THE ISSUE

“We ... men of Ulster ... do hereby pledge ourselves ... to stand by one another ... in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule parliament in Ireland ... and to refuse to recognise its authority”

“We ... women of Ulster ... desire to associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill”

The Issue

One hundred years on, are the men and women of Ulster still prepared to resort to “all means which may be found necessary” to oppose Irish unity? Do the men and women of Ulster need to organise to prevent Irish unity?

Outline

- Electoral behaviour: traditional “certainties”
- Public opinion: new complexities
- Demography: slow but steady change
- Political implications

Traditional Certainties

(1) Solid denominational voting, 1885-1922
TRADITIONAL CERTAINTIES

(1) Solid denominational voting, 1885-1922

- Killyfaddy syndrome (1914)
  - Killyfaddy: 52.3% Catholic, 1911; but Protestant majority of 3 on electoral register; one Protestant dies, 1914; Unionists win in tight local election, 1914
  - Victory in Killyfaddy gives Unionists (bare) control of Clogher Rural District Council
  - Chairmanship of Clogher RDC ensures (bare) Unionist control of Tyrone County Council
  - Victory in Tyrone changes shape of “loyal” Ulster

(2) Killyfaddy syndrome (1914)

- Killyfaddy results
  - (2 seats, block vote):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W Scott (U)</td>
<td>92 (el.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T Elkin (U)</td>
<td>89 (el.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP Cullinan (N)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G McIlroy (N)</td>
<td>84</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

—Sunday Independent, 31 May 1914

(3) Boundary Commission, 1925

- “In the areas concerned religious and political divisions to-day, broadly speaking, correspond; and ... in such areas, subject in each case to comparatively few exceptions, members of Protestant denominations would vote in favour of being in Northern Ireland, and Roman Catholics would vote in favour of being in the Irish Free State. These assumptions appear to be almost universally accepted.”

TRADITIONAL CERTAINTIES

Some long-standing exceptions

- Pre-Partition Nationalists were formally Union supporters (Home Rule implied acceptance of union)
- Some Catholics had reservations about Home Rule (landed gentry; some business interests; state employees)
- Some Protestants supported Home Rule, or were Republicans
- Protestant elite traditionally involved in nationalist leadership (common phenomenon in “small” nations)

PUBLIC OPINION: NEW COMPLEXITIES

Protestant constitutional preferences, 1968-2006
Protestant constitutional preferences, 1968-2006

Catholic constitutional preferences, 1968-2006

Catholic constitutional preferences, 1998-2010

Protestant opinion:
- Solid support for union (c. 80-90%, relatively stable), especially from 2007
- Committed opposition to Irish unity (sizeable minority “could not live” with it; material for support of “new covenant”; prepared to use “all means necessary” to oppose Irish unity?)
PUBLIC OPINION: NEW COMPLEXITIES

Catholic opinion:
- Sizeable proportion support union (over 30% until the late 1990s, then under 20%, then 24% in 2004-06, then up to 50%)
- No distinguishing social features for pro-union Catholics (eg class, education, religious behaviour, age, sex; but region of residence not examined)
- Intensity of Catholic unionist support for union unclear; do NOT vote for unionist parties, nor describe themselves as “unionists”

DEMOGRAPHY
CONCLUSION

- Catholics increasing as % of population; likely to constitute maj. in some decades
- Some time after becoming demographic maj., Catholics will become electoral maj.
- Opinion poll data strongly suggest that:
  - Few if any Catholics will vote Unionist, or describe themselves as “Unionist”
  - Many Catholics will support the Union
- However, the attachment of this group (and of many Protestants) to the Union may be brittle, and detachable

DOES ULSTER STILL SAY “NO”?

- Province of Ulster (9 counties) is no longer Protestant, but accepts constitutional status quo
- Territory of Northern Ireland (6 counties) will shortly cease to be predominantly Protestant, but, barring major shocks, will continue to support the union
- The Protestant people will continue to say:
  - “no” to Irish unity (but do not have veto)
  - “yes” to domestic constitutional reform (though have veto)

DOES ULSTER NEED TO OPPOSE IRISH UNITY?

IMPORTANT SUPPORTS FOR NI’S STATUS
1. Irish constitution and political system
2. Public opinion in the Republic of Ireland
3. Ulster Protestant opinion
4. Ulster Catholic opinion
5. British constitution and political system

—big change since 1912, when 3 and 5 were decisive; but note unpredictable impact of other factors, e.g. economy, Scottish independence