

INSTITUTE FOR BRITISH-IRISH STUDIES

REPORT ON CONFERENCE

“RENOVATION OR REVOLUTION? NEW TERRITORIAL POLITICS IN IRELAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM” UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, 3 APRIL 2002

Organised by the Institute with the support of UCD’s Advisory Committee on Academic Conference Support and the Joint Faculties Management Committee of the Faculties of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy and Sociology, the conference lasted for one full working day in the University Industry Centre. It brought together nine distinguished speakers and attracted an audience of about 95, drawn from the public service, the diplomatic corps, voluntary and other bodies and the academic community (see annex 2 for a list of registered participants).

Theme

The object of this conference was to take stock of new forms of territorial politics in Ireland and Great Britain. A fundamental restructuring of territorial political institutions has been taking place since agreement on devolution in Scotland and Wales in 1997 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This restructuring has moved at an uneven pace, with delays and crises, some predictable, others unexpected.

More specifically, the conference examined the kinds of institutional reform that have been taking place in Ireland since the Good Friday agreement in the context of large-scale changes in the territorial organisation of the United Kingdom, particularly the processes of devolution in Scotland and Wales. Alongside the detailed analyses of reforms in each area, the conference set itself a more general (theoretical) task: to define the shape of the emerging territorial politics on the archipelago.

The conference thus addressed not only the process of change in Great Britain, but also the new institutions of government in Northern Ireland, the North-South relationship, and the relationship between the two islands. Leading experts in the area addressed, in four sessions, the following themes: the changing character of territorial politics in these islands and the Irish-British relationship; the Scottish and Welsh experience of devolution, and the implications of these changes for England; the operation of the new system of government in Northern Ireland, and its relationship to the Republic; and the broader context of the European and international dimensions.

Papers

The day’s proceedings were divided into four sessions, at each of which two papers were presented; in one of these sessions an additional presentation billed as a “comment” was scheduled. Presentations were structured to allow some time for discussion, and this was initiated in each case by a pre-designated discussant (see annex 1 for the conference programme).

The conference began with a wide-ranging interpretative overview by **Arthur Aughey**, who used Schopenhauer’s fable of the porcupines to explore the theme of renovation and revolution. The fable, when applied politically, suggests that relationships within the islands are always changing. In the modified relationship after devolution, Scotland and Wales have recovered a sense of relative autonomy from England without sacrificing the historic solidarity of Britishness. The most persuasive interpretations of the new territorial politics, he argued, un-

derstand devolution to be both a *renovation* of an ideal as well as a democratic *transformation* of that ideal. He concluded by relating that interpretation to Ireland.

This was followed by another paper that took stock of the changing character of the British-Irish relationship. **Ronan Fanning** argued that The Good Friday Agreement was the culmination of a process, which can be traced from the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 through the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, whereby a framework was created within which the sovereign governments regarded each other as allies rather than as antagonists. The abandonment of the Irish constitutional claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland contributed to this process of normalisation in British-Irish relations, as have improved personal relations at prime ministerial, ministerial and official level. Continuous threats to the stability of the institutions established under Strand one of the Good Friday Agreement have reinforced the necessity for this inter-governmental alliance in order to shore up the middle ground; inter-governmental cooperation at EU level has further contributed to the process of normalisation. The workings of the British-Irish Council have been incidental, rather than fundamental, to the improvement in the inter-governmental relationship, he concluded.

Three presentations then looked at specific aspects of devolution within the United Kingdom. **David McCrone** examined the position at a time when the first term of the Scottish Parliament was more than half-way to completion, with fifteen months to run. He assessed what the new institutions have achieved, and their prospects. He drew attention to the importance of appreciating that (a) there is no uniform game-plan for devolution in the UK; and (b) that the so-called 'Scottish anomaly', a self-governing Scotland within a unitary British state, has a dynamic of its own. He reviewed the outcomes of the parliament in the context of people's expectations, and argued, by means of recent surveys, that while Home Rule has become the prevailing consensus in contemporary Scotland, people are by no means averse to a parliament with extended powers and responsibilities.

The Welsh case was reviewed by **John Osmond**, whose presentation outlined the character of the National Assembly as envisaged in the 1998 Wales Act and charted the evolution that has taken place in Wales's constitutional architecture during the first three years of devolution. He went on to assess the extent to which the changes that have taken place were anticipated, to examine the aspirations for greater powers for the Assembly, to analyse the impact of devolution on the emergence of a Welsh civil society; and to discuss the implications of the Welsh experience for the development of territorial politics in the rest of the UK and Europe.

The Implications of devolution for the remaining part of Great Britain, England, are sometimes overlooked; this question was the focus of a short presentation by **Simon Partridge**. This outlined devolutionary moves within England and Cornwall, and the forthcoming White Paper. The eight Regional Development Agencies with their associated Regional Chambers were briefly described, as was the weak challenge so far posed by elected mayors. The presentation suggested that such a quasi-federal England could fit well into a broadened British-Irish Council.

The conference then switched to the issue of Ireland. **Jennifer Todd** provided an overview of the changing structure of conflict in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday agreement, arguing that the Agreement defined a radical change in the structural form of the Northern Ireland conflict. Its proposed institutions embodied a form of binationalism which promised at once greater equality and greater stability. However this "ideal" redefinition contrasts with the practical implementation of the Agreement. In practice, remnants of the old, unstable, conflictual

structure remained and the emergent structure has diverged from a stable binationalism towards a multi-centred instability.

The implementation of the Good Friday agreement in the context of the North-South relationship was the subject of **John Coakley's** paper. This concentrated on one element of the Good Friday agreement: strand two, formerly known as "the Irish dimension". It began by assessing the challenge that the institutions in this area were designed to tackle: the pragmatic need for cross-border collaboration in a range of areas, and the need to reconcile conflicting nationalist and unionist territorial visions. Following an overview of the framework for North-South relations that emerged in the agreement, it examined the measures that have so far been taken to implement it as far as strand two was concerned—an active North/South Ministerial Council with the support of a secretariat based in Armagh, a set of implementation bodies, and a degree of cross-border cooperation in designated areas. It concluded with some speculation on the future evolution of the institutions for which the agreement makes provision, and seek so to interpret the broader meaning of the institutional changes that have taken place in this area.

Finally, two papers looked at the broader European and international dimension. **Brigid Laffan** analysed 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. She examined relations between the two states in the context of EU membership and proceeded 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. Her paper then assessed the EU dimension of the Good Friday Agreement in all three strands and finished with a brief analysis of the longer-term contribution of the EU.

Finally, **Adrian Guelke** discussed the role of the international system and the Northern Ireland peace process. He examined the impact of two major events in the international system on the peace process; the end of the Cold War and the attack on America on 11 September 2001. The thesis first advanced by Michael Cox that change in the international context of the conflict in Northern Ireland was a major influence in pressurising the Republican movement to adopt its peace strategy in the early 1990s was analysed. He also examined the reasons why the thesis has proved so contentious and why more generally there remains considerable scepticism as to the capacity of external events to shape events in Ireland in any fundamental way. He concluded with a discussion of the impact of September 11.

Future plans

Texts of all presentations are now available, and most have been prepared for inclusion in the institute's working paper series.

In addition, a book proposal based on the conference proceedings has been prepared. Provisionally entitled *Renovation or revolution? New territorial politics in Ireland and the United Kingdom*, this is intended for completion in autumn 2002, and is to be edited by John Coakley, Brigid Laffan and Jennifer Todd. In addition to revised versions of the nine papers presented at the conference, this will include one additional commissioned chapter, an introduction and a conclusion. The proposal has been sent to UCD Press with a view to its possible inclusion in the new series *Perspectives on British-Irish Studies*.

ANNEX 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Session 1, 9h30-11h00

Chair: Sir Ivor Roberts, British Ambassador

- Address of welcome
—Dr Art Cosgrove, President, University College Dublin
- *Territory and politics in Ireland and Great Britain after devolution*
—Arthur Aughey, University of Ulster
- *The British-Irish relationship after the Good Friday agreement*
—Ronan Fanning, University College Dublin
- Discussant: Eberhard Bort, University of Edinburgh

Session 2, 11h15-12h45

Chair: Noel Dorr, Chairman, Institute for British-Irish Studies

- *Implementing devolution in the United Kingdom: the Scottish experience*
—David McCrone, University of Edinburgh
- *Implementing devolution in the United Kingdom: the Welsh experience*
—John Osmond, Institute of Welsh Affairs, Cardiff
- *Implications of devolution for England: a comment*
—Simon Partridge, Political Analyst and Writer, London
- Discussant: Elizabeth Meehan, Director, Institute of Governance, Queen's University Belfast

Session 3, 14h15-15h45

Chair: Dermot Nally, former Secretary General to the Government

- *The changing structure of conflict in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday agreement*
—Jennifer Todd, University College Dublin
- *Implementing the Good Friday agreement: the North-South relationship*
—John Coakley, University College Dublin
- Discussant: John Doyle, Dublin City University

Session 4, 16h00-17h30

Chair: Garrett FitzGerald, Chancellor, National University of Ireland

- *Ireland, Northern Ireland, Britain and the European dimension*
—Brigid Laffan, University College Dublin
- *The international system and the Northern Ireland peace process*
—Adrian Guelke, Queen's University of Belfast
- Discussant: Tobias Theiler, University College Dublin

ANNEX 2: REGISTERED CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Arnold, Dr Bruce—Dublin
Aughey, Dr Arthur—University of Ulster
Beirne, Cllr Sean—Roscommon County Council
Bolger, Marianne—Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs
Bort, Dr Eberhard—University of Edinburgh
Brennan, Ms Jean—University College Dublin
Brigdale, Mr PJ —Dublin City University
Bury, Mr Robin—The Reform Movement
Campbell, Ms Delma—Dublin
Cantwell, Mr Sean—Dublin
Coakley, Mr John—Director, IBIS
Collins, Cllr Seán—Drogheda Borough Council
Connaughton, Ms Breeda—Department of Education & Science
Cosgrove, Dr Art—President, University College Dublin
Cullen, Mr Liam—US Embassy
de Bréadún, Mr Deaglán—*The Irish Times*
Donohoe, Mr John—Dept of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands
Dorr, Mr Noel—Chairman, IBIS
Doyle, Dr John—Dublin City University
Fanning, Prof. Ronan—University College Dublin
Farrington, Mr Christopher—Queen's University Belfast
Fish, Mr Harold—IBIS Board Member
FitzGerald, Dr Garrett—Chancellor, National University of Ireland
Fleming, Mr John—Cooperation Ireland
Forde, Mr Eddie—North/South Unit, Dept of Finance
Galligan, Dr Yvonne—Director, Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics,
Queen's University Belfast
Garvin, Prof. Tom—University College Dublin
Gillespie, Mr Paul—*The Irish Times*
Guelke, Prof. Adrian—Queen's University Belfast
Gusen, Mr Bill —Chargé d'Affaires, Canadian Embassy
Hammond, Mr David—Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Embassy
Hanratty, Mr Pat—Drogheda-Shankill Partnership
Heffernan, Mr John—University College Dublin
Honohan, Iseult—University College Dublin
Hopkins, Cllr Charlie—Roscommon County Council
Howard, Mr Kevin—IBIS, University College Dublin
Humphreys, Ms Mary —Irish Association
Jordan, Mr Tony—North/South Unit, Dept of Finance
Kennedy, Mr Michael—University College Dublin
Laffan, Prof. Brigid—University College Dublin
Lambe, Derek—Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs
Lang, Ms Karin—IBIS, University College Dublin
Logue, Mr Hugh—Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Logue, Mr Ken—Atlantic Philanthropies, Belfast
Mac Cárthaigh, Muiris—University College Dublin
Macieira, Ms Josiane—Dublin
MacWhite, Mr Stephen—University College Dublin
Maksijan-Anic, Ms Bernardica—Chargé d'Affaires, Croatian Embassy
Malamah-Thomas, Ms Ann—Director, British Council
Marsh, Dr Cliona—University College Dublin
McCartin, Cllr Thomas—Leitrim County Council
McCrone, Prof. David—University of Edinburgh
McGarry, Prof. John—University of Limerick
McPadden, Mr Jim—Leitrim County Council
Meehan, Prof. Elizabeth—Director, Institute of Governance, Queen's University Belfast
Millar, Adrian—University College Dublin
Mitchell, Dr Claire—IBIS, University College Dublin
Moynes, Keith—Anglo-Irish Division, Department of Foreign Affairs
Murphy, Ms Caitriona—Executive Committee, British-Irish Association
Nagle, Mr Maurice—Dept of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
Nally, Mr Dermot—Former Secretary General to the Government
ní Fhlaitheartaigh, Ms Caitlín—Office of the Attorney General
Ó Broin, Mr Rory —Dublin
O'Connor, Mr Tim—Joint Secretary, North/South Ministerial Council
O'Doherty, Mr Vincent—Executive Committee, British-Irish Association
O'Riordan, Mr Conor—Consul General of Ireland, Edinburgh
Osmond, Dr John—Institute of Welsh Affairs, Cardiff
Pålshaugen, Lone—University College Dublin
Partridge, Mr Simon—Political analyst and writer, London
Pederssen, Mr Thomas—University College Dublin
Reason, Ms Bríd—IBIS, University College Dublin
Redmond, Mr Peter—Dept of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands
Reilly, Mr Patrick—First Secretary, British Embassy
Roberts, HE Sir Ivor—British Ambassador
Ruane, Dr Joseph—University College Cork
Ryan, Ms Audrey— University College Dublin
Stapleton, Mr John—University of Limerick
Stuart, Mr Alan—University College Dublin
Theiler, Dr Tobias—University College Dublin
Todd, Dr Jennifer—University College Dublin
Trench, Mr Frederic—University College Dublin
Uí Mhaoldúin, Ms Damhnait—Dept of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands
van der Velden, HE Mr Jacobus—Dutch Ambassador
Visser, Ms Anna—Dublin