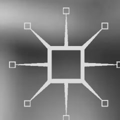
EDITED BY
Thomas Paul Burgess

THE CONTESTED IDENTITIES OF ULSTER CATHOLICS



The Contested Identities of Ulster Catholics

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Editor

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For Mary and Ruby

Preface

One might not unreasonably assume that the genesis for this book emerged from the wish to see a 'sister' publication bookend the 2015 work, *The Contested Identities of Ulster Protestants.*

After all, despite years of empty rhetoric and cumbersome policy in the area of community relations, parity of esteem and cultural equality, we academics tilling away in the fields of Northern Irish identity politics, are certainly not insensitive to the requirement for balance.

However, the initial motivation for undertaking this book had its origins in a much less prosaic rationalisation.

In September of 1993, I confounded many of my contemporaries and perhaps surprised myself a little, when I accepted a lectureship at University College Cork.

I had spent most of my working life in Northern Ireland, in civic, community and academic involvements, which were invariably touched by the unique circumstances dictated by the conflict there.

Therefore, the appeal of training and educating community activists, not encumbered by sectarian politics but rather, whose primary goal was to challenge social inequality and poverty, proved undeniably attractive.

Over time, I gradually became accustomed to some of the more subtle differences specific to Southern Irish society. The little things: the insistent chimes of the Angelus; the sober state monuments to the IRA dead of the war of independence; an easy reticence, born perhaps of post-colonial legacy, leading to ambivalence towards observing 'questionable'

rules and regulations; Fifty euro to the GP each time you cross the surgery threshold; the absence of a Saturday mail delivery service.

Indications of a Catholic state for a Catholic people? Or simply inconsequential differences of no import? In pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland, life, after all, moved more slowly.

To the American or European tourist, these maddening little anachronisms were quintessentially '*Irish*'. They were quaint and idiosyncratic. However, to the Ulster Protestant, they can jarringly take on a cultural significance far beyond their import. And so this proved with me.

However, these minor moot points were to pall into insignificance as my honeymoon with Catholic Ireland concluded dramatically one day, when I took a phone call at college.

'*This is Detective Sergeant Gallagher. From An Garda Síochána, Cork City. I'd like to speak with you on an urgent matter*'.

Later, as I watched at the window of my newly rented flat, two burly detectives arrived, shirtsleeve order on a hot day, clipboards in hand.

'*The thing is…*' "explained the more brusque of the two," '*…we've had an anonymous tip off to our "Crimeline" service. The Anti-Terrorist Squad have been given your name as someone involved in the terrorist murder at The Widow Scanlan's Pub in Dublin*'.[1]

To say I was incredulous would be an understatement.

For someone who had been publicly associated with projects and undertakings in Northern Ireland, which were committed to peace movements, community relations and reconciliation initiatives, it was nothing short of a personal insult. I was reeling from the fact that someone should dislike me so much as to wilfully concoct such a malicious slander.

Some years earlier in 1988, whilst a student at Oxford, two sinister-looking men who had been tailing my car consistently, had harassed me in an uncomfortable confrontation. Following a spate of IRA bombs in England, petrified with trepidation, I believed that it was only a matter of time before the S.W.A.T. team barged in to my student digs.

[1] The incident was revisited in the press when the family of murdered doorman Martin Doherty claimed PSNI/RUC collusion in the attack. Irish Times, 28 October 2015.

What *did* arrive was a letter from the local D.H.S.S., informing me that I had been under investigation by a pair of over-zealous dole snoopers. My relief marginally superseded my anger.

Ah, the plight of the Irish in England during those dark days. Protestants, Catholics … all just '*Paddies*'.

However, this was Ireland. Surely, in the eyes of Republicans and nationalists, as an Ulsterman, this was my homeland as well?

To this day, I can only speculate as to whether a disgruntled student—or even colleague—sought to make mischief at my expense. At the time, the whole sorry episode seemed to reinforce my fears that Ulster Protestants were unwelcome in the Irish state.

I requested that a formal complaint should be registered and the matter investigated with an eye to prosecution. In reality, there was little more I could do.

Nevertheless, the experience had served as a salutary lesson in the marginalisation of '*the other*'. It was sobering to experience civil society as a member of a minority community or out-group.

So when, several years later, I learned that my Head of Department was appointing a former Republican prisoner to the staff team, I was both intrigued and a little troubled. (This was a west Belfast, PIRA bomb-maker and now Sinn Fein activist who had secured his Ph.D. whilst incarcerated. We certainly had a lot to discuss.)[2]

Now, I have always rather despaired at the bourgeois, liberal intelligentsia's unwholesome attraction to the 'whiff of cordite'. And so it proved in certain sectors of my institution. To rub shoulders with a 'freedom fighter' invited a frisson of delicious endangerment. Something tantalising for the book club crowd or the coffee morning set perhaps.

Worse still, I began to imagine that perhaps some sociological experiment might pit us both together, so that we could be observed under test conditions!

Therefore, I undertook to address the matter directly by inviting said colleague for a 'clear the air' libation. During this, I made it clear that—whilst I believed his organisation had waged protracted war on my community—I accepted that past grievances were rendered 'regrettable' in a post-Good Friday dispensation.

[2] "IRA bomber now a lecturer on social policy", *The Irish Independent*, 21 October 2006.

Furthermore, I was prepared to vouchsafe a prediction.

That in 12 months' time, he would discover to his chagrin that he had, in fact, more in common with me (another west Belfast, working-class lad) than all the fellow travellers he thought to encounter in a 26-county Irish Republic.

By his own admission, this has subsequently been the case. At times, he has felt an outsider, as mistrusted and scrutiniszed as I had been. Maybe more so. However, how much more challenging this opprobrium must be for someone who had served a prison term for pursuing terrorist activities, in the quest for Irish freedom and a unitary state?

Around now you may be asking, 'what has all this to do with the contested identities of Ulster Catholics'?

Well, put simply, these episodes reinforced a conviction I had long harboured. That (much like the diversity of opinion and allegiance within the Ulster Protestant community) Irish (and Ulster) Catholicism/Nationalism/Republicanism, represented a swathe of attitudes and adherence not comfortably contained within the singular vision of Sinn Fein's socialist Republic.

Even a cursory re-visitation of historical expressions of Northern Irish Catholicism/Nationalism/Republicanism reveals a profusion of radically different visions, interpretations, and aspirations. Some of these have led to violent internecine conflict—others, to a disconnect with Mother Church over issues of social conservatism. Even the sacred shibboleth of re-unification has been brought into question.

Yet in Northern Ireland, as I write, the aftermath of the Westminster determinations has, in one fell swoop, eradicated the middle ground of Ulster politics and reinforced the 'Balkanisation' of the region in bluntly sectarian, East/West of the Bann terms. Power sharing has seemingly failed, and any opportunity for the expression of political nuance or gradation within both communities may have been set back for years.

Given the history and vagaries of Northern Irish politics, we understand the 'zero-sum' game of sectarian voting trends at times of political uncertainty. Only the most wilfully stubborn or opportunistic politician would attempt to claim that this simplistic mandate comfortably encapsulates and legitimises the manifestoes of both the main protagonists in their entirety.

But of course, there are many such ideologues in Stormont who will remind us that the people have spoken.

Therefore, it becomes imperative—perhaps now more than ever—for academics and commentators to challenge simplistic and tribal assumptions regarding monolithic opinion attaching to both these electoral blocs.

Cork, Ireland Thomas Paul Burgess

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I would like to thank all those who contributed their efforts to the writing of this volume. I am particularly grateful to those who were supportive of the book idea from its inception. These friends notably include, Sam McCready, Colin Coulter and Gareth Mulvenna. Thanks are also due to Margaret Buckley, Imogen Gordon Clark at Palgrave Macmillan and The College of Arts, Celtic Studies & Social Sciences, University College Cork, in facilitating sabbatical leave in order to work on the project.

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He has spent periods, variously as inner-city schoolteacher; Community Relations Officer in local government in Northern Ireland; and researcher for The Opsahl Commission of Inquiry into political progress in Northern Ireland.

He is a critically acclaimed novelist, *White Church, Black Mountain* (Matador Press, 2015) and *Through Hollow Lands* (Urbane Press, 2018) and, as a successful songwriter/performer with his band, Ruefrex, released seven singles and three albums, notable for their political commentary on the Northern Irish conflict.

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David Hassan was awarded a Distinguished Research Fellowship from Ulster in recognition of his outstanding contribution to research. He has held several leadership roles at the University, including Head of

School, Head of Research Graduate School, Provost of the Belfast and Jordanstown campuses, and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences (Global Engagement). His work extends to being Editor of both an academic journal and a book series for the global publisher Routledge, Founding Co-Director and Chair of the Special Olympics Regional Research Centre at Ulster, and Chair of a range of third sector and voluntary bodies. His work in the field of intellectual disabilities has significantly enhanced the integration of young people with developmental and intellectual disabilities across Europe. He has published 15 books and 175 other research outputs.

Stephen Hopkins is Lecturer in Politics in the School of History, Politics and International Relations at the University of Leicester, UK. His book, *The Politics of Memoir and the Northern Ireland Conflict* was published in paperback by Liverpool University Press in 2017. He was co-editor (with Graham Dawson and Jo Dover) and contributor to *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories* (Manchester University Press, 2016). He has written widely on life-writing associated with the Troubles, and has published recent articles in *Irish Political Studies, Irish Studies Review,* and *Memory Studies.*

Anthony McIntyre is a former Provisional Irish Republican Army member, writer and historian. He was imprisoned for 18 years in Long Kesh, spending four of those years on the no-wash protest. After his release from prison in 1992, he completed a Ph.D. in political science at Queens University Belfast and subsequently worked as a journalist and researcher. A collection of his journalism was published as a book in 2008, *Good Friday: The Death of Irish Republicanism*.'

Tommy McKearney is a socialist republican, a writer and organiser with the Independent Workers Union. He is also a former member of the IRA and participated in the 1980 hunger strike while imprisoned in the H-Blocks. He is the author of a book, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament,* is a regular contributor to *Socialist Voice* and occasionally comments on republican politics and events for the media. During Britain's EU membership referendum in 2016, he spoke on platforms advocating a 'Lexit' position. He is originally from Co. Tyrone but now lives in Monaghan.

Gareth Mulvenna obtained a Ph.D. from Queen's University Belfast (2009) in the socio-cultural experiences of Belfast's Protestant working

class from pre-Troubles to post-conflict. He is the author of *Tartan Gangs and Paramilitaries—The Loyalist Backlash* (Liverpool University Press, 2016) which was described by the leading journalist Ed Moloney as 'a classic'. Dr. Mulvenna is regarded as an expert on loyalist paramilitarism and has regularly engaged with the loyalist community on historical commemoration and conflict transformation initiatives. He is also co-editor of this book's precursor, *The Contested Identities of Ulster Protestants* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Conor Murray is currently undertaking a Ph.D. in history at DCU, researching the survival and growth of so-called foreign games in post-independence Ireland. Prior to this, his Masters at Ulster University examined the role of Cultural Identity in sport in Northern Ireland since 1998.

Malachi O'Doherty is the author of several books on Northern Ireland, including a recent biography of Gerry Adams and a memoir covering his work as a journalist during the worst year of the Troubles, 1972, '*The Telling Year*'. Dr. O'Doherty lives in Belfast and for most of his working life was a freelance journalist and broadcaster there, contributing to The Belfast Telegraph, The BBC, The Irish Times and Channel 4 among others.

Connal Parr is Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow in the Humanities at Northumbria University. His research has been published in various journals and edited collections, and his first book *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* was published by Oxford University Press in 2017. His work emphasises the interconnectedness of history, politics, and culture, with a particular focus on how societies deal with a divided and violent past. Connal studied Modern History at the University of Oxford and obtained his Ph.D. in Ulster Protestant politics and culture at Queen's University Belfast, before returning to Oxford as Irish Government Senior Scholar at Hertford College.

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Aimee Smith received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Aberdeen in 2015. Her thesis explored the creation and maintenance of young Catholic identity in post-conflict Northern Ireland. She has since conducted research on religious education and diversity in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (Trinity College Dublin) and from August 2017, has been based in the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation at Queen's University Belfast.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Thomas Paul Burgess

Our object in the construction of the state is the greatest happiness of the whole, and not that of any one tribe.
—Plato. The Republic

'*May you live in interesting times*', as the ancient Chinese curse would have it. And whilst undeniably 'interesting', disorder, change and democratic deficit have irrefutably been to the fore in the recent political developments of Northern Ireland.

At time of writing, the absence of an elected assembly at Stormont, during a tumultuous period when constitutional stability was most required, continues unabated and seemingly with little prospect of resolution. The last time that there *was* any demonstrable activity in the Northern Ireland Executive, it followed The Assembly elections called by the then Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, in March 2017. These produced gains for Sinn Fein, with the party taking 27 seats, just one behind the DUP's total.

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With so much in flux, you will not be surprised to learn that the contributors to this collection were barely able to hit 'save' on their keyboards, before another, seemingly more portentous event overtook their analysis. Attempting to 'take the temperature' of a community and thus establish trends and predict outcomes became an even more unusually fraught and inexact science. Even at the best of times, consensus around political aspiration, cultural affinity and the methodologies by which to express these has historically been contested within the nationalist and Republican peoples of the region.

Nevertheless, guided by the remit that informed our earlier collection, '*The Contested Identities of Ulster Protestants*', the editorial policy of this book remained focused on offering up an eclectic collection of commentators, not drawn exclusively from the academic fraternity. Subsequently, former Republican prisoners sit cheek by jowl with journalistic commentary and conventional empirical academic findings. This in turn offers a variety of writing styles and, of course, viewpoints.

Perhaps, the most logical place to begin such an undertaking was with my own chapter, which offers a somewhat 'glass-half-full' perspective (albeit an 'imagined' one). External events and a changing of the guard—where some key political actors are concerned—has fashioned both threat and opportunity on the island of Ireland. Chapter 2 seeks to propose something of an invitation to both nationalists (and unionists) to 'reimagine and own' the changing political landscape, rather than have events dictate to them. I posit the view that Irish nationalists—north and south—must be prepared to re-examine (and perhaps compromise) treasured shibboleths established from the formation of the Irish state and before. In doing so I argue, a federal model can move Ireland forward with the imagination and courage of a state no longer mired in the politically infantile legacies of the twentieth century; Revolution and rebellion, church-state controls and post-colonial inferiority complexes.

Following from this is Professor John Coakley's overview of Chapter 3. Coakley's chapter assesses the evolution of Catholic public opinion in Northern Ireland over the past half-century, seeking to trace the manner in which it has shifted in apparent response to the reality of partition. He concludes that there is an increasing complexity in the manner in which Catholics define their identity patterns, a persisting loyalty to the main nationalist parties of the past, and a fluid, open attitude towards the question of Irish unity.

This endeavour to 'locate' a definitive identity or political aspiration within the Catholic communities of Ulster, when placed against a constantly changing political landscape, is one that journalist and broadcaster Malachi O'Doherty also addresses. O'Doherty examines the many ambiguities that surround the notion of a collective Irish, Catholic, nationalist identity. He suggests that many of the traditional indicators of this culture remain equivocal. The Irish language is respected but not widely spoken. The ideal of Irish unity has receded. Brexit may revive it, but that is under the auspices of an Ireland as part of an international community, very different from the ideal of De Valera, that it should be insular and protected, or of Adams in 1977, that it should be a socialist state.

Further investigations into exactly where sentiments regarding the place of Irish Republicanism might currently lie come from former IRA prisoners, commentators, Anthony McIntyre and Tommy Mc Kearney.

In Chapter 11, McKearney examines whether the changing make-up within the North's population will also mean an end to partition followed by the political reunification of Ireland. While most northern Catholics have a shared experience (or at least a shared folk memory); their experiences have not always been identical. As with any community, there are differences shaped by class, by family and even by location. How this group of people will react to future happenings will be determined as much by external factors as by residual historical memory. Issues such as Brexit, Scotland's growing disenchantment with London and economic conditions in the Republic are all bound to influence opinion in the North. He poses the question, therefore, whether a milder and more accommodating form of Unionism might persuade the Catholic bourgeoisie to remain within the UK, if indeed that state survives.

McIntyre looks at the widespread fragmentation within Republicanism and examines the more salient causes. He contends that within the nationalist constituency, constitutional nationalism has a hegemonic position that is virtually unassailable from within. The chapter questions what—if any—potential there exists for Republicanism to overcome its disparate composition to the point where it can challenge the current nationalist hegemon.

Sinn Féin now has a woman, Mary Lou McDonald, as president of the party, while Michelle O'Neill holds the position of Leas Uachtarán Sinn Féin and party leader in the North. Yet the Irish constitution still

makes reference to a woman's place as in the home. And the referendum on abortion in Ireland—and landslide victory for the 'Yes' campaign—proved to be emotionally driven, contested and divisive.

Claire Pierson's chapter addresses this topical and still fiercely disputed issue for Irish Catholics. Gendered conceptualisations of nationalism present resonant imagery of women as mothers of the nation, often stereotyped in Irish nationalism through the highly Catholic imagery of the Blessed Virgin. Viewing women's key contributions to national identity through the role of motherhood creates assumed notions of nurturing and self-sacrificing identity. Abortion and its assumed rejection of motherhood crosses boundaries of ideal womanhood, and as such is presented as abhorrent to Irish Catholic nationalism and to Irishness more widely on the island of Ireland. This chapter calls on liberal theological conceptions of Catholicism such as that voiced by Catholics for Choice to envision how abortion stigma could be broken down in Northern Ireland.

Another fascinating aspect of gender politics in a northern Irish context involves women and the legacy of armed conflict. In Chapter 10, Niall Gilmartin contends that the gendered dichotomy of male-protector/female-protected remains a pervasive representational model of gender roles in armed conflict. Feminist scholars have long challenged the dubious links between femininity and 'peacefulness' by documenting women's role as armed activists. This chapter explores the pressing question of what happens to female combatants after armed conflict. While combatant women in non-state nationalist movements often experience high levels of activism and politicisation during the war period, feminist critiques of nationalism as a patriarchal structure often cite post-war regression, among others, as robust evidence of the pitfalls for women's participation within such highly gendered movements.

Both Education and Sport are at the heart of identity formation and allegiance within this cohort. Professor Tony Gallagher contends that Catholic schools remain the most significant social institution of the minority in the North, and their relationship with the State represents the most important interface between the Catholic community and the Unionist establishment. That relationship has changed significantly over time, and the author assesses the challenges to the power of the Bishops by the refusal of most Catholic grammar schools to move away from academic selection.

Professor David Hassan and Conor Murray suggest that many of Northern Ireland's unresolved issues are not solely political in nature but in fact have more to do with cultural identity and expression, when

settling upon an agreed narrative concerning the country's divided past and it's telling in a public forum. A range of agencies has attempted to play their role, many again operating outside established political structures, focusing instead on expressions of identity promoted through sports. For the Catholic community, these are viewed as entirely legitimate forms of cultural expression, even if they carry added significance within such a divided society (where they constitute both a form of political allegiance by proxy and an important aspect of community expression for many, including those who feel disenfranchised from wider society).

Biographical research methods have increasingly become a useful and popular tool for contemporary social scientists. Three contributors here combine an exploration of the historical and philosophical origins of their topic, embracing this important field of qualitative research, using examples of the different ways in which biographical methods can be successfully applied in this context.

Connal Parr (the grandson of former prominent politician and activist, the late Paddy Devlin) employs a biographical approach to his chapter, where—via personal interviews, reportage and scholarly works—he fuses the biographical with the academic to explore Catholic politics in west Belfast. He reasserts Devlin's belief in the Labour movement, which led to his rejection of Catholicism and speculates whether his variegated political trajectory was a reflection of his own complex Catholic background.

Gareth Mulvenna draws on personal experience and family history in seeking to examine if Catholic social and political attitudes towards Protestants, Unionists and Loyalists has changed throughout the course of the 'Troubles' and the 'peace process' eras. He posits the view that the debate has been reversed from two generations ago and it is now Protestants who feel socially, economically and politically bereft in a society where republicanism is making significant cultural and political strides. As both communities talk of equality and inequality in a post-Brexit landscape, the chapter assesses the factors that have contributed to these discourses.

In Chapter 13, Stephen Hopkins analyses the politics of life-writing and published narratives in relation to the founding generation of the SDLP. His revealing insights pay particular reference to their attitudes towards the outbreak of the 'Troubles', and the increasing violence of the conflict in the early 1970s. He examines attitudes to critical aspects of the party's past, one of which is the complex relationship of many

of the key individuals in the 'leading group' of SDLP founders to the Republican movement, and its embrace of political violence. He reflects upon the benefits and limitations of 'life-writing' as a research methodology, suggesting it is a key element in facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the 'memory struggles' which characterise the legacy of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

Throughout many of the chapters (and reflected in my preface), there emerges an ambivalence, ambiguity and at times downright hostility towards Northern nationalists from their southern kinfolk.

With Chapter 5, Brian Hanley suggests some origins for this. Hanley's chapter examines the reaction in the Republic to the outbreak of the conflict in 1969 and examples of widespread sympathy with nationalists between that year and 1972. He writes of a 'symptom of spreading infection… a new form of intolerance in Ireland, between Southern and Northern Catholics'. The chapter looks at the experience of those who came south as refugees and the growing perception that many northerners, in the words of Conor Cruise O'Brien, are 'tough, violent and virtually ungovernable'.

Finally, in a collection of this nature, it would be remiss not to ascertain something of the thoughts and opinions of the post-conflict generation within Northern Ireland. With Chapter 15, Aimee Smith explores feelings of identity amongst young Catholic's who are part of the first generation to have grown up during the Northern Irish peace process. While recent survey data shows that young Catholic's still see themselves as predominantly Irish, rather than British or Northern Irish, the traditional political identity of nationalism and support for a united Ireland are not as strong. Nevertheless, the chapter suggests a degree of ambivalence surrounding identity and social relations in Northern Ireland. Additionally, it shows that progress made in certain areas has not necessarily led to a social reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant young people who have grown up in the absence of inter-communal violence.

CHAPTER 2

'The State We're In: Imagining a New Republic; The Challenge to Irish Nationalism'

Thomas Paul Burgess

Leo Varadkar's recent 'bullish' promise to Northern nationalists might have been unthinkable under an earlier Enda Kenny-led Fine Gael administration.

'To the Nationalist people in Northern Ireland, I want to assure you that we have protected your interests throughout these negotiations. Your birth right as Irish citizens, and therefore as EU citizens, will be protected. There will be no hard border on our island. You will never again be left behind by an Irish Government', An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, 8 December 2017.

Yet, his comments and general demeanour regarding post-Brexit border arrangements—whether bolstered by assurances from Brussels or necessitated by the threat of potential Sinn Féin gains in any forthcoming election—have upped the ante in relation to the perennial 'national question'.

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The re-imaging of a unitary state on the island of Ireland comes at a time, internationally, when an appetite for devolution and regional autonomy sits squarely in opposition to a renewed sense of nation statehood, bolstered by inward-looking self-interest.

The Brexit desire to make Britain great again has been echoed by a Trump presidency intending to achieve a similar goal in the USA. Unbelievable as these developments might have seemed just a short time ago, we are experiencing a new dispensation that resonates to the popular seventeenth-century English ballad, '*The World Turned Upside Down*'.

Elsewhere, Catalonia has presented the Spanish government with a number of demands for self-governance, Scottish nationalism currently keeps its powder dry in anticipation of a second referendum that may break up the Union and in Kurdistan, more than 92% of Kurds voted in favour of officially separating from the central Iraqi government.

In Northern Ireland, nationalists can now add estrangement from the European Union to their feelings of alienation from the Irish Republic. Yet, suggestions that this necessarily bolsters an appetite for Irish reunification from within the nationalist community might be exaggerated. (Irrespective of Sinn Féin clearly identifying this as an opportunity to advance their own vision for a United Ireland.)

Nevertheless, all actors—not least Sinn Féin—are now acknowledging the seismic changes on the political map of Ireland, north and south.

> In June 2016, the people of the North of Ireland – nationalist and unionist and others – voted to remain within the European Union. They did so despite very many having legitimate concerns regarding the EU. It is incomprehensible to have one part of Ireland operating within the EU and another outside it…The Brexit referendum result has swept away many of the previous political assumptions about the constitutional, political and economic status quo in Ireland. Ireland's political landscape, North and South, has been transformed dramatically. (Sinn Féin 2016)

In that virtually unique manner in which Northern Irish politics can reduce the most complex and nuanced issues to a simple binary sectarian electoral outcome, both communities there find themselves signed up to the respective Brexit positions of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin (by dint of the mandate delivered to them and irrespective of individual voter preference on the matter).