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A common view in journalistic and academic commentary is that the recent internationalization of the Northern Ireland conflict and peace process has had a positive impact.[1] This perspective, however widely shared, carries subtly tendentious implications. While there are important exceptions,[2] unionists have in the main been significantly more suspicious of the involvement of external actors such as the United States and the European Union in the conflict than have nationalists,

* I would like to thank the National Archives, Kew, London, and the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, for permission to quote from unpublished manuscripts.

1. Lord David Owen, "The Resolution of Conflict: Internationalization and its Lessons, Particularly in Northern Ireland," in Marianne Elliott, ed., *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland: Peace Lectures from the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 22–40; Paul Arthur, "'Quiet Diplomacy and Personal Conversation': Track Two Diplomacy and the Search for a Settlement in Northern Ireland," in Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, eds., *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999), 71–95; Conor O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy: Clinton's Secret Search for Peace in Ireland* (Boulder, Colo.: Roberts Rinehart, 1997). Also compare Adrian Guelke, "International Dimensions of the Belfast Agreement," in Rick Wilford, ed., *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 262, with Guelke, *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1988).

2. Antony Alcock, "From Conflict to Agreement in Northern Ireland: Lessons from Europe," in John McGarry, ed., *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: the Northern Ireland Conflict and the Good Friday Agreement in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 159–80.

regarding such involvement as unsympathetic.[3] Britain has been the "external actor" that most consistently provided counterbalancing support for unionists. In recent years, however, even British policy has seemed to shift toward a position of neutrality between the two communities, leaving unionists feeling more and more isolated. Affinities between the most powerful forces in British politics and unionism are weak at best. In consequence, many unionists and loyalists perceive that there is an asymmetry between British and Irish political leaders' attitudes to their respective erstwhile allies in Northern Ireland.[4] Supported by a historical context, this tension between British policy and unionism is represented powerfully within unionist identity in a fear of British or other internal betrayal which at times almost exceeds or obscures fear or animosity toward the nationalist/republican "Other."[5] The fear of British betrayal is often linked in unionist demonology to the idea of a pan-nationalist alliance or conspiracy involving the Irish state's wholehearted backing of mainstream republicanism in the North. Not only is the existence of such a coherent pan-nationalist alliance actually a myth, but many researchers fail to see much difference between British and Irish political parties' attitudes toward Northern Ireland.[6] Viewed from the context of unionist politics, however, the considerable ambiguity in British attitudes to unionism exacerbates unionist insecurities and creates a series of tactical dilemmas.[7]

Unionists have thus experienced greater difficulties than nationalists and republicans in securing support and endorsement from any significant audience external to Northern Ireland. This cannot be

3. O'Clery, *Daring Diplomacy*, 250; Dennis Kennedy, "The European Union and the Northern Ireland Question," in Brian Barton and Patrick J. Roche, eds., *The Northern Ireland Question: Perspectives and Policies* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994), 166–88.

4. James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (London: Pinter, 1995), 194; Steve Bruce, *The Edge of the Union: The Ulster Loyalist Political Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 65–66; Paul Dixon, "Internationalization and Unionist Isolation: a Response to Feargal Cochrane," *Political Studies* 43:3 (September 1995), 497–505.

5. David W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978); Alvin Jackson, "Unionist Myths, 1912–85," *Past & Present* 136 (1992), 164–85.

6. Feargal Cochrane, "Any Takers? The Isolation of Northern Ireland," *Political Studies* 42:3 (1994), 378–95.

7. Roy Bradford, "Unionists Fear Being Stranded on the Rock of Consent," *Irish Times*, 20 May 1996, 12.

explained simply by reference to particular ignorance among or influences upon audiences in Britain, the United States, or continental Europe, since unionists' lack of external political support in three such locations seems likely to be underpinned by some common factors. The importance of such factors can hardly be overstated, since they have had such a critical disruptive influence on the current peace process. Many unionists sense that in view of this lack of outside support for their position, a peace process influenced by external actors cannot in practice enshrine the trumpeted goal of parity of esteem between "the two traditions" in Northern Ireland, but in fact accords privilege to nationalists.[8] Hence not only is a high proportion of opposition to the peace process unionist, but such opposition has repeatedly jeopardized progress in the process to date, and may yet prove fatal.[9] To an extent these problems are also cumulative: It may be suggested that, relatively deprived of external support, unionists have been discouraged from further cultivating such support,[10] have tended more to entrench their position than undertake self-criticism,[11] and, in the words of one commentator, have "retreat[ed] characteristically into that sullen, charmless introspection which has deprived the unionist cause of influence."[12]

Unionists' problem of international political legitimacy is thus a critical element in the recurrent problems that have marked the fragile peace process. This is a question particularly deserving of investigation in the current historical moment. As the recent elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly (November 2003) demonstrated, much to the chagrin and surprise of outside observers, neither the levels of

8. Arlene Foster, *'Parity of Esteem' and 'Consent': How Words Deceive* (London: Friends of the Union, 1996).

9. "Forum: Northern Ireland," *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2:3/4 (March/June 2003), 71–91, especially Colin Irwin, "Devolution and the State of the Northern Ireland Peace Process," ibid., 71–82.

10. Gerard Murray, *John Hume and the SDLP: Impact and Survival in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 210–39.

11. Richard Kearney, "Introduction: Thinking Otherwise," in Kearney, ed., *Across the Frontiers: Ireland in the 1990s: Cultural – Political – Economic* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), 18.

12. Colin Coulter, "Direct Rule and the Unionist Middle Classes," in Richard English and Graham Walker, eds., *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 187.

electoral support for anti-agreement unionism nor difficulties in the peace process show any sign of abating. Yet unionism's international-legitimacy problem is also curiously underexplored in that few convincing or wide-ranging causes have been suggested. On the other hand, simple and partisan explanations of this problem are commonly advanced, and this paper will thus initially explore these at some length. It will be shown that these factors fail to help us understand this critical problem, and thus some more complex global influences will also be considered. By definition such global tendencies may be hard to alleviate. Unfortunately, therefore, this analysis does not carry many optimistic implications for the peace process, although it is to be hoped that addressing this dimension of the obstacles to peace in Northern Ireland may at least offer an original, enlightening, and thus ultimately helpful perspective upon it.[13]

There are three reductive explanations for the lack of political legitimacy accorded to unionism by global observers. The first suggests a supposed failure of leadership among unionists, especially pro-agreement unionists in recent times; the second suggests that unionism simply deserves to be accorded no political credibility; and a third argues that the accordance of political legitimacy to causes in Northern Ireland is distorted by the success of misleading propaganda emanating from Irish republicans and nationalists. The first view is advanced by Tim Pat Coogan in the somewhat patronizing suggestion that unionists are fine people, "but they lack leadership,"[14] and finds a more significant echo in the more academic analysis of post-agreement politics put forward by Brendan O'Leary. According to O'Leary, David Trimble and his advisers have "consistently mishandled their management of the [Ulster Unionist] Party, their referendum campaign, and all the ensuing elections," and attempted to press unwarranted demands upon nationalists and republicans in an effort to "appease" rejectionist unionists.[15] But unlike other reductive explanations of unionism's

13. See also Peatling, *The Failure of the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004, forthcoming).

14. Tim Pat Coogan, "Foreword," to Chris Anderson, *The Billy Boy: The Life and Death of LVF Leader Billy Wright* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2002), 13.

15. Brendan O'Leary, "The Character of the 1998 Agreement: Results and Prospects," in Wilford, ed., *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, 54, 75.

difficulties, features of this diagnosis are shared by nationalists and unionists. Specifically, anti-agreement unionists also attack the leadership of pro-agreement unionism for failing to make the unionist case before global opinion and to articulate a position acceptable to a majority of unionists during the peace process. If David Trimble's biographer's contrasting effort to prove that his leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) is essential to the peace process does not entirely convince,[16] such criticisms of Trimble's leadership are still unpersuasive for three reasons. First, it seems a trite explanation, and rather self-serving when used by unionists' political opponents. After all, it could just as easily be argued that, for instance, John Hume and Gerry Adams have failed to face down "rejectionist" or "extremist" opposition to possible moderate turns in their policies at key points in the process.[17] Second, the considerable level of unionist opposition to the Good Friday Agreement as early as April and May 1998 demonstrates that any effort by Trimble to "appease" rejectionist unionists, even if it were in error, was certainly not wanton. Third, the weaknesses in unionism created by its divisions are not simply the product of errors on the part of the moderate or mainstream unionist leadership. Not only were such divisions evident long before Trimble was elevated to UUP leadership, but hard-line unionist attempts to attribute all of the responsibility for these divisions to moderate unionists are surely no less self-serving than the republican/nationalist analysis. Perhaps most significantly in recent times, the decision of the hard-line Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by Ian Paisley, to absent itself from all-party talks in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1997 has made pre-existing divisions in unionism harder to surmount and increasingly bitter.

This rejection of dialogue on the part of a significant body of unionists might seem to support the second reductive explanation of the lack of political legitimacy accorded unionists. According to this argument, the core unionist conviction that Northern Ireland should stay part of the United Kingdom is itself not a legitimate political aspiration, so that political formations and actions associated with such a conviction

16. Henry McDonald, *Trimble* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001, first published 2000), 345–46.

17. Murray, *John Hume and the SDLP*, 175; Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 339.

necessarily evince intolerance, intransigence, and supremacism. Analysts who are often pro-republican or pro-nationalist support this argument with evidence from both the historical roots and more recent manifestations of Northern Irish unionism.

According to historical arguments, unionism and the northern state are inherently rooted in the British/English colonization of Ireland.[18] In contrast, republicans claim a democratic mandate for Irish unity dating from the 1918 general election, which supposedly marked the Irish people's affirmation of the actions of the Easter rebels of 1916.[19] As Gerry Adams put it at the 1995 Sinn Féin *Ard-Fheis:* "Unionists are an Irish national minority with minority rights."[20] Against this "democratic" case for a united Ireland, unionism ultimately is said to rest on force, threat, and British enforcement of the unionist veto.[21] Moreover, such arguments often advance the notion that unionists were responsible for bringing the gun into Irish politics during their resistance to the third Home Rule bill. Here commentators focus their attention on the Larne gun-running in April 1914, which is said to have triggered the Easter Rising and the subsequent militarization of Irish nationalism, a point that "revisionist" historiography supposedly neglects.[22] To enforce partition, unionists also relied upon the violent ethnic cleansing of nationalists from parts of the North in subsequent years, most

18. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12; Robbie McVeigh, "The British/Irish 'Peace Process' and the Colonial Legacy," in James Anderson and James Goodman, eds., *Dis/agreeing Ireland: Contexts, Obstacles, Hopes* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 27–53; C. Desmond Greaves, *The Irish Crisis* (New York, International Publishers, 1972); David Miller, ed., *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism* (London: Longman, 1998).

19. Francis Mackey, "Southern Inaction Prolongs North Conflict," *Irish Times*, 13 June 2001, 14. Mackey is leader of the dissident republican 32 County Sovereignty Movement.

20. Quoted in Paul Mitchell, "'Futures'," in Mitchell and Rick Wilford, eds., *Politics in Northern Ireland* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), 269.

21. Greaves, *Irish Crisis*.

22. Roy Johnston, "Introduction," in Joseph Johnston, *Civil War in Ulster: Its Objects & Probable Results*, ed. Roy Johnston (Dublin, University College, Dublin Press, 1999), xix; Seamus Deane, "Wherever Green is Read," in Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan, eds., *Revising the Rising* (Derry: Field Day, 1991), 100; Brian Murphy, "The Canon of Irish Cultural History: Some Questions Concerning Roy Foster's *Modern Ireland*," in Ciaran Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938–1994* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1994), 222–33.

notably in Belfast in late July 1920. Along these same lines the Stormont regime allegedly remained dependent on the discriminatory structures of an "apartheid" Orange state,[23] and on an official acknowledgment by the British of the paramilitary UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) with the formation of the sectarian Special Constabulary.[24] More contemporary facets of unionism that are widely criticized include the activities of loyalist paramilitaries, which, in terms of specifically targeting Catholic civilians *as Catholics*, can be regarded as more sectarian than republican violence.[25] Loyalist murals are also regarded as persistently more militaristic and sectarian than their republican counterparts.[26] The strength of sectarian tendencies within wider unionist culture is said to be indicated by the prominence of the Orange Order therein. Finally, unionism's supremacism is said to be evinced in sexist features of unionist political thought and action.[27]

Most of these efforts to demonstrate that unionism merits no consideration whatsoever are confused and one-sided. Northern Ireland (and indeed Ireland as a whole) can only be helpfully understood as a colonial society to a limited extent.[28] Links between Britain, and especially Scotland, and Ulster—one of the bases of the North's differences from the South—are not just reducible to the seventeenth-century plantations.[29] In any case, distant settler-colonial origins would not entirely invalidate the unionist case. As the Ulster poet John Hewitt suggests, surely after a certain period of settlement a people deserve to be

23. Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland: The Orange State* (London: Pluto, 1976).

24. Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: The Formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 1920–7* (London: Pluto Press, 1983).

25. Peter Taylor, *Loyalists* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999, first published 2000), 113.

26. Bill Rolston, "Changing the Political Landscape: Murals and Transition in Northern Ireland," *Irish Studies Review* 11:1 (April 2003), 3–16.

27. Carol Coulter, *The Hidden Tradition: Feminism, Women, and Nationalism in Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993); Carol Coulter, "Ireland's Metropolitan Feminists and Colonial Women," *Éire-Ireland* 35:3–4 (Fall/Winter 2000–2001), 48–78.

28. Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Liam Kennedy, *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1996).

29. Graham Walker, *Intimate Strangers: Political and Cultural Interaction Between Scotland and Ulster in Modern Times* (Edinburgh: J. Donald Publishers, 1995); John Erskine and Gordon Lucy, ed., *Cultural Traditions in Northern Ireland: Varieties of Scottishness. Exploring the Ulster-Scottish Connection* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1997).

regarded as native to an area rather than rootless colonists.[30] Protestants' position in Ulster should certainly be regarded as more established than, say, Israeli settlers in territory acquired during the war of 1967. If there were acts of dispossession, they were not substantially within living memory in the Ulster case. The result of the 1918 general election may have been a mandate for the independence of nationalist Ireland (although republicans tend to forget that similar mandates predated the Easter Rising), but even if it were allowed that a vote taken over eighty years ago should determine Ireland's future, it would still by no means be clear that the 1918 election was also a mandate against partition.[31] There is surely little basis for assertions that the island of Ireland has to be treated as the unit of democratic self-determination beyond geographical determinism. Even if this is accepted, it is a rather odd form of geographical determinism at that, given that Belfast is, after all, geographically nearer to southwest Scotland than to Cork. The unionist gun-running at Larne in 1914 occurred at a time when Liberals and nationalists had been trying to drive through Irish Home Rule using distinctly questionable procedures,[32] and in any case it is not clear that the unionist mobilization caused the Easter Rising, nor that Irish nationalist politics was previously purged of militant or violent tendencies. Furthermore, the years 1912–14 surely show that unionism was not dependent on being propped up by British governments. The sectarian violence in the North around July 1920 should be placed in a context that includes a discussion of the aggression against southern Protestants during the war of independence.[33] Unionist denials of discrimination under the Stormont regime are disingenuous, but condemnation of unionists should be qualified in view of the facts that nationalist withdrawal from the institutions of the northern state would

30. John Hewitt, "No Rootless Colonist," in Patricia Craig, ed., *The Rattle of the North: An Anthology of Ulster Prose* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), 121–31.

31. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 35–44.

32. Patricia Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980); Ronan Fanning, "The Irish Policy of Asquith's Government and the Cabinet Crisis of 1910," in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney, eds., *Studies in Irish History, Presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin: University College, Dublin, 1979), 279–303.

33. Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

have made it difficult to integrate northern Catholics into the new state even given unionist goodwill, and that the attitudes of southern leaders at the time did much to arouse unionist suspicion.[34] There are also allegations that discrimination by nationalists took place in local government in locations such as Limavady and Newry even under the majoritarian unionist regime. Finally, policing in Northern Ireland has now been reformed to a level that satisfies the SDLP, the Catholic church and the Irish government, with only republicans holding aloof.

Evidence that unionism remains a relatively highly unreconstructed ideology in the present can also be greatly overstated. Recent republican activities themselves have a sectarian dynamic, although Steve Bruce and Ruth Dudley Edwards exaggerate this in their recent work.[35] The solipsistic rationale of loyalist sectarian assassination, in which all Catholics are deemed ultimately responsible for Provisional IRA (PIRA) actions, is certainly deplorable, but it may be an exaggeration to present this logic as genocidal,[36] and other dimensions of republican provocation need to be cited. First, it is simply the fact that the PIRA has during the Northern Ireland conflict killed more people than has any other group.[37] Second, arguments about the nonsectarian nature of PIRA attacks entitle the Provisionals to no credit whatsoever. If former "Volunteer" Patrick Magee is correct that the PIRA could have sought soft Protestant targets in East Belfast, for instance, the PIRA's strategy of instead leaving bombs in city centers (in Northern Ireland and in Britain), where they would kill and maim indiscriminately if detonated, was surely hardly a moral alternative.[38] Republican

34. Bryan A. Follis, *A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920–1925* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), especially 190–91; Dennis Kennedy, *The Widening Gulf: Northern Attitudes to the Independent Irish State, 1919–49* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1988); Marianne Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 373–481, especially 383.

35. Steve Bruce, "Fundamentalism and Political Violence: The Case of Paisley and Ulster Evangelicals," *Religion* 31:4 (October 2001), 388–89; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *The Faithful Tribe: An Intimate Portrait of the Loyal Institutions* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 35.

36. Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth, *Northern Ireland After the Good Friday Agreement: Victims, Grievance and Blame* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 61–62.

37. Richard English, *Armed Struggle: A History of the IRA* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), 378.

38. Patrick Magee, *Gangsters or Guerrillas? Representations of Irish Republicans in Troubles Fiction* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2001), 204.

murals are hardly much less provocative than their loyalist equivalents, especially where portraying those active in the PIRA as martyrs. The influence given the Orange Order within unionism, and especially in the northern state after 1921, has not often been symptomatic of many creditable features of unionism, but portrayals of the Order as analogous to the Ku Klux Klan are inappropriate, and it is in any case legitimate to ask whether the function of the Ancient Order of Hibernians within nationalist communities has in specific times and places been much different. The argument that Irish nationalism/republicanism does not also have sexist tendencies is ultimately reducible to special pleading.[39] In short, northern Irish unionism has been (and is) expressed in some discriminatory or reactionary modes, but there are many exceptions and extenuating circumstances, and surely there is not enough evidence to justify the highly confrontational view that unionism is substantially more unreconstructed, supremacist, or illegitimate than Irish nationalism or (especially) republicanism.[40]

Explanations of unionism's public-relations difficulties that focus on clever nationalist or republican propaganda conversely appeal to unionists, loyalists, and their sympathizers. An observer linked to the British government at the end of the World War II described de Valera's "propaganda machine" as "the most effective in the world now that Goebbels is dead."[41] In 1997, Sammy Wilson of the DUP described Provisional Sinn Féin (PSF) as "the monsters of manufacturing and media manipulation."[42] According to this view, the media and global public opinion (especially in the United States) are repeatedly deceived by republican slander of the decent unionist people of Northern Ireland into according the republican/nationalist case a level of sympathy and support that its violent tactics and aspirations utterly do not deserve.

39. G.K. Peatling, "Emotion and Excess: Discourses and Practices of Women and Republicanism in Twentieth-century Ireland," *Irish Studies Review* 11:2 (2003), 175–87.

40. This argument will be considered at greater length in Peatling, *The Failure of the Northern Ireland Peace Process*.

41. National Archives (Kew, London), HO 45/25053: memorandum by David Gray, "The United States and Irish Partition" (c. 1945–6), 9.

42. Christine Kinealy and Gerard Mac Atasney, *The Hidden Famine: Poverty and Sectarianism in Belfast, 1840–50* (London: Pluto, 2000), 2.

In depicting Harold Gracey, a Portadown Orange leader, picketing the Order's preferred and established route for the contentious Drumcree parade (which authorities have repeatedly closed to marchers in recent years) in 1998, the closing passage of Ruth Dudley Edwards's sympathetic portrayal of the Orange Order, *The Faithful Tribe*, provides a graphic incarnation of this argument:

> As winter turned into spring, there he sat, enduring, indomitable, principled, stubborn, and inflexible, a graphic symbol of those Ulster Protestant qualities that kept them going through the Siege of Derry and a three-century siege of their whole community, and yet have made them so often play into the hands of their enemies.[43]

The assumptions of atavism in this representation are particularly important. According to this "clever propaganda" argument, the Northern Ireland conflict has been, at least since 1689, a timeless struggle between bluff, straight-talking, and honest (if inflexible) unionists and duplicitous, amoral nationalists, whose real intention to slaughter the "Ulster Protestant community" indiscriminately is disguised beneath a seemingly plausible rhetorical veneer. Very old ethnic (and often frankly racial) stereotypes are recycled in such arguments and applied not just to political leaders, but also to "unionist" and "nationalist" communities *en masse*. As the Home Rule crisis of 1914 reached its head, with Ulster unionists arming and organizing to resist Home Rule by force if necessary, Lord Northcliffe, Irish Protestant and unionist, enunciated this dichotomy before a transatlantic audience:

> The Scotch-Irish are by nature better equipped for work than for talk. They have never taken the trouble to put their case before the world, preferring to depend for what they believe to be their liberty on abundance of rifles, ammunition, and machine guns. The Irish of the south, on the other hand, are fine orators and admirable writers.

"Behind the whole thing is the difference of race and character," Northcliffe added. "The southern Irish are easy, charming, versatile, poetical, but unpractical." The northern Scotch-Irish, on the other hand, were "shrewd and industrious," "practical, hard-headed folk."[44]

43. Dudley Edwards, *Faithful Tribe*, 430.
44. *Calgary Daily Herald*, 15 July 1914, 9.

The unpublished autobiography of Andrew Magill, a former Dublin Castle civil servant who discovered a "Scotch-Irish" identity and migrated to the North to work for the northern administration on the achievement of southern independence in 1921, provides many a resonant reiteration of this analysis. Magill complained that nationalist depictions of the troubles were fundamentally dishonest:

> We read about the devotion, the love of Ireland, the enthusiasm which filled all classes, but we hear nothing of the terror which walked through the land, of smiler with the knife under the cloak, of the policy of relentlessness which a comparatively small band of gunmen and desperadoes were able to enforce on the bulk of the people who were more or less indifferent to what happened . . . ; the Roman Catholic talks of oppression and injustice, . . . and is ready at a moment's notice to start rioting, and when he has provoked retaliation, to shriek about pogroms and massacres.[45]

But such dishonesty, Magill suggested, commonly duped the gullible English outsider: "The ordinary English tourist compares the northern abruptness with the southern charm of manner, and reflects unfavourably on the north. If he had more experience of the north and south, he would probably change his opinion," since while Ulster-Scots Presbyterians have a "keen interest in business affairs," "the Southern Irishman has never shown any aptitude for business" and is prone to "indolence."[46]

Explanations of unionism's problem of political legitimacy in terms of clever republican/nationalist propaganda thus represent the Catholic Irish as an eloquent, poetic, garrulous, deceitful race, devoid of practical achievements, and of talents apart from, in the memorable words of Robert McLiam Wilson's Ripley Bogle: breeding, "killing people," and a "bewildering capacity for talking shite."[47] But Ulster Protestants, especially Presbyterians, are also thus stereotyped as determined, businesslike, efficient but somewhat dour men (the women rarely being acknowledged) who, perhaps due to the rigors of

45. Andrew Magill papers (Bodleian Library, Oxford), MS.Eng.c.2803, f.349, 299, 300.

46. Ibid., f.304, 8, 304, 302–3.

47. Robert McLiam Wilson, *Ripley Bogle* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989), 83.

the presbytery's discipline,[48] are devoid of eloquence, culturally impoverished, and little capable of Arnoldian "sweetness and light." James Anthony Froude, for instance, clearly sensed an affinity between this perceived aspect of northern Presbyterian culture and the Carlylean gospel of silence, a gospel that the Catholic Irish "babblers" on the other hand deeply offended.[49] Equivalent representations can be found throughout the corpus of Scotch-Irish history, from its emergence in the late nineteenth century to the present day. One speaker at a congress of the Scotch-Irish Society of America in 1900 claimed:

> The Scotch-Irish, though gifted with a high order of intellectual endowment, have written but little history. They have neither in poetry nor prose extolled the virtues and achievements of their ancestors. Other races have told with both song and story of the valor and deeds of their forefathers. The Scotch-Irish, from the incipiency of the race, were engaged with the stern realities of life.[50]

Given the context (a set of congresses that constituted a sustained peon of racial self-congratulation), the assertion that "we have been too long getting our dues"[51] seems somewhat ironic. But such a stereotyped dichotomy between "Ulster-Scots" or "Scotch-Irish" and "the Irish" or "Celtic Irish" became fiercely planted in such political and ethnic locations. Writing under the self-styled pseudonym "Ulster Presbyterian," one author described northern Protestants during the third Home Rule crisis in the following terms:

> Now, whatever may be the failings of this industrious community, it is at least universally admitted that they are rich in energy and intelligence, and in a strong and aggressive individualism which is in striking contrast

48. James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 145.

49. James Anthony Froude, *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873–1875, 3 vols.).

50. John D. McIlhenny, "The Scotch-Irish in the Development of the United States," in *The Scotch Irish in America: Proceedings and Addresses of the Tenth Congress* (Nashville: Bigham & Smith, 1901), 136.

51. John S. Macintosh, "What the Nation owes the Scotch-Irish," *The Scotch Irish in America: Proceedings and Addresses of the Ninth Congress* (Nashville: Barbee & Smith, 1900), 143.

> to the "other worldliness," the easy going fatalism, however induced, of Celtic Ireland. Whatever the future may have in store, their coalescence in a common policy is virtually unthinkable at the present time.[52]

James Leyburn agreed that the "Scotch-Irish" in the United States were in aesthetic terms "practically deaf, dumb and blind,"[53] and more recent works of Scotch-Irish history continue to depict the Ulster-Scots or Scots-Irish as victims of unfair publicity, their "epic" a suppressed historical narrative.[54] These assumptions have a clear political resonance in Paisleyite rhetoric, as the *Protestant Telegraph* suggested at the start of the Northern Ireland conflict:

> Ulster people are the earth's salt. . . . The northern counties of Ireland and their people are very, very special indeed. The Ulster Protestant is a strong, robust character, with a fierce loyalty to his friends. . . . His thoughts run only in "straight lines." He has a guileless innocence . . . with a built-in honesty. . . . The Ulster Protestant has no time for double dealing, shady dealing, hypocrisy, and weakness. He despises traitors, political puppets, ecumenical jellyfish, opportunists, liars, crooks, apologists, and snivellers. . . .[55]

There is a view, although often (and perhaps necessarily) expressed in modes that are intellectually constricted,[56] that repeated assertions of such racial stereotypes comprise evidence in their favor, a point that liberal academics have largely avoided. At least in the case of unionist assertions of unfair representation, however, the way such stereotypes are reiterated in the place of more solid evidence is surely somewhat suspicious. The forms of Scotch-Irish identity from which

52. An Ulster Presbyterian, *Ulster on its Own: An Easy Way with Ireland, Being a Proposal of Self-government for the Five Counties Round Lough Neagh* (Belfast: Carswell, 1912), 5–6.

53. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish*, 323–24.

54. Rory Fitzpatrick, *God's Frontiersmen: The Scots-Irish Epic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

55. *Protestant Telegraph*, 16 Jan. 1971. Quoted in John Daniel Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict: The Structuration of Politics in Northern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82.

56. See, for instance, Paul Hollander, "Long Term Cultural Trends and the Problems of Higher Education in the United States," in Robert Weissberg, ed., *Democracy and the Academy* (Huntington, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2000), 29.

the argument is derived are particularly artificial.[57] The fact that the contemporary "Scotch-Irish" in the United States are more likely to accept nationalist than unionist readings of Northern Ireland politics[58] surely bespeaks either considerable discontinuities in the character of this supposedly unchanging race or weaknesses in the unionist case more than unfair representation. Complaints that "we" are unfairly treated by the media are in any case surely a clichéd argumentative device, and, most importantly, prominent counter-instances should be cited.

Historical and journalistic neglect of the loyalist ethnic cleansing of Belfast Catholics in the 1920s is surely a case in point.[59] Conceptions of unionists as straight-talking, honest people above the arts of propaganda and deception are themselves dishonest. Unionists' not infrequent denials that there was discrimination under the pre-1972 regime are surely, even on relatively sympathetic assumptions, hardly accurate.[60] Unionists and low-quality British newspapers (such as the *Daily Express*) are wrong to depict "Irish-America" (or even occasionally the entire United States) as gullible absorbers of simplistic propaganda against all things "British,"[61] as they miss the distinction between moderate Irish nationalists and pro-republicans in the United States (paradoxically giving the republicans credit for more influence than they deserve), the former actually offering some indirect assistance to unionists.[62] Indeed, if the American market for propaganda pertaining

57. Matthew McKee, "'A Peculiar and Royal Race': Creating a Scotch-Irish identity, 1889–1901," in Patrick Fitzgerald and Steve Ickringill, eds., *Atlantic Crossroads: Historical Connections between Scotland, Ulster and North America* (Newtownards: Colourpoint, 2001), 67–83: R. Stuart Wallace, "The Development of the Scotch-Irish Myth in New Hampshire," *Historical New Hampshire* 40:3&4 (Fall/Winter 1985), 109–34.

58. Míchéal D. Roe and Sybil Dunlap, "Contemporary Scotch-Irish Social Identities and Attitudes Toward *the Troubles* in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies* 1:3 (Fall 2002), 12–36.

59. Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 153–64.

60. John Whyte, "How much Discrimination was there under the Unionist Regime, 1921–68?" in Tom Gallagher and James O'Connell, eds., *Contemporary Irish Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 1–35.

61. Adrian Guelke, "The United States and the Northern Ireland Question," in Barton and Roche, eds., *The Northern Ireland Question*, 189–212.

62. Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish-America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968–1995* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

to Irish politics has been swayed as easily as unionist and British stereotypes suggest, it would seem that the long record of efforts on the part of unionists and their sympathizers to cultivate this market might be due for reassessment. Ulster Presbyterians aimed to influence American opinion in the early 1920s,[63] and British and unionist concerns about the effectiveness of de Valera's propaganda in the 1940s seem somewhat misplaced, since Churchill's misleading condemnation of Irish neutrality during World War II has, to unionist advantage, widely been accepted ever since.[64] Irish neutrality probably ought not to be regarded so judgmentally, especially when it is considered that the United States (for instance) itself did not end its formal neutrality until Hitler declared war on the United States late in 1941. More recent unionist efforts to depict republicanism as no different than Al-Qaeda and other enemies in the United States' "war against terrorism," if they have been less obviously successful, at least evince some politically cunning obfuscation on the part of unionists. To depict Ulster Protestants, in Dudley Edwards's terms, as guilelessly (if not stupidly) playing "into the hands of their enemies" for over three hundred years is in fact neither complimentary nor accurate. Furthermore, in a British context the argument that unionists have particularly suffered at the hands of the media has to confront the strong evidence that the disproportionate tendency in media coverage has been rather to depict *republicanism* negatively.[65] The portrayal of Ulster Protestants or unionists as devoid and incapable of cultural expression ignores many exceptions,[66] as well as cohering to aspects of the fallacious republican demonization of unionism alluded to above.[67]

63. William Corkey, *Glad did I live: Memoirs of a Long Life* (Belfast: Belfast Newsletter, 1962), 196–243.

64. Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Walkinstown, Dublin: Helicon, 1983), 120–27.

65. Bill Rolston, ed., *The Media and Northern Ireland: Covering the Troubles* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

66. Edna Longley, "Ulster Protestants and the Question of 'Culture'," in Fran Brearton and Eamonn Hughes, eds., *Last Before America: Irish and American Writing: Essays in Honour of Michael Allen* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2001), 99–120.

67. Brian Neve, "Cinema, the Ceasefire and 'the Troubles,'" *Irish Studies Review* 20 (Autumn 1997), 2–8; Ronan Bennett, "Why the IRA gets all the Good Lines," *Observer*, 12 Jan. 1997, 1.

A second criticism of this unionist self-defense also highlights its counterproductive dimensions. No less than the republican argument that unionism solely comprises unreconstructed supremacism, the argument that unionists are the victims of clever nationalist/republican propaganda in fact has confrontational implications. At the very least it can lead unionists to enter into peace processes with patronizing and incorrect assumptions about nationalists and republicans that are hardly likely to prove productive. As dialogue between British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Dáil President Eamon de Valera opened at the end of the Irish War of Independence in 1921, Northern Ireland's Unionist Prime Minister Sir James Craig rather unhelpfully suggested that de Valera be sent back to the Dáil with proposals "embodied in a document full of high-sounding phraseology, which would appeal to the imagination of the Southern Irish, and very highly-coloured lights should be thrown upon the concessions which it was proposed to offer."[68] As Northcliffe's and many other contemporary analyses suggests, such a view of the differing racial qualities of "Ulster-Scot" and "Irish" often intellectually underpinned the idea of partition during the Home Rule debates.[69] More seriously, however, by suggesting that the two "races" ultimately *cannot* get along, such a view suggests that the failure of all projects such as the current peace process is racially preordained.

W.A. Hanna's recent analysis of the unionist role in the peace process "in the light of the history of the major Ulster-Scot and largely Presbyterian component" within unionism is highly suggestive in this context.[70] In advancing the commonplace complaint that unionists are misrepresented by the media,[71] Hanna more interestingly contends that the strict biblical literalism of Presbyterianism leads many Northern Irish Protestants to distrust "studied ambiguity" and "any attempt

68. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (Belfast), CAB/4/2; minutes of Northern Ireland cabinet meeting, 16 June 1921.

69. John Harrison, *The Scot in Ulster: Sketch of the History of the Scottish Population of Ulster* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1888), especially 97, 112; James Barkley Woodburn, *The Ulster Scot, His History and Religion* (London: H.R. Allenson, 1914), especially 379, 397.

70. W.A. Hanna, *Intertwined Roots: An Ulster-Scots Perspective* (Blackrock: Columba Press, 2000), 8, 38–47.

71. Ibid., 50–62.

to fudge or obscure the meaning or the implications of the actual words used in any . . . political context." He suggests that this is key to understanding widespread unionist doubts about the peace process since "republican spokespersons in television appearances have shown themselves to be past masters at giving equivocal or evasive answers to awkward questions. . . . They are apparently unconcerned if their words are interpreted naively or uncritically . . . by those who want to believe them." "At best," Hanna continues, "such assiduous ambiguity makes meaningful discussion with republicans difficult for those unionists who are willing to negotiate; at worst, it deepens mistrust in an uneasy majority community and may result in the rejection of moderates as leaders."[72] Clearly, this is much more than an innocent observation of Provisional Sinn Féin's chief negotiator Martin McGuinness's propensity to avoid giving a straight answer to a straight question, but is again textured by familiar ethnic stereotypes. If "the Irish" as a whole are so congenitally dishonest, political dialogues with their leaders such as the peace process are clearly not only useless but also dangerous. For unionists, the implication is that there is no potential gain from talking to such people, but that there may be from fighting. This is indeed suggested in some cognate representations of the idea that the Protestants of Ulster not only have to fight their corner alone, but also would win in a straight fight against their foes. As Rory Fitzpatrick writes, "The Protestant people themselves have the power to maintain their independence of any Irish state."[73]

The unionist/loyalist myth that no help is possible from outside forces because republicans are more effective propagandists thus not only implies confrontation with nationalists/Catholics, but to an extent is deliberately constructed and exploited to strengthen and legitimize internal solidarity and discipline among factions of loyalists behind existing leaders against this nationalist/republican "Other." The myth thus enervates self-critical tendencies in unionism, in turn diminishing its capacity to represent itself in a more flexible way.[74] Ironically, the

72. Ibid., 56–57.

73. Fitzpatrick, *God's Frontiersmen*, 271.

74. Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, 95–106: Alvin Jackson, "Irish Unionism," in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, eds., *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 120–40.

argument that unionism is victimized by the effect of allegedly clever and unprincipled republican propaganda thus itself further facilitates republican representation of unionism as a supremacist ideology that ultimately rests on force. The two arguments are equally wrong, mutually dependent, and both act to reinforce tendencies to further violence.

Because popular explanations of unionism's problem of political legitimacy are thus so inadequate, we need to examine the influence of more subtle causal factors. Several of these have been suggested in more careful analysis. First, as Adrian Guelke suggests, few affirmative global points of reference can be found for the partitionist nature of unionist ideology: divided islands are rare.[75] This is only a partial explanation, however, since lack of analogy alone surely does not preclude the possibility of such a political settlement. Second, as Steve Bruce suggests, loyalist paramilitaries suffer from some of the dilemmas of pro-state terrorism. To an extent, the division of functions between loyalist paramilitaries and the British security forces in Northern Ireland has been unclear, and loyalism often seems most clearly to be demarcated from British state policy by the naked sectarianism or mafia-like nature of many of its activities.[76] Conversely, Irish republicanism has the benefit of an objective that can be readily simplified without great distortion while avoiding representation in such starkly negative terms. In other words, republicanism can be represented as a campaign to get the British out of Ireland, a campaign that can even be glorified by a rhetoric of anticolonialism, national self-determination, and/or human rights. Paradoxically, republicans, like groups such as Al-Qaeda, may have benefited from the intensity of media demonization in Britain and elsewhere, since at least this has raised the profile of such groups and made them and their objectives a central part of the political agenda. Pro-state terrorism, hardly being represented as ter-

75. Adrian Guelke, *Northern Ireland: The International Perspective*, 11-2; Guelke, "Northern Ireland and Island Status," in McGarry, ed., *Northern Ireland and the Divided World*, 228–52.

76. Steve Bruce, *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 268–90; Steve Bruce, "Northern Ireland: Reappraising Loyalist Violence," in Alan O'Day, ed., *Terrorism's Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland* (Aldershot, Hants: Dartmouth Pub. Co., 1995), 115–35.

rorism at all, may receive less denunciation, but it thereby also receives less publicity.[77] Third, regardless of their slender basis in fact, aspects of popular stereotypes of Irish Protestants and Catholics have recently worked significantly to the advantage of the latter. The association of Irishness with alcohol, conviviality, and sociability has long been a sensitive issue for nationalists. Due to postmodern capitalism's valorization of leisure and consumption rather than work as activities and as originators of identity,[78] however, global evaluations of such attributes have become significantly less negative. The global marketability of Irish music, entertainers, and alcoholic beverages, as well as of St. Patrick's Day festivities, all features of the "Celtic Tiger" phenomenon, provides the clearest evidence of a cognate re-evaluation of Irishness. Aspects of the stereotyping of Ulster Protestants as hard-working and businesslike, if dour and obstinate, formerly cohered to a form of metropolitan British nationalism that celebrated the "workshop of the world." Within this postmodern context, however (and perhaps also within the context of Britain's relative economic decline), these attributes have clearly become less attractive.

Logically, one would expect territorial United Kingdom nationalists to support unionists' desire to remain part of Great Britain. As has been noted, unionism in fact has few such reliable political allies. This indicates how important it is to understand how these and other international influences are refracted through British attitudes. British governments have in fact long had interests that have led them to diminish rather than underscore Britain's political connections with Northern Ireland.[79] Moreover, political contexts concurrent to recent phases of the peace process have exacerbated a variety of tensions between unionism and both the right and left in Britain. Unionists seem to have powerful and enthusiastic sympathizers on the British right in politics and journalism, a prime example being Charles

77. Alan F. Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism and the British Media* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1998); Shane Kingston, "Terrorism, the Media and the Northern Ireland Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 18 (July/Sep. 1995), 227–28.

78. David Ashley, *History Without a Subject: The Postmodern Condition* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 3, 11, 14.

79. Paul Dixon, *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 45, 102, 153, 201–7, 295–96, 302–3.

Moore,[80] until very recently the editor of the influential *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, and other "friends of the union." Pressed to articulate a basis for Britain's cultural distinctiveness from continental Europe by the specter of closer European integration, however, these erstwhile unionist allies proclaim a long-established self-congratulatory vision of Britishness that highlights its supposed tolerance, stability, continuity, and moderation.[81] This is an image of Britishness with which the reputation (however accurate) of neither past nor present unionists fits, so that its articulation, whatever the intention, logically excludes unionists from the imagined British nation. A less self-congratulatory and thus more pluralistic view of Britishness might be expected from British liberals and the British left, especially where a self-conscious effort is being made to accommodate other minority groups in a "new Britishness." But little specific effort is made to incorporate unionists in these plural conceptions of Britishness, as liberals and leftists have instead focused their attention on bringing nonwhite racial minorities within an expanded concept of Britishness. Indeed, insofar as the Irish (a category frequently equated with Irish Catholic nationalists) in Britain are themselves defined as a victimized racial minority, efforts to reconceptualize Britishness along these lines tend to reinforce political notions largely antipathetic to unionism.[82] The decline of Protestantism within Britain, which may be particularly reflected on the British left, has further reduced the strength of one former link between Northern Irish Protestants and the imagined British nation.

The effect of such influences on the political right and left in Britain may be perceived by many unionists as British betrayal or wanton appeasement of republican terrorists, but in fact few of these political

80. Charles Moore, "Why does Everyone Hate the Unionists so?" *Spectator* 271, 8629 (27 Nov. 1993), 7; Moore, *The Tale of a Round Table* (London: Friends of the Union, 1993).

81. Moore, *How to be British* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1995), 15–17; "Don't Diss Britannia," *Daily Telegraph*, 12 Oct. 2000, available at <http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fopinion%2F2000%2F10%2F12%2Fdl02.xml>, last accessed 26 Jan. 2004.

82. The Runnymede Trust Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain* (London: Profile Books, 2000); Mary J. Hickman and Bronwen Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain: A Report of Research Undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality* (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1997).

processes are solely generated within Britain, being linked to an international political context characterized by globalization, supra-nationalism, migration, and "postmodern" mobility. As the example of the British right suggests, even sincere efforts to defend the connection between Britain and Northern Ireland cherished by most unionists struggle to withstand these international influences, so that the problem of unionist isolation is not sufficiently simple to be solved by political will alone.

Unionists are not, and have never been, as friendless or betrayed as their rhetoric sometimes suggests, and surely are not sufficiently isolated to justify any further loyalist violence, not least because the nature of this violence is itself an originating source of unionists' problem of political legitimacy. But unionists' relative lack of external support should certainly concern not only unionists but also a number of other actors in the Northern Ireland conflict, since it ultimately unbalances the entire peace process. The results of the recent Northern Ireland Assembly elections show that the related unionist feelings of frustration and isolation can have very serious consequences. The rise of potentially obstructionist anti-agreement unionists should show even nationalists and mainstream republicans (among others) that it is not in their interest to be blasé about the demise of pro-agreement unionists, a fact that perhaps might have been realized to mutual advantage a long time ago.

But such a realization also cannot in itself be a fundamental solution to the problem of international political legitimacy faced by unionists. Simple diagnoses, it has been here demonstrated, fail to explain this problem since complex and global processes, and international actors with a large number of other interests, are deeply implicated in it, making rectification extremely difficult. Acknowledgment of this fact does, however, have the merit of illustrating the flaws of some crude and ultimately confrontational diagnoses of aspects of the contemporary conflict in Northern Ireland.