

Charles Shivers

Northern Ireland–National Identity and the Politics of Non-Participation: The Creation, Maintenance, and End to Catholic Subordination

Key Terms:

- Social Identity Theory (S.I.T.)
- Orange Order
- Stormont Parliament
- Unionist
- Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA)
- Cult of Parliamentary Sovereignty

Author



Charles Shivers

Drawing upon his experiences working for the British Consulate General in Los Angeles and the Foreign Office's Joint Export Promotion Directorate in London, Charles Shivers chose to begin this project. Through his research, Shivers gained a sense of self-confidence and further developed his ability to think critically about words and their logical connotations. His advice to others: choose a topic you are extremely interested in. ♦

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper will be to demonstrate that the conflict in Northern Ireland is not due to religious reasons, but due to two politically motivated interest groups. These groups are composed of the Protestants/Unionists and the Catholics/Nationalists who adhere to mutually exclusive definitions of self, and who are both in conflict over a status quo, which has placed the Catholics in a position subordinate to Protestant domination. This paper explains the reasons behind the creation of these two groups, how the Protestants have been able to maintain their position of dominance over the Catholics, and what it will take to end the conflict. ♦

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Faculty Mentor



Paula Garb
[School of Social Sciences](#)

Charles Shivers set out to demonstrate that the conflict in Northern Ireland has not been due to religious differences, but to tensions between politically motivated interest groups. He wanted to explain how the politics and economics of dominance have played a key role in perpetuating the conflict, and how this situation was changing, providing some hope for a breakthrough. Not long after he finished his thesis the world watched in awe as the Good Friday Agreement was signed that brought peace to the long suffering region. Charles persistently sharpened his thinking on the subject and revised the structure and style of his composition. He can be congratulated for his insightful analysis and original writing. ♦

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Introduction

THERE ARE TWO COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND, different in their origins, nursing different historical myths, possessing distinguishable cultures, having different songs and heroes, and wearing different denominations of the same religion. Religion is the clearest badge of these differences. But the conflict is not about religion. It is about the self-assertion of two distinct communities, one of which is dominant in the public affairs of the province.¹

The people of Northern Ireland have suffered for more than three centuries from the division of their Christian community into two religious groups. This division has resulted in hostility between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and can be traced back to the Protestant "plantation" system used by James I "to cement England's control over Ireland."² In the 1600s, the "plantations were seen as the answer to the problem 'if the Irish would not become Protestant, then Protestants must be brought to Ireland'."³ Hence, the Scottish Protestants were introduced into the North and empowered by the crown to secure its land, wealth, and control for England.

Turmoil, repression, and discrimination have categorized the North since the Protestant plantations. Legal and institutionalized social injustices were codified by Penal Legislation enacted from 1695 to 1709. These were "anti-Catholic laws used to eradicate the Catholic religion in Ireland."⁴ Although the persecution of religious worship proved to be an impossible task, "the penal laws that were enforced, [...]were those which debarred Catholics from Parliament, from holding any government office (high or low), from entering the legal profession, and from holding commissions in the army and navy."⁵ Catholics were thus effectively excluded from all public life and even much of their normal social activity. Catholic education became illegal (i.e. Gaelic was replaced with English), and it also became illegal for Catholics to buy land, obtain a mortgage on it, or even rent or inherit it (primogeniture—first born male inherits a family's wealth and property). Consequently, the Penal Laws caused great social and economic dissent and "isolated the vast majority of the people of Ireland in an inferior identity. They became segregated from the rest of society and the normal processes of law."⁶ The Protestant ruling class was thus able to create and maintain a

the Stormont Parliament, the people of Northern Ireland have been united by Christianity and a shared land, but they continue to be divided by such distinct self-interests as national identity and political representation.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the motivations sparking the conflict in Northern Ireland are not caused by the dogmatic differences in religion between the two warring parties. Instead, this paper demonstrates how and why these two conflicting interest groups (Protestants and Catholics) have used religious affiliations to divide their community over such underlying issues as national identity and political representation to perpetuate those positions of social and political dominance or subordination. Thus, religion is a facade for the conflict in Northern Ireland, which has really been protracted by the two following underlying issues. First, a separate and distinct sense of "national identity" has evolved for those Protestants and Catholics living in the North. This can be seen in that their self-definitions are mutually exclusive and have become a source of contention because they are matched with incompatible ideologies. Second, Protestants have used discriminatory mechanisms to limit Catholic political representation in order to thwart Catholic participation. Motivation for a separate national identity and discriminatory mechanism have been prompted by a growing Catholic populace that presents a challenge to the diminishing dominance of their Protestant majority.

National Identity and What it Means to be Irish

Within the North of Ireland, religious affiliation has been used since the time of the plantations to reinforce the *political* polarization of Protestant and Catholic communities. As a consequence, religion is mistaken as perpetuating the conflict when it is really only a means of distinguishing between group membership. The underlying conflict between Protestants and Catholics is thus not based on religion, but is due to the inherent differences in the political ideologies of these two mutually exclusive interest groups.

The Application of the Social Identity Theory in the Creation of Out-Groups

subordinate Catholic peasantry by restricting their rights and taking away their means of changing the situation. These injustices continued into the 20th century under the Stormont Parliament that began to govern Northern Ireland in 1920. Stormont failed in 1972 and was replaced by Direct Rule from Westminster because it was unable to control the disorder resulting from the demands for civil rights. From the time of the Penal Legislation until

Social Identity Theory (S.I.T.) explains how interest groups have been used to perpetuate the conflict in Northern Ireland. S.I.T. posits that "self-identity is composed of: 1) personal identity, defined by one's unique traits, characteristics and experience; and 2) social identity, defined by one's membership in different groups."⁷ Hence, S.I.T. uses the combined self-defi

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nitions of individual members in the formation of a group identity that excludes others based on the unique value system of the group. Conflicts that often occur are the result of "peoples' desire that their group be positively valued and distinct from other groups."⁸ S.I.T. also explains the importance of "telling," in which the question "'What is he/she?' (i.e. Are you Green or are you Orange?) dominates encounters between strangers."⁹ Group identity thus assumes great importance because, as results suggest, "some children in Northern Ireland are capable of making ethnic discriminations based on first names by the age of seven years, while most children do not achieve this skill until age 11 or older."¹⁰ The point here is that children in Northern Ireland *learn* to distinguish their group and its members from out-groups at young ages in order to establish a positive image of their group. In doing so, children begin to slide down the spiral of the politics of hate.

The Division of Northern Ireland into Two Distinct Political Interest Groups: Catholic/Nationalists and Protestant/Unionists

The political affiliation of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland is divided into two groups, Unionist and Nationalist, both of whom "claim the same piece of soil (i.e. Northern Ireland) as their own."¹¹ Whether a person belongs to either group is determined by the heritage of the family into which they are born and are socialized. According to S.I.T., a family's group affiliation determines the political bias of the child that is learned at a young age and is reinforced by the high level of community polarization. In either case, the family has a political ideology that is directly linked to its heritage of Irishness or Englishness and hence, the corresponding religious group. The result is that out of the 1.5 million people in Northern Ireland, "one million are of Scottish or English descent. They are mainly of the Protestant religion and regard themselves as 'British,' and, in political terms, they are 'Unionists', signifying their attachment to the Union with Britain."¹² The remaining "half a million people in Northern Ireland are of Irish lineage and maintain close cultural and religious links with the rest of the island's three million population. They tend to adhere to the Catholic religion, and aspire to a United Ireland. In political terms they are 'Nationalists' or 'Republicans'."¹³

There is a direct correlation between religion and political ideology; however, political, and

lying reasons for the creation and the persistence of in-groups and out-groups. S.I.T. suggests that this is done in order to determine: first, whether a person is a member of the oppressed or oppressor class and second, whether or not that person will be discriminated against. Catholics discriminate against Protestants because of past injustices, and Protestants discriminate against Catholics to maintain their position of dominance. Unfortunately, as S.I.T. also explains, this practice is *learned* by children at young ages, from family and community members and eventually translates into a hatred of their rival group.

To explain why a conflict has developed between these two groups, it is necessary to examine the inherent *political* differences in their definitions of self.

Unionists regard themselves as custodians of an idealized vision of the 'British way of life' and British liberty, symbolized by the Crown and the Union between Britain and Northern Ireland, which they see as protecting them against destruction by an alien Catholic Irish state.¹⁴

Protestants in Northern Ireland see themselves maintaining the union between the North and Britain. They want to maintain this union because they fear becoming the minority in an independent Irish State, thereby losing their dominant position, both politically and economically. Protestants also fear Catholic retribution following unification because of their past discriminatory practices. Additionally, "Ulster Unionists argue that they are British rather than Irish, and that they therefore constitute part of a second nation in Ireland."¹⁵

Irish Nationalists argue that everyone in Ireland, including northern Protestants, belong to a single Irish nation and that a minority of this nation (i.e. Ulster Unionists) do not have a right to secede from the rest of the Irish nation.¹⁶

Unlike the Unionists, Irish Nationalists believe that by virtue of one's birth on the Emerald Isle, one automatically becomes Irish, regardless of religious or political affiliation. Furthermore, Nationalists want unification of the North with the South. An example of Catholic political resistance in Northern Ireland can be seen in their refusal to participate in

not religious doctrines, have protracted the conflict. This is because while religious affiliation is used to distinguish group membership, it does not adequately explain the under

the governance of the Stormont Parliament, which was created in 1920, following partition.

Catholics did this in order to withhold legitimacy from both the partition and the governance of Northern Ireland by the British. However, in the years following the creation of the Stormont Parliament, Catholics reversed their position and

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actively sought political representation only to find that they had been politically disenfranchised.

Political Representation: Growth of a Catholic Middle-Class Creates the Realization of Their Under-Representation and Prompts a Challenge to the Protestant Hierarchy of Political Dominance

The separation of Ireland into its Northern and Southern regions was by no means accidental. The North is composed of the six counties of the historic province of Ulster, which are the foundation of Protestant control. The intended goal of the separation was to "guarantee an in-built Protestant majority, within the North, providing Catholic population-growth did not dramatically exceed that of Protestants."¹⁷ However, Protestant control resulted in abuse and the "Stormont parliamentary regime (1920 to 1972) became a textbook illustration of [John Stuart] Mill and [Alexis de] Tocqueville's prediction that democratic rule was compatible with a 'tyranny of the majority' in what critics were to dub 'the Orange state'."¹⁸

To guarantee Protestant dominance and prevent internal factionalization from developing, the Orange Order, which is part of the Protestant political party, utilized religious bigotry and fear to ensure a united Protestant vote. Protestant voting solidarity has been maintained by fomenting their "fear that the province might one day be absorbed into an Irish Republic dominated by their traditional enemies (i.e. Catholics)."¹⁹ To ensure that this would never occur, the Orange Order devised a wide array of discriminatory measures to subordinate the Catholics.

Political representation, or rather political non-participation, is one of the underlying causes that has protracted the conflict in Northern Ireland. As will be demonstrated, Catholic under-representation in government may be seen in their minimal membership in the Stormont Parliament (1920 to 1972), their limited positions in the civil service, and their few seats on the Judiciary. Protestants have thus effectively thwarted the political aspirations of a growing Catholic populace. This is because Catholic demands for political representation pose a challenge to the declining dominance of the Protestant electorate.

Exclusion, Limitations, and Discrimination Against Catholics Under

Northern Ireland, when he boasted about a "Protestant parliament for a Protestant people." As will be seen, "this was not empty rhetoric: the Protestants had a popular majority (two to one) in the Stormont Parliament and maintained an electoral cohesion that enabled the Unionist Party to take between 62% and 76% of the seats at Stormont regularly after 1929."²⁰ To secure Unionist leadership in the Stormont Parliament, the Orange Order directly linked itself to the Unionist political machine.

The ethos of Orangeism permeates the Party. Every Prime Minister of Northern Ireland had been an Orangeman, 95% of all elected Unionist representatives in Parliament have been Orangemen, and the Orange institution is officially represented in the major organs of the Unionist Party.²¹

Hence, Protestants were able to maintain their stranglehold over the political arena by keeping out Catholics. They accomplished this through political patronage and discrimination at all levels of government, which became the "officially sanctioned policy in the civil service."²² This resulted in a disproportionate and unfavorable amount of Catholic representation.

In 1927 Protestants held 94% of posts, and those Catholics who were employed were concentrated at the bottom end of the scale. In 1959, the percentage was unchanged despite the enormous growth in absolute numbers of Catholics.²³

Not only did those Catholics employed by government occupy the lowest levels, but the end result of their underrepresentation was to weaken the Catholic political machine. This was because "it was difficult to hold together a party which could never hope for a share of political power and obviously had little influence with the Government."²⁴


Discrimination was also evident in the Judiciary, as documented by the table, *Senior Judicial Posts in Northern Ireland in 1969*, which divides the total number of senior judicial posts into two groups, Protestant and Catholic.

Table 1
Senior Judicial Posts in Northern Ireland in

Protestant Majoritarian Rule

196925

From the end of the 17th century to the present day, the Protestants have maintained their control over Northern Ireland. This can best be understood in the words of Lord Craigavon, the first Prime Minister of

<i>Status</i>	<i>Protestant</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Total</i>
High court judges	6	1	7
Country court judges	4	1	5
Resident magistrates	9	3	12
Crown solicitors	8	0	8
Under Sheriffs	6	0	6
Clerks of the peace	6	0	6
Total(s)	39	5	

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This table is significant because it shows that Catholics occupy only five out of the 44 possible seats available. The Protestants thus effectively controlled the Judicial/Legislative process (i.e. "Courts make laws!"). Furthermore, this is important because it enables the following two implications to be drawn. First, the Judiciary was able to legitimize and enforce laws, such as the Special Powers Act of 1922, without opposition.

This gave:

[T]he government the right to intern people without trial (which it did between 1922 and 1925, between 1938 and 1946, and between 1956 and 1961), to arrest people without warrant, to issue curfews, and to prohibit inquests—a power which tacitly prevented the investigation of illegal killings by the security forces.²⁶

Thus, the Catholics once again became subordinated to the will of a Protestant majority, much like they had been under the Penal Legislation of 1695 to 1709. Furthermore, Catholics had no means of seeking redress against illegal arrests, inquests, or unjust killings. Second, "these arrangements further reduced the prospects that the law might protect the civil liberties of the minority."²⁷ Hence, Mill's and Tocqueville's prediction that the "tyranny of the majority" can co-exist with democratic rule was censured. The question now becomes: Was the system of governance in Northern Ireland really democratic? And if so, how did government go wrong? Initially, the Stormont Parliament was constructed to provide the people of the North with a means of representing themselves, based on the British system of Parliamentary governance. This system included the democratic requirements of an opposition party, the Nationalist party, which consisted of a disenfranchised Catholic minority. The problem the Catholics faced however, was that the Unionist, or Protestant, party did not need the aid of the Catholic minority to form a majority in government. This was because the Unionists did not gain any political advantage by consulting with the Catholics; therefore, they did not. The resulting "Cult of Parliamentary Sovereignty"²⁸ consequently became the acceptable legal practice under the Stormont Parliament because:

Thus, it is clear that Protestant dominance in the political arena has stifled those Catholic aspirations for proportional representation that would enable them to confront the Protestants as equals. Currently, "direct rule continues under the Northern Ireland Act of 1974, which is annually renewed, as is the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act."³⁰ This took the power away from both the Protestants and Catholics and vested it in Britain's Parliament in London. As of late, the Blair government is considering the possibilities of devolving London's authority to a new and fully restored Parliament in Northern Ireland.

Mechanisms and Motivation for Protestant Dominance

Protestants prevented Catholics from gaining political power by using six discriminatory mechanisms: 1) a switch from proportional representation to plurality rule; 2) the subsequent use of gerrymandering; 3) the "Cult of Parliamentary Sovereignty" over the legislative process; 4) the requirement of an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown; 5) canvassing, and finally; 6) clientelist relations. Protestant discrimination in the political process was used to maintain the Protestant's dominant political position because they view making "concessions to their opponents as a form of communal suicide."³¹

The first discriminatory mechanism was the shift from proportional representation to the "conventional British plurality rule" in 1922, two years after the creation of the Stormont Parliament. This enabled "Unionists to reduce the number of local councils held by nationalists (25 out of nearly 80 in 1920)."³²

The second discriminatory mechanism was the gerrymandering of constituency boundaries. This remained a constant feature of Northern Ireland's local government for 50 years. The combination of plurality-rule and gerrymandering resulted in diminished Catholic representation in the 1924 local elections, when "nationalists were reduced to holding two councils."³³ However, it is necessary to note that "the results of the changed election system and 'Leeching'" (Northern Ireland's word for gerrymandering)³⁴ "were compounded by nationalist boycotts and abstentionism. (When boycotting was abandoned, nationalists won 10 to 11

Under the majoritarian rules inherited from across the water, the Unionists could form one-party governments with no Catholic representation whatever and they were free of the constraints of a competitive party system and of a bill of rights or any other strong legal protection for the minority.²⁹

councils out of 73)."35 An additional note is that Catholics boycotted the Stormont Parliament since its first meeting in 1921. They did this to prevent the official acceptance of the partition of Ireland and to withhold conferring legitimacy to the government of the North.

The third discriminatory mechanism Unionists used was to impede the legislative process. Unionist minis

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ters had no incentive to aid the Nationalist party (i.e. Catholics) because they had established a permanent Cabinet monopoly. The "Cult of Parliamentary Sovereignty" thus ensued since Unionists were not dependent on outside party support; Protestant dominated rule soon resulted in abuse. Unionist Ministers used their positions of authority to actively subvert concessions to the Catholics and used their lack of action to sanction government abuses by not preventing discrimination. This is evidenced in the following quote:

Unionist ministers were able, either actively to support Political discrimination, through framing appropriate legislation and sanctioning biased forms of administration, or tacitly to endorse discriminatory practices by not using their offices to prevent abuses at lower levels of government and administration.³⁶

The result of this bias on the legislative process was two-fold. First, it created an out-group of at least one-third of the electorate (i.e. Catholic) and second, Unionist Cabinet dominance prevented the "essential checks and balances in the Westminster model."³⁷

The fourth discriminatory mechanism was the requirement of an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown. This was preposterous to those Irish Catholics who not only despised the British, but were rejecting their rule in the North by boycotting the Stormont Parliament. The Oath of Allegiance was used as a screening measure to keep those Irish Catholics who desired unification of the North and the South out of the political arena because they were viewed as disloyal. The Oath was thus intended to conscribe those disloyal Irish to the British way of life.

The fifth discriminatory mechanism was instituted by the Orange Order and is known as canvassing. "This meant that an applicant for a local authority job, for example, was given a list of councillors and committee members and was expected to visit them to plead his case"³⁸ as to why he should receive the job.

Canvassing was used to develop the sixth discriminatory mechanism, that of clientelist relations which enabled Unionist elites to "distribute patronage amongst favoured sections of the constituency, thus strengthening the loyalty of their

population during the 1930s when unemployment peaked around 25 percent. From 1920 until 1968, the issue of Catholic loyalty to the crown was a driving force for continued Protestant dominance. Catholics refused to swear allegiance to the crown because they were unwilling to accept the partition of Northern Ireland and the legitimacy of the Stormont Parliament. Hence, the conflict is also about mutually exclusive desires for re-unification of the North with the South. Whereas Protestants want to remain loyal and within the United Kingdom, Catholics want a unified Ireland rather than be "held hostage" under British subjugation. The motivation to deprive Catholics of any political influence can best be summarized by Lord Brookeborough's comment that "nobody is going to put an enemy where he can destroy you!"⁴¹ This represents the prevailing Protestant sentiment in Northern Ireland. Additionally, from 1920 to 1968, the struggle for, and the fear of, re-unification also drove the conflict. Protestants feared the possibility of retribution and extinction under re-unification because they would become a minority in a united Ireland. The Orange Order capitalized on Protestants' fear of being "dominated by their traditional enemies...to keep the two communities apart and to ensure that all Protestants united in voting for their party."⁴² Protestants were thus motivated to protract the conflict to maintain their hierarchy of power and privilege.

The Catholic Challenge: A Rise in the Catholic Middle-Class Prompts a Shift in Their Desire From Unification to Equal Representation, Resulting in Political Mobilization Against Protestant Dominance

Following the end of World War II, the challenge for equal representation within the North became possible with the rise of a Catholic middle-class. Catholics were no longer dependent on the three dominant forms of employment that were controlled by Protestants: agriculture, linen, and ship building. Instead, new industries meant that Catholics had more access to managerial occupations⁴³ because they were not controlled by the Orange Order's garnering of political patronage. Hence, the introduction of foreign investment in new British enterprises in the North "created a new middle-class sector whose incomes and status were not related to the old Unionist oligarchy."⁴⁴ The corresponding

supporters."³⁹ The end result was that the Orange Order was able to prevent the factionalization of their party by keeping members loyal through patronage. Protestants also used clientelist relations to discriminate at the local level against the Catholics "where religion could be easily ascertained."⁴⁰ This applied to both governmental and non-governmental jobs and especially hurt the Catholic

growth of the emerging Catholic middle-class was linked to a new frame of mind that "instead of challenging the legitimacy of the Northern state, began to demand equality within it."⁴⁵

The growth of a Catholic middle-class contributed to the formation of a Catholic reformist movement, which later encompassed Northern Ireland's civil rights movement of the 1960s and the development of an educated

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Catholic elite. "The introduction of free education at all levels in Northern Ireland under the Education Act (1947) was a significant factor"⁴⁶ in the development of a Catholic intelligentsia. Furthermore, "university education became available on academic merit rather than according to economic circumstances."⁴⁷ These university-educated Catholics later became the leaders of the civil rights movement of 1960 to 1980, resulting in the full realization of Catholic economic and political deprivation. During this time, Catholics made an attempt to address their demands for political reform.

Surprisingly, "when the Civil Rights movement emerged in the 1960s, the slogan 'one man, one vote,' brought widespread support from Protestants for the reform programme."⁴⁸ The emerging Protestant and Catholic coalition was significant because: 1) Protestants and Catholics were working together; 2) it marked the first real dissension within the Unionist party—a deviation from solidarity; 3) cooperation became possible because Catholics were not seen as wanting unification, but were seen as wanting representation within the North, and; 4) Protestant electoral control had marginalized poor Protestant voters in favor of Protestant business owners who received plural votes. Hence, the poor Protestants also wanted equal electoral representation because they too were marginalized.

Consequently, the Protestant majority saw this as a threat, and problems ensued when "the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, set up in February 1967, began to press for social and electoral reforms in the province, including the abolition of the B Specials and the Special Powers Act."⁴⁹ As mentioned earlier, these two items had stripped the Catholics in the North of much of their civil liberties, resulting in a government-run state, lacking in democratic checks and balances.

Northern Ireland's Prime Minister Terence O'Neill responded to the combined demands of marginalized Catholics and Protestants with the introduction of economic reforms through the Stormont Parliament in Northern Ireland. His political reforms, however, were opposed within the Unionist Party. A counter-force soon emerged under the leadership of Protestant fundamentalist leader, Ian Paisley, who mobilized fearful Protestants in the late 1960s with claims that moderate prime minister "Terence O'Neill was selling Protestants down the river into a united Ireland with his reform program and

security of the state."⁵¹ The Campaign for Social Justice and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) were formed in 1967 and were composed of both Protestants and Catholics who aimed at ending the social and political discrimination against Catholics. Their efforts were frustrated, however, because the illiberal sections of Unionism perceived civil rights as yet another threat from nationalists because their demands for equality were made by, and on the behalf of Catholics. Furthermore, illiberal Protestants, or Paisleyites, prevented the NICRA from holding peaceful demonstrations because they threatened the government with holding counter-demonstrations on the same day. The demonstrations would have definitely led to public disturbances and/or riots. Regardless, NICRA decided to proceed and, with the help of students, ignored the bans, and violence thus ensued.

The British army was brought in to prevent civil war and to keep the two communities apart which meant effectively to curb Protestant violence against Catholics. But the army was not a police force, and northern Ireland was not just another colonial posting where the rebellious native could easily be recognized. This led to mistakes and mishandling of the population by the army.⁵²

Violence in the late 1960s brought an awareness of the challenge that the radical student community presented to the Protestant leadership and highlighted a Northern Ireland deprived of democracy and in desperate need of civil rights. In response to the civil disturbances, the United Kingdom government stepped in to suspend the Stormont Parliament in 1972, even though the government enjoyed a high level of confidence amongst the minority (Catholic) community.

Up until the disturbances, new forms of participation and structure were emerging, albeit at a relative slow pace. "[T]he state was on the defensive, the people were in the ascendant, and the dream of people's power was close to realization."⁵³ Northern Ireland has been governed by a Direct Rule administration from London since 1972, "through British Ministers appointed by the U.K. Prime Minister."⁵⁴ However, in recent times, the Blair government has been discussing moves in the direction of a devolved parliament in Northern Ireland. This would effectively

overtures to the Republic."⁵⁰

Unfortunately, O'Neill met opposition both from Catholics and from within his own party. "Catholics viewed O'Neill as offering too little too late; Protestants regarded him as a traitor who was prepared to risk the

place the power to rule directly in the hands of the people. How and when have yet to be determined, but as this section has made clear, a successful government in the North must have the official checks and balances of the Westminster model and be robust enough to ensure minority rights.

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Conclusion

Given that political representation, and not religion, drives the conflict in Northern Ireland, it will be necessary to open up the political process in order for Blair's devolved Parliament to be successful. This will provide a conducive environment in which the two large voting blocks will be able to break-up into their factional parties, and they in turn will have to work with each other in order to gain enough power to form a coalition government. To ensure that this will occur, the voting system should be based on Germany's system of proportional representation in which those parties receiving five percent or more of the vote are allowed representation in public office. With these prerequisites firmly established, coalition governments would have to represent a wider cross-section of society and thus limit the dominance of one group as maintained by the Orange Order and Ulster Unionist Party. Additionally, voting solidarity could not be maintained through previous channels of political patronage, and liberal Protestants could pursue their own agenda of political equality. Furthermore, London can create regulatory commissions during the devolution time to ensure the ease of the transition.

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²⁶O'Leary and McGarry 127.

²⁷O'Leary and McGarry 128.

²⁸O'Leary and McGarry 114.

²⁹Crighton and Mac Iver 127-142.

³⁰Hughes 85.

³¹Crighton and Mac Iver 127-142.

³²O'Leary and McGarry 111.

³³O'Leary and McGarry 112.

³⁴O'Leary and McGarry 112. Sir John Leech was placed in charge of a one-person judicial commission that readjusted electoral boundaries.

³⁵O'Leary and McGarry 112.

³⁶O'Leary and McGarry 114.

³⁷O'Leary and McGarry 114.

³⁸Probert 62.

³⁹Probert 62.

⁴⁰Probert 62.

⁴¹Magee 93.

⁴²Magee 94.

⁴³Probert 75.

⁴⁴Probert 75.

⁴⁵Hughes 82.

⁴⁶Pringle 248.

⁴⁷Pringle 248.

⁴⁸Probert 60.

⁴⁹Hughes 82.

⁵⁰Crighton and Mac Iver 127-142.

⁵¹Pringle 252.

⁵²S. Wichert, "The Role of Nationalism in the Northern Ireland Conflict." *History of European Ideas* 16:1-3 (1993): 109-114.

⁵³Oliver 370-376.

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¹⁰Gough et al. 647.

¹¹Hughes xiii.

¹²Q. Oliver, "Community Development in Areas of Political and Social Conflict: The Case of Northern Ireland." *Community Development Journal* 25.4 (1990): 370-376.

¹³Oliver 370.

¹⁴Hughes 2.

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