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From War to Peace: Northern Ireland Conflict and the Peace Process

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the reasons ethnic violence erupted in Northern Ireland at the end of the 1960s. Based on semi-structured interviews with civil society workers, local deputies and residents in Northern Ireland that took place during August-September 2014, it argues that in the Northern Ireland case, the cleavage structure and political competition which overlapped with bipolar ethnic divide rendered political parties incapable to appeal to ethnic diversity within Northern Irish society. This article shows that the unionist-nationalist cleavage structure and political competition based on plurality rule brought about ethnic polarization and intensified interethnic tensions by producing governments supported exclusively by Protestants and hindering the incorporation of Catholics into the political system. It also demonstrates that peace negotiations in Northern Ireland were a process of institutional innovation in order to incorporate both communities into the political system.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Polarization, Cleavage Structure, Peace Negotiations, Northern Ireland

Savaştan Barışa: Kuzey İrlanda Çatışması ve Barış Süreci

ÖZET

Bu çalışma 1960'ların sonunda Kuzey İrlanda'da etnik şiddetin neden ortaya çıktığını incelemektedir. 2014 Ağustos-Eylül aylarında Kuzey İrlanda'da sivil toplum çalışanları, yerel milletvekilleri ve Kuzey İrlanda sakinleriyle gerçekleştirilen ucu açık görüşmelere dayanarak, bu çalışma iki kutuplu etnik bölünmeyle örtüşen siyasi yapı ve politik rekabet nedeniyle, Kuzey İrlanda'da siyasi partilerin etnik çeşitliliğe hitap edemediğini öne sürmektedir. Bu çalışma Kuzey İrlanda'da birlik yanlıları ve milliyetçiler arasındaki siyasi rekabetin ve çoğunluk sistemine dayalı seçim sisteminin sadece Protestanlar tarafından desteklenen birlik yanlısı hükümetler yaratarak ve Katolikleri siyasi sisteme dâhil etmeyi zorlaştırarak etnik polarizasyona yol açtığını ve etnik gruplar arasındaki tansiyonu yükselttiğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma ayrıca Kuzey İrlanda barış müzakerelerinin iki topluluğu da siyasete dâhil etmeyi amaçlayan bir kurumsal yenilenme süreci olduğunu açıklamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Çatışma, Etnik Polarizasyon, Siyasi Yapı, Barış Müzakereleri, Kuzey İrlanda

Introduction

The rise of paramilitaries at the end of the 1960s and the ensuing thirty years of ethnic violence, widely known as “Troubles”, claimed over 3,700 lives between 1969 and 2001 in Northern Ireland.¹ The number may sound small for large populations; however, it has a substantial traumatic impact for a population of about 1.6 million. It makes the pro rata equivalent of over 172,000 people in Turkey. The violent conflict took place mainly between three actors: republican paramilitaries, loyalist paramilitaries and security forces. Paramilitary groups were revived and reenergized as “defenders” of their community especially between 1968 and 1972.² O’Leary and McGarry qualify the ethnic violence of 1960s stemming from this conflict as a communal war:

The comparisons suggest it is legitimate to classify the Northern Ireland conflict as similar to those who have riven Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and Cyprus. It is an ethnic war, a communal war, or an inter-national war. The Irish euphemism for the conflict, ‘the Troubles’ is just that: a euphemism.³

Religious identification is the most salient identity in Northern Ireland although Protestants and Catholics use multiple identifications such as “Irish”, “British”, “Ulster”, and “Northern Irish”.⁴ The religious identification is a proxy for national and political affiliation. The saliency of religious identities may lead to misleading conclusions as if the conflict is about religion but the main building block of disagreement is grounded upon the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.⁵ While unionists, composed predominantly of Ulster Protestants, are alleged to the maintenance of the union with Britain; nationalists, composed predominantly of Irish Catholics, viewed the partition of the island of Ireland and the British presence in the North illegitimate and defended the unification of Ireland. After World War I, it was understood that all-Ireland independence was impossible due to the resistance of unionists, who were mainly concentrated in historical Ulster region of Ireland, to join in a free Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act created two parliaments in 1920, one in Dublin and one in Belfast which would negotiate the future of Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 concluded the disagreement officially by establishing the Irish Free State with 26 counties and Northern Ireland with six counties. The boundaries of Northern Ireland were artificially demarcated to ensure a safe majority for unionists and the maximum territory governed

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- 1 Marie Smith and Jennifer Hamilton, “The Human Costs of the Troubles”, Owen Hargie and David Dickson (eds.), *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Conflict*, Edinburgh, Scotland, Mainstream, 2004, p.15-36.
 - 2 Dermot Freenan, “Justice in Conflict: Paramilitary Punishment in Ireland (North)”, *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, Vol.30, 2002, p.151-172.
 - 3 Brian O’Leary and John McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*, Second edition, London, Athlone Press, 1996, p.18.
 - 4 See John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, Oxford, Oxford University, 1990; Karen Trew, “Catholic-Protestant Contact in Northern Ireland”, Miles Hewstone and Rupert Brown (eds.), *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters*, Oxford, UK, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p.93-106; Neil Waddell and Ed Cairns, “Identity Preference in Northern Ireland”, *Political Psychology*, Vol.12, 1991, p.205-213; Karen Trew and Denny E. Benson, “Dimensions of Social Identity in Northern Ireland”, Glynis M. Breakwell and Evanthia Lyons (eds.), *Changing European identities: Social Psychological Analyses of Social Change*, Oxford, Butterworth Heinmann, 1996, p.123-143.
 - 5 Before the repercussions of French Revolution and industrialization penetrated into Ireland, not the nationality issue but the contention for power and land interspersed with the conflict on the definition and worship of God determined the dimensions of the conflict. See Anthony Buckley, “We’re Trying to Find Our Identity: Uses of History among Ulster Protestants”, E. Tonkin, A. McDonald and M. Chapman (eds.), *History and Ethnicity*, London, Routledge, 1989, p.183-197; John Coakley, “The Religious Roots of Irish Nationalism”, *Social Compass*, Vol.58, No.1, 2011, p.95-114.

by unionist majority.⁶ This drawing of boundaries between Irish Free State and Northern Ireland triggered the ongoing controversy between nationalists and unionists on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. There is a conceptual struggle even over the name of Northern Ireland, as many nationalists refuse to call it as Northern Ireland in order not to recognize the partition but call this entity “six-countries”, “North” or “North of Ireland”. Northern Ireland is depicted as “a place apart” in many sources due to social, political and economic segregation of Protestant and Catholic communities. It is very common to find Catholics and Protestants who have not met one person from the other side although they live side by side. Their areas of socialization such as leisure activities, schools and sports largely differ.

Northern Ireland represents a unique case study for ethnic conflict studies since ethnic violence erupted in a region which has high GDP per capita, a well-developed economy, high school enrolment and favourable geography.⁷ Discussing Northern Ireland from the perspective of ethnic conflict studies, this study argues that the cleavage structure and political competition which overlapped with bipolar ethnic divide in Northern Ireland served to increase interethnic tensions by producing governments supported exclusively by Protestants and hindering the incorporation of Catholics into the political system. The findings of this study support Wilkinson⁸ and Horowitz⁹ who argue that political competition and cleavage structure which provide electoral incentives for political parties to appeal to minorities decrease the likelihood of interethnic violence, whereas political competition and cleavage structure which do not provide electoral incentives to build multi-ethnic coalitions can be detrimental to societal peace. This article displays that the unionist-nationalist cleavage structure and political competition based on plurality rule generated ethnic polarization and ethnic exclusion in Northern Ireland which are found to fuel the the risk of civil war.¹⁰ It also shows that peace negotiations in Northern Ireland were a process of institutional innovation in order to incorporate both communities into the political system. The data for this research is collected in Northern Ireland based on semi-structured interviews with local community workers working for conflict resolution, five interviews with local deputies from different political parties and the fieldwork in North and West Belfast where I conducted informal interviews with residents.

This article proceeds as follows. Firstly, it discusses the Northern Ireland conflict from the perspective of ethnic conflict literature. Secondly, it questions the role of the cleavage structure and political competition on ethnic violence in Northern Ireland. Thirdly, it focuses on peace negotiations and institutional progress which faced several setbacks and disappointments along the way to peace deal.

6 Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1992.

7 Douglas Woodwell, “The ‘Troubles’ of Northern Ireland: Civil Conflict in an Economically Well-Developed State”, Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Vol.2, Washington DC, World Bank Publications, 2005, p.161-190.

8 Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

9 Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa: Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

10 Jose G. Montalvo and Marta Reynal-Querol, “Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict and Civil Wars”, *American Economic Review*, Vol.95, No.3, 2005, p.796–816; Lars-Erik Cederman and Luc Girardin, “Beyond Fractionalization: Mapping Ethnicity onto Nationalist Insurgencies”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol.101, No.1, 2007, p.173–185; Joan Esteban, Laura Mayoral and Debraj Ray, “Ethnicity and Conflict: An Empirical Study”, *American Economic Review*, Vol.102, No.4, 2012, p.1310–1342.

Theoretical Framework

There is a vibrant debate on the causes of ethnic conflicts which reveal that ethnic conflicts are composite and causally heterogeneous.¹¹ Relative deprivation theory posits that the gap between people's expectations and their actual conditions triggers conflicts in a society.¹² The hotly debated greed-grievance conundrum in civil war studies tested the impact of grievances and found out that not grievance but greed is important on the onset of civil war.¹³ However, the single dimension measure of ethnicity, notably ethnic-fractionalization index (ELF), is incapable to assess the interaction of ethnicity with other social cleavages.¹⁴ Studies on horizontal inequality focus on a more multidimensional measure of ethnic grievances which encompass economic, social, political and cultural dimensions and display that horizontal inequalities fuel the risk of violent ethnic conflict.¹⁵ While these studies are helpful to understand the causal effect of grievances, they are not able to specify how these grievances are mobilized under specific conditions. This article highlights the role of cleavage structure and political competition in increasing horizontal inequalities when political parties supported by majority ethnic group do not need the electoral support of the minority ethnic group in order to maintain the power.

Another body of research concentrates on the psychological-emotional component of ethnic conflict. Horowitz underlines that people sacrifice themselves due to the fear of threat, the anxiety for survival and the search for self-esteem.¹⁶ Kaufmann argues that hatred is not ancient as Kaplan argued¹⁷ but modern and built upon an ethno-myth complex.¹⁸ Studies show that in the Rwanda genocide, violence-promoting norms spread among the dominant population.¹⁹ The psychological-emotional component of ethnic conflict is also tied to the construction of ethnic groups in relation to each other since floating stereotypes, prejudices and negative images amplify during ethnic conflicts. Constructivist approaches explain how the acts of representation of ethnic identity and nationhood alter interethnic relations. Identities that we presume today as antagonistic evolved in time and space. "Tutsi" and "Hutu" in Rwanda denoted class status rather than ethnic identity in pre-colonial times.²⁰ Nonetheless, neither the psychological-emotional component of ethnic conflicts nor the construction of ethnic groups are fixed but variable since a sense of interethnic cooperation or affinity

11 Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.24, 1998, p.423–452.

12 James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution", *American Sociological Review*, Vol.6, No.1, 1962, p.5–19; Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1970.

13 Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", World Bank, DECRG, 2002, <http://econ.worldbank.org/programs/conflict> (Accessed on 13 April 2009); James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War", *American Political Science Review*, Vol.97, No.1, 2003, p.75–90.

14 Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Nicholas Sambanis, "The Collier–Hoeffler Model of Civil War Onset and the Case Study Project Research Design", Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds.), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 2005, p.2.

15 Frances Stewart (ed.), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

16 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1985.

17 Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, New York, Picador, St. Martin's Press, 2005.

18 Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War", *International Security*, Vol.21, No.2, 1996, p.108–138.

19 Ravi Bhavnani and David Backer, "Localized Ethnic Conflict and Genocide: Accounting for Differences in Rwanda and Burundi", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.44, No.3, June 2000, p.283–306; Ravi Bhavnani, "Ethnic Norms and Interethnic Violence: Accounting for Mass Participation in the Rwandan Genocide", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.43, No.6, 2006, p.651–669.

20 Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1995.

can be constructed by state policies after histories of conflict.²¹ While the boundaries of Protestant and Catholic identities were more blurred in the past, the political controversy over the status of Northern Ireland and the ensuing violence solidified the divisions between them.²²

Instrumentalist explanations focus on the interests of individuals in joining ethnic groups. Hardin²³ and Hechter²⁴ note that ethnic conflicts arise when individual and collective interests converge. Responding to Downs' free-rider problem,²⁵ these authors consider ethnic ties as focal points of coordination. Posner's research on Africa shows that individuals are able to scale up and down their identities according to their interests in winning coalition.²⁶ Hale argues that ethnicity is neither conflictual nor cooperative but enables an interest oriented behavior repertoire according to the number and relative size of groups on each cleavage dimension.²⁷ Instrumentalist explanations relate to institutional approaches regarding the role of elites in the emergence and reinforcement of ethnic conflicts. Competing elites exploit ethnic tensions to obtain or maintain state power.²⁸ Gagnon purports that elites in Yugoslavia exploited ethnic tensions not to mobilize ethnic groups *per se* but to de-mobilize the challenges against the *status quo*.²⁹ Wilkinson argues that states in which governments and political elites need minorities' electoral support for power are more peaceful compared to states in which governments and political elites do not need it and benefit from ethnic polarization to maintain the power.³⁰ Horowitz argues that multi-ethnic political alignments should be supported by electoral incentives since "only coalitions that rest on intergroup vote-pooling, as well as seat pooling, have reason to be accommodative".³¹ This article contributes to Wilkinson's and Horowitz's arguments with the case study of Northern Ireland conflict. It shows that the unionist-nationalist cleavage structure and political competition based on plurality rule served to increase interethnic tensions in Northern Ireland by producing unionist governments supported exclusively by Protestants and hindering the incorporation of Catholics into the political system. The exclusionary political arena brought about ethnic polarization and ethnic exclusion which fuel the risk of civil war.³²

Cleavage Structure, Political Competition and Ethnic Conflict

It is widely accepted in sociology that cross-cutting cleavages moderate conflicts between individuals and groups whereas overlapping cleavages increase tensions since there is no individual or group able to mitigate conflicts among divergent groups. The roots of this argument go back to the works of

21 Diana Dumitru and Johnson Carter, "Constructing InterEthnic Conflict and Cooperation: Why Some People Harmed Jews and Others Helped Them during the Holocaust in Romania", *World Politics*, Vol.63, No.1, 2011, p.8.

22 John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995.

23 Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997.

24 Michael Hechter, "A Rational Choice Approach to Race and Ethnic Relations", John Rex and David Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p.264-279.

25 Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper, 1957.

26 Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Conflict in Africa*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

27 Henry E. Hale, *The Foundations of Ethnic Politics*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

28 Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*; Brass, *Theft of an Idol*; Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*.

29 Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*.

30 Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*.

31 Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa*, p.177.

32 See reference 9.

Ross,³³ Simmel³⁴ and Coser.³⁵ Political parties which arise out of social cleavages have a pivotal role in influencing these cleavages by articulating their grievances and mobilizing constituencies on the basis of established social cleavages.³⁶ While political competition based on cross-cutting cleavages such as left-right axis uses common issues across a range of different ethnic groups in order to mobilize them, political competition between ethno-political cleavages in deeply divided societies may result in ethnic outbidding when political competition is closely contested between ethno-political parties. Ethnic outbidding, the competition between rival political parties to appeal to their co-ethnic voters, has the risk to slide into extreme positions and radicalize ethnic groups.³⁷ Wilkinson³⁸ and Horowitz³⁹ support that interethnic cooperation hinges on the intensity of political competition and the degree to which the governing party/parties need(s) or enjoy(s) directly or indirectly minority votes. This article contributes to their argument displaying that the unionist-nationalist cleavage structure in Northern Ireland and political competition based on plurality rule intensified interethnic tensions by producing unionist governments supported exclusively by Protestants and excluding parties which represented Catholics from the political system. The hegemonic Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) applied policies favorable to the Protestant majority and unfavorable to the Catholic minority to maintain its power which amplified ethnic polarization between Catholics and Protestants.

Political Hegemony of Ulster Unionist Party⁴⁰

The Northern Irish state was uneasy with the Catholic population from its start due to the fact that its foundation was already controversial between Ulster unionists and Irish nationalists. Proportional representation was implemented after its foundation but the UUP which was elected to government by the support of the Protestant majority abolished proportional representation in 1929 and passed to plurality rule since unionists were anxious about a possible fracture of Protestant majority. The first-past-the-post system supports disproportionately the party with the highest vote which takes seats in the parliament higher than it would take in a proportional electoral system. Hence, the plurality rule reified the unionist-nationalist cleavage structure as unionist seats never fell below 34 seats until 1972 in Stormont Parliament in which there were 52 seats after the abolition of proportional representation.⁴¹ This system also enabled a fusion between the legislative and the executive so that the UUP, which had the overwhelming majority in parliament, did not have to negotiate or search for compromises with Catholics which could have moderated conflicts, in effect, between nationalists and unionists. But according to Prof. Adrian Guelke, even proportional representation would not propel the accommodation of nationalists into the political system due to the exclusionary attitude of unionist governments:

33 Edward A. Ross, *The Principles of Sociology*, New York, Century, 1920.

34 Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations*, Kurt H. Wolff (Trans.), Glencoe, IL, Free Press, 1955.

35 Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Glencoe, IL, Free Press, 1956.

36 Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, New York, Free Press, 1967; Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stability of European Electorates. 1885-1985*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

37 Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War"; Neil De Votta, "From Ethnic Outbidding to Ethnic Conflict: The Institutional Bases for Sri Lanka's Separatist War", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol.11, No.1, 2005, p.141-159; Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*.

38 Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*.

39 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa*.

40 The origins of the UUP stretch back to the foundation of Ulster Unionist Council in 1905. The UUP was strongly opposed to the partition of Ireland and Irish Home Rule bills before the foundation of Northern Ireland.

41 Marc Mulholland, *Northern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.34.

The protestant majority was much more substantial during the Stormont years than it is now. So, even under the proportional representation system, nationalists would have had a minority of the seats. They would have done perhaps a bit better than they did under a plurality system. But, you know, given the determination of unionist parties under Stormont to take no role of the voices of nationalism completely and exclude them. The exclusion of nationalism was not just about the political level, it ran through the whole society. I mean, you know, Catholics play kind of Gaelic games of various kinds, you know, hurling and so on. In the 50s, the BBC of Northern Ireland did not even report the results of these matches. As if there was no interest, anything that was so. They were treated as if they were, you know, kind of, did not count, as invisible.⁴²

Northern Ireland enjoyed significant autonomy from Britain except for budgeting and foreign policy but this autonomy only advantaged unionists who were able to put into place social, political, and economic tools to maintain their hegemony. The UUP ruled Northern Ireland from the institution of Stormont parliament in 1920 (established by the Government of Ireland Act of 1920) until the introduction of British direct rule in 1972. The parliament was not an efficient ground to represent nationalists' interests for the Nationalist Party⁴³ which represented mainly Catholics. The opposition was fragmented between nationalists, socialists, and independent unionists. Nationalist deputies often boycotted the Stormont parliament and did not take seats since they did not want to remain as loyal opposition to unionist governments.

The UUP also reinforced the security frontiers around the unionist regime against the Catholic minority and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Besides, in the early years of the Northern Irish state, the violent conflict had not ended, with more than 400 killed, 2000 injured and there was an ongoing civil war in the Irish Free State between pro-treaty and anti-treaty forces.⁴⁴ The constabulary act of 1922 set a one-third quota for Catholics in the new police forces called the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) but the Catholic population in the RUC remained around 11 percent in 1969.⁴⁵ In addition, the "specials" were armed as an auxiliary force. The Ulster Defense Regiments (UDR) (the Northern Ireland militia of security forces), the RUC and specials were viewed as partial and sectarian by Catholics due to their special relationship with Orange lodges⁴⁶ and Protestants population.⁴⁷ Catholics were reluctant to join security forces not only because they considered them sectarian but also they could face community condemnation, frustrated with partition and unionist hegemony. The UUP vested the security forces with additional powers of search, arrest, detention by the special powers act in 1922. These powers were designed for one year but lasted until the introduction of direct rule in 1972 and illustrate the brunt of insecurity held by unionist governments against the Catholic minority. Moreover, the politics in the Irish Free State were evolving in some manners vindicating the unionists' fears about Catholic domination and

42 Adrian Guelke, 18 August 2014, Belfast, personal communication. Prof. Adrian Guelke is Emeritus Professor of Comparative Politics in the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy at Queen's University of Belfast and author of many books on Northern Ireland politics.

43 Nationalist Party was formed after the partition of Ireland by the members of Irish Parliamentary Party which was the leading proponent of Irish Home Rule.

44 Jonathan Tonge, *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change*, Harlow, Longman, 2002, p.19.

45 *Hunt Report of the Advisory Committee on Police in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, 1969, p.29 cited by Brian M. Walker, *A Political History of the Two Irelands: From Partition to Peace*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.68.

46 Orange lodges are connected to Orange order, the largest Protestant civil society organization in Northern Ireland. Its name stems from William of Orange, who defeated the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

47 Ronald J. Weitzer, *Policing under Fire: Ethnic Conflict and Police-Community Relations in Northern Ireland*, Albany, State University and New York Press, 1995.

their would-be minority position in a united Ireland scenario. Article 2 and 3 of the 1937 Ireland Constitution defined the nation of Ireland on a 32-country basis claiming the right to sovereignty on entire Ireland. The political maneuvers of Irish Prime ministers (called as *Taoiseach*) laying claim on all-Ireland also ignited unionists' fears.⁴⁸

Not only plurality rule but also gerrymandering, the design of electoral boundaries so as to favor certain parties, was used as a tool by unionists to maintain their hegemony in Protestant and Catholic areas. In addition, the limitation on the right to vote in local franchise, which was dependent on house holders' tax-pay rates, undercut the representation of Catholics, since they were economically in lower echelons of society and had larger families living under the same roof. This system was excluding lodgers from the right to vote. Spatial segregation was salient for unionists in order to draw electoral constituencies to their favor. Hence, they discriminated Catholics in the allocation of public housing.⁴⁹ This system disenfranchised approximately a quarter of those qualified to vote in local council elections.⁵⁰ The situation of Derry (Londonderry for Protestants) is emblematic of this manipulation of electoral behavior. Although sixty percent of the population was Catholic in Derry/Londonderry, unionists were in power in local councils with a minority of the votes. In the unionists' cognitive map, there was a close relationship between the security of state and exclusion of Catholics from political power for fear that that this inclusion would constitute a slippery slope toward the unification of Ireland. This anxiety is illustrated in the remarks of a prominent unionist member of parliament, Edmund Warnock:

If ever a community had a right to demonstrate against a denial of civil rights, Derry is the example. A Roman Catholic and Nationalist city has for three or four decades been administered (and none too fairly administered) by a Protestant and Unionist majority secured by a manipulation of the Ward boundaries for the sole purpose of retaining Unionist control... I was consulted by Sir James Craig [prime minister], Dawson Bates and R. D. Megaw at the time it was done. Craig thought that the fate of our constitution was on a knife-edge at the time and that, in the circumstances, it was defensible on the basis that the safety of the State was the supreme law.⁵¹

Other than a minority of local councils governed by the Nationalist Party, Catholics did not have a significant voice in the political system. The British government tacitly supported this exclusionary political system by being disinterested in it.⁵² The rift between nationalists and the state amplified in parallel to the limitations on the representation of Catholics and overrepresentation of Protestants. The state was associated with Protestant unionist hegemony for Catholics which intensified ethnic polarization between overlapping Catholic/Irish/ nationalist and Protestant/ British/ unionist identities.

48 John Bowman, *De Valera and The Ulster Question 1917-1973*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982, p.175-182.

49 John Whyte, "How Much Discrimination was there under the Unionist Regime, 1921-68?", Tom Gallagher and James O'Connell (eds.), *Contemporary Irish Studies*, Manchester, England, Manchester University Press, 1983, p.7-35.

50 Roger H. Hull, *The Irish Triangle*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1976 cited by Ronald J. Terchek, "Conflict and Cleavage in Northern Ireland", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 433, 1977, p.53.

51 Letter to Terence O'Neill included in Cabinet Conclusions cited by Marc Mulholland, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland's Troubled History*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.54.

52 David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of The Troubles: The Story of The Conflict in Northern Ireland*, Chicago, New Amsterdam Books, 2002.

Table I. Seats Taken by Parties as the Election Outcome in the House of Commons, 1929-1969

Year	Unionist Party	Other Unionist	Nationalist Party	Other Nationalist	Northern Ireland Labor Party	Other	Total
1929	34	2	11	0	1	0	48
1933	33	2	9	2	1	1	48
1938	35	3	8	0	1	1	48
1945	31	2	10	1	2	2	48
1949	35	2	9	1	0	1	48
1953	35	1	7	4	0	1	48
1958	34	0	7	2	4	1	48
1962	31	1	9	2	4	1	48
1965	34	0	9	3	2	0	48
1969	36	3	6	5	2	0	52

Source: Adapted from Coakley⁵³ who used the source of Elliott⁵⁴.

Note: 48 members were elected the House of Commons since four seats were allocated to the Queen's University of Belfast. The four university seats were abolished in 1969 and redistributed among new territorial constituencies in Antrim and Down.

The UUP also used its political hegemony to shape the socio-economic structure between Protestants and Catholics which widened the preexisting economic horizontal inequalities. The UUP provided for its support base, working-class Protestants, job opportunities at the expense of working-class Catholics.⁵⁵ Catholics were discriminated in the public and private sectors. Well-paid jobs, such as those in the security sector were connected to Protestants. As Mac Laughlin and Agnew draw attention, there was a correlation between the non-unionists vote and job distribution:

In 1961, the Belfast area, with less than 30 percent of Northern Ireland's land area, accounted for more than 55 percent of the industrial labor force (Northern Ireland Census 1961). Antrim and Down, especially the Protestant sectors of south Antrim and North Down, accounted for over 20 percent of the North's manufacturing jobs. Londonderry City, together with counties Londonderry, Tyrone, and Fermanagh, had more than one-quarter of Northern Ireland's total population and more than one-half of its non-Unionist electorate, but accounted for only 13 percent of Northern Ireland's manufacturing jobs.⁵⁶

The recent work of Scarcelli on cleavages and civil war shows that countries with crosscutting cleavages are more resilient against negative catalysts whereas those with overlapping cleavage structures are more vulnerable to them.⁵⁷ The turn of events between 1968 and 1972 in Northern Ireland corroborates this argument. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) initiated its marches starting from 1968 and challenged the social, economic, political discrimination of Catholics by

53 John Coakley, "The Political Consequences of the Electoral System in Northern Ireland", *Irish Political Studies*, Vol.24, No.3, 2009, p.259.

54 Sydney Elliott, *Northern Ireland Parliamentary Election Results, 1921-1972*, Chichester, Political Reference Publications, 1973.

55 Liam O'Dowd, "Regional Policy", Liam O'Dowd, Bill Rolston and Mike Tomlinson (eds.), *Northern Ireland: Between Civil Rights and Civil War*, London, Cse Books, 1980, p.5-34.

56 James G. Mac Laughlin and John A. MacAgnew, "Hegemony and the Regional Question: The Political Geography of Regional Industrial Policy in Northern Ireland, 1945-1972", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.76, No.2, 1986, p.254.

57 Marc Scarcelli, "Social Cleavages and Civil War Onset", *Ethnopolitics: Formerly Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol.13, No.2, 2014, p.181-202.

using the slogan “One Man, One Vote”. The sectarian treatment of security forces against demonstrators and the limitations put by the UUP on their rights to protest turned it into a mass movement among Catholics. The new leader of the UUP, Terence O’Neill, was also in favor of minor revisions to include Catholics in the political system. But some sections of unionists and Protestants were uneasy about changes in the political system which was defined by the political immobility of unionists for fifty years. Conceived as disloyal, Catholic demonstrations were equal to the repudiation of the political regime in their eyes.⁵⁸ Protestants organized counter-demonstrations and interethnic riots erupted. The British army took control of law and order in 1969 since the heavy-handed tactics of crowd control, house searches, interrogation, and daily street patrols implemented by the RUC and the UDR were seen as part of the problem. Parallel to simmering intercommunal tensions, loyalist and republican paramilitary organizations were coming into force.⁵⁹ Loyalist paramilitaries, the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), were reformed. Alistair Little recounts the resurgence of the UVF: “There was a number of bombs that were planted and set off and they set off civil rights marches and breaking away of official IRA as Provisional IRA. And the UVF was reformed.”⁶⁰

British counterinsurgency strategies deteriorated the situation by targeting in its early phases mainly Catholic working class neighborhoods which were also strongholds of nationalist resistance. Upon the request of the UUP, the British state introduced the internment policy in 1971 which endowed security forces with considerable security competences to imprison suspects without criminal charges or judicial proceedings. The Catholic population became the main target of internment as well. In January 1972, British soldiers charged with monitoring civil rights marches in Derry/Londonderry opened fire onto demonstrators and killed fourteen unarmed marchers and wounded eighteen others which stamped history as Bloody Sunday. This shocked Catholics who had departed from the militant republican tradition by more peaceful ways of demonstrations. The internment policy and the inconsistencies in its implementation in favor of unionists and loyalists increased the cycle of violence facilitating the militant recruitment of the Provisional IRA, a breakaway from the official IRA.⁶¹ A West Belfast resident who witnessed the rise of the Provisional IRA recalls this era as:

In 69, whenever the loyalists attacked nationalist areas, the IRA was very very weak. There was only one gang going through the Falls road. Whenever the loyalists came in, then people started to say, people complained about the IRA. They said those things are going through the war and said “I RUN AWAY”, “I.R.A.” Where was the IRA when they are and we are getting attacked? That’s when the Provisional IRA started, you know, and they became. So, the Provisional IRA at the beginning was stronger and earliest for those who had been attacked by loyalists and then as it turned against the law and against the British, it became stronger in other areas as well. That’s how the Provisional IRA started (...) They became very very strong at the beginning in the areas that were close to loyalist areas that had been attacked. (...) Then, it turned more, the British army started to press down on the Catholic community, then it started the war between the Provisional IRA and the British and of course, the British oppressed more, searched the houses, beat up, so people wanted to join. And of course, after Bloody Sunday, they became stronger again.⁶²

58 Paul F. Power, “Civil Protest in Northern Ireland”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.9, No.3, 1972, p.223-236.

59 John E. Finn, *Constitutions in Crisis: Political Violence and the Rule of Law*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991.

60 Alistair Little, 2 September 2014, Belfast, personal communication. Alistair Little is an ex-UVF combatant and works on conflict transformation work in various conflict areas such as Northern Ireland, Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, and South Africa.

61 The IRA campaign launched in 1956 disappeared off the radar in 1962 due to the lack of nationalist support and internment policies implemented against it by the Operation Harvest. Thus, the IRA was weak when the intercommunal tensions were simmering in Northern Ireland. The Provisional IRA was composed in Belfast in 1969 and turned into the major republican paramilitary force thereafter.

62 Oisín Farmer, An Irish language teacher in West Belfast, 16 August 2014, Belfast, personal communication.

In effect, if NICRA's demands had been incorporated into political system, it could have restored normal politics with the input of Catholics into policy making. This could have headed off paramilitary violence. But the incapability of unionist governments to respond to Catholic demands and excessive security operations reified ethno-political trenches which gave motivation and opportunities for paramilitaries to resurface. Britain introduced the direct rule in March 1972 upon this implosive situation which hardened even more the nationalist-unionist cleavage structure.

From War to Peace: A Process of Institutional Innovations in the Middle of War

The period after the introduction of direct rule was a process of institutional innovation to include both Catholic and Protestant communities into the political system and conclude a peace agreement which would satisfy both nationalists and unionists. The tide of politics in Britain also turned significantly with the direct rule as Westminster now assumed directly the administration and responsibility of Northern Ireland. Intimidated by the fact that Britain could sell Northern Ireland for its interests, the constitutional ambiguity and insecurity stirred even more the intransigence of unionist parties against power-sharing with nationalists. On the other hand, nationalists would no longer be satisfied with the improvements of civil rights. They forced Britain to recognize Irish dimension and convince unionists for power-sharing with nationalists.

After the introduction of direct rule, intraethnic political competition gained saliency as much as interethnic competition and altered the dynamics of the peace process. Britain consciously introduced single-transferable vote into elections in order to encourage political participation of Catholics and strengthen voting across sectarian lines.⁶³ After the June 1973 elections, in which the more radical parties of unionism, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)⁶⁴ and Vanguard Party⁶⁵ pressurized the UUP; the UUP, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)⁶⁶ and the Alliance Party⁶⁷ agreed to form a power-sharing executive in order to hold advantage against their ethnic counterparts. The Sunningdale Agreement formalized the Irish dimension instituting a Council of Ireland on 9 December 1973. Nevertheless, this recognition of the role of the Republic of Ireland on the future of Northern Ireland invigorated fear among unionists. The February 1974 British elections revealed that the UUP could not persuade unionists about the Irish dimension as the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC) composed of the DUP, Vanguard Party and the DUP and official unionists won more seats than the UUP. The ethnic outbidding among unionists pushed the power-sharing executive over the edge since the Ulster Workers' Council strike emboldened by the Vanguard Party, the DUP, the Orange Order and loyalist paramilitaries forced the UUP to backpedal on its commitment to power-sharing government. The political reverberations of this strike and the killing of 33 people by the UDA caused a political crisis in power-sharing government and the UUP leader, Brian Faulkner, resigned from the executive on 28 May 1974. Alban Maginness, the current SDLP Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from North Belfast, sees the Sunningdale Agreement as a missed opportunity for peace:

63 Paul Arthur, *Government and Politics of Northern Ireland*, New York, Longman, 1984.

64 The DUP was established by Ian Paisley, the leader of Free Presbyterian Church in 1971 opposing to the power-sharing executive and Sunningdale Agreement.

65 The Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party (VUPP) which existed in Northern Ireland between 1972 and 1978 was the more extreme scission of the UUP and was associated with some loyalist paramilitary organizations.

66 The SDLP was founded in 1970 composed of many members of the Nationalist Party. The SDLP defended the unification of Ireland by agreement contrary to Sinn Fein's militant program.

67 The Alliance Party was founded in 1970 and it is a biconfessional party which receives its votes mainly from middle class citizens.

Another opportunity (for peace) was in 1974 was the Sunningdale Agreement and power-sharing executive and that could have created a situation in which if the IRA had stopped their violence at that stage and if loyalists and unionists had cooperated with the SDLP and the Alliance Party, then, we could have made similar rapid progress in terms of new politics in Northern Ireland. That was not to be, but that could have happened even in that stage if the IRA called off their campaign at that stage which they should have done then we could have made a lot of progress. If you fast-forward from 1974 to 1998, 24 years, you get roughly the same package, right, same package. Except those who opposed it in 1974 were supporting it in 1998. So one of my colleagues Seamus Mallon (ex-deputy leader of the SDLP), said that, pointedly, particularly toward the republicans, the GFA was the Sunningdale Agreement for slow learners.⁶⁸

But according to Alex Maskey, Sinn Fein MLA from South Belfast, the Sunningdale Agreement did not convince Republicans who would not consent to an agreement in which Britain had jurisdiction over Northern Ireland.⁶⁹ A second initiative for constitutional convention was held in 1975 but the elections for convention displayed that unionists were still not ready for compromise as it ended up with the victory of unionists opposed to power-sharing and Irish dimension. Even before the negotiation could gain momentum, the SDLP withdrew from negotiations and the convention was dissolved in 1976. No significant initiative came to terms between 1976 and 1979.

In the 1980s, the increasing legitimacy of Sinn Fein changed the dynamics of the peace process as it was no longer possible to push aside Sinn Fein and its political voice. By the mid-1970s, the British governments pushed forward the criminalization of paramilitaries in order to break the link between communities and paramilitaries while paramilitaries were spreading the propaganda that they were freedom fighters. However, Thatcher, the head of the Conservative government (1979-1990) stroked the chord of Catholics by maintaining a firm stand against concessions to republican hunger strikers. Their ensuing deaths boosted Sinn Fein legitimacy which won 10.1 per cent of the votes in the 1982 Northern Ireland Assembly elections. The republican movement passed to a double strategy from 1981 onwards as republican violence continued but Sinn Fein contested elections. As one of the ex-IRA combatants illustrates:

It had always been advanced by opponents of the IRA that they did not have any support in nationalist areas. That was one of the criticisms of the Republican movement that they had never support of the people in republican areas, they had no democratic mandate, they represented nobody, they are criminal godfathers, they used all of those terms. But till after the hunger strikes of 1981 which showed that republicanism did have a mandate in nationalist areas and that mandate was increasing all the time.⁷⁰

68 Alban Maginness, SDLP MLA from North Belfast, 3 September 2014, personal communication. Alban Maginness is a member of the SDLP since 1972 and he was the Chairperson of the SDLP between 1985-1991. He was elected to the Inter-Party Talks in 1996 and was also a party delegate to the Brooke Talks in 1992 and to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation in Dublin. He has been elected several times to the Northern Ireland Assembly and he is currently the SDLP MLA from North Belfast.

69 Alex Maskey, Sinn Fein MLA from South Belfast, 9 September 2014, personal communication. Alex Maskey became the first Republican to be elected to the Belfast City Council in 1983 after the Troubles and the second Republican to elect to the Belfast City Council in Northern Ireland history. He was a member of Sinn Fein negotiation team during peace negotiations and he has been elected several times to Northern Ireland Assembly. He is the current Sinn Fein MLA from South Belfast.

70 An ex-IRA combatant, 18 August 2014, Belfast, personal communication.

Not the cooperation between nationalist and unionist parties, but the conflict resolution initiatives of external parties accelerated the peace process. The Provisional IRA continued to push the buttons of British governments with bomb attacks which even came very close to assassinating Prime Minister Thatcher and leading members of the British government on 12 October 1984 while loyalist paramilitaries orchestrated sectarian killings. The Republic of Ireland assumed a more active role in conflict resolution initiatives as Garret Fitzgerald, Irish Taoiseach established the New Ireland Forum to drive forward the collaboration between political parties from the North and the South. The SDLP and the political parties from the South participated in it whereas unionist parties boycotted it. The 1984 report of New Ireland report criticized the British government for favoring unionist supremacy and stressed the need for recognition of two traditions with equal respect. Thatcher did not take this report into serious consideration but two governments formed in 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement which provided proof for local parties that the British and Irish governments could bypass them for conflict resolution.⁷¹

John Major from the Conservative Party ascended into office in 1990 and was more inclined to consensus-making and cooperation compared to Thatcher. The British and Irish governments issued the Downing Street declaration in 1993 putting forward two pillars which constructed the basis of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998. First, Britain had no selfish interest to remain in Northern Ireland against the wishes of the majority. If the majority would ever opt for the end of the union, Britain would establish necessary legislation to end its rule. Second, the Irish government recognized the principle of consent as a prerequisite for Irish unity, irrespective of Article 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Irish Republic. Fra McKann, Sinn Fein MLA from West Belfast, underlines that the Provisional IRA had realized that they could not defeat Britain by the use of force and they had to produce new politics to move the process forward:

Obviously, the decision to call a ceasefire was a decision made by the IRA themselves. I think that there was a growing realization within republican circles that the British government and the British military could not defeat the IRA and I think that there was also realization that the IRA could not defeat the British military. There was a belief there that if that was the case, then what you needed to do was to look for a new way forward and to bring the process forward. I know that there were quite a number of senior Irish republicans who went out and spoke to, what would-be called senior opinion makers, whether it is the Catholic churches, Protestant churches, the business. I mean, to find out how you move the process forward. Our leadership was also involved in discussions with the leaders such as John Hume from the SDLP and in privately with the British and with the Irish governments. I think what happened was that then the IRA believed that there was a new way of uniting the country and that was the peaceful means and methods.⁷²

The USA became more involved in conflict resolution initiatives in Northern Ireland with the presidency of Bill Clinton (1993-2001). While multi-party talks went on and off, Tony Blair replaced Major in May 1997 and gave further impetus to the peace process with the support of

71 William V. Shannon, "The Anglo-Irish Agreement", Spring 1986, *Foreign Affairs*, available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/40811/william-v-shannon/the-anglo-irish-agreement> (Accessed on 20 February 2015); "1985: Anglo-Irish agreement signed", *BBC News Online*, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/15/newsid_2539000/2539849.stm (Accessed on 23 February 2015).

72 Fra McKann, Sinn Fein MLA from West Belfast, 2 September 2014, Belfast, personal communication. Fra McKann organized Sinn Fein party campaigning after 1981 Hunger Strikers. He has been elected several times to Northern Ireland Assembly and he is currently Sinn Fein MLA from West Belfast.

Washington. The GFA in 1998 is considered as the apogee of the Northern Ireland peace process including not only constitutional parties but also paramilitaries and a wide range of civil society actors into negotiations. It is a comprehensive peace agreement which encompassed power-sharing Assembly and Executive, North–South institutions, the British–Irish Council and the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference. The consociational arrangements adopted by the GFA were an institutional formula to include sharply polarized unionist and nationalist cleavages into the political system. The DUP opposed the GFA since its most potent concern was, according to Nigel Dodds, Member of UK Parliament from the DUP that “the Agreement would allow front men for Irish Republican terrorists to assume positions in Government without committing to exclusively peaceful and democratic means.”⁷³ The Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended four times; the most lengthy and serious was between from October 2002 until May 2007 which was reinstated after the Saint Andrew’s Agreement in 2006. Institutionalizing the communal divide, the consociationalism also created electoral incentives for nationalist and unionist political parties to maintain nationalist-unionist cleavage structures and political competition based on ethnic divides. Biconfessional parties in search of both Protestant and Catholic support such as the Alliance Party are “squeezed out” by nationalist and unionists blocs.⁷⁴ The politics in Northern Ireland are not still ready for cooperation between nationalists and unionists without consociational arrangements. According to Anna Lo, South Belfast deputy of the Alliance Party, “the constitutional politics are still black or white... It is still either/or issue.”⁷⁵ However, the reintroduction of devolved government in 2007 was remarkable in the sense that the extreme parties of the past, the DUP and Sinn Fein, shared power and continue to share power in the collective government.

Conclusion

The case study of the Northern Ireland conflict displays that the cleavage structure and political competition which overlapped with bipolar ethno-political divide brought about the sharpening of ethnic relations in Northern Ireland by generating the political hegemony of the unionist Protestant majority against the nationalist Catholic minority. This political hegemony gave leeway to the UUP in power to reinforce its position by social, political, and economic discrimination of Catholics. The nationalist-unionist cleavage structure and the political competition based on plurality rule could not produce cross-cutting politics which could have moderated relations between British-Irish, Protestant-Catholic, unionist-nationalist divides. The ethnic grievances boiled over into intercommunal violence due to the reluctance of the UUP to respond to the demands of the Catholic community, the excessive counterinsurgency measures and the growing popularity of paramilitaries. The peace process which began after the introduction of direct rule was a search for compromise by incorporating the overlapping cleavages between Protestant/Unionist/British and Catholic/Nationalist/Irish identities by power-sharing arrangements.

73 Nigel Dodds, Democratic Unionist Member of Westminster Parliament for Belfast North, 28 August 2014, Belfast, Personal communication.

74 John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton, “Discourse in the Shadows: Discursive Construction and the Northern Ireland Assembly,” *Discourse & Society*, Vol.23, No.1, 2012, p.69-92.

75 Anna Lo, MLA from South Belfast in Alliance Party, 29 August 2014, Belfast, personal communication.

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