each separate article was categorised in up to three sub-themes. Following this, frequency counts have been contextualised qualitatively using abstracts and relevant quotes from articles.

Table 7.1 Sample of newspapers for analysis.

Method	Standard content analysis
Newspapers	Saoirse and Sovereign Nation
Time Sample	**Saoirse-** Feb 2004- Jan 2011
	Sovereign Nation - Feb/ March 2004 – Jan/ Feb 2011
Complete Survey	1214 (**Sovereign Nation** - 504, **Saoirse** - 710)
Unit of Analysis	Single Articles / Text
Focus	Theme

Table 7.2 Topic areas covered in *Sovereign Nation* and *Saoirse* by number of articles and total percentage

	Sovereign Nation		*Saoirse*	
	number of articles	theme as a %	number of articles	theme as a %
Critique of Sinn Féin				
Acceptance of GFA	66	6.6	64	4.8
Electoral Politics	7	0.7	7	0.5
Endorsement of policing	24	2.4	15	1.1
Hypocrisy	14	1.4	17	1.3
Collusion	2	0.2	1	0.1
Inaction	18	1.8	13	1.0
Decommissioning	4	0.4	13	1
TOTAL	**135**	**13.5**	**130**	**9.8**
Organisational Expression				
Organisation objectives	38	3.8	44	3.3
Republican principles	45	4.5	20	1.5
Republican Unity	25	2.5	1	0.1
Strategy/ tactics	20	2.0	21	1.6
TOTAL	**128**	**12.8**	**86**	**6.5**
Direct Political Expression				
Community Concerns (anti social behaviour, drugs, alcohol etc)	20	2.0	25	1.9
Europhobia	-	-	13	1.0
Colonialism	21	2.1	6	0.4
Defiance/Riots	21	2.1	3	0.2
Recruitment	24	2.4	72	5.4
Rejection of GFA	48	4.8	23	1.7
Rejection of policing	31	3.1	23	1.7
Socialism/ anti capitalism	16	1.6	19	1.4
Support for IRA	5	0.5	9	0.7
Political action- rallies, marches, protests, future calendar dates	15	1.5	98	7.3
TOTAL	**208**	**20.8**	**298**	**21.18**
Campaigns				
POW Campaigns	99	9.9	104	7.8
International sympathies	59	5.9	87	6.5
TOTAL	**158**	**15.8**	**191**	**14.3**

Victimisation

Gardai	17	1.7	16	1.2
PSNI/ RUC	82	8.2	79	5.9
British government/ army	58	5.8	50	3.7
Sinn Fein	-	-	3	0.2
Unionist/ Loyalists	14	1.4	27	2.0
Pro- Agreement Parties	3	0.3	1	0.1
The 'Free State'	7	0.7	10	0.7
Media	18	1.8	11	0.8
'Know Your Rights'	6	0.6	4	0.3
Other	8	0.8	22	1.6
TOTAL	**213**	**21.3**	**223**	**16.7**

Expressions of IRA violence

Legitimacy (just cause/legitimate authority)	20	2.0	1	0.1
Denial of involvement		0.4	1	0.1
Warnings	4	0.8	-	-
War news	8	0.9	21	1.6
Effectiveness (success)	9	0.7	1	0.1
TOTAL	7	**4.8**	**24**	**1.8**
	48			

Mandate from history

Martyrdom	33	3.3	119	8.9
Remembrance	47	4.7	222	16.6
Historical narrative	35	3.5	50	3.7
Songs/poems	1	0.1	1	0.1
TOTAL	**116**	**11.6**	**392**	**29.3**

Results

Before engaging in a detailed discussion on some of the key trends emerging from the data general trends indicate that for *Sovereign Nation* the largest single theme was *Victimisation* whereas for *Saoirse* the most frequent occurrence was the expression of a *Mandate from history* (see Figure 7.1) *Saoirse* is mainly dominated by features involving remembrance and the celebration of the past. Indeed a significant amount of RSF attention is placed on understanding republicanism through the prism of the past. The smallest category for both publications was the *Expression of IRA Activity*. It is also important to note that for both publications, *Organisational Expression*, which covers the groups' objectives and goals, is notably low (12.8 percent in *Sovereign Nation* and 6.5 percent in *Saoirse*). Although *Sovereign Nation* tends to dedicate more space to this issue both groups have a tendency to place more focus on their critique of Sinn Féin and the formation of a rebuttal to the mainstream narrative. Therefore, for the majority of the articles, both publications adopt an offensive position at the expense of expressing their own objectives and principles (see Table 7.2).

Figure 7.1: Dissident newspaper content by theme (%).
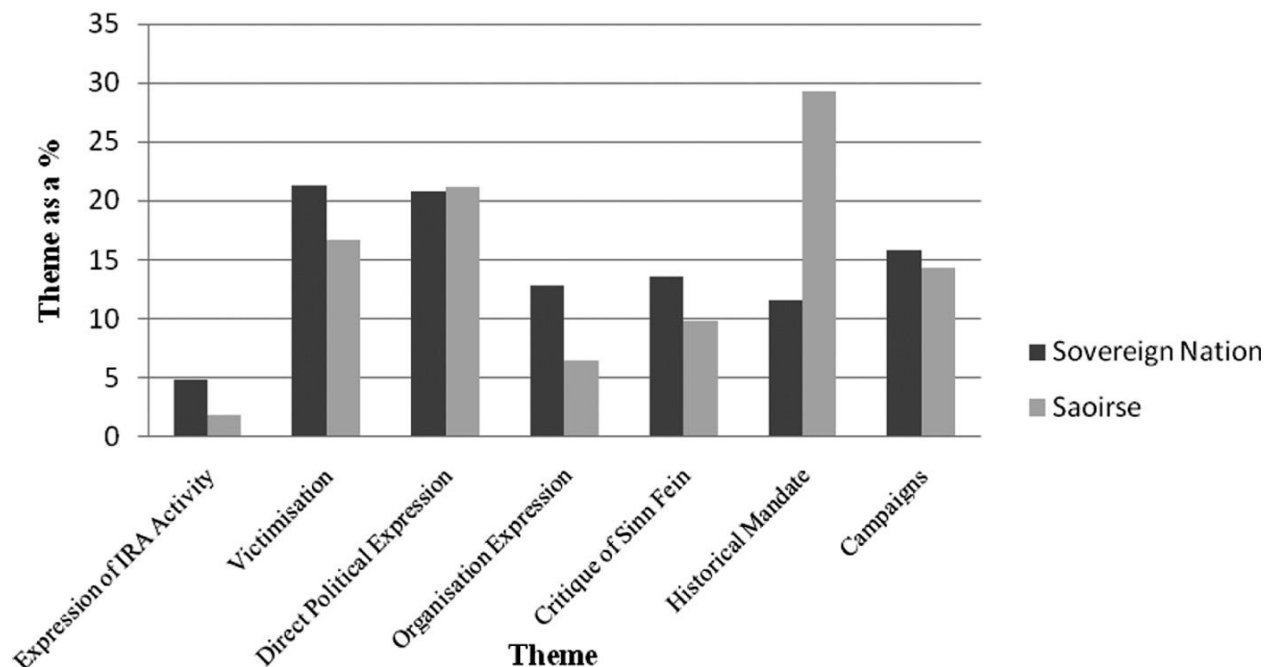
Expression of IRA activity

> Violence, being instrumental by nature, is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it.[777]

All groups that threaten to use, or advocate, violence or force in an effort to further their political beliefs or agenda employ some form of justificatory argument to explain or support their actions.[778] The 32CSM and Republican Sinn Féin proclaim their existence as being purely political, community-based organisations. Yet, the inclusion of statements and the reporting of actions from the RIRA and CIRA, exposes the groups' position on armed struggle as being an acceptable tactic in resisting British 'occupation'. Although IRA activity is the focus of mainstream media reports, *Expressions of IRA activity* is the lowest category in both publications, making up 4 percent of overall coverage in *Sovereign Nation* and only 1.8 percent in *Saoirse.*

However, in terms of column inches it appears as though there is less of a gap between the two publications with *Expression of IRA activity* making up 6.7 percent of column inches in *Sovereign Nation* and 6.1 percent in *Saoirse*. Identifying the column inches demonstrates that whilst expressions of violence may be less frequently reported in *Saoirse*, what is written tends to be more substantial in terms of details and information. However, whilst both publications may contain a similar amount in terms of column inches it is necessary to point out that the manner in which both publications report IRA activity is very different. Out of the 6.1 percent of column inches in *Saoirse* dedicated to reporting the activities of paramilitaries, almost all (5.9 percent) is dedicated to the category *war news*. The category *war news* is dedicated to reports that simply state factual information (e.g. date and place of IRA activity) as distinct from the expression of support or outright defence of paramilitary actions. An example of this is within the 'For the Record' section of the newspaper, which reports a range of news from international sympathies and domestic politics to paramilitary activity. This involves the expression of activity in an objective and factual style of reporting. Therefore, *Saoirse* is far more likely to present

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[777] H. Arendt, *On Violence*, (New York, Harcourt Books, 1970), p.79.

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paramilitary activity in what may appear more of an impartial or neutral manner as opposed to the expression of support for armed struggle or inclusion of statements from paramilitaries.

Such manner of reporting may also be linked to current legislative context, making it also necessary to consider the possible impact of the increasing use of newspaper statements and public speeches in legal trials as evidence of affiliation with paramilitary groups. In June 2011 two clips from YouTube of an Easter commemoration in 2008 were used as evidence to infer an individual's involvement with paramilitary activity. Filmed standing beside a masked paramilitary delivering an Easter message, Aidan Quinn was accused of involvement with the CIRA.[779] In addition, after the 32CSM Easter commemoration in 2011 Marian Price, who held a statement for a RIRA member to read, was charged with encouraging support for an illegal organisation.[780] Cognisant of these recent prosecutions, groups and individuals are forced to become more aware of what they include in publications and speeches as well as reconsider public expression at rallies or marches. As a result it makes it less likely that groups will declare outright support for armed struggle or proclaim it as a legitimate tactic. Therefore, a lower level of reporting IRA activity may also be the result of prohibitive legislation, whereby groups are conscious of publishing anything that may be interpreted as being evidence of direct links to a paramilitary organisation.

However, within *Sovereign Nation*, it is possible to observe that there is a tendency to provide more expressive coverage in relation to paramilitary activity. This indicates a stronger association to armed groups and militarism, with the 32CSM more overtly defending the use of armed struggle as a legitimate tactic than RSF. This could be explained by the context of the emergence of the RIRA and the 32CSM in the 1990s. Their members had accepted the 1986 downgrading of republican fundamentals (ending of abstention from Leinster House) amid the leadership's pledge of continuing armed actions. Therefore, whilst they attack 'those who have lost their nerve and compromised the republican position'[781] in reference to the Provisionals,

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[778] G. O'Boyle, 'Theories of Justification and Political Violence: Examples from Four Groups', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no.2 (2002), p. 23.
[779] See *BBC News,* 'Video clips allowed in Continuity IRA rally trial', 08/06/2011.
[780] See *BBC News,* 'Marian Price returned to jail by Secretary of State', 16/05/2011.
[781] *Irish Times*, 16/04/2001

such criticism is based more on the perceived role of militarism and less on the principle of abstention.

In addition, the idea of victimhood and the utilisation of violence as a form of self defence is highlighted through the expression of community concerns, such as anti-social behaviour. It is also not uncommon for statements from paramilitaries to contain threats directed towards drug dealers warning them to stop operating in certain communities. For example, a RIRA Easter statement proclaimed: 'We have taken action against the scourge of drugs and anti-social behaviour.'[782] As such, the RIRA attempts to portray itself as the defenders of certain areas, insisting: 'We have *attacked* the occupation and *defended our* communities.'[783] Such statements act as a declaration of ownership to specific areas, ultimately encouraging spatial and territorial attachment. As Shirlow explains further,

> The promotion and protection of place is thus a 'rational' and 'cogent' part of an identity construction around essentialist ideas and viewpoints. Such people are purposeful spatial determinists who promote and sustain the need to demarcate community allegiance both cognitively and via territorial delineation.[784]

Promoting the protection of the community aids the creation of a collective identity and enforces group loyalty by making the location an arena of resistance and celebration. Here dissidents are not only portraying themselves as the defenders or protectors of their communities, but also highlighting the inability or inaction of Sinn Féin to represent and protect the republican community. The result of highlighting such territorial distinction is that it again reinforces the idea that armed struggle is utilised as a form of self defence where violence is a direct response to the fact that the situation on the ground has not changed.

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[782] *Sovereign Nation*, 'IRA Easter Statement', June/July 2010
[783] *Ibid.*
[784] P. Shirlow, *Ethno-sectarianism and the construction of Fear in Belfast, Northern Ireland*, in, R. Pain & S. J. Smith (eds.), *Fear: Critical Geopolitics and Everyday Life*, (Hampshire, Ashgate, 2008), p. 194.

Victimisation

A common thread running through the legitimation of anti-state action is an extended conception of collective self defence.[785] In achieving this, groups often highlight the enemy's aggressive intent whilst representing themselves as victims portraying their use of violence as a reactionary form of self defence. In relation to this there is a tendency for groups to exaggerate the hostile intent and threat posed towards them whilst minimising the threat posed by their own group, which goes some way in accounting for why expression of IRA activity is so low.

Expressions of victimisation comprise the largest category in *Sovereign Nation*, with just over 21 percent of overall coverage and the third largest category in *Saoirse* with only 16.7 percent. The largest categories in this case are victimisation from the PSNI/RUC, making up 8.2 percent in *Sovereign Nation* and 5.9 percent in *Saoirse*. The title RUC (the predecessor to the PSNI) is deployed in respect of the police service in Northern Ireland in an attempt portray to the force as a continuing sectarian and colonial entity. Thus *Saoirse* claimed that 'Again it is Hugh Orde's [the then Chief Constable] men who are lashing out like concerned animals.'[786] The RUC, which was for so long the republican object of resistance, was renamed and reformed as the PSNI in 2001 following the Patten Commission Report.[787] The inference in still using the name RUC to label the police is to suggest that despite the Good Friday Agreement things on the ground remain the same where the British presence remains in Northern Ireland victimising the republican/nationalist population.

The higher amount of coverage of victimisation in *Sovereign Nation* is attributed to the fact that the 32CSM emerged from opposition to the direction of the peace process and the shift towards acceptance of policing by Sinn Féin, even before full backing in 2007. Therefore, for the 32CSM highlighting alleged victimisation by the police reinforces their justification for splitting. The Provisionals proclaimed that violence arose as a direct response to supposedly state-sponsored violence of 1969. Armed struggle was therefore justified as a necessity in order to deal with

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[785] P. Hollander, 'Contemporary Political Violence and Its Legitimation', *Society* 46, no.3 (2009), p. 267.
[786] *Saoirse*, 'RSF condemn raids and arrests in Co Fermanagh', 01/08/2008.
[787] Independent Policing Commission for Northern Ireland, *A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland*, (London, HMSO, 1999).

social, economic, and political injustices. Resistance was portrayed as a consequence of a situation whereby 'the existence of injustice, allied to the absence of any prospect of redress, made political violence inevitable.'[788] There was thus a transfer of responsibility, with blame being placed with the regime they are opposing. In a similar manner, the continued use of force today is justified by describing it as an inevitable consequence of British occupation and victimisation, and the continuation of social, economic and political injustices. RSF links 'self-defence' to the 'liberation struggle', declaring it has:

> always upheld the right of the Irish people to use any level of controlled and disciplined force to drive the British out of Ireland and secure the all-Ireland republic. Ireland is no different from any other country in that it has a right to defend itself.[789]

Therefore it is possible to observe how creating the impression of victimhood whether it be past, present or potential is associated with and justifies violence as a form self defence.[790] In an attempt to counter the discourse that these groups are obsessed with violence at the expense of political co-operation, the use of armed struggle is framed as a form of defence, highlighting their own victimisation as a justificatory argument in continuing to advocate armed struggle.

The Critique of Sinn Féin

The dissident critique of Sinn Féin can be seen as a direct attempt to rebut the discourse that dissidents are traitors to peace as well as republicanism. Here there is a tendency within dissident newspapers to separate those who are pro-peace at any cost versus those who are pro-peace on certain terms. For the dissident groups, a great deal of energy is injected into the formation of a critique of Sinn Féin, accounts for 13.5 percent of the content in *Sovereign Nation* and just below 11 percent of *Saoirse*.

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[788] *An Phoblacht/ Republican News,* 8/12/1994.
[789] R. Walsh, interview with the author, Belfast, 29 June 2009, cited in M Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 76
[790] See Hollander,P., 'Contemporary Political Violence and Its Legitimation', *Society* 46, no.3 (2009), p. 269; M. B. Brewer, *Intergroup Relations*, (Berkshire, Psychology Press, 2005), p. 113.

Having put down their weapons and entered a power-sharing agreement, the Provisional movement condemn any use of physical force as a strategy for reaching a united Ireland. This vein of criticism argues that the PIRA functioned in a different context, a situation whereby violence was the only remaining option, a claim of last resort heavily criticised by many. Sinn Féin claims they are pursuing transitional electoral and political routes towards republican goals. Considering the seismic shift of Sinn Féin from pariah to mainstream politics and in light of such electoral success and popular approval how do dissident groups today justify their opposition?

Within the critique of the Provisionals the largest category is *Acceptance of GFA* (6.6 percent in *Sovereign Nation*, 4.8 percent in *Saoirse*) which refers to the Provisionals' acceptance of the peace process as a 'sell out' of republican principles. For both groups, this 'sell out' thesis tends to centre on decommissioning of weapons and endorsement of policing. Both acts were viewed as betraying key republican tenets, provoking a response from *Sovereign Nation* in 2001 that Sinn Féin had 'permanently removed themselves from the Republican family.'[791] Such condemnation portrays the path taken by Sinn Féin as a betrayal of republican principles. Whilst Sinn Féin claim to retain their aspiration to a united Ireland through electoral strategy, dissident groups capitalise on the change of tactics as a sell out, a betrayal of past generations and those who took part and lost their lives in the struggle for Irish freedom: '...they forgot the Armalite and opted for the ballot box only. They sold out to the English.'[792]

In a similar way to the mainstream narrative such discourse helps create the notion of difference which is critical to maintain the collective identity of a group. For this to be successful there has to be a series of identity markers to differentiate those who belong to the community and those who do not, and in this case it defines the Provisionals as long having the left the republican family.

This point is stressed by utilising the prism of the past, epitomised by headlines such as, 'Britain Repeats Failed Policy of the Past' and 'Internment alive in the occupied 6.'[793] Here the past is

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[791] T. O'Hanlon, in *Sovereign Nation* 'A Farewell to Arms: After Weston Park, Is Provo Decommissioning Imminent?', 08/2001.

[792] *Saoirse*, 'Follow the Cause, Not the Man- The Cause Will Never Let you Down', Sept 2008.

[793] *Sovereign Nation*, April-May 2010.

used to stress how the situation in Northern Ireland has not moved on where the Good Friday Agreement has achieved nothing for the political, social or economic progression of the republican community. This can be seen in direct opposition to the mainstream discourse that dissidents want to 'return to the dark days of the past', where memory of the troubles is used as a deterrent in comparison to the gains made by the peace process. To counter the mainstream discourse of wanting to 'return Northern Ireland to the past', there is a tendency amongst dissidents to stress that despite the concessions made by Sinn Féin in the peace process, the situation on the ground has not improved. Dissidents claim that oppression and occupation remains and argue that Sinn Féin have abandoned the republican community. Political nationalism is infused with a social agenda. By highlighting continued community concerns such as drugs, anti-social behaviour and sectarianism, dissidents attempt to demonstrate continuing grievances within the republican community. The result of this discourse it that it divides those who are pro-peace at any cost (Sinn Féin) versus those who advocate peace on certain terms.

Historical Mandate

> The concept of the apostolic succession still plays a central role in sustaining the idea of a direct linear connection between the republicans of the present and the history of Irish resistance extending back, not just to Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen, but beyond to all the other rebellions since the Norman invasions of Ireland in the twelfth century. The continuity of revolt is important in republican heritage as a source of inspiration.[794]

The timeless nature of Irish republican history is encompassed by the idea of the 'apostolistic vision' as noted above by MLR Smith. Associated with this is the notion that history and myth is so strongly attributed to the identity surrounding republicanism that it passes from generation to generation. Despite the diverse and broad spectrum of republicanism, all the elements claiming to offer the 'true', 'holy and apostolic' version of the ideology, are united in one sense: they indulge in a deep nostalgia for a similar past. Across the wide republican spectrum in Ireland a great level of importance is placed on recalling the past, to the point where it is suggested that

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[794] M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement*, (London, Routledge, 1993), pp. 11-12.

significant historical events are presented as such moments which seem to transcend time.[795] Republican groups publicise their affiliations to key events or their lineage to uprisings and subsequent martyrs by the plethora of commemorations, marches and memorials that are spread across the republican calendar (see chapter one). Elevating the past to a level of such significance serves a purpose beyond historical or traditional interest; rather it helps shape the contemporary mind-set or existing psyche. Remembering has the potential to play the protagonist role in stimulating a fervent response. As Kearney maintains: 'Such mythic origins are frequently connected to figures of motherland (or fatherland) - potent symbols for reanimating the power of "dead generations" restoring a conviction of unbroken continuity with one's tradition.'[796] The symbolic reiteration of tradition has the potential to smooth over blemishes of the present by indulging the origins and romanticism of the past.

Both Republican Sinn Féin and the 32CSM claim to have descended from the blood line of 'true' republicans. Both groups dedicate a considerable amount of space to commemorations and remembering. In such cases republican history has been elevated to such a level of ideological and symbolic importance that the past is never the past. By emphasising the importance of tradition and remembering, both *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* can be seen to be 'carrying the past into the present and the present into the past. So myths of tradition may be said to defy the normal logic of *either/or* by conflating not only opposite time scales but also such opposed orders as living or dead, divine and human, redeemed and damned.'[797]

Yet, a significant difference is that Republican Sinn Féin are keen to claim the position as the true heirs to the republican mantle by remaining firm on the fundamental principle of abstention from 'Leinster House' - still not recognised as a legitimate parliament - given the confinement of its jurisdiction to 26 Counties. Within *Saoirse* Republican Sinn Féin dedicated almost 30 percent of overall coverage to the topic 'Mandate from history', whereas *Sovereign Nation* only contained 11.6 percent. Having broken away from the Provisional movement in 1986, Republican Sinn Féin argues that only it embraces the constant and dutiful embodiment of the

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[795] E. O'Brien, *A Nation Once Again; towards an epistemology of the Republican Imaginaire,* in, F. McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 2003), p. 148.
[796] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 108.
[797] *Ibid*, p. 109.

republican tradition. However, those later to emerge within the 32CSM remained in the Provisional movement following the 1986 split (meaning they agreed to the dropping of the long-term republican principle of abstention from Leinster House), finally departing over the direction of the peace process. In strident criticism of those groups such as the 32CSM which remained with Provisional movement post-1986, Republican Sinn Féin insist:

> ...we are not to be confused with an organisation which has been set up lately, half Provo and half Free State, the two halves adding up to 32. We are the rightful inheritors of the United Irishmen, the Fenians, the patriots of the 1916 Rising, and in our own time the Hunger-Strikers.[798]

Republican Sinn Féin regularly highlights this difference as marking it as the only principled republican organisation. For those who broke away from the Provisionals and went on to form Republican Sinn Féin, (whose members claimed this was the 'old' Sinn Féin party and that non-abstentionists were part of a new organisation) ideological devotion and loyalty was seen as paramount. This can be demonstrated in the November 2005 edition of *Saoirse* which was a 'Special Centenary Edition' celebrating 'Sinn Féin: 100 years of revolution'.[799] Rather than celebrating their roots in the 1986 division, Republican Sinn Féin claim lineage as the original Sinn Féin formed in 1905.

Similarly to Republican Sinn Féin, the 32CSM utilises history in order to portray the path chosen by the Provisionals as a betrayal, diminishing the achievements of anyone who had fought and died for a united Ireland. The 32CSM claimed the u-turns made by Sinn Féin 'desecrated the memory of those republicans both from previous generations and those of the past three decades, who sacrificed their lives attempting to end British rule in Ireland.'[800] Unlike Republican Sinn Féin, however, the 32CSM and their role within the Provisionals beyond the 1986 split does not signify a betrayal. Whilst the 32CSM also use historical narrative to justify their position they are far more successful in making their points relevant to the modern situation and attempting to incorporate contextual realities with tradition, insisting that:

> The true lineage of republicanism throughout its history contains a great irony in that to inherit it for the present you must make it different from the past. This is achieved by

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[798] S. Murphy, *Address Given at Bundoran Hunger Strike Commemoration, August 2000* (Dublin, Republican Sinn Féin, 2000) cited in M Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard*, (Dublin, Irish Adademic Press, 2011), p. 82.
[799] *Saoirse*, 01/11/2005.
[800] 32CSM, *Entering and accepting British Political System* (2000).

bringing something new and contemporarily relevant to it. It is in the study of these contributions that the true lineage of Irish republicanism can be traced.[801]

So whilst both groups highlight the passing of the republican baton from generation to generation the 32CSM see this exchange to be directly shaped by pragmatism and adaption to the contemporary circumstances, whereas Republican Sinn Féin are far more nostalgic and backward looking. *Saoirse* has been criticised for being badly designed and having a dated feel.[802]

Thus, both organisations highlight the importance of blood sacrifice and propagandise that sacrifice as a justification for the maintenance of armed struggle. Whilst history has the potential to liberate memory, it can also provide conformism used in a manner that fixes rather than liberates. As Kearney argues: 'Without mythology, our memories are homeless; we capitulate to mindless conformism of fact.' On the other hand however, 'if revered as ideological dogma, and divorced from the summons of reality, myth becomes another kind of conformism, another kind of death.'[803] There is an intentional focus on martyrdom and remembrance throughout the history of the republican movement. This can be seen in the way in which military struggle has been framed. 'Memory' has been used as a weapon and republicans lay accused of being its greatest exponents. Thus Kearney asserts that 'violence in Ireland has sent people out not so much to kill as to die. It is a violence based on martyrology and on the notion of attrition.'[804] In order to explore this idea further Kearney draws attention to the Provisional movement's use of 'mythology' during the prison campaigns of the 1980s. Within this analysis he explores how highlighting the suffering of the hunger strikers and the conditions of prisoners during the 'dirty protests' the memory that was evoked was one of sacrificial suffering and martyrdom:

> The [Provisional] IRA's ideology of martyrdom inverted what went by the name of normal political logic (at parliamentary or military level); it subscribed instead to a mythic logic which claimed that defeat is victory, failure is triumph, past is present. This mythic logic, as we already observed, is not some irrational reflex action, impervious to analysis. It is highly structured and strategic method of combining contraries which secular reason keeps rigidly apart.[805]

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[801] 32CSM, *Republican Unity: A Discussion Document* (n.d.).

[802] M. Frampton, *Legion of the Rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism*, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2011), p. 71.

[803] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy,* (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 121.

[804] P. Arthur, *The transformation of republicanism*, in, J. Coakly (ed.), *Changing Shades of Orange and Green: Redefining the Union and the Nation in Contemporary Ireland*, (Dublin, UCD Press, 2002), p. 90.

[805] R. Kearney, *Post Nationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture and Philosophy*, (London, Routledge, 1997), p. 110.

Within republicanism there is far much focus on sacrifice and martyrdom, which has the potential to generate a more sympathetic and supportive reaction than the military aggression of the IRA. This again goes some way in explaining the current low coverage of *IRA Activity* within *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation.* Whilst past military actions are celebrated as necessary and heroic, it appears that present day *IRA Activity* seem to warrant less focus and coverage as well as outright praise. Whilst the sources of such remembrance may have occurred in a different context to today, time can transform actions in to deeds worthy of eternal commemoration.

Considering the Dissident (Counter) Narrative

In order to counter mainstream narratives, the 32CSM and RSF utilise several retaliatory discourses, with three main narratives in particular (see table 7.3). In response to the 'traitors' discourse, both groups utilise history and remembrance to reiterate their loyalty to the republican tradition. Secondly, in direct rebuttal to being 'obsessed with violence', both publications highlight their own victimisation as a justificatory argument in continuing to support the use of armed struggle. Therefore, violence is portrayed as a form of self-defence. Finally, to consider the mainstream discourse that dissidents want to 'return Northern Ireland to the dark days of the past', where memory of the troubles is used as a deterrent in comparison to the gains made by the peace process, both publications instead use the past to stress how the situation in Northern Ireland has not changed, arguing that the Good Friday Agreement has achieved nothing for the republican/ nationalist community.

Table 7.3: Mainstream narrative versus the dissident group counter narrative

Mainstream narrative	'Dissident' (counter) narrative
'Traitors'	Use of history to stress loyalty to republican tradition
'Obsessed with violence'	Violence as a form of defence
'Return to the darkest days'	The situation remains the same

The strength of utilising alternative forms of media as a source for analysis is the scope it provides in being able to quantify the various areas of coverage, specifically, in this circumstance how RSF and the 32CSM attempt to counter the dominant state message. However, whilst it may reveal further information into how marginal groups utilise alternative forms of media in order to construct their rebuttal, it is also important to consider the effectiveness of the counter narrative. Both RSF and the 32CSM are able to formulate a response to the mainstream discourse, but the influence of the response may be slight.

With such restricted resources, in terms of finance and expertise in comparison to those of the mainstream media, it is difficult for the 32CSM or RSF to direct their message beyond the parameters of their own membership. The reach of both publications is predominantly within their respective movements. *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* provide, for the most part, an internal message, used to boost the morale of those already sympathetic to the cause. *Saoirse* and *Sovereign Nation* may have a slightly broader reach than those already active within the movement, but it is unlikely that either newspaper could be used to attract many individuals, into the movement or convince those who support the peace process that armed struggle is a legitimate tactic. Whilst gaining coverage in the national press may be a consideration within group strategy, there is little that can be done to counter existing coverage beyond the 'dissident' press, blogs and street graffiti. As a 32CSM member explained, 'the media are going to say

negative things about us anyway.'[806] Therefore, the internal message and bolstering the resolve of supporters are the main concern of RSF and 32CSM publications amid the problems of gaining a broader hearing for the 'dissident' message. Utilising a narrow range of newspapers for analysis has begun to reveal how anti-state groups attempt a counter narrative to the dominant discourse that surrounds them. In addition there is potential for the condemnation of dissident republican activity to be located within the wider debate on how states aim to confront the threat of terrorism. Such analysis could potentially provide a framework for a broader investigation into the use of (counter) propaganda from either the state or anti-state perspective.[807] However, riddled by internal splits, infiltration by security services and the general sentiment of war weariness surrounding the people of Northern Ireland, there are clearly additional factors to consider in understanding why dissidents remain small in numbers.

Conclusion

Modern day Irish republicanism is characterised by a broad spectrum of ideas and values. Throughout its history Irish republicanism has never been a static entity. It is possible to trace the adoption of various strategies and tactics as context and circumstance dictated. That republicanism has never been a rigid doctrine – only interpreted by some organisations as such - makes it harder to define the republican core and therefore easier for Sinn Féin, despite the obvious compromises made under the Good Friday Agreement, to proclaim they remain the embodiment of republican principles. Similarly, 'dissident' groups fail to represent a monolithic entity, meaning they cannot be easily slotted into simple categorisations and easily labelled with characteristics. For those who reject the Sinn Féin line, the single term 'dissident' is largely inadequate to define and distinguish such a broad and varied phenomenon.

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[806] 32CSM member, interview with author, Dublin, 26/03/2010, in, A. Sanders, *Inside the IRA: Dissident Republicans and the War for Legitimacy,* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 238.
[807] For wider reading see J. Bew, M. Frampton, I´. Gurruchaga, *Talking to Terrorists: Making Peace in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country* (London, Columbia University Press, 2009); R. English, *Terrorism: How to Respond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); R Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: language politics and counter terrorism*, (Manchester, Palgrave, 2005).

The term 'dissident' has become a label as opposed to an analytical description, encompassing the ideas that these groups are rejectionist, evil, backward, inhuman and obsessed with violence at the expense of 'peace'. The result is a deliberate distinction between what is defined as us and them, good and evil, and most importantly in this instance, those who are pro-peace versus those who are anti-peace. In order for these distinctions to be successful there has to be the creation of a collective identity to define those who are within the community and those who are not. For that reason it becomes obviously apparent how the term 'dissident' lends itself to the instant collectivisation of those who 'do not belong'.

Saoirse and *Sovereign Nation* do construct a counter narrative to mainstream discourse, one which propagandises their own cause and relays group messages. In a context in which those dissenting from the pro-Stormont line are typically labelled as 'a small number of deluded people'[808] it is crucial for groups to challenge this narrative, however far their rebuttal reaches. As a 32CSM member exclaimed in relation to a question on the importance of printed media: 'It's vital because it is your voice.'[809] The difficulty for dissidents is extending what is largely an internal dialogue into mainstream discourse.

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[808] Oral evidence of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Owen Paterson, Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, 08/09/2010.
[809] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork 02/03/ 2011.

Conclusion

In assessing the ideological basis of dissident republicanism since 1986 there are several conclusions that can be drawn in defining 'dissent'; assessing the aims, strategies and tactics of dissidents; and analysing dissident groups. It was not the aim of this thesis to provide detailed insight into the military operations of dissident republicanism. Whilst there has been a need to provide information on the nature of armed dissident activity, the volume and full range of dissident attacks is difficult to set out in this thesis due to the limits of space and time. Such information is available elsewhere.[810] Rather, the thesis was designed to add to the small, yet growing, literature on how to understand the evolution of contemporary republicanism beyond that offered by Sinn Féin. The thesis has attempted to explore dissent in terms of how and why this occurs within the republican framework and, secondly, to explain 'dissent' as a construction in reference to how public perception of these groups is formed. There is a need to address the volatile nature of republicanism and why the nature of the tradition has made it so prone to division. Within this framework, the thesis then utilised a detailed examination of dissident organisations and their attempts to legitimise their activity.

Is it still about the split?

Irish republicanism has always been vulnerable to splits and divisions. The fractious and heterogeneous nature of the republican movement has been an enduring characteristic throughout the past century. In exploring why Irish republicanism has been so prone to division some academics have attempted to explain this phenomenon as a cyclical trend where the tension between political struggle and military conflict has provided the regular catalyst in dividing the movement.[811] This category of explanation sees republicanism as comprising an enduring

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[810] M. Frampton, 'The Return of the Militants: Violent Dissident Republicanism'[810], *A Policy Report for The International Centre for the study of radicalisation and political violence*, (ICRS, London, 2010).

[811] See B. Feeney, *Sinn Féin; A Hundred Turbulent Years,* (Dublin, O'Brien Press, 2002); A. Maillot, *New Sinn Féin: Republicanism in the twenty-first century* (London, Routledge, 2005); J. Augusteijn, 'Political Violence and Democracy: An Analysis of the Tensions Within Irish Republican Strategy, 1914-2002', *Irish Political Studies* 18, no.1 (2003), pp. 1-26; M.L.R. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland?: the military strategy of the Irish Republican movement,* (London, Routledge, 1995).

struggle between militarists and politicians, between hawks and doves and between Neanderthal tendencies and progressives. Such explanations, whilst helpful in emphasising endogenous factors, internal tensions and inherent strains in the movement, fail to consider the impact of exogenous factors weighing upon the movement, most notably socio-economic factors and the strategy of the British state.

Other explanations account for the perpetuation of splits by highlighting that Irish republicanism has never been a static entity, but rather is best viewed as a product of contextual realities, reacting to governmental policies and social and economic circumstances.[812] As a result, strategies have regularly altered. On this interpretation, republicanism is less a set of fundamental, rigid principles and more a contextually-based articulation of a set of ideas which embrace Irish unification and national sovereignty, but offer considerable tactical flexibility in terms of the means of the attainment of these overarching goals.

Whilst important, there is a need to go beyond social, economic and political circumstances and to also consider the strongly held traditions and the historical narrative attached to Irish republicanism. It is the prominence of tradition within republicanism that helps frame individual interpretation of the movement in its current context. Therefore, individual circumstances come together with historical tradition to create a multifaceted and diverse phenomenon. As a result of such diversity within one tradition, 'the split' is set to remain an enduring characteristic of Irish republicanism.

This thesis has considered whether it is possible to define Irish Republicanism through set principles. Why is Irish Republicanism so prone to division? Can Sinn Féin still be labelled republican and is there such a thing as dissident republicanism? Finally, how, if at all possible, do armed dissident groups defend the continued use of armed struggle? In order to conclude the answers to each of these questions it is necessary to draw on the discussions of the previous chapters.

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[812] See K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007); R. English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*, (Oxford, Pan Books, 2006); B. O'Brien, *The Long War: IRA and Sinn Féin,* (Dublin, O'Brien Books, 1993); R. White, *Provisional Irish Republicans: an oral and interpretative history*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993).

Defining Irish Republicanism: are there agreed components?

In considering the emergence of dissident republicanism since 1986 there is a need to explore how such a vast range of interpretations can exist, each claiming lineage to the same tradition. Ultimately, is it possible to present any agreed components to Irish republicanism? It is very difficult to assign the label of republican in the form of a 'tick box' criteria. Offering a model of the 'true' republican provides a restrictive and shallow understanding of the tradition, unable to comprehend the space from which alternative interpretations may emerge. It is not the aim of this thesis to provide a check list of what constitutes 'true' Irish republicanism. Rather, it is to investigate where and why the faultlines occur within different interpretations. The faultline between 'purist' and 'pragmatist' demonstrates the instability that is inherent in the movement. For both the goal of unification is the same yet the methods by which to achieve this are diverse, ranging from acceptance of the northern consent principle and need to persuade unionists to change allegiance, to those for whom any acknowledgement of the northern state delegitimises republicanism. It is within the interpretation and application of such ideals that variations occur. The categories of purist and pragmatist are not necessarily representative of any groups and characteristics are not mutually exclusive. But the polar positions of these categories do provide the opposing ends of the republican spectrum to allow us to consider where, if at all, dissident groups as well as Sinn Féin fit on the spectrum. Whichever end of the spectrum groups may occupy, neither can guarantee their methods will guarantee success in reaching their ultimate constitutional goal. Consensus exists only in terms of ultimate desires. Construction of republicanism as a spectrum is more conducive to considering where republican groups today are positioned, as well as how they relate to one another.

The evolution of republicanism: Sinn Féin's modernised brand

Despite the absence of a 'true republican' checklist, Sinn Féin has firm possession of the republican franchise in Northern Ireland. As a result any other groups claiming republican credentials are considered in relation to what Sinn Féin, in their modern form, represent. By

utilising constitutional politics within a system that recognises partition, Sinn Féin are accused by republican critics of 'selling out' or compromising their aspirations for political rewards. The former PIRA member Anthony McIntyre has commented that 'in politics as in other areas of life it is often necessary to compromise principles. But there is a gulf between compromise and abandonment that should not be bridged.'[813] It has therefore been necessary to assess the evolution of Sinn Féin and the forces behind such seismic shifts in the party in order to consider whether their claims of being a republican party are still valid.

Sinn Féin has responded to Downsian laws of electoral competition and the need to chase the median nationalist voter, processes which became of ever greater importance amid military stalemate and public hostility towards armed struggle. As a result, the party expanded their ideas to include a pluralist interpretation of identity and frontloaded the (republican) principle of equality (within the 'Ireland of Equals' rhetoric) at the expense of freedom and territorial sovereignty. By employing constitutional strategy and displacing revolutionary tactics and armed struggle, the party broadened its support base. In terms of the operation of a constitutional republican party, Sinn Féin's moves were logical. By adhering to the rules of party competition and electoral logic Sinn Féin are now in a position whereby they have far more influence than they ever would have possessed as a mere voice for the actions of the IRA. Because republicanism has been so open to interpretation and therefore harder to define it makes it easier for Sinn Féin, despite the compromises made, to claim fidelity to the republican tradition. Understanding this has been essential in understanding how Sinn Féin have utilised republican tenets to explain and justify their seismic shift and how they can continue to frame their actions within the broad and flexible parameters of republican principle.

Rather than employing a rigid framework of republicanism, it is more useful to consider where groups claiming the label relate on a spectrum. This allows us to consider groups in their own right, rather than in relation to Sinn Féin. Therefore to answer whether Sinn Féin can still be labelled republican, there is no more or less reason why they should be labelled republican than dissident groups. The rewards of constitutional politics are greater and have broadened the

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[813] A. McIntyre, in *The Guardian*, 'By shaking the Queen's hand, Martin McGuinness accepts her sovereignty', 26/06/2012.

appeal of the party. It is therefore much easier for Sinn Féin to articulate their position of pragmatic constitutional republicanism as *the* republican mantle.

Is there such a thing as dissident republicanism?

In order to question whether there exists such a thing as dissident republicanism there is a need to go beyond the descriptive analysis of the phenomenon and provide insight in to the differing interpretations of the tradition. Exploring the origins, strategies and campaigns of several dissident groups has revealed the complexities in understanding modern day Irish republicanism. In addition to understanding the dissident critique of mainstream republicanism it has been necessary to consider these groups in their own right and not in reflection to what Sinn Féin represent. Using the label of dissident implies defection from republican ideological principles, as well as a challenge to the accepted status quo. In addition, placing a broad range of groups under the same label of 'dissident republican' denies the presence of heterogeneity.

Closest of all the groups to the 'purist' interpretation of the republican tradition is RSF. The ending of the policy of abstention from Leinster House in 1986 was viewed by RSF as a betrayal of the All-Ireland Republic of 1916. The policy of abstention remains the position of RSF today. Whilst many consider this unwillingness to alter their stance as outdated and static, RSF are provided with a sense of exceptionalism in not having compromised their position and retaining fidelity to what they alone see as the only true republican tradition. For groups such as the 32CSM that remained with the Provisionals after 1986 division, the eventual split was not about the arcane principle of 26 county abstention and more about the modus operandi of republicanism: the running down of its military capacity and displacement by electoralism. Such alignment to the physical force tradition was expressed by members who claimed that there has to be some sort of 'military solution to the problem.'[814] Positions of principle were also involved; dissidents of various hues unite in opposition to participation in a Northern Ireland assembly, but for most 'dissident' republicans disarmament of republican groups can only be justified after the clear advancement of national goals, not in advance.

Even in terms of militarism there is nonetheless diversity as neither the IRSP nor éirígí believe that 'armed struggle' need be a core component. The IRSP emerged from the socialist wing of republicanism, distinct from the Provisionals and are labelled dissidents based on their ideological departure. The post-GFA context saw the emergence of the Irish socialist republican political party éirígí. Through dynamic campaigns éirígí have expressed the centrality of socialism and the working-class struggle in answering the national question. The party recognise a need to embraced electoral politics in parallel to active, grass-roots campaigning.

RNU are often mistakenly described as an umbrella organisation for other dissident groups. They refute being the driving force behind the creation of a dissident republican united front, but they do encourage the coming together of republican groups especially over the rights of republican prisoners and opposition to the PSNI. RNU are not a political party yet retain a pragmatic position in respect to the use of electoral politics in the future.

Dissident groups thus emerged at different times, for different reasons and from different branches of Irish republican lineage. They all express differences in their interpretation of republicanism and demonstrate different approaches to electoral politics. Except RSF, all consider the positives of a united 'broad front' to varying degrees and vary their views of the utility of 'military' struggle. Groups continue to evolve organisationally, making them harder to define. They have to adapt and evolve as the British state has overwhelmingly the upper hand and therefore dictates the conditions in which dissident groups function. In the Northern Ireland context, the label of dissident has become a construction to collectivise those who oppose the current status quo, largely bereft of serious analytical purpose.

Justifying the Armed Campaign

The scale of change within Sinn Féin, the dismemberment of PIRA and what was viewed as the 'copper fastening' of partition under the GFA, meant that dissent and opposition to the peace process was inevitable. A number of small groups have emerged resistant to compromise, maintaining the utility of a military campaign. How do militant republican groups that continue

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[814] Michael Gallagher, interview with author, Derry 29/01/10.

to advocate the legitimacy of armed struggle such as Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH), the Continuity IRA (CIRA), RAAD (Republican Action Against Drugs) and the Real IRA (RIRA), attempt to justify and rationalise their actions?

Dissidents are often labelled as deluded, evil and obsessed with violence at the expense of peace. Such dominant discourses frame our understanding of dissident groups and the methods they employ. Therefore, to look beyond the label given to dissident groups it is necessary to deconstruct the dominant narrative. The final two chapters of this thesis explored the attempts to justify the continued use of armed struggle. All groups that engage in anti-state violence attempt to provide a rationale behind their actions. The use of violence does not stem from a belief that it will solely provide a route to their ultimate constitutional claim. However, it does present an opportunity to provide a physical expression of 'resistance' to the current status quo. These groups, to different degrees, emphasise republican history and claim legitimacy from its supposed lessons. These include the absence of a prior mandate for republican violence at any stage of history, yet its deployment subsequently being feted, the Easter Rising providing the obvious example. Moreover, the effective threat of force offered by unionists shaped British policy in the twentieth century. These claimed lessons obviate the need to demonstrate a mandate from the living and place republicanism in a sphere of interminable physical force contestation. As a 32CSM member articulated:

> No there is no compromising. If we compromise then the same thing is going to happen there is going to be splits, there is going to be dissidents, more dissident groups. Do you know what I mean? If we say tomorrow, oh we are going to do it through peaceful means, there are a lot of groups who would have just carried on. People don't realise that, it's not going to stop. There is no solution; there is no peaceful solution to unite the country.[815]

Understanding the prevalence of historical tradition and the attachment to armed struggle is vital in explaining the persistence of the physical force tradition. However, to understand armed dissident republicanism by expressing the phenomenon exclusively in terms of traditionalism and events of the past creates an overwhelming impression of groups being backward looking and stuck in perpetuity in a bygone era. Groups have to evolve to contemporary circumstances and attempt to present actions as a necessary use of force.

In attempting to justify violence, dissident groups identify British forces as legitimate targets and as threats to their community. The range of targets includes the police and British army, but is extended, in terms of community 'threat' to drug dealers and those engaging in 'anti social' behaviour. These threats are reinforced at times of tension, dissidents capitalising on controversies over Orange parades which retain unpopularity within the broader republican community.

The intention is not only to present armed force as either an inevitable response to British involvement in Ireland, or as self defence, but also transfers responsibility for the violence to the threat they claim to be opposing. Dissident groups therefore attempt to portray violence as resistance or as a form of self-protection, claiming that despite the GFA, the peace process has brought nothing for certain communities. The mainstream discourse attempting to condemn or undermine groups might damage the broader public perception of dissidents, but fails to permeate the groups themselves. Two 32CSM members, when asked how they felt or how they responded to people labelling them dissidents, responded with the following:

> To me it doesn't really bother me to be honest.

> It's a media term from Provisional Sinn Féin. But we didn't change our view. Other people changed their views. Just by going on the TV and calling us micro groups does us no damage at all. It destroys no credibility. You have people saying these people don't have support. These people do have support. They call us criminals, it doesn't wash. They have to say these things to satisfy their own support.[816]

Whilst the term dissident is rejected on the basis that anti-GFA groups believe themselves not to have dissented from republican principles, the meaning associated with the term has been constructed to support arrangements under the GFA. As the opening quote to this thesis outlined, dissent (armed or otherwise) is defined by those who are in defence of the status quo:

> Those who defend status quo relationships of power, or see them as natural and normal, tend to treat any opposition or critique as tantamount to treason or terrorism. That 'another world is possible', to invoke a popular refrain, is nothing less than an ontological challenge to the world that is today.[817]

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[815] Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.
[816] Joe Barr and Ciaran Boyle, interview with author, Derry 08/03/2010.
[817] R. D. Lipschutz, *Foreword*, in, L. Coleman & K. Tucker (eds.), *Situating Global Resistance: Between Discipline and Dissent,* (London, Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

Sinn Féin, the Northern Ireland executive, the British government, security services and the media have framed the interpretation and understanding of dissent. Therefore, the label 'dissident' can be rejected as a meaningful, analytical term. Rather it is a label to collectivise those republican groups who present opposition or challenge what is seen as 'normal' and the 'accepted' status quo.

In conclusion, the peace process has not ended the debate on how Irish republicanism is defined. For dissidents, whilst a significant aspect of their campaign is providing a critique of Sinn Féin, there is a void in offering a viable alternative. No groups provide an electoral challenge to Sinn Féin. In rejecting constitutional politics as an area in which to gain a mandate or legitimacy, dissidents do not offer convincing explanations of how the continued use of armed struggle, abstention or political campaigning can reach the final constitutional goal, or even why support for each of these is a republican absolute. However, it is also necessary to note that there is also no guarantee that Sinn Fein's institutional participation will be any more successful in achieving a united Ireland. A strategy based upon making a hitherto contested state work better is far from necessarily the means of its removal. What was once described by a constitutional republican of the Fianna Fail variety, Charles Haughey, as a 'failed political entity' may be working for the first time in its existence, thanks to Sinn Féin's participation. Making something viable as a means of its disposal might be seen as curious.

The main question for future research into dissent is whether we are now witnessing the last gasp of armed republicanism, or is this just another repetition of a cyclical trend inherent in the very nature of the Irish republican tradition? Seeking refuge in historical determinism can only preserve, but not advance, the dissident cause. However, as the closing quote suggests, there are those who remain determined to take their legitimacy from the refuge of republican history, however far that takes them:

> we wouldn't regard ourselves as dissidents. What I would say is I have to stand up for what is right and carry on the principles the leaders of 1916 walked after, and I'd be proud to call myself a dissident if that is what it is.[818]

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[818] John Murphy, interview with author, Cork, 02/03/2011.

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