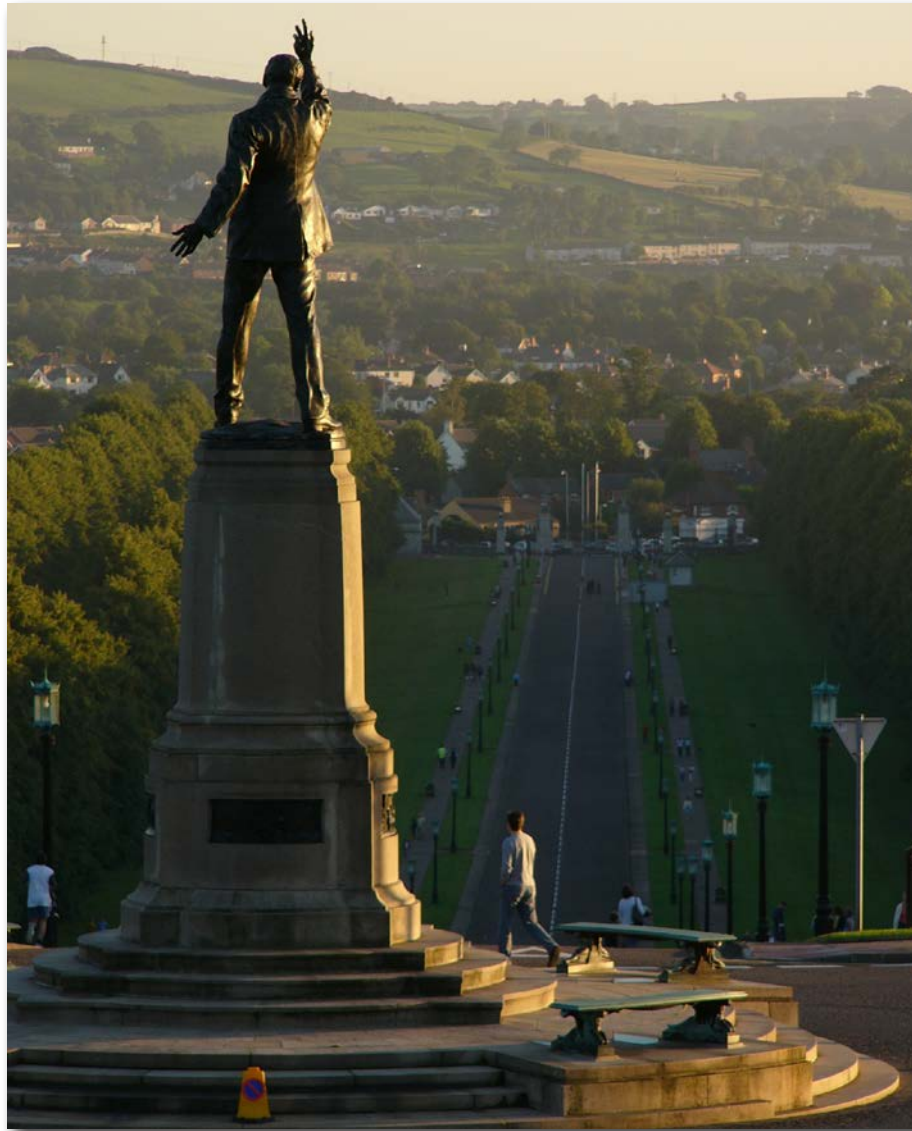




# British Politics Review

*Journal of the British Politics Society, Norway*

Volume 11 | No. 2 | Spring 2016



## Peace in Northern Ireland Miracle (almost) achieved?

### CONTRIBUTORS

Sophie Whiting • Peter McLoughlin • Fearghal McGarry • Arthur Aughey  
Eamonn O'Kane • Anne-Marie Forker • Kate Fearon • Jan Erik Mustad

## British Politics Review

Volume 11 | No. 2 | Spring 2016

ISSN 1890-4505

*British Politics Review* is a quarterly journal issued by the British Politics Society, Norway. With contributions from academic and journalistic sources, the *British Politics Review* is aimed at everyone with a general interest in political developments in Britain.

**British Politics Society, Norway** is politically neutral and has no collective agenda apart from raising the interest and knowledge of British politics among the informed Norwegian public.

### Editorial team

Øivind Bratberg [Editor]

Atle L. Wold [Editor]

Kristin M. Haugevik [Associate Editor]

Henry Allen [Associate Editor]

### Postal address

P.O. Box 6 Blindern  
N-0313 Oslo, Norway

### Email

mail@britishpoliticsociety.no

### Website

www.britishpoliticsociety.no

### Print

Reprosentralen, Oslo, Norway

### Cover photo

Front page: View from Parliament Buildings at Stormont, Belfast, with the statue of Edward Carson (1854-1935). Carson, an Irish Unionist politician, was a key advocate of exempting the six Ulster counties from the creation of the Irish Free State in 1921-22.

Photo by Robert Young. Downloadable from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament\\_Buildings\\_\(Northern\\_Ireland\)#/media/File:ViewfromStormont.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_Buildings_(Northern_Ireland)#/media/File:ViewfromStormont.jpg) (Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic).

### Manuscripts

Within a relatively broad framework, *British Politics Review* welcomes articles on British politics and society, preferably related to the thematic area set for each issue (announced in the previous issue and on our website). Please contact the editors at mail@britishpoliticsociety.no

### Subscriptions

200 NOK pr year

Please contact us at  
mail@britishpoliticsociety.no  
or visit our website.

## Editorial

# Northern Ireland, 10 years after St Andrews

“The War is over” is a phrase which has sometimes been used to describe the state of Northern Ireland after the Belfast (“Good Friday”) Agreement of 1998 – the famous breakthrough in the so-called “peace process” which seemed to spell the beginnings of a new era in Northern Ireland. With most political groups now committed to pursuing their political objectives by peaceful means only, it was finally possible to set up institutions of self-government for Northern Ireland, based on that principle of “power sharing” which had first been put forward during the most intense phase of the “Troubles” in 1973.

Yet the immediate years after 1998 were difficult ones, marked by problems related to the “decommissioning” of paramilitary arms, and repeated suspensions of the devolved institutions. Following an incident known as “Stormontgate” in 2002 (which involved the discovery of an alleged IRA spy ring inside Stormont), direct rule from London was again resumed, and the future of devolution to Northern Ireland would remain in limbo until a new breakthrough was reached at St Andrew in Scotland in 2006. St Andrews, however, provided the basis for a more stable arrangement for Northern Ireland, and since May 2007, the devolved institutions have been up and running.

This current issue of *British Politics Review* takes the lesser known St Andrews Agreement as its point of departure. Why was it that St Andrews provided for more stable devolution to Northern Ireland than the Belfast Agreement had done? The inclusion of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) which had refused to take part in the talks leading up to 1998 has often been cited, but beyond that: what is the legacy of St Andrews, and what is the state of Northern Ireland today?

Arthur Aughey looks at, precisely, the legacy of St Andrews, arguing that while devolution seems to be working, the story since 2006 has not been one of unmitigated success. Crucial for the peace process was the commitment made by the major paramilitary organisations to give up the use of violence, and Eamonn O’Kane and Jan Erik Mustad look at the challenges facing the IRA and the Loyalists respectively, in the current climate of peace. A striking feature of the development since St Andrews has been the rise of Sinn Féin, both north and south of the border, and this issue is addressed by Sophie Whiting. Peter McLoughlin takes the pulse of Northern Irish society per 2016, with a particular focus on the Good Friday Generation, the “Millenials”, while Kate Fearon looks at the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, addressing the impact this organisation has had on politics in Northern Ireland.

Finally, 2016 also marks the centenary of an arguably far more famous event than St Andrews, the Easter Rising of 1916, and Fearghal McGarry looks at, both the rebellion itself, its lasting implications for politics in Ireland, both north and south, and the current debates surrounding the commemorations of the Rising.

*Atle L. Wold & Øivind Bratberg (editors)*

## Contents

Northern Ireland in 2016: centenaries and forgotten decennials, elections and disenfranchised millennials  
*Peter McLoughlin* pp. 3-4

Easter 1916 and the politics of commemoration  
*Fearghal McGarry* pp. 5-6

Reflections on the tenth anniversary of the St Andrews Agreement  
*Arthur Aughey* pp. 7-8

Mainstream or revolutionary? The politics of Sinn Féin in 2016  
*Sophie Whiting* pp. 9-10

The IRA since St Andrews: They (still) haven’t gone away, you know  
*Eamonn O’Kane* pp. 11-12

The remains of Loyalism. Can dissidents spark a return to conflict?  
*Jan Erik Mustad* pp. 13-14

Northern Ireland and Brexit  
*Anne-Marie Forker* pp. 15-16

The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition: incipience, influence and impact  
*Kate Fearon* pp. 17-18

Speech by the Taoiseach Enda Kenny at the launch of ‘The GPO: Witness History’ on 25 March 2016  
pp. 19-20

# Northern Ireland in 2016: centenaries and forgotten decennials, elections and disenfranchised millennials

By Peter McLoughlin

Even by Northern Ireland's standards, 2016 is proving to be a politically eventful year – and we are not even halfway through. Firstly, we have a double centenary – one commemoration for each community, of course. Nationalists have already marked 100 years since the Easter Rising against British rule in Ireland – seen as a seminal moment in the emergence of an independent Irish state. Ironically, however, the Rising might also be seen as important to the birth of Northern Ireland. Before the Rising, Ulster unionists had already shown the staunchness of their opposition to the prospect of Home Rule for Ireland – that is the establishment of a Dublin parliament, allowing a measure of self-government for the county, whilst remaining firmly under the Empire and British Crown. The radicalisation of nationalist Ireland after the Rising, now struggling for a wholly independent republic, made any accommodation with unionism even less likely. The prospect of partition and two Irish states was the likely and eventual outcome.



*Peter McLoughlin is a Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast. His main research interests are on Northern Ireland and other divided societies. He is author of **John Hume and the Revision of Irish Nationalism** (MUP: 2010).*

The second centenary of 2016, July's memorial of the Battle of the Somme, is the one Ulster unionists are more likely to commemorate – though it should be noted that nearly as many southern Irishmen died fighting in British uniforms in WWI. However, it is the huge losses of Ulster's 36th Division at the Somme in particular that are most remembered by unionists. And again it can be argued that this episode made the partition of Ireland and creation of a northern state all the more likely. Unionists could now favourably compare their sacrifice for Britain with the republican insurgency against British rule just a few months earlier. Indeed, unionists depicted the Rising as a nationalist “stab in the back” for a Britain preoccupied with events on the Continent, contrasting this with their own sacrifice in France, and thus making it even more difficult for the London establishment to consider forcing them under Dublin's jurisdiction.

It is understandable, therefore, that these highly politicised centenaries are receiving all the headlines in both parts of Ireland. But we should remember that there is also an important decennial to mark this October – 10 years since the St. Andrew's Agreement. Of course, it could be argued that the Good Friday

Agreement eight years earlier was the more historic moment – the St. Andrew's deal essentially being an agreement to implement the former accord in its fullness. However, by finally bringing together the two most polarised parties in Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin and the DUP, and committing them to share political power, St. Andrew's was also an important milestone in our peace process.

It could also be argued that this year's Stormont election is a similar milestone – albeit a less obviously momentous marker. Firstly, the successful serving of two full and consecutive terms of parliament is often seen as a yardstick in terms of democratic stabilisation. Secondly, this election came 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement – not a particularly significant anniversary one might think, but one which meant that a number of young people born the same year as our foundational peace settlement were able to vote for the first time.

This particular demographic could be seen as the first truly post-conflict electorate – ‘the Good Friday Generation’ as a recent BBC Northern Ireland debate has dubbed them. And it seems like this cohort might be having some impact in quickening the pace of political change and normalisation in Northern Ireland. Indeed, whilst the recent election results were largely similar to the last – thus recreating the basis for a government again dominated by Sinn Féin and the DUP – there was tentative shifts. Firstly, the number of women in the Assembly increased by 50% – starting from a low 20 members, but importantly rising to 30. Secondly, the Greens were the party which saw the largest increase in their vote, helping double their representation to two seats. Meanwhile, the People before Profit Alliance also gained two seats, including a stunning, poll-topping performance in Sinn Féin's electoral heartland of West Belfast. These two parties command strong support amongst younger voters, and also share similar positions on the economy and the debates about sexual politics that have become prominent in Northern Ireland of late – again, primarily amongst young people. Thus, whilst a small group, representatives from these two parties might together assume an important role in providing an effective opposition to the government – especially under a system where all of the major parties can and previously have opted to sit in the Executive. By giving voice to anti-austerity politics, and pressing for change to allow for gay marriage and abortion in Northern Ireland, these parties can begin to articulate genuine political alternatives at Stormont.

Beyond this, however, there is a worrying political trend which again relates to young voters – that many do not vote. Indeed, in this election, like the last, nearly one in every two voters did not bother to exercise this fundamental democratic right. Whilst the demographic data regards this year's turnout has yet to be collated, evidence from recent elections in Northern Ireland and beyond shows that the youngest voters are often the least likely to go to the polls. Moreover, in Northern Ireland, such disaffection occurs under a PR system where, unlike Westminster's majoritarian method, it is far less likely that an individual's vote will be "wasted", and it is far easier to elect representatives of small or new parties – as proven by those who have just voted new Green and People before Profit candidates into Stormont. The point, of course, is that such change could have been much greater had the near half of the electorate who did not vote instead chose to do so and opted for candidates not aligned to either community.

Hopefully, the small change that has occurred will now act as an incentive for others to use their vote towards progressive ends – and hopefully this example will take effect quickly. Indeed, for despite all the emphasis on dates in this year's calendar which mark past events or achievements, we still have another poll to come which could massively affect the future. The EU referendum on June 23rd has huge import for all citizens of UK, but especially the Good Friday Generation and those who follow in Northern Ireland – the one part of the UK which actually borders another EU state, and thus where change could be most dramatic and possibly destabilising. In this regard the EU referendum could nearly be as important as that on the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. And once again, the youth vote could be crucial. Although evidence suggests that younger generations are much more likely to have pro-EU views than older cohorts – and although younger voters are the group whose lives will be most affected by the poll over time – the same concern over turnout prevails. Older voters might be more negative about the EU, but they are also more positive about expressing their opinion in the way that counts most – not in bars, cafes, or on social

media, but in the polling booth.

It is vital that the Good Friday Generation build on the positive political achievements of those that went before them, whether the civil rights generation of the late 1960s – who were actually fighting for the right to vote as well as for other basic entitlements – or the activists of the 1990s – who laid the foundations for the peace process and the democratic settlement we enjoy today. Beyond Northern Ireland, young people born at the time of this settlement or near the end of the 1990s are often called 'the millennials', and concern is growing for their increasing disenfranchisement. The millennials might be the first generation in history to be worse off than their parents in socio-economic terms – accruing huge debts if they seek a university education, yet being much less likely to own their own house, hold a job for life, or enjoy adequate healthcare and pensions as they age. But millennials in Northern Ireland, our Good Friday Generation, have even more to fight for, and even less to be complacent about. After decades of conflict and instability, democracy here is still in its infancy – it needs to be nurtured, made sturdier, and more mature its preoccupations. A fair distribution of society's wealth – not flags and parades – should be our concerns. Sexual rights for all – not the statutes of religious conservatives who helped perpetuate past discrimination – should be the order of the day. And a sustainable environmental future – rather than simply commemorating the deeds of those a hundred years in the past – should now be our goal.

Like millennials elsewhere, the Good Friday Generation should be the demographic most eager to use their vote – a right made all the more vital as their socio-economic stake and so relative power in society is being continually eroded by post-crash austerity politics. They must avoid the cynicism that suggests that voting changes nothing, and see that – for all the positive potential of other forms of political activity – marking a bit of paper and placing it in a ballot box is still the single action most likely to make a real difference in what our politicians do and how our society is governed. June 23rd is their next opportunity to show that they recognise this basic political fact, and engage in this sacred democratic act.



**Centre of power.** The Parliament Buildings in Belfast, located in the Stormont Estate area of Belfast. Housing the Parliament of Northern Ireland until its suspension in 1972, it is now the home of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Photo: Robert Young (flickr)

# Easter 1916 and the politics of commemoration

By Fearghal McGarry

On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, one thousand rebels occupied the General Post Office and other buildings across the centre of Dublin. Organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Rising was supported by the Irish Citizen Army and a radical minority within the Irish Volunteers. Its leaders were motivated by a range of influences – from republicanism and cultural revivalism to Catholic nationalism and socialism – but they were united in the belief that an insurrection, even if unsuccessful, could revive separatist fortunes. The rebellion was a response to the First World War but it was intended to destroy the possibility of a post-war Home Rule settlement that would have created a weak Irish parliament subject to UK sovereignty.



*Fearghal McGarry is a reader in modern history at Queen's University Belfast. He has written widely on modern Irish history, and his most recent publications include *The Abbey Rebels of 1916*, *A Lost Revolution* (Gill & Macmillan, 2015) and *The Rising, Ireland: Easter 1916* (OUP, 2011).*

Confronted by twenty thousand British army soldiers, the rebels had capitulated by the end of the week. Although a military failure, the insurrection achieved its propagandistic aims. The execution of 16 leaders and arrest of 3,500 nationalists by the British authorities led to popular support for republicanism. The rebellion's impact was also felt internationally, particularly in the United States where it was covered on the front page of the New York Times for over two weeks. In 1918 a majority in Ireland voted for an Irish Republic in the UK general election, leading to further conflict following the suppression of the revolutionary assembly established by Sinn Féin. The IRA's campaign of guerrilla warfare subsequently gave way to the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty which copper fastened partition and ceded dominion government to twenty-six Southern counties. The 'anti-treaty' minority which opposed this compromise was crushed by Irish Free State forces in the Civil War of 1922-23. In 1949, amidst limited public enthusiasm, an Irish Republic was eventually established on the 33rd anniversary of the outbreak of the rebellion.

Over the past century the Easter Rising has come to symbolise both the revolutionary struggle for independence and the attainment of Irish sovereignty. By establishing a creation myth for the new State, the rebellion provided a potent source of political capital but its contested legacy also proved divisive. When the Irish Free State

was inaugurated it rooted its legitimacy not in the Treaty that established its authority, or the 1918 general election, but the un-mandated blood sacrifice of 1916, a development that did not prevent the widows of the rebellion's executed leaders from boycotting State commemoration of the Rising. Although Eamon de Valera's anti-Treaty Fianna Fáil repudiated the Free State's claim to the legacy of the Rising, his party placed even greater emphasis on its commemoration when it won power in 1932. Perhaps the most striking feature of 'official' commemoration was the extent to which the most revolutionary event in modern Irish history was reimagined by a socially conservative State. On both sides of the Treaty divide, the State's ruling parties emphasised the Catholic sacrificial dimension of the Rising rather than the Proclamation's radical promise of 'religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens'. Feminists, the Protestant minority and liberal intellectuals were among those marginalised after Irish independence.

The Irish State's efforts to shape the meaning of 1916 have always met with resistance. In 1966, against a background of improving North-South relations, the attempt of the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Seán Lemass to construct a modern civic patriotism failed to displace decades of anti-partitionist grievance. In Northern Ireland, where the Rising represented unfinished business rather than national sovereignty, the fiftieth anniversary was exploited by the emerging loyalist demagogue Ian Paisley to stoke communal tensions. Its most direct consequence in the North was not, as is often claimed, the revival of the IRA and outbreak of the Troubles but the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force and a campaign of loyalist violence against Catholics. The conflict that followed, which saw the Provisional IRA depict itself as the inheritors of the legacy of 1916, profoundly influenced popular attitudes to the Rising, particularly in the South where intellectuals and revisionist historians drew attention to the destructive impact of Ireland's tradition of elitist violence. By the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1991, which took place against a backdrop of sectarian violence in the North, commemoration of 1916 no longer evoked political or public enthusiasm in the Irish Republic. In contrast, the 90th anniversary – occurring in the wake of the Belfast Agreement and Celtic Tiger prosperity – saw the restoration of the military parade in Dublin (suspended following the outbreak of the Troubles) and renewed enthusiasm for 1916.

In terms of its scale and popularity, as well as the level of State involvement, the parallels between 2016 and 1966 seem the most striking. There is, however, a substantial difference this time round: the Irish State's desire to balance patriotic celebration with a more nuanced acknowledgement of the Rising's historical complexity. For much of the past century, remembering 1916 meant forgetting Home Rule, the alternative future that most Irish people took for granted prior to the rebellion, and overlooking Irish nationalist participation in the First World War (in which some 200,000 Irishmen served). In contrast, the Irish government's decision to frame 1916 as part of a Decade of Centenaries, which incorporates both the Home Rule crisis and First World War, has restored the era's political losers to the national narrative. Neglected victims of the Rising – including civilians (who accounted for the majority of deaths during Easter week), policemen and Crown forces (many of them Irish) – have for the first time been prominently commemorated. The radical dimension of the Rising has also been retrieved, with the 'Éirebrushed' role of women in particular coming to the fore. As with previous commemorations, these developments reflect both the State's desire to create a usable memory of 1916 and changing Irish values. The liberalisation of society following the collapse of Catholic authority, evidenced by the recent equal marriage referendum, as well as improved Anglo-Irish relations, are shaping a more inclusive memory of Ireland's past.

Although the government's programme – which involves cultural events, historical reflection, and includes schoolchildren and the diaspora alongside more traditional State rituals – has generally met with approval, the points of tension which have emerged demonstrate how the meaning of 1916 is being renegotiated. The State's shift from a republican to pluralist narrative has not gone uncontested. In combining a call for a full acknowledgement of 'the multiple readings of history, and of the multiple identities and traditions which are part of the historical experience' with its assertion that 'the State should not be expected to be neutral about its own existence', the government's Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations anticipated the potential for tension between the demands of reconciliation and historical integrity.

The State's official programme was initially criticised for evading the militancy and violence at the heart of the Easter Rising. 1916 relatives

"For much of the past century, remembering 1916 meant forgetting Home Rule, the alternative future that most Irish people took for granted prior to the rebellion, and overlooking Irish nationalist participation in the First World War (in which some 200,000 Irishmen served)."

groups and radical republican organisations have discerned in the State's new narrative an attempt to posit a moral equivalence between republicans and imperialists. Criticism has centred on the unveiling of a memorial at Glasnevin Cemetery which lists without distinction the names of rebels, civilians, and British soldiers. Some of this appears disingenuous. Sinn Féin, which opposes the idea of a hierarchy of victims in the Northern Irish Troubles, has condemned the memorial for listing 'indiscriminately together Irish freedom fighters and British crown forces'. However, that party's critics have accused it of seeking to exploit the Rising by establishing a commemorative programme in parallel to that of the State, and through its discreet sponsorship of historical exhibitions linking the events of 1916 with the 1981 Hunger Strike.

It would be naïve to expect any consensus on whether the Irish State has successfully balanced the need for inclusivity with historical integrity in 2016 but the government's response to the Glasnevin controversy demonstrates how the times are changing. Asserting that "all lives are equal", the minister with responsibility for commemoration, Heather Humphreys – a Presbyterian whose grandfather signed the Ulster Covenant – robustly defended the memorial, reiterating the government's intention

to host an event commemorating British soldiers killed in the course of suppressing the Rising. What is clear is that the widespread public and media engagement with the centenary has allowed a wide range of views to be expressed. On 24 April 2016, as thousands took to Dublin's streets to "Reclaim the Vision of 1916", an initiative critical of what it sees as the ambivalence of the State's commemorative programme, a small ceremony was held outside Dublin Castle to mark the death of Constable James O'Brien, the first victim of the Rising. After its conclusion, a great-granddaughter of Seán Connolly – the man responsible for killing O'Brien (and who would later become one of the first rebels to die) placed flowers alongside the wreath laid by the British ambassador to Ireland, a poignant and unexpected gesture reflecting the conciliatory mood of the centenary. Who knows what the signatories of the Proclamation would have made of all this, but many in Ireland see this unprecedented willingness to remember all the victims of Easter week as an indication of the self-confidence of an Irish State which now looks to its closest neighbour as a good neighbour and equal partner rather than former oppressor.

# Reflections on the tenth anniversary of the St Andrews Agreement

By Arthur Aughey

The St Andrews Agreement has an interesting provenance. When, after 1989, Hegel's *Philosophy of History* had come back into vogue – even if Francis Fukuyama's interpretation was questionable – Hegelian reflections were respectable again, even in Northern Ireland, if only because Northern Ireland's history-as-the Troubles appeared to be over. If there was what some hailed as a 'new beginning' it was difficult to perceive it in the instability of the institutions established by the Belfast Agreement of 1998 and the bitter arguments about the release of paramilitary prisoners, police reform and IRA arms decommissioning. My description of the new political dispensation then was 'a modification of Northern Irish circumstances' which was a sceptical, though not dismissive, judgement of the times. How modified – and in what way – the St Andrews Agreement was later to demonstrate. I suggest that it demonstrated, firstly, a distinctive variation on Lampedusa's celebrated paradox in his novel *The Leopard* and, secondly, a politically convenient Hegelian reading of history.

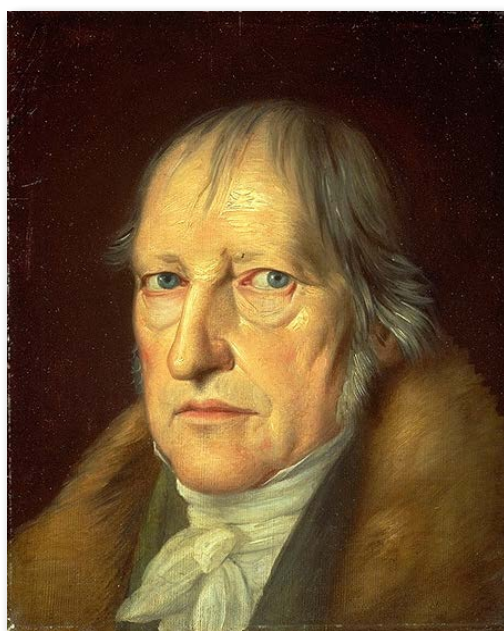
**Lampedusa's paradox.** For unionists, if things were to stay the same (the Union continues and majority consent is affirmed) things would have to change (executive authority shared with nationalists and republicans as well as an all-Ireland dimension). For nationalists, if things were to change (a potential transition to Irish unity) things would also have to stay the same (unity could only be achieved on the basis of Unionist consent which meant accepting Northern Ireland's place within the Union). For this formula to work, the character of post-1998 politics could take one of two forms: either a moderate, controlling 'centre' – the Ulster Unionist and Social Democratic and Labour parties who together had negotiated



Arthur Aughey is a Professor of Politics at the University of Ulster. From 2008 to 2011 he held a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship and was until recently a member of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and the British Council (Northern Ireland Committee). He has published extensively on the politics of Northern Ireland, British Conservatism and constitutional change in the UK.

the institutions of the Agreement – would establish the operational template of the Assembly and Executive; or the 'radical' parties – Democratic Unionists, who had absented themselves from negotiations and rejected the outcome and Sinn Féin, which had not been centrally involved in negotiating the institutions – would do so and in the process, ironically, becoming stabilising forces. The question was not simply: Who could deliver their respective communities? It was also: Who could deliver for their respective communities? Enter Hegel.

**Hegels' reconciliation.** One interpretation of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* reads: meaning in history is already fulfilled insofar as it is in the process of being fulfilled. If 'radicals' wish to adopt a 'conservative' position this is an attractive reading of the historical moment. I would argue that the St. Andrews Agreement displays that transition. On the one hand, Sinn Féin was already selling the post-1998 dispensation as transitional to Irish unity: history is as it ought to be because it is on the way to becoming what it should be. In the meantime the 'ought' (Irish unity) takes the shape of the 'is' (working the devolved arrangements at Stormont) and Sinn Féin becomes a stabilising, not a destabilising, political force. On the other hand, the value of this trajectory to the British and Irish Governments was obvious: its potential to reconcile republican supporters to Northern Ireland's existence by encouraging them to believe that it was in the process of becoming radically other.



**Hegelian reading.** What can G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) teach us about the Northern Ireland peace process? Portrait painting by Jacob Schlessinger (1831).

This was the opportunity as well as the condition for Sinn Féin to replace the SDLP as the dominant party of nationalism. By 2003, reconciling that particular 'is' and 'ought' clearly appealed to a majority of nationalist voters. Furthermore, this constitutionalising of republicanism explains the willingness of the authorities to make allowances for certain forms political violence. Since that violence had already become other than what it was (no bombing campaign or attacks on the security forces) it was judged to be in the process of becoming what it ought to be (accepting the legitimacy of the new police service).

**The St Andrews synthesis.** For republicans seeking solace for military defeat, that Hegelian interpretation makes sense but did it make sense for the DUP? Had not its leadership denounced the 1998 Agreement and all its works? Was it not condemned as a betrayal of loyal Ulster? A similar construction can explain the DUP's political trajectory. After its electoral success in 2003, displacing the UUP as the largest party, the DUP had shifted to the more accommodating position of arguing that agreement – if not *this* Agreement – was not only in the process of becoming what it ought to be (through renegotiation of aspects unpalatable to unionists) but also that in most respects it *already was* what it ought to be, if only because the DUP had signalled *its* willingness to make a deal. Prior to the St Andrews Agreement, the then deputy leader, Peter Robinson, claimed that only an agreement which satisfied the DUP could be both politically authentic and secure long-term stability.

All it took now was for Sinn Fein to properly commit to exclusively democratic politics, arms decommissioning and acceptance of the police. On that basis, the DUP could legitimately share power with Sinn Fein. The St Andrews Agreement, then, provided the DUP with the opportunity to re-enter the Executive in May 2007 – not as an opponent of the system but as a defender. The DUP and Sinn Fein – now communally hegemonic parties – could reconcile the “is” and the “ought” by doing what self-interest required. What astonished international opinion – the DUP's Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness conducting the business of First and Deputy First Minister with bonhomie – had been some years in the making. If these they appeared like the TV double act Barry and Paul Elliott (the Chuckle Brothers), the political arrangements they dominated owed much to this (conceptual) synthesis of Hegel and Lampedusa.

**The St Andrews legacy.** The operation of the Executive and the Assembly since St Andrews has been – to put it politely – dysfunctional. One scholar has described it as not so much power-sharing as a cross between power-splitting and power-snaring. I think two points are worth making about its legacy, one which reveals an irony of inversion and one which exhibits a communal intensification of political choice.

Firstly, when one considers the centrality of the issue of cross border links in recent Irish history – especially within unionism where it was considered a mechanism to promote Irish unity – well, who talks of it now? In an irony of inversion, one can argue that North-Southerly (as it became known in the 1990s) has, in practical matters, helped to

secure the Union if only because it demonstrates the very lack of integrative ambition on the part of the Irish Government. Despite the efforts of Sinn Fein to argue otherwise, opinion polls suggest that northern nationalism does not accord unity any pressing significance. Though the DUP attacked the UUP remorselessly after 1998 over the existence of north-south institutions, the party has used St Andrews to legitimise its own easy adjustment to their continued operation.

Secondly, the change to the electoral rules following St Andrews meant that the largest party takes the post of First Minister and not, as previously, the largest party of the majority community. This has effectively (and intentionally) promoted the ‘largest party’ dynamic within each community. For example, in the current election campaign for the Assembly, the DUP's deputy leader Nigel Dodds has claimed that there would be ‘chaos’ if the DUP failed to be returned as the largest party. The message is a simple one: unionist voters must stop Martin McGuinness becoming First Minister. It worked in the last Assembly election and the only modification of the strategy this time is a novel presentational bias. The new DUP leader, Arlene Foster, is now promoted not only as the ‘face’ of the campaign but also as a quasi-presidential figurehead. DUP candidates are all on message and ‘backing Arlene for FM [First Minister]’. The Sinn Fein campaign is less self-consciously presidential but it too promotes a similar, if inverse message: a vote for us is the only way to beat the DUP and to promote the nationalist interest.

**Conclusion.** If one were seeking a post-St Andrews metaphor for Northern Ireland politics, I suggest a democratic engine in neutral. The system consumes resources, it makes a lot of noise, it ticks over, every now and then its revving threatens permanent and lasting damage, energy is expended and yet it doesn't make much progress as the recent crisis over welfare expenditure showed. Things seem geared for party interests but, with declining electoral participation, the public is increasingly disengaged. That the significance of the Assembly is not what it does but that it is has some merit in a society so recently defined by terrorist violence. The St Andrews Agreement secured functioning institutions. Should we expect anything more constructive than that? To ask that question is to ask of its citizens (just as the poet Philip Larkin asked of ‘days’): ‘Where can you live but Northern Ireland?’ If not the ‘priest and the doctor’, possibly only novelists and philosophers can answer that question.



# Mainstream or revolutionary? The politics of Sinn Féin in 2016

By Sophie Whiting



*Sophie Whiting is a Lecturer in Politics at the University of Bath. Her research centres on political violence within the context of global peace processes as well as post-devolution and gender politics in the UK.*

In the decades before the Northern Irish peace process, Sinn Féin were described as a fringe anti-system protest organisation subordinate to the Provisional IRA (PIRA). Reference to Sinn Féin was generally in relation to their armed counterpart, where any introduction of the party was accompanied by the preface, 'political wing of the IRA'.

Today, Sinn Féin's republicanism maintains a wholly political focus. In 2003 Sinn Féin overtook their moderate nationalist rivals, the SDLP, to become the largest nationalist party in the Northern Irish Assembly. In the South, the party has maintained a steady electoral growth and with Fianna Fáil propping up a minority Fine Gael government, Sinn Féin has assumed the main voice of opposition.

Across both sides of the Irish border, two very different political contexts, Sinn Féin is attempting to preserve an anti-establishment sentiment and maintain claims to a united Ireland, whilst also being an effective political party, be it in opposition or in government. The challenge now for Sinn Féin, is how to stretch their electoral appeal further whilst maintaining support within their traditional republican heartlands.

**The rise of politics.** In the early phase of the Northern Irish conflict, central to the republican strategy of getting the 'Brits out' and achieving a united Ireland was the sustained military campaign of the PIRA. Politics played an auxiliary role to armed struggle where Sinn Féin served as a mouthpiece for the actions of the PIRA.

From the early 1980s onwards the primacy of armed struggle ebbed away as realism and pragmatism overshadowed the limited potential gains of a military campaign. Under the dual-strategy of 'Armalite and ballot-box' attention shifted to a second front of electoralism where Sinn Féin's political strategy was placed in partnership with the PIRA's continuing violence. Electoral rewards soon followed with the party having a major breakthrough in the 1982 Assembly elections and Gerry Adams winning the West Belfast seat in the 1983 general election, gaining 43% of the nationalist vote. Amidst the initial promise of electoral growth Deputy Leader Martin McGuinness still avowed an attachment to an armed strategy by claiming it was down to

'the cutting edge of the IRA' to deliver freedom in Ireland rather than votes and winning elections.

Despite the early electoral gains, for as long as the PIRA continued its campaign, there was a ceiling on Sinn Féin's support. It was therefore untenable to maintain the armed front of the PIRA whilst embarking on a project designed to make Sinn Féin become the dominant force within Northern Irish nationalism. By the mid 1980s, amongst high civilian casualties, successful British government coercion and containment policies and frustration felt amongst the rank and file, it was becoming harder to justify continuing an armed campaign. Amongst such setbacks the party developed a more sophisticated electoral strategy and with it engaged in a peace process to end the three decades of conflict in the region.

For the majority within Sinn Féin and the PIRA, this revision represented the evolution of tactical considerations; a natural development in order to adjust to contextual realities. For others it was a sell out. Accepting the terms of the peace process meant acknowledging Northern Ireland as a political entity whilst the partition of the island would exist as long as the majority of citizens so wished. Sinn Féin had accepted an agreement with no guarantee of their ultimate republican goal of a united Ireland.

Whilst there had previously been suspensions of the PIRA's armed campaign, most notably the 1994 and 1997 ceasefires, the ability to resume a military campaign remained. Full decommissioning of weapons and the PIRA 'leaving the scene' represented a new departure and meant that by the time of the St Andrews Agreement in 2006, Sinn Féin had evolved unimaginably from its form in the 1970s and early 1980s.

**A change of strategy?** Whilst Sinn Féin bears many characteristics of a modern political party they are unique in their lineage to a revolutionary past and association to an armed organisation. The transition from an armed to political campaign requires clandestine organisations to adapt to the demands of party politics within the constitutional arena. Rebel groups are organised in a way conducive to irregular armed campaigns, which requires hierarchical command structures, secrecy and a close-knit leadership. Political parties on the other hand face a different set of demands ranging from the creation of a full time and professional organisation, devising a political platform and selecting party representatives.

The ability for parties to adapt to a changing political environment is key to their success and survival. With the PIRA 'leaving the scene' and Sinn Féin supporting the peace process, the party was rewarded electorally. Yet, political parties with roots in a revolutionary past are not 'new' organisations, historical and organisational legacies exist. Such legacies were made apparent in October 2015 following the murder of former PIRA member, Kevin McGuigan. A key line of police enquiry in relation to the murder involved members of the PIRA. A subsequent independent report on paramilitary activity in the region concluded that the main decision making body of the PIRA, the Army Council, continues to oversee Sinn Féin with an overarching strategy, yet with a 'wholly political focus'. Such developments demonstrated the continued existence of paramilitary structures in Northern Ireland and highlighted the complexity of organisations evolving from an armed campaign into the constitutional arena.

The positioning of Sinn Féin centre stage and the gradual demotion of an armed campaign required strong leadership and internal party cohesion. Whilst some have criticised Sinn Féin for being 'cult-like' and intolerant to internal debate, strong leadership has been central to the cohesion and electoral success of the party. Whilst the PIRA of the 1970s is far beyond recall, the continued existence of a command structure enabled the organisation to traverse post conflict politics to become the largest nationalist force in Northern Ireland.

**Sinn Féin in 2016.** Despite the rebranding of Sinn Féin's republicanism, the party has remained relatively unified in that it has retained most members and indeed expanded. Along with strong leadership and professionalisation, central to party adaptation has been Sinn Féin's attempts to broaden their electoral appeal. Sinn Féin's electoral growth has not occurred by attracting unionist voters in Northern Ireland but has been based upon attracting previous non-voters and middle class nationalists. The party's appeal is therefore based on a 'catch-self' rather than 'catch-all' strategy. Despite this, Sinn Féin have de-ghettoised to broaden their electoral support base where discussion has moved beyond prisoner releases, decommissioning or policing reform to the prospect of the party governing on both sides of the border.

In a drive to grow Sinn Féin's representation across the island of Ireland, party president Gerry Adams became an elected member of Dáil Éireann in 2011. In stark contrast to the 1980s when Adams was banned from TV and radio, he is now leading a party with 23 representatives, a jump from 14 in the last election.

In Northern Ireland, the party is lead by Martin McGuinness who has been Deputy First Minister since 2007. As the dominant nationalist and unionist parties respectively, Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party remain the driving forces behind Northern Irish politics. However, in the 2016 Assembly elections, Sinn Féin dropped a seat and their overall vote share fell by 3%. Sinn Féin's campaign message rested on positioning itself as the party of the left who could stand up to Conservative party cuts from Westminster. Despite this, the radical left anti-austerity party, People Before Profit (PBP), elected its first two MLAs in the traditional republican heartlands of West Belfast and Derry. PBP only gained 2% of overall vote across Northern Ireland but the party has a narrow, yet targeted electoral appeal. Their success suggests that first time and younger voters cannot be taken for granted by Sinn Féin. PBP's anti-austerity message also has resonance in working class areas and present the first electoral challenge from the left to Sinn Féin.

**Mainstream revolutionaries?** Sinn Féin is attempting to strike two opposing targets at the one time. On one extreme, the party continues to abstain from Westminster, they do not recognise the term 'Northern Ireland' in internal documents and espouse a commitment to a united Ireland within the tradition of the 1916 rebels. On the other, party leaders have attended events hosted by the British Head of State and greeted members of the Royal Family to Northern Ireland. Opposition to austerity measures and the party's anti-establishment veneer is juxtaposed to scenes that place the party firmly within the constitutional box of British politics. A consistent party image may become even more difficult as the party wears different hats either side of the border.

There is no doubt that Sinn Féin remain the dominant force within Northern Irish nationalism, the party has reaped rewards by broadening their appeal beyond traditional republican heartlands. Yet recent election results question whether the party's anti-establishment veneer is losing its shine.



**Cross-border.** Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, became an elected member of Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Republic of Ireland's legislature, in 2011.

# The IRA since St Andrews: They (still) haven't gone away, you know

By Eamonn O'Kane



*Eamonn O'Kane is Reader in Conflict Studies at the University of Wolverhampton. He is co-author, with Paul Dixon, of Northern Ireland Since 1969 (Longman, 2011) and is currently writing a book for Manchester University Press on the Peace Process.*

In an aside whilst addressing a large rally in Belfast in August 1995 Sinn Féin's President, Gerry Adams, responded to a shout from the crowd to 'bring back the IRA' with the observation, 'they haven't gone away you know'. The comment was made at a time of frustration amongst republicans that twelve months after the IRA had called a ceasefire the political party associated with them, Sinn Féin, had not been allowed into all-party talks.

The peace process in Northern Ireland was to be marked by crises and setbacks over the following two decades, many of which were related to debates around the status, tactics and existence of the IRA (the group that was responsible for most deaths during the Troubles period). The talks that led to the St Andrews Agreement over a decade after Adams's observations were designed to try and draw a line under these issues and enable sustained government to be re-established in Northern Ireland. In July 2005 the IRA had announced it had 'formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. ... All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms. ... Volunteers must not engage in any other activities whatsoever.' The international commission that had been set up to deal with the decommissioning issue confirmed a month later that "the IRA has met its commitment to put all its arms beyond use'. In October 2006 the International Monitoring Commission said the IRA 'has disbanded "military" structures...We do not believe that PIRA is now engaged in terrorism' and concluded that there was 'convincing evidence of PIRA's continuing commitment to the political path'. The agreement by Sinn Féin to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) as part of the St Andrew's Agreement process was the final part in the jigsaw

which enabled devolved government to be restored to Northern Ireland the following year.

Yet hopes that the St Andrews Agreement would mark the end of crises over the Provisional IRA were to prove false. The killing of a former IRA man, Kevin McGuigan, in Belfast in August 2015 caused the devolved government to come close to collapse. The PSNI's suggestion that the structures of the IRA still existed and that members of the organisation may have been involved in the killing caused Unionists to re-evaluate their willingness to share government with Sinn Féin. Despite protestations from senior Sinn Féin politicians that the IRA were not involved and that the organisation had 'left the stage' the British government had to undertake an inquiry in an attempt to prevent the collapse of the devolved government. In October 2015 a report concluded that "the structures of PIRA remain in existence in a much reduced form. This includes a senior leadership the 'Provisional Army Council'". The report argued that 'PIRA members believe' the IRA's Army Council 'oversees both PIRA and Sinn Féin with an overarching strategy' and that the IRA 'continues to have access to some weapons'.

It might have been expected that the revelation that the IRA still existed, had access to weapons and some role in overseeing the actions of Sinn Féin, would exacerbate the crisis. However, on the back of the report the largest Unionist party, the DUP, agreed to stay in government and the crisis was averted. There are several reasons for this.

"Sinn Féin's position is an interesting one. It has always been their claim that the peace process reflected new realities in Northern Ireland; realities which meant that the goal of a united Ireland could be pursued more effectively by an unarmed political struggle rather than an armed, paramilitary one. But Sinn Féin did not disavow or criticise the armed struggle and the actions of the IRA during the Troubles period."

Firstly, as well as the points above, the report also found that the oversight by the Army Council had 'a wholly political focus'. The 'small number' of IRA members who were storing weapons did so to make sure they were not lost to dissident republican groups (who were still using violence) and those IRA members who were involved in violence or criminality were

acting independently and their actions had not been sanctioned by the IRA. The report claimed that the 'PIRA's leadership remains committed to the peace process and its aim of achieving a united Ireland by political means'.

Secondly, the parties and the governments entered into a new round of talks and agreed in November 2015 to the 'Fresh Start' document. This agreed to a new oath of office for Ministers who had to pledge 'to accept no authority, direction or control on my political activities other than my democratic mandate alongside my own personal and party judgment'. In addition they undertook 'to challenge all paramilitary activity and associated criminality' and 'to call for, and to work together with the other members of the Executive Committee to achieve, the disbandment of all paramilitary organisations and their structures'. These changes sought to deal with the problems of the relationship between Sinn Féin and the IRA and the continued existence of its structures.

The third reason that the claim of the continuance of the IRA was perhaps not as catastrophic as might have been expected relates to the wider purpose and outcome of the peace process. The moves that had been ongoing since the early 1990s in Northern Ireland were designed to end the violence there and steer the Provisional IRA away from the 'armed struggle'. In this respect it had been very successful. There had been signs even in the official reports on decommissioning that the IRA might not have destroyed its entire stockpile (the October 2006 IMC report had noted weapons had 'been withheld despite the instructions of the leadership'). The demand had not been that the IRA disband but disarm.

There was a perception, particularly during the earlier phases of the peace process, encouraged by Sinn Féin, that the IRA's continued existence was necessary to lead the movement and its members to the new political strategy and away from violence. It was felt that the IRA needed to continue to exist to reduce the likelihood that its members would join the (much smaller) dissident republican groups that remained committed to an armed struggle. Whilst the Provisional IRA remained in the shadows and did not use violence then its continuation as, what a former Irish Justice Minister called a 'husk organisation' was not highlighted or questioned. However, when the PSNI suggested in August 2015 that its members might be involved in violence, then the organisation was again a cause for crisis in the peace process.

Where then does this leave the Provisional IRA, Sinn Féin and the peace process? Sinn Féin's position is an interesting one. It has always been their claim that the peace process reflected new realities in Northern Ireland; realities which meant that the goal of a united Ireland could be

pursued more effectively by an unarmed political struggle rather than an armed, paramilitary one. But Sinn Féin did not disavow or criticise the armed struggle and the actions of the IRA during the Troubles period. The claim was that the Provisional IRA's armed struggle had been justified and necessary in the earlier period but (largely due to the advances that the armed struggle had secured) new opportunities now arose that made the armed struggle no longer necessary (and the continued use of violence by other groups calling themselves republicans was unjustified).

This move from arms to politics was one that enabled Sinn Féin to grow into the largest political party representing the nationalist community and the second largest party overall in Northern Ireland. The suggestion that the IRA still existed in some form does not seem to have had significant impact on the party's support given they only lost one seat in the Northern Ireland Assembly in the recent elections (to the socialist 'People before Profit'). British government reports have consistently stated that the IRA are not involved in recruitment and that the 'IRA of the Troubles period is well beyond recall'. The route into the Provisional republican movement now is via the political party, Sinn Féin, rather than the 'army' of the IRA. Historically the army was the driving force of the movement but as time passes the power structures and personnel within the movement will change.

The next generation of leaders of the Provisional movement will have had a different history and trajectory than the leadership of the Troubles-period. There remain threats to the peace process and there are deadly groups operating in Northern Ireland (as the killing of a prison officer by the 'New IRA' in Belfast in March this year demonstrates) but the Provisional IRA is not the threat it was. Given the benefits that Sinn Féin has secured from the IRA's abandonment of the armed struggle, the Provisional movement has become one of the strongest defenders of the peace process. The willingness of the Unionist parties to continue in government with them is indicative that they are no longer seen as a threat to the peace in Northern Ireland. There will inevitably be further hiccups and crises along the way but the Provisional IRA are fading towards history as an example of physical force republicanism in Northern Ireland.

# The remains of Loyalism. Can dissidents spark a return to conflict?

By Jan Erik Mustad



*Jan Erik Mustad is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Agder, Norway, and the author of numerous books on British politics and society. He is a regular commentator in the Norwegian media.*

Recently former British Prime Minister and one of the chief architects behind the Peace Process in Northern Ireland Tony Blair claimed that terrorism has little support in the communities of Northern Ireland. However Blair warns politicians not to drop their guard as segregation in certain areas still poses a threat to peace, albeit a small one. With segregated communities and grassroots levels still politically voting for "their own" candidates, there is still the odd chance for politics to break into sectarianism, according to Blair.

Interestingly, the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement), signed eighteen years ago, took for granted that peace had to be guaranteed by keeping the antagonists apart, in other words segregated. In the aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement, nearly fifty so-called peace walls were built to keep certain areas of Belfast and (London) Derry segregated. Nearly two decades later, it is precisely this «peacekeeping» move of segregation that has ignited a small if not insignificant threat to the province's peace and stability as there are still groups of dissident Republicans and Loyalists in these areas who try to destabilise the Peace Process. On the Loyalist side, there are fringe groups who operate within a sectarian mind-set, feeling a vivid threat from Republicans and indeed feel a need to protect their estates, their people and their legacies both culturally, politically, socially and religiously.

In post-conflict Northern Ireland, Loyalism has attracted lots of negative media attention. Loyalists are often seen as thugs and criminals who have not really left the old schisms of conflict behind, and they are often regarded as a homogenous group of brutal male criminals engaged in activities hostile to contemporary society. Moreover, some of them are frequently blamed for still adhering to a romantic vision of terror and violence, and a longing back to the days of violent conflict.

A frequently used stereotypical image of Loyalism is a tattooed muscular man walking his dog in a bare sleeveless shirt. However, this repetitive use of stereotypes blurs the picture and somehow restricts nuances from these communities to emerge, as is in fact the case with Loyalism. Even though there are still Loyalists who would wish to return to war and who feel betrayed and embittered about the Peace Process and developments in post-conflict Northern Ireland, there are a number of transitional and transformative Loyalists who have made and are making positive contributions towards peace and stability with changed lifestyles, refreshed mind-sets and new ways of viewing the world.

Hence, it is important to recognise some of these progressive elements of Loyalism before assessing whether the regressive and sectarian elements threaten the current peace. Ultimately, positive Loyalist shifts have contributed to conflict transformation, and in many of the former sectarian areas Loyalists are pursuing alternative goals such as human rights, education, social services and job creation rather than those of conflict, war and terror. Notably, that means that many Loyalists are finding that a shift of focus, into more meaningful activities, creates positive outcomes and attracts political attention to the needs of their own deprived communities. With the threat of Republicanism more or less removed, the success of St

Andrews and Northern Ireland's, at least for the time being, secure place within the UK, transitional Loyalists embrace community/voluntary work, addressing social and political exclusion in order to create safer and more prosperous communities. Keeping the narrative on these issues will prevent many Loyalists from dropping back down into the sectarian mind-set and thus stabilise many of the former war-torn areas. The next step on this path would be to gradually loosen up on segregation policies.

"With the threat of Republicanism more or less removed, [...] transitional Loyalists embrace community/voluntary work, addressing social and political exclusion in order to create safer and more prosperous communities... The next step on this path would be to gradually loosen up on segregation policies."

There are nevertheless some dissidents falling outside the Loyalist conflict transformation, who still believe that violence and terror is the way to solve differences. The crucial question is whether these dissidents may be viewed as a threat to the peace and the power sharing set up in Northern Ireland, and whether they can manage to reignite the old sectarian rhetoric and lead to actions threatening the Peace Process.

There is no doubt that there are still regressive elements within Loyalism who have not left their old agenda behind and who attempt to increase tension by maintaining the discourse from the Troubles. Members of such groups like the Orange Volunteers and Red Hand Defenders are few, but count some dozens of Loyalists who do not believe the struggle to be over and see the need to protect their own communities, their people and not least the doctrines of Protestantism. Both the mentioned organisations are regarded as Protestant fundamentalists who still see themselves being in the middle of a holy war, using religious rhetoric in the fight for Protestant domination. Looking back to the early phases of the Troubles, it is not difficult to locate the sources of this rhetoric and how it had been maintained in some of these Loyalist sectarian areas. Current and former leaders of political parties, people like Ian Paisley and Peter Robinson, were part of Ulster resistance movements in the 1970s and 80s where they gave inflammatory speeches designed to stir up Loyalist action through the preservation of their own culture, religion and identity.

Many studies have blamed Paisley for violent and militant Loyalist resistance in the way he fused religious and political discourses. He was the founder of both the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Free Presbyterian Church, and notably, it seems to be in the intersection point between Protestant fundamentalism and «the-no-surrender» politics that his urge for action and mobilisation came through, awakening loyalists to fight for Ulster in the early 70s. Traces of Paisley's discourse can clearly be found in some of the dissident groups in today's Northern Ireland. Even though the image of the «other» - the real or assumed threat from Republicanism - has diminished, these Loyalists still feel under siege, directing their narrative towards a defence of Ulster, their own culture and religion and indeed their identity. Loyalist informants, in numerous interviews with the author, have revealed a sense of betrayal at a variety of levels and that their own leaders led them up a «golden path» just to desert them «when the going got tough».

Among dissidents a common view is that Loyalists have lost out on all fronts and that there exists a need to assert their own identity and existence, as Unionist politicians do not do that for them. Feeling let down by the likes of Paisley and Robinson in the DUP adds to the perception of Loyalist marginalisation and disillusionment. Dissidents view the political door to be closed and hence, they need to

continue to fight in order to be heard, seen and taken account of. Demonstrations, marches and other street activities á la the 70s, are reminders that loyalists have not disappeared and that some of them are still willing to use violence and terror to show that.

Another predominant notion in these groups is that the Peace Process was Republican-dominated and driven, and that British governments would sacrifice everything, even the people loyal to them, in return for a Republican cessation of violence. As the zero-sum game attitude still prevails among members of these groups, Republican concessions happen at the expense of the loyalists, and consequently, Loyalism must fight for their existence. During the Troubles, Loyalist resistance was seen as a response to Republican threats linked to the imposition of Irish hegemony, while currently, the latter argument is still being used. Seeing themselves as victims of the political Peace Process, the political transformation has left behind and slowed down the social transformation. A few decades ago, unemployment, poor housing, social deprivation and low economic performance were associated with Republican urban areas. Lately, these conditions have been transferred to the loyalist areas and poor social conditions have ignited much anger and frustration among Loyalists.

Even though the Loyalist picture is nuanced, internal feuding has contributed to the public idea that they are groups of thugs and criminals. In fact, several of the transformative Loyalists have blamed regressive elements to still possess these outdated traits and generally give Loyalism bad publicity and a bad reputation. The low number of dissidents are not looked upon as a threat to power sharing and the political Peace Process by Northern Irish authorities, but there is a fear that continued segregation will groom more anti Peace Process Loyalists and make them even more hostile the province's political set-up. One should not underestimate though, the progress being made in many of these communities, where wholehearted attempts are made to reinterpret the relevance of Loyalism in a wider communal sense. By and large, this interpretation revolves around a change of attitude from protecting their environments to renewing them, acting against social educational and other forms of injustice. Such transformations should serve to improve their public image and begin a new phase of Ulster Loyalism.



Many studies have blamed Ian Paisley (1926-2014), founder and longtime party leader of the DUP, for violent and militant Loyalist resistance in the way he fused religious and political discourses.

# Northern Ireland and Brexit

By Anne-Marie Forker

On 23rd June, voters in the United Kingdom will be asked at a referendum if Britain should continue its membership of the European Union, which it joined in 1972 when it was called the European Economic Community. One of the warnings given by 'Remain' campaigners is that if the UK votes to leave the EU, Scotland could hold a second independence referendum. However, there has been less speculation about the possible ramifications for Northern Ireland, which could be affected by Brexit more than other UK regions, primarily because it is the only region which shares a land border with another European country, the Republic of Ireland, with whom it entered the Good Friday agreement in 1998. The possible exit of Northern Ireland from the European Union raises not only economic, cross-border trade questions but also significant political questions regarding relations between the North and South, who have been co-operating more as a result of the 1998 Agreement.

**Economic restrictions.** Northern Ireland's business community broadly favours the UK remaining in the EU. Northern Ireland's biggest external trading partner is the Republic of Ireland, which accounts for approximately half of its total trade with the EU. Research for the Northern Ireland Assembly indicated that leaving the EU could cost the Northern Ireland economy almost £1 billion a year and highlighted that £2.4 billion of EU funding was received between 2007 and 2013. Although the United Kingdom pays more into the EU than it receives from it, Northern Ireland is a major beneficiary of the returned funding. The Peace Fund, which operates on a cross border basis, will provide €270 million between 2014 and 2020. If Northern Ireland leaves the UK, what will replace this funding?



*Anne-Marie Forker is Editor of the Northern Ireland Law Reports and a photographer. She holds a degree in Law and Politics from Queen's University of Belfast and an MA in Human Rights Law from the University of London (King's College). She also holds a certificate in International Human Rights Law and Practice from the London School of Economics.*

A practical consequence of Northern Ireland leaving the EU would be that the border between the North and South would become an external EU border. It is highly likely that this will result in increased border controls and inevitably further restrict the movement of goods and persons, possibly having a negative impact on Northern Ireland's economy. Leaving the EU could also negate any advantage Northern Ireland might receive from cutting its corporate tax rate from 20 per cent to 12.5 per cent in 2018, which aims to make Northern Ireland more competitive in the fight for foreign direct investment. Economist Richard Ramsey states that if there is a Brexit, it's 'game-over' for Northern Ireland's 12.5 per cent business tax plan from April 2018: 'There'd be no point, because market access trumps tax rates every time ... So even if we had a corporation tax rate of zero per cent, if you were a US inward investor you wouldn't touch us because of the avalanche of uncertainty a Brexit will bring. They'd move on to the south or beyond.'

Dr Lee McGovern, Senior Lecturer in the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast, points out that currently the operation of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy accounts for some 82 per cent of farm income across Northern Ireland. The figure of aid for the period 2014-20 is estimated at €3 billion. McGovern asks whether it is to be expected that the UK Treasury would replace these funds with UK monies following Brexit. If it doesn't what would happen to the farming and related agri-food sectors?

The Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland's largest Unionist party, has claimed that there will be few implications for free movement between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland or trade with EU countries. However, their former minister for health and member of the Stormont finance committee, Jim Wells, has said that border controls between the Republic and Northern Ireland would have to be reintroduced in the event of Britain voting to leave the EU. The Social Democratic and Labour Party said that the comment by Jim Wells was the first time the DUP had admitted that there would be major consequences for relations between Belfast and Dublin in the event of a Brexit. It is difficult to see how there will be 'few implications' for free movement, especially with no detailed alternative plan forthcoming.

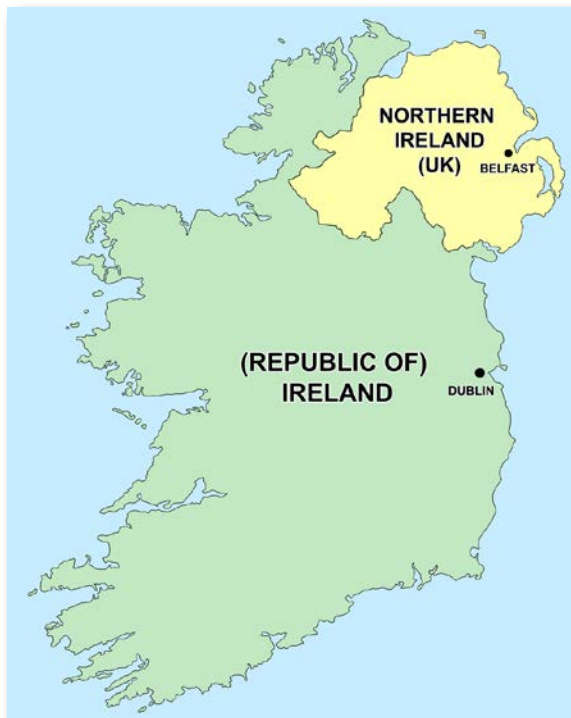
"Many nationalists in Northern Ireland were reassured by European Union membership bringing the North and South closer together, closer to reunification, despite the Republic removing its territorial claim over Northern Ireland. If the border is 'hardened' by Northern Ireland leaving the European Union, this reassurance ceases to exist."

**Politically destabilising.**

European Union membership was an important part of the Good Friday agreement. As part of the Agreement, the British parliament repealed the Government of Ireland Act 1920 which had established Northern Ireland and partitioned Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland amended Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of Ireland, which asserted a territorial claim over Northern Ireland. However, many nationalists in Northern Ireland were reassured by European Union membership bringing the North and South closer together, closer to reunification, despite the Republic removing its territorial claim over Northern Ireland. If the border is 'hardened' by Northern Ireland leaving the European Union, this reassurance ceases to exist. Fundamental elements of the compromises made in reaching the Agreement are, indeed, compromised. Martin McGuinness, the deputy first minister of Northern Ireland, said that if Britain voted to leave the EU there would be a 'democratic imperative' to allow people on the island of Ireland to vote on reunification.

Enda Kenny, Taoiseach, implied at a Downing Street press conference that the success of the Northern Irish peace process was partly linked to the Irish Republic's and UK's membership of the EU: 'The guns are silent. This has taken a great deal of work from so many people over so many years ... It is important to say that the road out of inequality, the path out of that unfairness, is employment and opportunity. That is why we have shared trade missions to a number of locations, there is a great deal of cooperation with respect of issues of economics in Europe. We should not put anything like that at risk. From our perspective it would be a serious difficulty for Northern Ireland.' The possibility that the UK could leave the EU was highlighted by an Irish parliamentary committee's report back in 2015, which warned that some cross-border bodies could become redundant: 'The committee also heard that [a UK exit] could also threaten other north-south bodies and would ultimately have a politically destabilising effect on the region, relationships and the Good Friday agreement itself.'

The Labour peer and former Northern Ireland secretary, Peter Mandelson, shares a similar view:



'The risk to Northern Ireland from leaving the EU is wide-ranging and deeply worrying, economically, politically and socially, and that risk must be recognised by the rest of the UK.'

In an article published in the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, 'Who Will Speak for Northern Ireland? The Looming Danger of an Ulster Brexit', Edward Burke, a lecturer in strategic studies at the University of Portsmouth, argues that 'Northern Ireland, with its 300-mile land border, its fractured political structures, weak economy and enduring terrorist

threat' requires urgent attention in the Brexit debate, 'inattention in the case of Northern Ireland, particularly on Brexit, is complacent and dangerous; Northern Ireland's departure from conflict remains brittle'. Burke emphasises that membership of the European Union has also allowed deeper security co-operation between the UK and Ireland through the European Union Arrest Warrant (EAW). Ireland handed over 192 suspected criminals or terrorists to the UK authorities under the EAW from 2004-2013. European police and judicial co-operation agencies such as Europol and Eurojust are also frequently used by the British and Irish police and security agencies during counter-terrorism and criminal investigations on both sides of the border, Burke observes.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, Northern Ireland faces considerable economic and political risks in the event of a Brexit, unique to the region. To some extent, it is out of their hands as other regions in the UK have a much higher percentage of the referendum vote and the strongest element of the Leave campaign is in England, but the consequences for Northern Ireland are substantial. Membership of the European Union played an important part in the Good Friday agreement and also provides significant funding to the region. There are also security issues to consider regarding the European Union Arrest Warrant. It is unclear what will replace these arrangements. Northern Ireland is still developing as a post-conflict society and it seems unwise at this time to strengthen the divide with the European Union, which helped establish the Good Friday agreement, and continues to provide critical funding.



# The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition: Incipience, Influence and Impact

By Kate Fearon

By the mid-1990s, both the British and Irish governments, increasingly acknowledged that no-one was going to emerge the winner of the Northern Irish conflict through exclusively military means. Around 3,185 people had been killed and 38,711 injured in 35,058 shooting and 17,021 bombing device incidents. The governments sought a political settlement.



*Kate Fearon was a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, a member of its negotiations team for the Belfast Agreement, and then its Chief of Staff in the inaugural Northern Ireland Assembly. She went on to work for multilateral international organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and Kosovo and bilaterally for the UK government in the Sudan.*

The single most important difference for women’s participation in the peace process was the governments’ decision to hold elections to determine who would be delegates to the negotiations. Intended to ensure that the paramilitary organisations were represented, the electoral process was designed to ensure a truly multi-party and inclusive process, offering participation based on relatively limited electoral support.

**Access and achievement in the peace negotiations 1996-1998.** It was into this context that a group of women who had been activists and analysts in the academic, civil society and public and private

negotiations that would decide the political future of Northern Ireland. This decision was taken only 6 weeks before the elections. The campaign was a flurry of enthusiasm, intellect, organization and grit. Three core principles – equality, inclusion and human rights – were struck early on, and all policies were developed around this framework. The women came from different political, religious and cultural backgrounds, but were united in their determination to use their own common experience of political exclusion to influence the agenda, shape the process, change the dynamic and impact the outcome. They got elected.

In the negotiations the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) team carved out a niche for itself, in four main ways: (1) being concerned about process and relationships within the negotiations and also between the negotiation process and members of the community (2) the production of high-quality, community consulted policy positions, (3) keeping the process inclusive, and (4) expanding the agenda beyond the traditional constitutional negotiating agenda to include a number of other matters, which ended up in the final text of the Agreement, under the Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity section.

**Implementing the Agreement.** The process of implementing the Belfast Agreement has been long and demanding. The NIWC emphasis on victims’

rights and the reconciliation agenda in the negotiating process has turned out to be much more significant than anyone imagined. Advocating for an ‘all victims’ (not just ‘our victims’) approach was not without criticism, but it was the right thing to do.

	Sunningdale Agreement 1973	Constitutional Convention 1975	Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985	Downing St. Declaration 1993	Belfast Agreement 1998	
Constitutional Elements	Strand 1 Inside Northern Ireland	Executive & Assembly	Parliament & Government	Executive	Relationships between 2 communities	Executive & Assembly
	Strand 2 Ireland, North & South	Council of Ireland (executive)	Imposed institutional association with Ireland should be rejected	Cross-border co-operation on social and economic issues	Institutional recognition of special links between British & Irish peoples	Ministerial Council (non-executive)
	Strand 3 The UK & Ireland/Status of NI	UK & IE declare no change in status of NI without majority consent (consent principle)	External relations the preserve of UK Government	Expanded role of Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council; consent principle	Institutional recognition of special links between British & Irish peoples; consent principle	British Irish Intergovernmental Council
	Policing in NI	No change	No change	No change	No change	Review of Policing
	Criminal Justice	No change	No change	No change	No change	Review of Crim. Just.
	Extra-Constitutional Elements	Elections to negotiations	No	No	No	No
Women at the table		No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Paramilitary Ceasefires		No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Not exploiting victims for political gain, but to understand that the situation of victims was a symbol of division and symptomatic of greater malaise. In the twenty years since the Agreement was approved these issues have emerged as the most difficult ones to resolve.

It is significant that much of the high-level interventions to support the implementation of the Belfast Agreement after 2003 have related to these matters (and here policing is included). What has become known as the 'dealing with the past agenda' – justice for victims, reconciliation, acknowledgment as to what actually happened, what the conflict was all about, continues to dog implementation.

**Influencing the Assembly.** The NIWC did not intend to be a long-term political party, but took the view that, as long as it had elected representatives, it would continue to work on its agenda. In the 1998 elections to the inaugural Northern Ireland Assembly, it gained two Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and took forward its original agenda on the rights and equality parts of the Agreement, making substantial contributions to the reviews on Policing and Criminal Justice, and to the Victims Commission.

Within the Assembly, the NIWC continued to play a key role. Although only 2 out of the 108 MLAs were NIWC representatives, the Coalition was none the less able to highlight issues and confound the Executive parties on many occasions. For example, NIWC MLAs infuriated all parties early in the Assembly when they indicated their intent to subvert a rule on designated politico-national identity.

The furore spoke to a more fundamental issue. In being prepared to play fast and loose with communal identity, the basic organising principle of the polity, the NIWC challenged the received truth that national identity was privileged above all others, that it was immutable. To suggest that identity was not only fluid, but that it was elective – that choice could be involved, and that the NIWC did not intend either to be defined by national identity or be boxed in by it was something that shook the new/old establishment. And it was not to be: the Speaker issued a ruling stating that the designation could not be changed, thus blocking the NIWCs flexibility in this respect.

"The presence of the NIWC in the negotiations, the way it spoke about constitutional issues, the unique agenda items it proposed and championed, and its presence in the media outside of the negotiations and during the Assembly created a climate in which women's political participation was firmly part of the new political landscape."

The NIWC was the first party to submit a Private Members Bill to the Assembly (on a Children's Commissioner). This was voted down, but later taken up by another party (SDLP), with the result that a Children's Rights Commissioner Bill was passed, in similar initial terms as the NIWC draft. As well as this, the NIWC held the position of Deputy Speaker.

In 2002, with the traditional parties dominating, and the NIWC in opposition, the NIWC lost both its seats. By 2006, it had no longer any Council seats, and the party held a convention that May, almost 10 years to the day since it was first elected, to formally dissolve itself.

**Women in Public Life.** There is no doubt but that the NIWC catalysed the more meaningful participation of women in other parties. When the NIWC first sat at the negotiating table, they were the only women from the political parties so to do. When the Belfast Agreement was signed two years later, there were women at the table from other political parties as well. The experience of the NIWC pushed back the boundaries of not only a deeply divided but also a deeply conservative society. It paved the way to normalising women in political life.

However, no women were appointed to the first Executive in 1998. The NIWC, not being afraid to 'name and shame' on this matter, publicly highlighted the absence of women in leadership positions in the Assembly, in both domestic and international media. And, over time, 3 women Ministers were appointed (from nationalist parties) in the course of the first Assembly. Between 1998 and 2015 there have been 241 MLAs. Of these, 50 were women - around 21%.

It is patently impossible to attribute a causal relationship between the number of women Ministers appointed to the inaugural Assembly and the NIWC, but what can be asserted is this: the presence of the NIWC in the negotiations, the way it spoke about constitutional issues, the unique agenda items it proposed and championed, and its presence in the media outside of the negotiations and during the Assembly created a climate in which women's political participation placed women firmly in the new political landscape. It demonstrated that women could be competent political leaders, and resulted in an environment in which it became politically unacceptable for mainstream parties not to appoint women to senior positions.

# Speech by the Taoiseach Enda Kenny at the launch of 'The GPO: Witness History' on 25 March 2016

*Enda Kenny was re-elected as Taoiseach - the Irish Prime Minister - on 6 May 2016 for a second term. He has represented the constituency of Mayo as a Fine Gael member of Dáil Éireann since 1975 and was elected party leader in 2002.*



*In relation to the centennial anniversary of the Easter Rising of 2016, the Taoiseach took part in various events. The speech reproduced here was held at the opening of an exhibition at the General Post Office, the main venue of the Rising, and was referred to by the Irish Times as "his most significant during this weekend of commemorations".*

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here this morning with Minister Heather Humphreys to launch this significant exhibition – 'The GPO: Witness History', a key element of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme.

It is an honour to have Liam Cosgrave join us here today. His father, W.T. Cosgrave, formally reopened the enlarged GPO in 1929.

It is fitting that we are gathered here today in this historic building "witnessing history" so to speak as it was on this site, 100 years ago that Pádraig Pearse read aloud the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in an act of brave defiance that lit the touch paper leading to the culmination of centuries of struggle for Irish freedom.

As the volunteer headquarters during the Easter Rising and focal point of the British counterattack, there is perhaps no more iconic landmark in the country that so poignantly reflects the courage and determination of those brave men and women who came out that Easter to challenge the British empire.

It was here that Pearse, Connolly, Plunkett, Clarke and Mac Diarmada directed the fighting across the city and the country while the burning building collapsed around them under the weight of fire from the ever encircling British forces.

I am delighted to be able to announce the opening of An Post's 'The GPO Witness History'. This amazing new exhibition will give visitors a real sense of what it was like to be in the General Post Office and Dublin a century ago and to reflect on how those days shaped Ireland over the following 100 years.

Like Dublin Rising, an initiative which I launched in partnership with Google, that allows users to explore the streets of Dublin as they were in 1916, this exhibition will use the latest immersive technology to bring history to life. It will help to remind us that the men and women who lived in the city and who fought and died in the Rising were not just names and photographs in our history books but were real people with the same hopes and fears as all of us today.

During this time of reflection and commemoration, we must also never forget that as well as volunteers and British soldiers, many hundreds of civilians also lost their lives in the fighting. As well as the exhibition, the space will also feature a memorial to the 40 children killed by gunfire during Easter Week 1916. The memorial, 'They are of Us All' by renowned Dublin artist, Barbara Knezevic is composed of the very black limestone and steel that was dug out of the ruins of Jacobs Biscuit factory with each child being represented by a stone.

**The Legacy of Freedom.** When I launched the Government's programme of commemorative events, I stated that I wanted 2016 to be a year in which we remembered our shared history on these islands; a meaningful opportunity to reflect on our achievements and our failings, and that we take the chance to imagine our future.

From the ashes of the Rising, the subsequent War of Independence, and Civil War arose a free and democratic Irish State.

The foundation of the Irish Free State and the tradition of Irish men and women working together for the common good of our people is a legacy that we can be most proud of.

Ireland has since enjoyed one of the longest periods of unbroken democratic governance in the world. Between a World War, devastating economic crashes, and geo-political instability, the Irish State and her people endured.

We owe much credit to the early nation builders who built up our public institutions as unassailable pillars of democracy.

As we move through the decade of centenaries we will find time to reflect on the legacy of those early nation builders, like W.T. Cosgrave, who laid the strong foundations of our State.

It is important to recognise that the modern Irish state would not have survived if it wasn't for the brave men and women who served and embraced the institutions of the early State.

On Easter Sunday, outside this building, we will commend the service of generations of Óglaigh na hÉireann, An Garda Síochána and the emergency services.

The Irish people believe and trust in these institutions to maintain and protect the State and our right to freedom.

They have earned that trust through generations of national service.

But a State is nothing without her people. And the Irish people themselves are the strongest defenders of our democratic tradition.

From the members of our media who speak truth to power... to any citizen seeking to bring about social change in our society.

It is the Irish people who work to make this State a better place for future generations that makes Irish democracy great.

Governments and Taoisigh come and go, new Dáils are elected and rejected, but the people's will and their decisions have been... and will continue to be... sovereign.

From the bloody experience of those early days of our State, we have learned that the only way forward as a nation is to sit down together, work hard, and

build a better future.

When it comes to imaging the next 100 years of the Irish State, I hope that every custodian of Ireland's democratic tradition can protect the public trust in them by putting the people and the national interest first.

I have been deeply honoured and humbled to hold the office of Taoiseach for the past five years.

There have been difficult times for our people and our country.

During these times I have seen the best in Ireland, the unyielding sense of national service shown by our civil and public services, our civil society groups, our enterprise and union leaders, and all our people... to build a better future for our country and for our children.

Ireland works when Ireland works together.

Conclusion. I'd like to finish by congratulating An Post and everyone involved in bringing this fantastic exhibition to fruition and to commend Shannon Heritage which does such an outstanding job as custodians of some of our nation's most priceless cultural and heritage sites, like Bunratty Castle and King John's Castle, who will be operating and managing the new Centre here.

I'm certain that this Centre will prove to be one of the top attractions for visitors to this city and to Dublin natives interested in the events of the Rising, not just during this centenary year but for the next 100 years and more.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

*Kindly reproduced from Department of the Taoiseach at [http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/News/Taoiseach's\\_Speeches/Speech\\_by\\_the\\_Taoiseach\\_Enda\\_Kenny\\_at\\_the\\_launch\\_of\\_%E2%80%98The\\_GPO\\_Witness\\_History%E2%80%99-on\\_25th\\_March\\_2016.html](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/News/Taoiseach's_Speeches/Speech_by_the_Taoiseach_Enda_Kenny_at_the_launch_of_%E2%80%98The_GPO_Witness_History%E2%80%99-on_25th_March_2016.html)*

## Membership 2016

*Membership in BPS is open to all individuals and institutions with an interest in British politics, society, language, and culture. As a member, you receive subscription to four editions of British Politics Review, invitation to all events organised by the society and the right to vote at our annual general meeting.*

*Your membership comes into force as soon as the membership fee, 200 NOK for 2016, has been registered at our account <6094.05.67788> (please make sure to mark your payment with your full name). If you have questions about membership, please do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail at [mail@britishpoliticssociety.no](mailto:mail@britishpoliticssociety.no)*

## Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

On 23 June, British voters will decide whether the UK is to remain a member of the European Union, or step out of the community Britain joined in 1973.

No matter what the outcome, the consequences are likely to be significant

for both Britain and the EU, and for the summer edition of *British Politics Review*, we will invite commentators to reflect on the situation in the wake of the referendum.

First, however, we await the result: will this be Cameron's

greatest success, or will it be the one referendum too far?

*The summer edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in July 2016.*