26. Jennifer Todd, The changing structure of conflict in Northern Ireland and the Good Friday agreement

This paper argues that until the early twenty-first century the Northern Ireland conflict retained an unstable triangular form (the legacy of the long-past colonial period), where the British state was inextricably imbricated in a communal conflict. By its very structures and modes of statecraft it reproduced the conflict, which, by its policies, it attempted to ameliorate and manage. The Good Friday agreement changed all that. It did not resolve the conflict, although it began to create the conditions whereby this might be possible, allowing the British state to reposition itself, so that it could arbitrate those aspects of the conflict which were internal and manage those which were ethno-national. In effect, the conflict moved from an unstable triangular to a stable symmetrical form of conflict management. Although the provisions of the agreement appeared to mark radical change, aspects of the older form of conflict management returned in its implementation, suggesting that the triangular structure of conflict is not yet gone. Rather than a move towards stable binationalism, we may be seeing an uneven move towards an unstable multi-variable form of conflict, where the communities compete for alliances and resources in a context of a multiplicity of power centres. In this respect globalisation and the changes in forms of territorial management in the archipelago may be less conducive to stability in Northern Ireland than was initially hoped.

27. Brigid Laffan, Ireland, Britain, Northern Ireland and the European dimension

This paper analyses the European dimension of British-Irish relations and the EU’s role in altering the environment within which relations between these islands are played out. The paper examines relations between the two states in the context of EU membership and proceeds to an analysis of the evolution of an EU role under four headings: the EU as an arena, EU policies and reports, the EU as a model and the EU in Northern Ireland. The paper then assesses the EU dimension of the Good Friday Agreement in all three strands and finishes with a brief analysis of the longer-term contribution of the EU.

28. Claire Mitchell, Is religion in Northern Ireland politically significant?

Reducing religion to theological fundamentalism has stifled the debate about its political significance in Northern Ireland. This paper develops an integrated theoretical conception of religion as the key to illuminating the multi-dimensional role it plays in social relationships. Based on analysis of interviews conducted in 2000, it finds four main ways in which religion is socially and politically significant in Northern Ireland—as a communal marker, as a community-builder, as ideology and as theology. These roles differ amongst believers and non-believers, churchgoers and non-churchgoers and amongst Catholics and Protestants. Through exploration of religion as a fluid dimension of personal and group identity, the paper concludes that religion does not simply mark out the communal boundary, but often gives it meaning as well.

29. Seamus Mallon, Nationalism in Northern Ireland from partition to the Belfast agreement—a political perspective

Éamon Phoenix, Nationalism in Northern Ireland from partition to the Belfast agreement—an academic perspective

NATIONALISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND
FROM PARTITION TO THE BELFAST AGREEMENT —
A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

This paper reflects on the challenges and difficult contexts, which hindered the process of negotiation that resulted in the Good Friday agreement. Problems included past political experiences, the novelty of negotiation for many of the parties, acceptance of negotiating partners, and the chaotic and ad hoc nature of negotiation. The paper refers to some of the
difficulties of implementation that followed the agreement, in particular tensions that have arisen over structural resistance to the establishment of the new Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The paper concludes by highlighting the challenge that is facing all political parties on the island: the need to create a new political idealism.

NATIONALISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND
FROM PARTITION TO THE BELFAST AGREEMENT — AN ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

This paper provides an historical introduction to nationalism in Northern Ireland, from partition to the Belfast agreement. The author traces the emergence of contemporary nationalism from the early days of Joseph Devlin through the trauma of the civil war, partition and the consolidation of unionist domination. The paper goes on to consider the changing role of nationalism during the 1960s and the emergence of the SDLP, and concludes by pointing to the growing threat to the SDLP that is posed by Sinn Féin.

Kevin Rafter, The Irish government and the peace process, 1992-94 — an observer’s perspective


This paper explores the role of the Irish government in advancing the peace process in the years leading up to the ceasefires of 1994. As Taoiseach since 1992, Albert Reynolds had brought his own familiarity with Northern Ireland as a businessman to bear on efforts to resolve the problem. A positive working relationship with British Prime Minister John Major and with US President Bill Clinton helped to ease the path towards a ceasefire, and to provide the outline of a political settlement (as summarised in the Downing St Declaration of 1993, on which the later Framework Document was built). The paper discusses the role of the Irish government, and in particular of the Taoiseach, his advisors and intermediaries, in persuading republican and loyalist paramilitaries of the potential of the political path, and in encouraging the adoption of conclusive ceasefires.

THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AND THE PEACE PROCESS, 1992-94— AN OBSERVER’S PERSPECTIVE

This paper examines the contribution of a number of key individuals—prominent among them the Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds; his advisor, Martin Mansergh; and a Redemptorist priest, Fr Alec Reid—to bringing about peace in Northern Ireland. It assesses the central contribution of the Taoiseach in persuading the republican movement that his government possessed sufficient international clout to make it a worthwhile ally in pursuing a political rather than a military path. Martin Mansergh was able to reinforce this message in his contacts with republicans, and Fr Alec Reid, an intermediary whose role was not known at the time, was able to provide vital reassurances to each side about thinking on the other side as discussions proceeded.

31. Alice Feldman, Beyond the Catholic-Protestant divide: religious and ethnic diversity in the north and south of Ireland

This paper explores the challenges posed by the ethnic diversification of contemporary Irish society for conventional understandings of and responses to issues of religion, community and politics. It argues that the particularities of social and institutional histories and structures in the North and South have eclipsed wider considerations of both race and ethnicity and religious identity beyond the Catholic-Protestant divide. This has, in turn, served to obscure the many dynamic changes that such diversity has catalysed both within Irish civil society generally, and within the island’s traditional religious institutions themselves. The paper discusses the promises and potentials of conceptualising religion or religious identity and the relationships between religion and ethnicity within broader cultural and political fields, and their implications for the “new” (multicultural) Ireland.
32. Gladys Ganiel, *The politics of religious dissent in Northern Ireland*

Historically, the politics of dissent has been associated with Presbyterian participation in the United Irish movement. This paper argues for a broader definition of the politics of dissent based on the two dominant theological traditions in Ulster Protestantism—Calvinism and evangelicalism. It explains how these theologies have been drawn on to challenge their own assumptions, creating a politics of dissent that promises to transcend sectarianism. It is argued that this has been the case in contexts as varied as the United Irish movement, the radical evangelical wing of the early twentieth century labour movement, and the radical evangelical wing of the contemporary civil society-based peace movement. It evaluates the significance and influence of the politics of dissent in each era, and examines the reasons why the United Irish and labour movements did not transcend sectarianism. It concludes with an analysis of the prospects for the peace movement to help transcend sectarianism.

33. Claire Mitchell, *Catholicism in Northern Ireland and the politics of conflict*

It is a common misconception that religion in Northern Ireland is politically important only for Protestants, whereas for Catholics the causes of conflict are social, economic and political. Despite very high levels of religiosity amongst Catholics, faith is generally viewed as something located in the private sphere that does not spill over into the public realm. This paper challenges the assumption of the social insignificance of Catholicism and urges re-examination of how the relationships between religion and politics are conceived and measured for this group. It argues that analysis must extend beyond linkages between theological beliefs and political preferences. In fact other dimensions of religion, such as its role in the construction of community and identity as well as its institutional influence, are much more useful in understanding its political significance. The paper concludes that when these dimensions of religion are examined, we find that Catholicism has been enormously important in the politics of conflict in Northern Ireland. It concludes that after the Good Friday Agreement, the political roles of Catholicism have changed somewhat, but have by no means disappeared.

34. Jennifer Todd, *Process, perspectives and interpretations: an oral archive of the Good Friday Agreement*

This paper outlines the process by which an archive of audiotaped interviews with participants in the multi-party negotiations, which led to the Good Friday Agreement, was collected. It outlines some of the difficulties that the project met, and also the successes—the way that many participants were willing to give considerable information for the historical record. It argues that such projects can provide for the wider academic public the type of insight which is normally only given to academics in private briefing sessions. It points to several particularly rich areas where the archive can be used for theses or monographs.

35. Wilhelm Verwoerd, *Towards inclusive remembrance after the “Troubles”: a South African perspective*

This paper is a reflection on an underlying moral dynamic of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), namely inclusive moral remembrance. The TRC strove to provide an inclusive forum for many of those harmed and those responsible for harming on all sides of the conflict, in contrast to the exclusivist, ethnic remembrance characterising Afrikaner nationalist remembrance after the Anglo Boer War. Examples from the TRC process highlight the tension-filled balancing acts required to remember the horrific suffering of many, without forgetting the humanity of those responsible; to celebrate our ability to transcend the horrible, without denying a shared potential for evil. These philosophical reflections are hopefully of some relevance to current debates on these islands about appropriate, creative responses to the hurt and harming associated with the “troubles”.