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Abstract

Excerpt

On August 31, 1994, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) declared a cessation of military operations. For the past thirty years, the conflict in Northern Ireland has been raging almost without pause.¹ British security forces have attempted to control the violence by establishing road blocks, conducting house searches, altering the judicial system to allow conviction on informant testimony, instituting internment without trial for paramilitary suspects, garrisoning over thirty thousand British soldiers in Northern Ireland, instituting broadcasting bans of Sinn Féin, and conducting intensive interrogation of suspects. Despite the best attempts of the British government over the past few decades to thwart PIRA, the conflict persisted. To sustain a low-intensity war under these conditions requires more than guns and ammunition; it requires the support of a political community, extensive organization of economic resources, and cultural values that give meaning to the conflict.

Keywords: *ceasefire, Irish Republican culture and history, Northern Ireland, Republican political identity*

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CEASEFIRE: THE IMPACT OF REPUBLICAN POLITICAL CULTURE ON THE CEASEFIRE PROCESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Montgomery Sapone

On August 31, 1994, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) declared a cessation of military operations. For the past thirty years, the conflict in Northern Ireland has been raging almost without pause.¹ British security forces have attempted to control the violence by establishing road blocks, conducting house searches, altering the judicial system to allow conviction on informant testimony, instituting internment without trial for paramilitary suspects, garrisoning over thirty thousand British soldiers in Northern Ireland, instituting broadcasting bans of Sinn Féin, and conducting intensive interrogation of suspects. Despite the best attempts of the British government over the past few decades to thwart PIRA, the conflict persisted. To sustain a low-intensity war under these conditions requires more than guns and ammunition; it requires the support of a political community, extensive organization of economic resources, and cultural values that give meaning to the conflict.

The duration of the conflict in Northern Ireland cannot be understood without reference to Irish Republican culture and history. Similarly, the ceasefire itself must be viewed in light of the history and culture of Irish Republicanism. PIRA's refusal, for example, to decommission weapons or to declare a "permanent" ceasefire as a precondition to entering into negotiations is generally seen by observers as a purely utilitarian strategic decision. After all, handing over guns with no guarantee that what is negotiated will actually be given creates unnecessary vulnerability. But behind the refusal to decommission weapons is not just a utilitarian political strategy, but a set of cultural values.

This paper begins with a discussion of the cultural forces that sustained the conflict. In addition to the considerable impact of cultural forces, British security policy contributed to the longevity of the conflict. Similarly, the antithetical political positions of the major players in the conflict (British, Republican, Loyalist and Irish Republic) prevented any easy settlement.² This paper describes how the low-intensity, military sustainability and cultural entrenchment of the conflict resulted in a stalemate between PIRA and the British Army. Noting that the ambivalence of a military stalemate has consequences for a ceasefire process, this paper reviews the political and military events during the ceasefire and then argues that the major stumbling blocks during the ceasefire process were not simply logistical, but deeply connected to the culture of Irish Republicanism.

Sustaining Perpetual Low-Intensity Conflict

The conflict in Northern Ireland is one of the longest running low-intensity conflicts of the twentieth century. The continuity of the violence has confounded academic commentators and military analysts alike. In the thousands of books that have been published concerning the conflict in Northern Ireland, explanations ranging from religious hatred to material gain have been advanced to account for the longevity of the conflict and the intractability of the parties in negotiating a settlement.³ But the key to the continuity of the conflict is neither economic nor sectarian, but cultural. Ephemeral cultural values have allowed the Republican community to continue fighting for

British withdrawal and the reunification of Ireland against one of the most sophisticated military organizations in the world for thirty years.⁴

The core political belief of Republicans in Northern Ireland, including Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA, is that the 1921 partition of Ireland and continued British rule in Northern Ireland are illegitimate.⁵ Republicans view the British government as the source of the conflict in Northern Ireland. According to Gerry Adams (1995: 61), President of Sinn Féin, "violence in Ireland has its roots in the conquest of Ireland by Britain." Republicans do not see their own violence as the *cause* of continued British military presence in Northern Ireland, but as a *reaction* to it. They believe they are engaged in armed opposition against British colonialism. Therefore, any settlement that does not guarantee the withdrawal of the British from Ireland is de facto inadequate.

The social environment in which Republicans in Northern Ireland live only reinforces their perception of the British as the enemy and their armed struggle as necessary and just. The poverty, discrimination, social isolation and unemployment which Catholics in Northern Ireland experienced as a minority in a Protestant-majority state reinforced their perception of themselves as victims of a repressive colonial regime. In the Republican communities of Northern Ireland, most families have relatives or friends who have been killed by security forces or imprisoned for paramilitary activity. The impression of Republicans that the British were determined to destroy the Irish culture and deny them self-determination was confirmed by the constant, hostile presence of British armored vehicles and patrolling soldiers. For Republicans, these conditions amounted to a state of social and psychological siege.

For Republicans, armed struggle against British military occupation is unquestionably necessary, effective and legitimate (Irvin 1999). The political history of Ireland provides adequate evidence of the effectiveness of armed struggle as a means of creating political change. Without the historic efforts of the IRA and their forebearers against the British colonization of Ireland, the Republic of Ireland would not exist today. It is an impossible task to convince Republicans that change is possible through the democratic process alone -- their history instructs otherwise. And this history is a living fact that is, for Republicans, constantly present. Indeed, the historical deeds of grandfathers and great-grandfathers who fought against British occupation during the 1916 Uprising and the Anglo-Irish war often recounted with pride.

Another indication of the unchallenged legitimacy of armed struggle within the Republican community is that the IRA has never suffered from a paucity of volunteers. While it may seem incomprehensible that Provisional IRA volunteers chose to engage in military activities likely to result in death or imprisonment, to them the choice appears not only necessary but desirable. Status in this community is correlated with military competence. Bearing arms in the pursuit of Irish autonomy is considered to be the ultimate expression of Republicanism.

Like most cultures where violence is a fact of daily life, Republicans in Northern Ireland have successfully adapted to the misfortune by transforming the tragedy of violent death into communal benefit. The spectacular funerals of slain IRA volunteers, the treatment of the 1981 hunger strikers as martyrs, and the murals glorifying the Republican dead all testify to the capacity of Republicans to derive cultural value from politically motivated deaths. Violent death is seen not just as a necessity of the armed struggle against the British, but as a sacrifice which only serves to make the culture stronger. Although Republican culture could be negatively described as "necrophilic,"

the sanctification of violent death is a highly adaptive cultural practice within a militarized environment.⁶

In addition to cultural factors that perpetuated the conflict, British political and military policy have, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to its longevity. The British Army entered Northern Ireland in 1969 in order to conduct peacekeeping operations. Although the British Army was initially deployed to put a stop to Loyalist rioting in which the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were colluding, the violence quickly escalated. Under the command of Lieutenant-General Tuzo, the Army conducted a number of large-scale military operations, such as the internment of suspects, the re-taking of urban territory (Operation Motorman), and use of unnecessary extreme force (e.g., "Bloody Sunday" in 1972).⁷ The situation in Northern Ireland certainly looked like war; IRA prisoners were even accorded a de facto POW status by the British government.

Because this military approach to dealing with the IRA unintentionally legitimated PIRA as a belligerent, security policy was reevaluated in the 1980's. Alternative methods of containing the violence were sought. New British security policy emphasized normalization, Ulsterization and criminalization in order to limit the overall level of violence (Bew and Patterson 1985). During this period, attempts were made to contain the conflict geographically within Northern Ireland through exclusion orders, road blocks, and extradition. The conflict was "normalized" by creating a *cordon sanitaire* around Belfast City Center, by instituting police primacy, and undertaking by sophisticated public relations campaigns. Convicted PIRA members, as well as Loyalist paramilitaries, were treated as criminals ("terrorists") rather than as political prisoners. PIRA's attempts during the late 1970's to escalate the war by attacking "big targets" (helicopters, NATO bases, Mountbatten's yacht) and the 1981 hungerstrike, which sought to regain prisoner-of-war status for paramilitary prisoners, were responses to the criminalization program (Feldman 1991).

Although British security policy prevented escalation of the violence, it ironically also prevented any purely military solution. British commanders often asserted that, if law and public policy allowed them to do so, they could defeat PIRA militarily. However, legal restrictions on the use of force (e.g., rules of engagement, emergency legislation, and international instruments) prevented the British Army from taking aggressive military actions that would have routed the IRA. The status of the armed conflict as an emergency action with troop deployment authorized under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions Act) as military aid to the civil power rather than a war powers act, imposed a doctrine of minimum force. Soldiers issued with a yellow card containing the rules of engagement were allowed to fire only in life-threatening circumstances (Dewar 1985: 58-59). Furthermore, as the ostensible upholders of law and order, they could not be seen to act outside of the law. The British Army essentially tied its own hands with the security policy it adopted. As Pillar (1983: 28) points out,

[t]his combination of restraints — the inability to avoid entering a war and the inability to make full use of military capabilities once in it — means that wars which formerly would either never have been fought in the first place, or fought to a swift and decisive conclusion, are now fought in a restrained and carefully controlled way. This encourages deadlock and compromise and reduces the likelihood of capitulation.

PIRA effectively exploited the British Army's hesitancy to use force and concern with legality to engage in a protracted campaign of paramilitary violence. Thus, although violence was not eradicated, losses were kept at an "acceptable" level (in the words of Northern Ireland Secretary of State Merlyn Rees) and the war dragged on and on.⁸

In addition to the cultural values of Republicanism and British security policy, the divergent interests of the major players in the Northern Ireland conflict also prevented any easy resolution of the political and military issues underlying the violence. Each group was fundamentally opposed to the interests and views propounded by the other groups, and generally unwilling to accept compromise of any sort. In brief, the Unionists despised the Republicans on political and social grounds and viewed any involvement of the Republic of Ireland in northern Irish politics with suspicion; the Republicans rejected the British presence in Ireland and saw the Unionists as sectarian and politically misguided; the British mistrusted the involvement of the Republic of Ireland but needed the vote of the Ulster Unionists; and the Republic of Ireland wanted to distance itself from the problems of the province altogether and yet retained a sentimental feeling towards the history of the IRA (Whyte 1990). These views derive from complex historical and political facts and are worthy of further explanation.

Successive British governments have proposed various unworkable solutions to the political problems of Northern Ireland. From 1921 until the mid-1970's Northern Ireland was ruled through Unionist controlled Stormont Parliament. Majority home rule reduced Northern Ireland to the status of a dependent colony, allowed Unionist domination of the security apparatus, effectively removed Catholics from political life, and led to the catastrophic deployment of British troops in 1969. As a result of Stormont and the events of 1969, the British government outlined new principles in the 1973 *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals* (Great Britain 1973). This paper made it clear that Unionists should be prevented from exercising total domination, and that any political arrangements require the involvement of the Irish Republic if they are to satisfy northern Nationalists. This power-sharing assembly combined with an all-Ireland council has remained the model for British political initiative since that time.

The Unionists generally dislike the power-sharing arrangement preferred by the British and view Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. Although they form a majority in Northern Ireland, they would be a minority if the island were unified.⁹ Unionists, not surprisingly, reject any political arrangement that would entail being governed by the Republic of Ireland and thereby losing their economic and political status. Since Unionists have traditionally occupied positions of political power and have controlled the domestic economy, they have much to lose if the distribution of power were altered. The security industry in Northern Ireland, including the police, the now defunct Ulster Defense Regiment, and the prisons, historically have been staffed by Unionists and would shrink radically if the conflict ceased.

Power sharing with Nationalists and increased involvement of the Irish Republic are seen by Unionists as concessions by Britain to the Nationalists. Historically, concessions by the British government towards the Republican community have resulted in a backlash by Unionists against the British Government.¹⁰ Unionists, it has been said, have been willing to kill British soldiers in order to defend their right to remain British (Dewar 1985: 99). Prior to their own declared cease-fire, Loyalists were also willing to take on the Republic of Ireland. "Loyalists are not going to allow their country to be taken away from them," said Ray Smallwoods, the chief political strategist of loyalist

paramilitaries. "We've seen what the IRA has gotten by bombing and killing. Our war is not just with the IRA. It's with Dublin. And we're prepared to fight to the death" (Cullen 1994: 1). Loyalist paramilitaries have been quite willing to carry out their threats: in the last three years more people were killed by Loyalist than Nationalist paramilitaries.

Though Unionist objections to British withdrawal and power sharing may seem clear enough, the same objections by the Irish Government are a bit harder to understand. Since 1937, the Irish government has claimed constitutional jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, declares that "the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas." In 1990, this claim was reaffirmed by the Irish Supreme Court in *McGimpsey v. Ireland* which claimed that the "re-integration of the national territory" was a "constitutional imperative." For many years the British government did not object to these claims of sovereignty although they conflicted with the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Article 75 of the Government of Ireland Act (1920) provides that:

Notwithstanding the establishment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland...the supreme authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things in Northern Ireland and every part thereof.

At the heart of the Irish Constitution lay an aspirational claim to the political control of the whole of Ireland. One would imagine, this being the case, that the Irish Government would be delighted with British willingness to allow them to assume a larger role in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland through diplomatic agreements. The Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985 gave the Irish Republic the right to put forward views and proposals on matters relating to the administration of Northern Ireland (including security) in return for improved security co-ordination on their side of the border (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 19). Yet, unification is not a popular solution with the Irish Government. The British withdrawal from Northern Ireland would create innumerable problems for Dublin. Not only would the Republic be required to absorb the Unionists (and cope with any violence which might be directed at the Irish government), they would also assume the considerable financial burden of underwriting the depressed economy of Northern Ireland.

Nor are Northern Republicans particularly keen on being absorbed by the Irish government. From the perspective of Sinn Féin, the Irish government has abandoned the principle of Irish self-determination and has basically ratified the British claim to Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement, European Union membership, and the ratification of the Single Europe Act are seen as an erosion of Irish sovereignty and control of resources and a movement towards a "NATO view of international affairs" (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 83). Republicans view the current incarnation of Ireland as being little more than a dependent of Great Britain, since over fifty percent of its "foreign" trade is with the UK. Nationalists and Republicans believe that resolution to the political problems must include the democratic participation of all of the Irish people and that the negotiations depend on the political authority and legitimacy wielded by the Irish government. While Nationalists and Republicans have sought a greater role for Dublin in the ceasefire process, they are not seeking a simple end to partition resulting in reunification. Rather,

their long-term goal is to establish a democratic socialist republic based on the 1916 Proclamation, which would include decentralized economic and political structures in a pluralist, bilingual, non-sexist, and non-aligned Ireland (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 150).

A total reconstruction of the Irish state is probably not what the Irish government has in mind as a possible political future. Especially not at the hands of Sinn Féin. In the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA are treated as terrorists or criminals and generally are not viewed as legitimate political entities. Sinn Féin, for example, has been censored from speaking on television or radio under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act (not renewed in 1994). Yet, Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA are responsible for the very existence of the Irish Republic, having successfully fought a war against the British in 1916 for independence. It is not surprising that, historically, the government of the Republic of Ireland and the Fianna Fail party in particular have been sympathetic to the northern Republican cause. The Republic of Ireland has sometimes refused to extradite Republicans convicted of paramilitary offenses and has turned a blind eye to the use of the border as a "fall back" for paramilitaries during operations. Perhaps the most shocking example of covert support of the IRA by the government of the Republic of Ireland was the arrest of Charles Haughey, minister for the Gaelteacht under Jack Lynch's Fianna Fail party. Haughey and four other members of the Fianna Fail government were arrested for conspiracy to import arms that were to be sent to the IRA. "Whether the Cabinet either knew or implicitly approved of Haughey's activities remains to this day a less than satisfactorily answered question" (O'Malley 1990: 22 fn.).

Breaking the Stalemate

The geographical containment of the conflict, the prevention of escalation through legal structures and the unwillingness to incur international approbation all served to turn the conflict in Northern Ireland into a "stalemate." A stalemate is a condition of conflict where neither belligerent party can achieve a decisive military victory and which can be almost indefinitely sustained by both parties (Goodman and Bogart 1992: 1). In stalemated wars, neither belligerent party is able to achieve a decisive victory, nor are they able to exhaust their opponent to a state of financial or military collapse. This has consequences for the ceasefire negotiation process. Negotiating a ceasefire after a stalemate tends to be much more laborious and intricate since the "winner" may be unclear and the belligerents may overestimate their own bargaining power (Smith 1995: 5).

Counter-insurgency operations or low-intensity conflicts that end in stalemate, such as that in Northern Ireland, appear even less amenable to negotiated settlement (Goodman and Bogart 1992: 1). In these conflicts the very identity of the belligerents and the legal status of the conflict are often unclear. In Northern Ireland, for example, the "belligerents" might include the British Army, PIRA, Ulster Defence Association (UDA), Irish People's Liberation Organization (IPLO), Red Hand Commandos, Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), or any number of other armed groups. PIRA declared a cessation of all military operations, but did not specify against whom. The Loyalist paramilitaries made a similarly ambivalent statement. Moreover, the legal status of the conflict in Northern Ireland is indeterminate. There is disagreement on whether the conflict ought to be called an "internal disturbance," as the British government would have it or whether it ought to be called a "war," as the Republican movement would claim.¹¹

Limited conflict between equally matched opponents, such as that in Northern Ireland, is almost indefinitely sustainable.¹² Although more than three thousand people have been killed since

the latest period of conflict began thirty years ago, the conflict was not excessively costly in human terms. Similarly, the financial costs to Britain of prolonged low-level violence were negligible as a portion of the total economy. Neither the British Army nor PIRA were short on weapons, ammunition or manpower. Both would have been able to continue the war almost indefinitely.

In light of the military sustainability and cultural entrenchment of the conflict, the question arises: why didn't the conflict continue indefinitely?¹³ For a variety of reasons, a ceasefire became simultaneously desirable to both the British and the Republican movement, despite the political, cultural and military entrenchment of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

British willingness to enter into negotiations with the Provisional IRA resulted partially from the end of the Cold War, which changed the strategic map of Europe. During the Cold War, the Republic of Ireland was not a member of NATO and disallowed any NATO bases or operations. Northern Ireland, being a British possession, was NATO friendly soil. Once NATO defense of the North Atlantic became unnecessary, Northern Ireland declined in strategic importance. The conflict in Northern Ireland, despite the excellent training benefits it provided for British Army regiments and the convenient "proving ground" it provided for British defense, had become enormously expensive. Deployment of nineteen-thousand troops has cost over £1 billion per annum, compensation to victims of violence by the Northern Ireland Office cost £30-50 million per annum, and the Exchequer grant to Northern Ireland cost over £3 billion (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 14). Furthermore, the concerns of insurance companies regarding the costs of bombs in London in 1992 and 1993 influenced the willingness of various ministers to support negotiations with PIRA (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 14).

The Provisional IRA's willingness to enter into negotiations also resulted from a confluence of factors. Since Gerry Adams and the other members of the northern leadership contingent (Tom Hartley, Danny Morrison, Mitchel McLaughlin) have risen to power in the Republican movement, Republican ideology has shifted from the primacy of the armed struggle to an increased focus on political process. According to Gerry Adams, "armed struggle itself is a tactic and one cannot shoot or bomb an independent Ireland into existence.... The tactic of armed struggle is of primary importance because it provides a vital cutting edge. Without it, the issue of Ireland would not even be an issue." "At the same time," Adams continues, "there is a realization in Republican circles that armed struggle on its own is inadequate and that non-armed forms of political struggle are at least as important" (1995: 63). This political refocus has led to a certain type of constitutionalization. "In the past, the republican movement was a separatist movement with radical tendencies. In its current embodiment, the radical tendency is for the first time in control..." (Adams 1995: 163). Additionally, rumors that the US would increase its aid package to Northern Ireland from \$19.6 million to \$120-200 million in order to restore the infrastructure and boost employment may have encouraged the Republican ceasefire (Adams 1995: 51).

In addition to the political and economic reasons for the ceasefire, recognition of a military stalemate also led to the ceasefire. British policy since the late 1970's has assumed that PIRA cannot be defeated militarily (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 12). Likewise, PIRA is aware that they will never be able to amass enough military force to compel Britain to withdraw. Belligerent recognition that the war is stalemated and is likely to remain so (or that one party has decisively more power than the other) is, according to Smith, the first precondition for a cease-fire. Belligerents must also believe, as the British did, that this power balance is unlikely to

shift either in their favor through military action, or against them through a cease-fire (Smith 1995: 8).

In Northern Ireland, the acknowledgment of a military stalemate made political resolution possible. Because a military victory was impossible, the solution to the problem had to be a political one. The ceasefire in Northern Ireland did not result from defeat or military necessity.¹⁴ Rather, the cease-fire process was driven by an acknowledgment that the war was unwinnable.

Talking it Out

The current cease-fire and talks about the future of Northern Ireland are the result of a long process of political reevaluation by Sinn Féin. Since 1987, Sinn Féin has been developing a strategy for peace, beginning with a discussion paper called *A Scenario for Peace* (Sinn Féin 1991). In 1990, Sinn Féin re-established contact with the British government through secret diplomatic channels which had been used extensively during the prior cease-fires and 1981 hungerstrike. In 1992, Sinn Féin circulated *Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland*, a discussion paper that explicated their view of what was needed in order for peaceful resolution (Sinn Féin 1994a).¹⁵

Attempts to develop a joint nationalist strategy led to talks between Adams and John Hume the leader of the Social and Democratic Labour Party, the largest constitutional nationalist party in Northern Ireland. In April 1993, Hume and Adams issued a joint statement, declaring the right of "the Irish people as a whole... to national self-determination" (Hume and Adams 1993). The Hume-Adams initiative, which was eventually endorsed by the Irish government, was the snowball that launched the peace avalanche.

The on-going secret talks between British government and Sinn Féin were made public in November 1993. Following a series of rumors and leaks, Sir Patrick Mayhew made an announcement in Parliament. Mayhew claimed that PIRA had initiated the dialogue with this message allegedly sent by Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin's Vice President:

The conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close. We wish to have an unannounced cease-fire in order to hold dialogue leading to peace. We cannot announce such a move as it will lead to confusion for the volunteers because press will misinterpret it as a surrender. We cannot meet Secretary of State's public renunciation of violence, but it would be given privately as long as we were sure that we were not being tricked (Great Britain 1993).

This announcement caused public uproar in the Republican community, Parliament and the British press. Because the British government had phrased the announcement in such a way that it appeared that Sinn Féin was the initiating party, Sinn Féin nearly backed out of any negotiations with the British. According to Adams, the admission by Mayhew "breach[ed] the confidentiality which we had at all times respected and ... misrepresent[ed] the content of our exchanges. The bad faith and double dealing involved clearly presented us with serious difficulties in assessing the sincerity of the British government..." (Adams 1995: 205). As the message makes clear, PIRA was unwilling to be seen by its membership as the party who had asked for peace.¹⁶

In 1993 the Joint Declaration on Northern Ireland ("The Downing Street Declaration") was signed by British and Irish governments. The Declaration articulated principles of negotiation and

framed the broad issues crucial for a negotiated settlement. The Declaration offered concessions to both Unionists and Nationalists (McKittrick 1994: 321):

The British government agrees that it is for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, north and south, to bring about a United Ireland, if that is their wish (Great Britain and Republic of Ireland 1993).

This statement pleased Unionists by including the concept of consent. For Unionists “consent” (often referred to as “the Unionist veto”) meant that political or constitutional status of Northern Ireland will not be altered without their agreement.

Republicans had a mixed response to the Declaration. The inclusion of the concept of self-determination, which is central to the ideology of Republicanism, reassured some Republicans. Furthermore, the Joint Declaration attempted to bring Sinn Féin, historically marginalized in preference to the more moderate SDLP, into the constitutional talks. Unfortunately, the Declaration also specified that Sinn Féin would be welcomed at the negotiating table only after renouncing violence. According to Martin McGuinness, the declaration was “worthless” (Smith 1995: 206).

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Declaration for Republicans was the British government’s declaration that it had no “selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland.” This statement marked a fundamental shift in British policy toward Northern Ireland. Britain was apparently backing down from its promise to the Unionists to keep Ulster British. The abdication of Britain from any political responsibility for Northern Ireland prompted conservative critics of the Declaration to argue that, “Crucially, the Declaration puts the future of Ulster in an exclusively Irish – and not British – context” (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994: 12).

After the Provisional IRA Army Council voted not to reject the document outright (Coogan 1994: 496), Sinn Féin asked the British government for clarification of the Joint Declaration. In response to a written question posed by Sinn Féin, the British representative stated: “[We] accept the validity of all electoral mandates, including that of Sinn Féin...” (Dunnigan 1995: 46). Furthermore, the British stated that any agreement will be based on “full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland” (Dunnigan 1995: 46). In effect, the Declaration opened the constitutional status of Northern Ireland (including the Government of Ireland Act) to discussion, confirmed that no party had veto power over policy in the North, and recognized Sinn Féin's mandate (Dunnigan 1995: 46).

Political recognition by the U.S., which had long had a “special relationship” with Britain, also indicated to Republicans that British intentions were good. As Pillar (1983: 79) points out, “[a]ction by a nonbelligerent party provides an even better opportunity [to begin negotiations]. A suitable proposal by a third party eliminates the need for either belligerent to move first in offering negotiations.” Although previous U.S. administrations had denied Gerry Adams admission to the United States, in January 1994, President Bill Clinton effectively opened diplomatic relations with Sinn Féin by granting Gerry Adams a visa to enter the U.S.

PIRA continued to mount attacks in the months leading up to their declaration of a cease-fire.¹⁷ In continuing to attack British targets, the Provisional IRA was sending a signal that it was not capitulating out of weakness. In order to avoid the stigma of weakness attached to peace offers,

belligerents may attempt to demonstrate strength and determination by escalating violence directly prior to or at the beginning of a peace conference. The purpose is "to demonstrate through armed action that one's diplomatic initiatives do not indicate a weakening of the will" (Pillar 1983:187).

The Provisional IRA finally declared a cease-fire on August 31, 1994 in a brief, four-paragraph statement. It began:

Recognizing the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic peace process and underline our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann [Youth of Ireland in Irish] have decided that as of midnight Wednesday, August 31, there will be a complete cessation of military operations. All our units have been instructed accordingly (Provisional Irish Republican Army 1994).

After commending the sacrifices of Republican volunteers, the statement affirmed that "[w]e believe that an opportunity to create a just and lasting settlement has been created." After the declaration of the cease-fire, Gerry Adams declared that "[t]he onus is on the British government, the onus is on (Prime Minister) John Major to seize this moment" (Kiernan 1994: 1). For the Provisional IRA, this cease-fire was conditional and would be honored only as long as progress was being made towards the right to self-determination asserted in the Joint Declaration.

While moderate Loyalists were optimistic about the cease-fire, hard-liners saw the cease-fire as a threat to their existence. As Pillar (1983:162) points out: "Solutions which leave open the possibility that the enemy will eventually take power are not highly valued because they pose a risk not only to one's political goals but even to one's life." The Ulster Freedom Fighters called the cease-fire a "recipe for civil war" (Kiernan 1994: 1). Belfast graffiti after the PIRA cease-fire summed up the Loyalist position: "Better to die on your feet than live on your knees in a united Ireland."

On October 13, 1994, six weeks after PIRA declared a cease-fire, the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Freedom Fighters, also declared a cease-fire.¹⁸ Loyalist paramilitaries declared a cease-fire only after assurances were given about Northern Ireland's constitutional position as part of the United Kingdom. The Loyalist statement, read by Gusty Spence, the former leader of the UVF convicted of murdering a Catholic man in 1968, said: "The permanence of our cease-fire will be completely dependent upon the continued cessation of all nationalist republican violence. The sole responsibility for a return to war lies with them" (UPI Newswire 1994).¹⁹

Following the ceasefire, British officials held preliminary talks with Sinn Féin in December of 1994. In early 1995, the British and Irish governments published the Framework Document, outlining recommendations for a political settlement of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Great Britain and Republic of Ireland 1995). The Framework Document satisfied neither Republicans (as it contained provisions for the Unionist consent) nor Unionists (as it accorded too much power to Dublin). The Framework Document was quickly shelved.

Disarmament was the biggest barrier in the peace process following the ceasefires. The British government and the Unionists demanded that all-party talks must be preceded by a permanent cease-fire and decommissioning of weapons. The Provisional IRA refused to renounce violence or to decommission their weapons. An independent disarmament commission chaired by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell was established by the Republic of Ireland, which is accorded

a consultative role in the governance of Northern Ireland under the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Mitchell commission recommended in a report released on January 24, 1996 that the British government drop its demand that the Provisional IRA disarm before Sinn Féin be allowed to take part in the peace talks. The report did suggest that Sinn Féin should be required to declare the ceasefire permanent and to agree to disarmament simultaneously with talks (Editors 1996a: A5).

The British Prime Minister rejected the commission's proposal, insisting instead on elections to confirm the strength of the political parties' respective mandates. All-party talks would take place after special elections to choose delegates to the all-party talks. Essentially, the British demanded the creation of an internal political assembly in Northern Ireland as the precursor to political negotiations (Editors 1996b: A5). Both the Republican community in Northern Ireland and the Irish government saw the creation of an internal political assembly as kow-towing to the political demands of the Ulster Unionists. An internal political assembly also negated what Republicans saw as the "all-Ireland" aspect of the conflict. The British Prime Minister was also criticized for prioritizing the coming election and retaining the voting power of the Ulster Unionist Party in the British parliament.

Following the British government's demand for a political assembly and the rejection of the Mitchell Commission's proposal, on February 9, 1996 PIRA issued a statement declaring that a resumption of the "armed struggle" was taking place, citing its frustration with the lack of movement on political talks. According to the statement: "The cessation presented an historic challenge for everyone and the IRA commends the leaderships of nationalist Ireland at home and abroad. They rose to the challenge. The British Prime Minister did not" (Provisional Irish Republican Army 1996: paragraph 4). Later that day, the Provisional IRA detonated a 1,500-pound fertilizer bomb at Canary Wharf in east London, killing two people and injuring hundreds.

Despite the end of the ceasefire, the British government carried on with its pre-Canary Wharf Plan. Elections took place on May 30, 1996 and seated a one hundred ten member forum, to "advise" teams engaged in promised multi-party negotiations.²⁰ Following the election, multi-party talks began on June 10. Sinn Féin was barred from the talks on the grounds that the Provisional IRA had not resumed its cease-fire. Following Sinn Féin's exclusion, the Provisional IRA exploded a van bomb in downtown Manchester on June 15th.

Despite Sinn Féin's exclusion from the talks, negotiations for a political settlement continued. On 1 May 1997 the Labour Party were elected to power in British General Election. Tony Blair, then leader of the Labour Party became Prime Minister while Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam was appointed as Secretary of State of Northern Ireland. The new Labour Government made a number of overtures to Sinn Féin, expressing a desire to include them in talks if the Provisional IRA would renew the ceasefire. According to a statement of the Provisional IRA, "having assessed the current political situation, the leadership of the Oglai na hÉireann are announcing a complete cessation of military operations from 12 midday on Sunday 20 July, 1997" (Provisional Irish Republican Army 1997: paragraph 4). After eschewing all paramilitary activity for six weeks, Sinn Féin signed the Mitchell Principles (agreeing to a democratic, non-violent political resolution) and was admitted into the talks.

In January of 1998, Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) was expelled from the talks on the grounds that the paramilitary group with which it is associated, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) (a.k.a. the Ulster Defence Association), had been involved in the recent murders of at least three

Catholics. The British and Irish governments indicated that the UDP could re-enter the talks process if the UFF maintained its renewed ceasefire. On February 20, 1998 Sinn Féin was expelled from the multi-party talks on the grounds that PIRA had been involved in the recent deaths of two men. Shortly after the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) rejoined the multi-party talks following the its suspension, Sinn Féin (SF) rejoined the multi-party talks in mid-March 1998.

The Good Friday Agreement was reached on April 10, 1998 (Great Britain 1998). Under the terms of the Agreement, a new Northern Ireland Assembly would be elected by proportional representation, with executive and legislative powers and safeguards to ensure its operation on the basis of cross-community support.²¹ In terms of security matters, the Agreement essentially creates a *quid pro quo*: if the Republicans (and other parties) will declare a complete and unequivocal ceasefire, stop all procurement of weapons, dismantle paramilitary structures actively directing and promoting violence, cooperate fully with the Independent Commission on decommissioning, and abjure from using other organizations as proxies for violence, the British government will de-escalate security, withdraw troops, release paramilitary prisoners, and amend the legal system. The Good Friday Agreement sets a two-year target for full decommissioning of paramilitary arms and explosives. It provides two possible methods of decommissioning: the provision of information to the Commission, leading to the collection and destruction of arms; and the destruction of arms by those who are in possession of them.

While the British Government has taken a number of steps that indicate their intention to follow through with the letter of the Good Friday Agreement, Republicans have taken only very small steps towards decommissioning. The British have de-escalated security by ending routine military patrolling in many parts of Northern Ireland, by reducing the overall troop level to its lowest at any time since the Provisional IRA's first ceasefire in August 1994, and by demolishing the British Army's Fort Whiterock base in Belfast in the near future. The British government has also instituted prisoner release under the Northern Ireland Sentences Act that came into force at the end of July 1998. This Act provides for the early release of over four hundred prisoners in Northern Ireland over the next two years in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement.²² The sole action of the Republican movement thus far has been the appointment on 2 September 1998 of Martin McGuinness as Sinn Féin's representative to the International Commission on Decommissioning.

Stumbling Blocks in the Ceasefire Process

From this cursory review of the events during the cease-fire process, the unwillingness of the Provisional IRA to decommission their weapons in light of the British *quid pro quo* de-escalation of security measures and withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland seems like pure folly. Haven't the British clearly shown that they are eager to evacuate Northern Ireland? Similarly, Sinn Féin's overwhelming mistrust of British intentions, despite good-faith assurances offered by the British and the U.S. governments appears incomprehensible. Surely, the British are playing fair? It is also hard to understand Sinn Féin's inability to negotiate on behalf of the Provisional IRA. How can Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA negotiate a truce when they can't control their own members? The rise of hard-line paramilitary splinter groups like the Real IRA is also perplexing. Does the existence of such groups belie the Republicans' claim that they desire peace? The answer to the last question goes straight to the heart of issues central to Republican political identity.

Republican suspicions of "perfidious Albion"

The unwillingness of the Republican movement to extend any trust to the British government can be explained by sketching briefly the history of IRA ceasefires. The present ceasefire is the most recent in a long series. In addition to the three-day Christmas truces declared annually since 1990, bilateral cease-fires occurred in 1972 and 1974-5. During the 1981 hungerstrike, PIRA declared a cease-fire so that the deaths of the hungerstrikers would not be overshadowed by other military actions. Most recently, PIRA had called a brief halt to hostilities in April 1993.

From a Republican perspective, the British were responsible for breaking these ceasefires. For example, the 1972 cease-fire was broken when the British Army and UDA attacked civilians in West Belfast (MacStiofain 1975: 260). Loyalist violence directed against the Nationalist community drew PIRA into armed engagement. According to one PIRA Army Council member, "If our units had been ordered to stand aside, ...the IRA would have lost the defense initiative and all credibility with the people" (MacStiofain 1975: 289).

The settlement negotiations following these ceasefires all involved the same basic Republican demands: public recognition of the right of the Irish people to decide the future of Ireland, a declaration of intention to withdraw British troops, and the grant of a general amnesty for political prisoners (Finn 1991: 80). Not surprisingly, the British were unwilling to grant the IRA's demands in 1972 or 1974-5 (Wichert 1991: 171). In the 1970's, the British Army had no intention of withdrawing, believing that the war could be won on the ground. The expectation of eventual victory almost certainly inhibited the British desire for cease-fire (Smith 1995: 21).

A major factor underlying Republican resistance to the declaration of a permanent cease-fire was their perception of Britain as perfidious and double-dealing. PIRA's experiences with these prior cease-fires led them to suspect that the British would use the current cease-fire as an opportunity to regroup and develop new strategies. According to Adams (1995:103),

the British government has also used bilateral truces with the IRA to gain the upper hand, to cause confusion in republican ranks and to introduce new strategies. It has never engaged in a truce with the serious intention of considering or conceding the republican demands. In particular, the lengthy bilateral truce of 1974-5 was used to push ahead with the 'Ulsterisation/ 'normalisation/ 'criminalisation' policy.

The Provisional IRA, like many belligerents considering ceasefires, were concerned that a ceasefire would put them in a worse position and the British in a better position if fighting resumed (Smith 1995:16).

It is not unusual for belligerents to take advantage of cease-fires to regroup and rearm. In international law, this is generally viewed as a legitimate practice.²³ According to Oppenheim (1952: 551), "belligerents during an armistice may, outside the line where the forces face each other, do everything and anything they like regarding defence and preparation of offence..." A ceasefire, in this sense, allows for a continuation of war by other means (Seabury 1970: 102). Since wars are *legally* ended only by formal peace treaties, this continuation of war by other means is, in a sense, legitimate (Smith 1995:17). Ceasefires "may simply fix the conditions under which the fighting will be resumed, at a later date, and with a new intensity" (Bailey 1982: 3).

Having experienced the British “continuation of the war” under the guise of prior cease-fires, the Republican movement was wary of British intentions in the 1990s no matter how eloquent the assurances. Martin McGuinness, who negotiated the 1972 truce and was instrumental in the most recent cease-fire, resolved after the 1972 breach that "from [then] on there could be no question of an end to the violence until the ink on the treaty of withdrawal was dry" (Bishop and Mallie 1987: 230).

Permanence

Although the Provisional IRA declared a "complete cessation of military operations," they did not affirm that it would be permanent. The Downing Street Declaration, which spelled out terms for peace talks, allowed Sinn Féin to join the negotiations three months after PIRA called a "permanent" end to violence. Following the announcement of the cease-fire, Major requested an assurance that it was, indeed, permanent. Neither Adams nor deputy Sinn Féin leader Martin McGuinness were willing to describe the cease-fire as "permanent." "I think you have to take the statement at face value," according to McGuinness (Kiernan 1994: 1).

A number of cultural and historical factors underlie PIRA's unwillingness to declare a "permanent" cease-fire. First, from the perspective of Sinn Féin, asking PIRA to declare a permanent cease-fire before the withdrawal of British troops would place all the military obligations on PIRA.²⁴ Declaring a permanent ceasefire would give the British exactly what they had long wished for (a de-clawed and powerless Provisional IRA), while the British themselves remained fully armed. Following the Loyalist cease-fire, Gerry Adams pointed out that "[t]he British government is now the only agency with armed forces under its control which has not ceased its military activity" (U.P.I. newswire 1994). By declaring a permanent ceasefire, the Republican movement would receive nothing but further assurances.

The second factor militating against declaring a permanent ceasefire concerns the basic political philosophy of the Republican movement. The Republican philosophy of armed struggle is based on the notion that only force will compel Britain to leave Ireland. There is the implication that since Britain has not withdrawn its troops, "by giving up force ...blood has been shed in vain" (Dunnigan and Martel 1987: 41). Dunnigan and Martel (1987: 41) refer to this problem as "entrapment:" belligerents locked into a confrontation believe that they have invested too much labor in establishing an international support network, the acquiring and hiding of arms shipments, organizing the required military training and political education of its members. PIRA's cease-fire announcement (Provisional Irish Republican Army 1994) attempted to deal with the problem of entrapment by commending the volunteers who had died in the cause of Irish freedom: "We remember all those who have died for Irish freedom and we reiterate our commitment to our republican objectives."

On October 22, Prime Minister John Major announced that he would accept the current cease-fire and that the ceasefire now being observed by both sides is "intended to be permanent." As Pillar (1983: 91) points out, "The fundamental diplomatic act in an international negotiation is a change in one's offer — a change in what a negotiator says he will accept as an agreement." Apparently in response to pressure from Reynolds and American leaders, Major accepted the terms of the ceasefire. According to Major: "I am now prepared to make a working assumption that the cease-fire is intended to be permanent.... If we can continue reasonably to assume that Sinn Féin is establishing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods, if the IRA continues to show that it has

ended terrorism, then we shall be ready to convene exploratory talks before this year is out" (Tuohy 1994b: A1). Major said the Provisional IRA's adherence to the cease-fire was "more compelling than their words" (Tuohy 1994b: A1).

The Military Structure of the Provisional Irish Republican Army

Sinn Féin's inability to negotiate or speak on behalf of the Provisional IRA remains a major puzzle of the peace process in Northern Ireland. Yet the inability of Sinn Féin to exercise control over the Army Council is a result of the basic structure of the organization. While many present leaders of Sinn Féin are former members of the Army Council (the governing body of the Provisional IRA) Sinn Féin does not control the Army Council. The "armilite and the ballot box" strategy of PIRA, which accords equal primacy to electoral politics and military action, must satisfy the Army Council or risk splitting the movement. For example, Sinn Féin requested clarification by the British government of the Downing Street Declaration before they would bring the proposal to the Army Council (Wichert 1991: 121). Without the Army Council's full support for the cease-fire, Sinn Féin could not implement it. According to Adams (1995: 221): "It was up to the IRA to hold their own consultations and come to their own decision. I would have respected whatever decision they took."

The Army Council's inability to exercise total control over militant factions within the Provisional IRA also results from the organizational structure. The Provisional IRA is organized into active service units (ASUs). Organizationally, ASUs are a cell structure rather than a traditional military hierarchy. While this structure protects PIRA from infiltration and prevents any one person from knowing too much, it also limits the control that the Army Council actually has over the members.²⁵

This organizational structure has implications for the cease-fire negotiation process since "at a pure logistical level, a belligerent may actually be unable to cease fire because it cannot control the military forces which purport to fight for it" (Smith 1995: 123). In the case of the Provisional IRA, a number of infringements since the cease-fire point to the unauthorized use of violence by volunteers who are dissatisfied with the negotiation strategy. During an armed robbery of a post office in Newry on November 11, 1994, a postal worker named Frank Kerr was killed (Melaugh 1994). After denying that it has authorized any use of weapons since the cease-fire, PIRA acknowledged ten days later that its members were responsible, although the robbery had not been "sanctioned" by PIRA leaders.

Republican Factionalism

Perhaps one of the most serious stumbling blocks to the ceasefire is the resistance to political settlement within the Republican movement itself. In many paramilitary organizations, hard-line military factions are likely to be skeptical about the political process, and to view negotiation as capitulation. At the Letterkenny Conference, for example, eight-hundred party delegates of Sinn Féin dismissed the Downing Street Declaration as inadequate and tilted too much in favor of the Ulster Unionists. Even at that time, military factions within PIRA saw the ceasefire declaration as a betrayal of the Republican movement. Ruairi O'Bradaigh, IRA chief during the 1960s, told the Belfast Telegraph that the leadership has been "constitutionalized," meaning that political process

has replaced armed struggle to an unacceptable degree. But in the nature of the long struggle, he said, another group would rise up to take its place (Tuohy 1994b: A1).

Another group did, in fact, rise up to take the place of PIRA. On 15 August, 1998 the Real IRA (RIRA) came to the attention of the general public when it detonated a car bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland killing twenty-eight civilians and injuring more than two-hundred people. The RIRA is a "fundamentalist" Republican group that objected to the 1997 PIRA ceasefire and to the peace process. Despite the popular Republican support of the of the Good Friday Agreement, RIRA preferred to continue the armed struggle. RIRA split following a convention of senior PIRA figures at Gweedore, County Donegal, in October 1997. At this meeting, PIRA's Quarter Master General who was in charge of weapons, ammunition and explosives, resigned from the PIRA Executive.²⁶

While Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA retained the loyalty of the majority of Republicans, not all were satisfied with the northern leadership and their plan for peace. A number of senior PIRA figures, including some members of the General Headquarters Staff, which comes immediately below the Army Council in the PIRA chain of command, abandoned PIRA in favor of this splinter group. RIRA absorbed elements of the PIRA's Southern Command and recruited some of PIRA's top bomb-makers giving them the capability to make home-made explosives, to prepare bombs and to assemble a range of mortars. In addition to certain members of the Dublin Brigade, an entire PIRA unit in Tipperary is said to have gone over to RIRA with its arms.²⁷

Decommissioning of Weapons

The single major stumbling block in the ceasefire negotiations has been the issue of decommissioning of the Provisional IRA's arsenal. The British government has consistently insisted on the decommissioning of the weapons before all-party peace talks. Michael Ancram, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, stated that "peace without fundamental solutions is not a permanent peace. So we ask those with arms, 'If you are committed to peace permanently, why do you need a vast arsenal?'" (Montalbano 1995: A1). Loyalists have also consistently refused to negotiate with PIRA without prior weapons decommissioning. According to Michael Empey, a member of the Ulster Unionists: "Laying down arms is a test that the IRA is truly committed to peace. As long as they can turn on terror, we are not playing on a level field" (Montalbano 1995: A1).

Despite demands from all sides, the Provisional IRA has consistently refused to decommission its weapons. For the Provisional IRA, decommissioning amounted to a form of military surrender that it was unprepared to undertake (Editors 1996c: A14). According to Gerry Adams, "The British government is not simply interested in a gesture. It is, in reality, demanding the start of a surrender process as a precondition to all-party talks" (Bew and Gillespie 1996: 105).

PIRA's unwillingness to decommission weapons is related not only to the armed struggle against the British Army, but to the defensive role which weapons have played in nationalist communities. According to Gerry Adams (1995: 50), "the circumstances which shaped the recent support for the IRA are, above all, the experience of the barricade days from 1969-1972." During the Loyalists rioting in Belfast in August of 1969, the IRA (which had been defunct) rearmed and reorganized in order to defend the community from attack (deBaroid 1990). The current expectation that PIRA will abandon its weapons runs counter to the fundamental worldview of Republicans -- that their communities are besieged by hostile British and Loyalist forces and that the only defense they can expect is what they themselves provide.

Following the approval of the Good Friday Agreement, the Provisional IRA issued a statement refusing to give up any of its weapons. "Let us make it clear that there will be no decommissioning by the IRA. This issue, as with any other matter affecting the IRA, its functions and objectives, is a matter only for the IRA, to be decided upon and pronounced upon by us" (Provisional IRA 1998). The statement described the Northern Ireland peace deal as significant, but said it fell short of "presenting a solid basis for a lasting settlement." "The leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann have considered carefully the Good Friday document," the statement begins. "It remains our position that a durable peace settlement demands the end of British rule in Ireland and the exercise of the right of the people of Ireland to national self-determination" (Provisional IRA 1998).

Articles 2 and 3

Another stumbling block to an enduring peace settlement was the dual claim of the Republic and Ireland and Great Britain to the territory of Northern Ireland. The modification of the Irish Constitution became the cause of a deadlock in drafting of a framework document for talks. While this issue does not involve the Provisional IRA directly, it is bound up with the political history of Ireland and with concepts of cultural and national sovereignty. The Irish Constitution and the British Government of Ireland Act both lay claim to the territorial sovereignty of Northern Ireland. Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, declares that "the national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas." The phrase "national territory" implicitly makes a claim that the territory of Northern Ireland belongs to the Republic of Ireland. Article 3 states that "pending the re-integration of the national territory" the laws enacted by Parliament shall pertain to Northern Ireland. Article 3 effectively claims the right to exercise legal jurisdiction over the whole island. In *McGimpsey v. Ireland*, the Irish Supreme Court declined to "abandon [...] the claim to the re-integration of national territory," essentially reaffirming Irish territorial claims to Northern Ireland.²⁸

Negotiating these contradictory claims to sovereignty has been rather thorny. Earlier in the talks process, the British government proposed that if the Irish Government would amend the territorial claims in Article 2 and Article 3, the British government was willing to modify the terms of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act (and the subsequent 1973 Amendment). Nobody was happy with this arrangement. Although the original wording of Articles 2 and 3 was perceived as a threat by Unionists who do not consider themselves to be part of the Irish nation, the modification of the Government of Ireland Act (1920) was even worse. Because the wording excludes Unionists, it is totally counter productive to the very objective that the articles purportedly sought to advance (Fitzgerald 1994). Alteration of Articles 2 and 3 was seen as a compromise by Irish nationalists. By renouncing the claim over the territory of Northern Ireland, the partition of Ireland was legitimated. For Sinn Féin, the revocation of Articles 2 and 3 would "have the effect of leaving Britain's assertion of, and claim to, sovereignty over six Irish counties uncontested, while withdrawing Ireland's rightful claim to sovereignty" (Adams 1995: 206).

The Good Friday Agreement seems to have provided some solution. Under the Agreement, the Irish Constitution will be amended, abandoning the Republic's territorial claim on Northern Ireland and offering formal recognition that Northern Ireland is legitimately part of the United Kingdom. This will please the British government and assure the Unionists that they will not become "Irish" without their consent. The British Government agreed to repeal the 1920

Government of Ireland Act, thereby disavowing their sovereignty claim, and to introduce legislation to create a united Ireland should that become the wish of a majority in Northern Ireland. This arrangement will please Nationalists by removing Britain's claim upon Irish soil and mollify the Unionists by guaranteeing Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom unless a majority want to change that status. Additionally, this arrangement will probably meet with international approval; Adrian Guelke (1988) argues that islands are perceived by the international community as integral political units.

Republican Constitutional Issues

The appeal of a group like RIRA may, from the outside, seem incomprehensible. They engaged without apology in the slaughter of civilians and seemed determined to destroy all the gains made during the ceasefire process. Yet, RIRA did appeal to many Republicans. To Republicans, the appeal of the Real IRA was not based on a gruesome appreciation of the atrocities committed by gung-ho blood-crazed Provo gunmen. Rather, the Real IRA touched a nerve in the Republican body politic. The Real IRA claimed that they, in fact, were the "real" IRA. They claimed that their historical mandate and political legitimacy were derived from the 1919 Dail. In their view, by participating in the political process and by giving up the armed struggle, the Provisional IRA had betrayed the fundamental values of the Republican movement.

Historically, disputes over political legitimacy and who represents the "authentic" spirit of Republicanism have caused significant splits in the Republican movement. All of these splits resulted in considerable bloodshed and were (for Republicans) presumably worth fighting for. Perhaps the most well known split in the movement is that which resulted in the Irish Civil War, 1921-1923. Similarly, disagreements over participation in the political process led to the 1970 division of the organization into the Official and Provisional IRA. The Provisional IRA rejected any political recognition of either Stormont, Dublin, or Westminster parliaments and thereby became the inheritor of the armed struggle tradition (Wichert 1991:121). Although it never came to pass, an impending feud between the Provisional IRA and RIRA did not seem unlikely following the RIRA bomb in Omagh.²⁹

Disputes concerning the legitimacy of political mandate lie at the heart of the secret culture of Republicanism. The appeal of the Real IRA, the refusal to give up weapons before "the ink on the treaty was dry," the factionalism and militarism of the Republican movement, and the relationship between Sinn Féin and PIRA are all informed by the strange history of Republican constitutionalism.

At the beginning of the 1916 uprising against the British occupation of Ireland, the leaders of the rebellion authored a Proclamation of the Irish Republic. This was essentially an aspirational, constitutional charter document, as the actual Republic of Ireland only came into being following the Anglo-Irish War. As part of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, a parliament of the Irish Republic, known as the Dail Eireann, was established. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret military organization, was renamed by the Dail to the IRA. They took oaths to "support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic, which is Dail Eireann, against all enemies, foreign and domestic." They then entered into a war of independence against the British Government. While the IRA won freedom for the southern twenty-six counties of Ireland, the victory was incomplete.

In December 1921, the Dail Eireann signed a treaty with England which gave them the status as a nation-state within the dominion of the British Empire and which ended the Anglo-Irish War. Northern Ireland was then partitioned from the rest of the island and became a British protectorate. Sinn Féin split into two factions in the Dail: those favoring the Treaty, and those opposed. In 1922, when the Dail accepted the Treaty, the IRA withdrew its allegiance and fell back on its own convention for authority (Cronin 1980: 132). The Anti-Treaty faction called themselves Republicans, believing that the Anglo-Irish War had been fought in order to found an independent republic, outside of any political influence of England. The Irish Free State came into existence in 1922, and the Republican anti-Treaty forces began a guerrilla war against it, known as the Irish Civil War.³⁰ The anti-Treaty forces or Republicans refused to participate in any way in the political process and vowed to continue the armed struggle against the British occupation of Ireland.

These historical facts have informed Republican political thinking for over seventy years, and still influence the daily functioning of the organization. As the direct organizational descendant of the anti-Treaty Republicans, PIRA claims a historical mandate as the legitimate government of the Irish Republic.³¹ No other political organization holds this authority — it is the prerogative of the Army Council itself. Every Republican owes allegiance to the Army Council, of which Sinn Féin is merely the proxy. The training manual of the Provisionals, *The Green Book*, states that "The leadership of the IRA is the lawful government of the Irish Republic" (Clarke 1987: 2).³² Essentially, PIRA views itself as the legal successor of the Second Dail, and therefore as the legitimate government of the Irish Republic (Cronin 1980: 208).³³ Sinn Féin, therefore, has no power of its own, but can only act under the political will of the Provisional IRA.³⁴

Historically, the Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin have refused any political participation in British institutions, as they see the British government in Northern Ireland as illegitimate. As a force of occupation, the British government lacks any political mandate. Participation, therefore, of Republicans would legitimize an unacceptable political situation. But this view seems to be changing slowly. On 10 May 1998 Sinn Féin decided, at a second Ard Fheis in Dublin, to support the Belfast Agreement. Sinn Féin's decision was made possible, in part, by a change in the IRA's constitution allowing Sinn Féin to take up seats in the new Northern Ireland Assembly. Most speakers at the Ard Fheis emphasized that Sinn Féin's acceptance of the Belfast Agreement was no more than a tactical "extension of the armed struggle." The Provisional IRA would retain its arms and (as Gerry Kelly put it) the decision to participate in a Northern Ireland Assembly was taken in the knowledge that "in six months we can revisit it" (British Information Service 1998). These statements go far in explaining Republican willingness to engage in political process -- if that participation can be couched as "tactical" or "provisional" then it does not confer unearned legitimacy on the British political machine.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show how the cultural values that helped sustain the war also had a direct impact on the cease-fire process. PIRA's refusal to decommission weapons or to declare a "permanent" cease-fire as a precondition to entering into negotiations reflects not only a utilitarian strategic decision but also reflects a set of cultural values. In a culture that reveres military competence and sees the Anglo-Irish war as historical proof of the efficacy of arms, the

decommissioning of weapons threatens to negate the foundation upon which Irish Republican culture is based. In light of these values and attitudes, what is the prospect for permanent peace?

PIRA appears willing to bargain during negotiations, to accept a staged withdrawal of British troops and to accept the principle of democratic consent to political change. Yet this flexibility only extends so far. Because they are not simply an organization but the military expression of a complex culture, PIRA will not back down on certain issues. In the interests of self-protection and cultural militarism, PIRA will probably resist decommissioning of weapons unless the British government withdraws troops. Their unwillingness to declare a permanent ceasefire indicates that the ceasefire is a tactic in much the same way that armed struggle was a tactic. If they fail to get what they seek through negotiations, they may begin the military campaign again. On the other hand, after the experience of peace for such an extended period, their support base in the Republican community may shrink. Peace, like war, may become an entrenched condition.

Notes

¹ Ceasefires represent an indeterminate state between peace and war. The difficulty in defining the stages of transition between peace and war is reflected in disagreements within international law regarding the definition of "ceasefire." The term was used neither in the Hague Convention (1907), nor in any major works on international law of armed conflict, such as Greenspan (1959) or Schwarzenberger (1968). Only with the creation of the United Nations was the term "ceasefire" distinguished from "truce" or "armistice" (Mohn 1950). Truce can be distinguished from ceasefire in that a truce involves stabilization or strengthening of a ceasefire. Armistice can also be distinguished from ceasefire since it may only be local in character. For the purpose of this paper, Smith's (1995: 266) definition has been adopted: "A cease-fire is an implemented agreement between belligerents (either explicit or implicit), involving all or the greater part of their military forces to, at a minimum, abjure the use of violent force with regard to each other, for a period of time (not necessarily specified) regardless of the intention for doing so, and regardless of the eventual outcome of such agreement."

² Generally, "Republicans" tend to be Catholic and are sometimes mistakenly referred to as such. "Loyalists," though the name denotes a political view that is not dependent on religious affiliation, are often called Protestants. "Unionists" seek to maintain political unity with Great Britain.

³ The material gain theory, for example Gordon (1987), seems particularly unlikely considering the poverty of Northern Ireland. The British government derived no obvious economic benefit from its ties with Northern Ireland, although it is likely there were certain military, strategic and political benefits. The soldiers who patrolled West Belfast learned invaluable tactical lessons; operations during the Falklands War benefited from the training ground of Northern Ireland. In light of the political neutrality of the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland also provided an invaluable strategic position for NATO air and sea operations in the North Atlantic during the Cold War (Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies 1994). Similarly, the Republican community derived no material benefits from the war that would encourage its continuation. According to Gerry Adams (1995:65): "If the life of an IRA volunteer was a career, one might be able to talk about people who wanted to keep the war going rather than lose their livelihoods, but there is not even that mercenary element."

⁴ Commentators such as Byrne and Carter (1996) and Byrne (1995) have argued that we need to take note of the role of ethnic identity in the competing attachment of two opposing ethnic communities to the same territory. The point of this paper is somewhat different: that cultures contain internal mechanisms or social values that may, under the right circumstances, serve to sustain or produce conflict.

⁵ Republicanism is just one subtype of nationalism in Northern Ireland. The Social Democratic Labor Party (SDLP), the largest nationalist group in Northern Ireland, has views that are dissimilar to those of Republicans. While Republicans see British occupation as the bar to unification, leftist social democrats pinpoint the problematic relationship of unionists and nationalists as a bar to reunification. Guelke (1988) makes the point that the international community views the partitioned territory of Northern Ireland as illegitimate.

⁶ "Necrophilic" in this context can be taken to mean a strong, abiding fascination with death and with the political martyrdom of Republican figures like Padraig Pearse and Bobby Sands. Commentators have noticed that blood-letting in the Republican tradition has a redemptive quality (Feehan 1986). For background on the hungerstrike see Beresford (1987).

⁷ On the history of British military operations in Northern Ireland, see Dewar (1985).

⁸ The delicate process of preventing escalation and avoiding international disapproval forced the war underground. By the late 1980's the conflict centered on undercover operations, informants and a mutual, informal shoot-to-kill code of combat between PIRA and British Army Special Forces (Urban 1992).

⁹ Loyalists fear that if Ireland is united, the nine hundred thousand Protestants in the north would become a minority among the three million Catholics in the Republic of Ireland.

¹⁰ For example, when in May 1974 the British labour government proposed a Council of Ireland, the (Protestant) Ulster Workers Council began a strike that shut down all activity in Ulster. As a result of the strike, the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont collapsed and London assumed governance of the province (O'Malley 1990: 228). The Home Rule bills of 1893, 1912 and 1913 were also violently resisted by Ulster Protestants.

¹¹ Wars are typically defined by authors in the field as those with more than one-thousand combat deaths per year (Pillar 1983; Small and Singer 1982: 12). Northern Ireland and other such low-intensity conflicts thus fall outside of the parameters of the studies.

¹² The cease-fire in Northern Ireland challenges a fundamental assumption of conflict resolution theory: that wars end because they cannot be sustained. This idea emerges out of the military history of pre-nineteenth century Europe, when most wars ended with a decisive military victory or when victory became militarily or financially inconceivable. Statistical data suggests that modern wars, with the exception of the Gulf War and the Falklands War, have not ended in a decisive military victory. Rather, they tend to result in a stalemate with an ambivalent relationship between the belligerents (Pillar 1983: 16-21; Dunnigan and Martel 1987: 207-262). Dunnigan and Martel's data indicate that in 85.7% of wars between 1975-1983 stalemate was considered to be the decisive factor in ending the war.

¹³ The conflict in Northern Ireland challenges other assumptions in cease-fire theory which are beyond the scope of this paper. Wars are assumed to be temporary aberrations in the political life of nations that must and will eventually come to a halt when the belligerents have the political

will to do so. In Northern Ireland, the basic assumption that wars are temporary needs to be carefully considered.

¹⁴ Quantitative studies have attempted to determine the relationship between casualties, force ratios and the duration of wars in order to predict when wars end (Small and Singer 1982). The data do not associate any threshold level of combat deaths with cessation of war, and there may in fact be a negative correlation between length of wars and battle deaths per capita per month (Wittman 1979). In other words, the fewer the deaths, the longer the war.

¹⁵ Key sections of the document included the recognition by the British of an Irish right to self-determination, the end of partition and transfer of sovereignty to an all-Ireland government who would be democratically selected by the people, the use of British authority to influence Unionist opinion, and consultation between London and Dublin to set policy objectives of ending partition (Adams 1995: 209).

¹⁶ PIRA denied ever sending this message. This may, in fact, be true since the messages were transmitted orally, rather than in written form (Sinn Féin 1994b; MLR Smith 1995: 201). According to Pillar (1983: 67), the pervasive notion that an initial offer to negotiate is 'suing for peace' leads governments to resist making such offers for fear of being considered the defeated party."

¹⁷ Such attacks included a bomb explosion at an army checkpoint in Keady on May 15, 1994 that killed a British soldier. On May 21 in Armagh, the Provisional IRA abducted, interrogated and executed Reggie McCollum, a private from the Royal Irish Regiment. McCollum was the third member of his family killed by Republicans. These attacks may have been intended to show the pre-ceasefire strength of PIRA, but other attacks were long-intended and had very specific targets. On July 11, 1994, Ray Smallwoods, a notorious former paramilitary from the Ulster Democratic Party, was assassinated in Lisburn and two members of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, Joe Bratty and Raymond Elder killed on July 31 in Belfast. Additionally, after many attempts, PIRA finally did shoot down a British Lynx helicopter on March 19 in Crossmaglen with a mortar shell.

¹⁸ The statement issued by the Combined Loyalist Military Command said: "In the belief that the democratically expressed wishes of the greater number of people in Northern Ireland will be respected and upheld, the Combined Loyalist Military Command will universally cease all operational hostilities as from 12 midnight, Thursday Oct. 13, 1994" (Combined Loyalist Military Command 1994).

¹⁹ According to Martin McGuinness, "Against the backdrop of no IRA attacks against British forces, you have a situation where they are free to deal with these people within the Loyalist community who would embark on rampages . . . but that's not to say you won't have outbreaks of violence." (Kiernan 1994: 1). In stark contrast to the traditional Republican view of the British Army as collaborating with Unionists, McGuinness' statement indicates that Republicans now expected British security forces to protect the Republican community from Loyalist violence.

²⁰ Sinn Fein gathered more than fifteen percent of the vote, a record high. The outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association polled six percent of the vote. This election indicated that twenty-one percent of the vote in Northern Ireland supported political parties advocating violence.

²¹ The Agreement also included a provision for co-operative council between Northern Ireland and the Republic to consult, co-operate and act within the island of Ireland.

²² As of November, 1998 over two hundred and twenty prisoners, about half of those eligible, have been freed. Prisoners from the following organizations are ineligible for early release: The Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA), The Real Irish Republican Army, The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). Despite the fact that PIRA is not co-operating with the decommissioning body and punishment attacks have continued, PIRA prisoners have been released.

²³ Another school of thought views cease-fire as a status quo in which belligerents are not allowed to take advantage of the calm for military gain. During the conflict in Palestine, the UN Security Council resolved on August 19, 1948 that "no party is entitled to gain military or political advantage through violation of the truce" (Smith 1995: 18).

²⁴ Pillar (1983: 111) notes that cease-fires are generally unsuccessful if "each side proposed placing all the military obligations on the enemy while assuming none itself."

²⁵ Finally, neither Sinn Fein nor PIRA have much influence with other hard-line paramilitary groups, such as the INLA or the IPLO. These organizations operate independently, and thus far have been cooperating with the cease-fire. The INLA declared a "tactical rather than permanent" cease-fire on May 5, 1995.

²⁶ The Executive elects the seven-person Army Council, which is the main decision making body of PIRA.

²⁷ In addition to receiving covert support from PIRA members dissatisfied with the peace process, RIRA has worked with the two other Republican groups opposed to the peace process: the Continuity IRA (CIRA) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), which called a ceasefire after the Omagh massacre. For an excellent summary, see Boyne (1998).

²⁸ In *McGimpsey v. Ireland*, constitutional questions were raised regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Article 1(a) affirms "that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland." The plaintiffs argued that because the Anglo-Irish Agreement effectively recognized the legitimacy of the present constitutional arrangements in Northern Ireland, it violated Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution which exert a claim over Northern Ireland as part of the "national territory." Furthermore, the "consent clause" of the Agreement was challenged, insofar as it was argued that Ireland had entered into a Treaty whereby it committed itself to obtaining the consent of one section of the Irish nation, while disregarding the interests of the majority (e.g., the population of the Irish Republic). The Irish Supreme Court held that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not inconsistent with Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution, but merely "constitutes a recognition of the de facto situation in Northern Ireland ... without abandoning the claim to the re-integration of national territory."

²⁹ The Omagh atrocity, which seemed to be designed to frustrate the peaceful aims of PIRA and Sinn Fein, could have easily provoked a feud between PIRA and the Real IRA. In the past, this type of unauthorized military action often resulted in bloodshed. Another sensitive issue was the theft of PIRA arms and war material by the Real IRA. Misappropriation of weapons is considered to be a capital offense by PIRA. The fact that there was not a feud indicates that the northern leadership of Sinn Fein and the Army Council successfully restrained the more militant factions in PIRA.

³⁰ Michael Collins was a figure central to the Irish Civil War. At the end of the Anglo-Irish War, Collins took a pragmatic pro-Treaty view, believing that the Treaty was the only concession

that the British could offer in 1921. Nevertheless, Collins was determined to protect the Republicans in the north from Protestant anti-Nationalists. Despite the fact that he had become a minister in the newly formed government of the Republic of Ireland, Collins carried out military operations against British forces along the border. At this time, a series of pogroms were being carried out in the North, and these were widely considered to be the work of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, ex-Chief of the Imperial General Staff and current military advisor of the Unionist government in Belfast. Wilson, a vehement anti-Nationalist, was killed in London on the order of Michael Collins by the IRB. Wilson's "killing was the pretext that finally tumbled the two Sinn Fein factions into Civil War" (Cronin 1980: 151). Collins was assassinated in 1922.

³¹ It should be noted that the "Irish Republic," which is a nation waiting to be born, is not the "Republic of Ireland," which is a nation born following the Anglo-Irish war.

³² This is almost identical to clause twenty of the Constitution of the Irish Republican Brotherhood: "The Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood is hereby declared in fact, as well as by right, the sole Government of the Irish Republic."

³³ Believing themselves the legitimate government of Ireland, the Provisionals claim a mandate to declare war against Great Britain.

³⁴ Although it may seem that the tail is wagging the dog, the Provisional IRA's physical force tradition not only established the Republic of Ireland, but has assured the continuity and preservation of the movement for at least a century (or eight centuries, depending on when one begins counting). The ideology of Republicanism is also remarkably consistent: Seamas Twomey, former commander of the Belfast Brigade of PIRA in the 1970's and Gerry Adam's predecessor as Chief of Staff, summed up the basic ideology of Republicanism very simply: "Our first prime and main objective is the unification of our country. This means getting the British out of the occupied part of the country. After that the whole system in North and South would have to be changed" (Cronin 1980: 214).

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