

# Unionism and Loyalism

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## Unionism: Historical Viewpoint

- Defines itself in opposition to Irish nationalism.
- Rejects the idea of a historic Irish nation. Ireland only became a nation after the Act of Union in 1800 (ie within the UK).
- The 26 counties of the Free State/Irish Republic **seceded** from the United Kingdom – the six counties of NI did not withdraw from an Irish state.
- After partition in 1921 the Irish government encouraged political instability in NI by continuing the territorial claim to NI in the Irish constitution (removed in 1999).



## Academic Definitions

- Jennifer Todd:
  - Ulster Loyalist – primary loyalty to the NI Protestant community.
  - Ulster British – primary loyalty to the British state/nation.
  - In practice there is an overlap between the two.
- John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary:
  - Devolutionists – a NI assembly provides best defence against Irish nationalism because British government is unreliable.
  - Integrationists – Union best maintained by legal, political, electoral and administrative integration with the rest of the UK.
- Norman Porter:
  - Cultural Unionism – rooted in Protestantism. The concepts of liberty and loyalty are central.
  - Liberal Unionism – aims to achieve a similar political way of life as the rest of the UK

# Unionist and Loyalist Organisations

- Organisations reflect **social and economic** divisions in the PUL community.
- Complicated by emergence of organisations in response to **the Troubles** or to specific political initiatives.
- **Churches:** Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist, Baptist, etc.
- **Political parties:** Ulster Unionist Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Vanguard, etc.
- **Loyal Orders:** Orange Order, Apprentice Boys of Derry, Royal Black Preceptory.
- **Paramilitary Organisations:** Ulster Volunteer Force, Ulster Defence Association and associated organisations.
- **Loyalist Workers' Organisations:** Loyalist Association of Workers and Ulster Workers' Council



## Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

- Founded 1905. Largest party in NI until 21<sup>st</sup> century and formed the government 1921-72.
- Fairly democratic structure made it open to internal disputes and splits.
- Party leaders often found it difficult to bring supporters along with political initiatives such as Sunningdale and GFA.



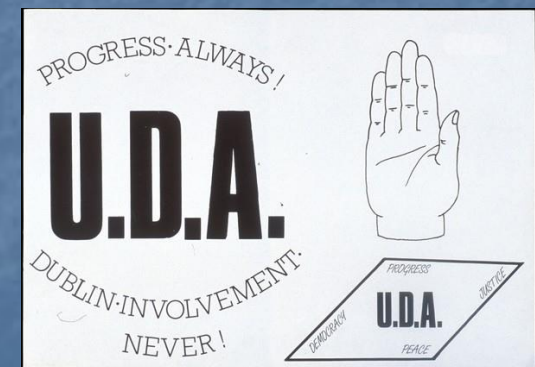
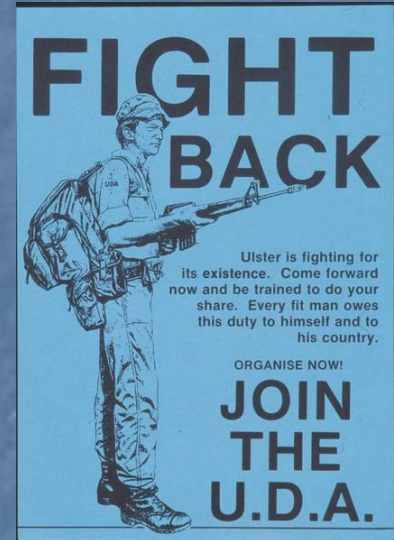
# Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

- Founded 1971 and led by Rev. Ian Paisley until 2008. Now Arlene Foster.
- Traditionally less open to negotiation than the UUP in politics and on many social issues (Paisley leader of Free Presbyterian Church).
- Hard to categorise the DUP as either just a loyalist or unionist party.
- With unionist dissatisfaction with the GFA it overtook the UUP in 2003 becoming the largest political party in NI.
- UK General Election 10 seats – balance of power



# Ulster Defence Association

- Founded September 1971 by Protestant vigilante groups. Localised structure made it hard to control.
- Andy Tyrie (leader 1973-1988) said objective was 'to terrorise the terrorist'. Often became attacks on Catholics at large.
- By 1990s increasingly corrupt.
- **Not** illegal until 1992 - banned after upsurge in UDA violence.
- Military wing, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (1973), banned from the outset.
- Intermittent feuds with other loyalist paramilitary groups.
- Responsible for an estimated 431 deaths while 96 UDA and UFF members were killed.



# Ulster Volunteer Force

- Founded 1966 in opposition to O'Neill reforms and apparent renewed republican threat - smaller than UDA but more disciplined and politically aware – often more ruthless.
- Shankill Butchers, responsible for at least 19 murders, connected to the UVF. Dublin and Monaghan bombs 1974 killed 33.
- Leading UVF figure Gusty Spence credited with politicisation of the UVF. Spence died 2011.
- Intermittent feuds with the UDA and the breakaway LVF. Closely linked with the Red Hand Commandos.
- UVF and RHC responsible for at least 569 deaths while 65 members killed during the Troubles.





# Collusion

- Issue of collusion between members of security forces and loyalist paramilitaries during Troubles highly contested.
- Clear evidence of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and some members of security forces in some instances. However, loyalist paramilitaries were NOT an adjunct of British security forces and were often in conflict with them.
- 1972-2001 50% of murders committed by loyalists (30% of total) solved by RUC/PSNI. 8,000 loyalists charged with terrorist and serious public order offences.
- 30% of murders committed by republicans (60% of total) solved. 11,000 republicans charged with terrorist and serious order offences. (*Belfast Telegraph* 21 March 2018)

## 1921-63 'The Orange State'

- Ulster Unionist Party dominated political life in NI
- Gerrymandered local council areas in some border areas. Allocation of jobs, housing other resources favoured unionists over nationalists. Public order policing not applied evenly.
- Political culture favoured Unionists and restricted nationalism. The Twelfth a public holiday while nationalist displays often restricted
- Unionist political behaviour influenced by:
  - Grass-roots unionism (often more hard-line than leadership)
  - Concern Britain was an unreliable ally
  - Continuing (if intermittent) IRA attacks in NI
  - Continuing anti-partitionist attitude of nationalists both in NI and the South



## The O'Neill Years: 1963-68

- Terence O'Neill Unionist leader in 1963. A moderniser – aim to reform the economy, win back working-class Unionist votes lost to NI Labour Party, improve relations with Catholic community and the Republic.
- But:
- Opposition within the UUP – reform unnecessary or too fast
- Outside the party Ian Paisley (fundamentalist Protestant) says change is undermining NI
- UVF paramilitary activity
- From c.1963 growing demands from civil rights groups to end discrimination
- From 1964 the UK Labour govt taking a greater interest in NI affairs
- 1966 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries and UVF raise tensions



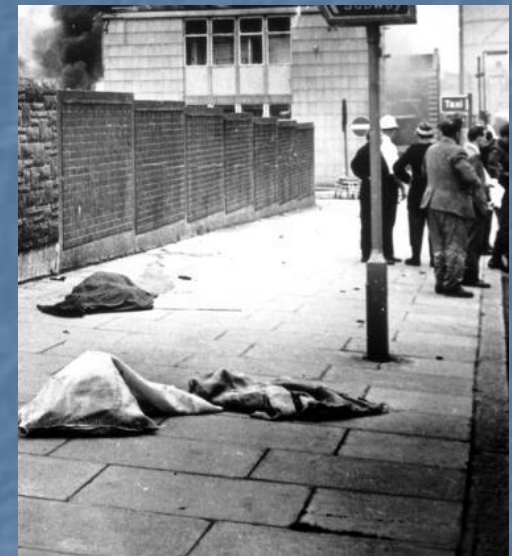
## The Fall of Stormont: 1968-72

- October 1968 Civil Rights march in Derry sees marchers beaten by police.
- Unionists introduce reforms but
- January 1969 People's Democracy Belfast-Derry march a turning point.
- Attacked by loyalists outside Derry. Protestant-Catholic views more polarised
- August 1969 Apprentice Boys march in Derry leads to riots. British soldiers on streets of NI
- Republican and loyalist paramilitary groups grow – state forces unable to defeat them
- Internment in August 1971 increases violence.
- Bloody Sunday January 1972 leads British to suspend NI parliament in March 1972.



## Unionists and the Troubles

- Fracturing of many traditional lines of authority.
- Many working class areas feel undefended by state forces – aids growth of paramilitaries mostly among working class (loyalists).
- Unionists view the conflict as a terrorist campaign against a democratic state.
- IRA campaign was a form of ethnic cleansing (especially in western counties)
- Constitutional nationalists and Irish government used IRA violence to further the nationalist agenda



## Brooke-Mayhew Talks: 1991-92

- 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement gives Irish govt a right to consultation on some areas of NI politics.
- Some Unionists decide majority rule parliament now impossible. Negotiation with nationalists necessary to remove AIA.
- Early 1990s Brooke-Mayhew talks bring NI parties and British and Irish governments close to agreement on political structures for NI.
- Unionists agree to power-sharing. UUP and DUP meet Irish Government for talks.
- Rejected by John Hume who believed an IRA ceasefire is needed first.



# 'New Unionism' and the Peace Process

- Arthur Aughey: *Nationalism, Devolution and the challenge to the UK State* (2001)
- **Distinctions** - made to create space for political compromise:
  - Irishness of place – not political Irishness
  - Devolution as part of UK-wide trend - not aiming for a united Ireland
  - Practical cross-border co-operation – not for nationalist reasons
- **Propositions:**
  - Consent principle must govern North-South relations
  - Nationalists must forego idea of British Govt as 'persuaders' for a united Ireland
  - Articles 2 and 3 of Irish constitution must be changed to improve North-South relations



John Hume, David Trimble  
And Bono promote GFA

# The Good Friday Agreement 1998

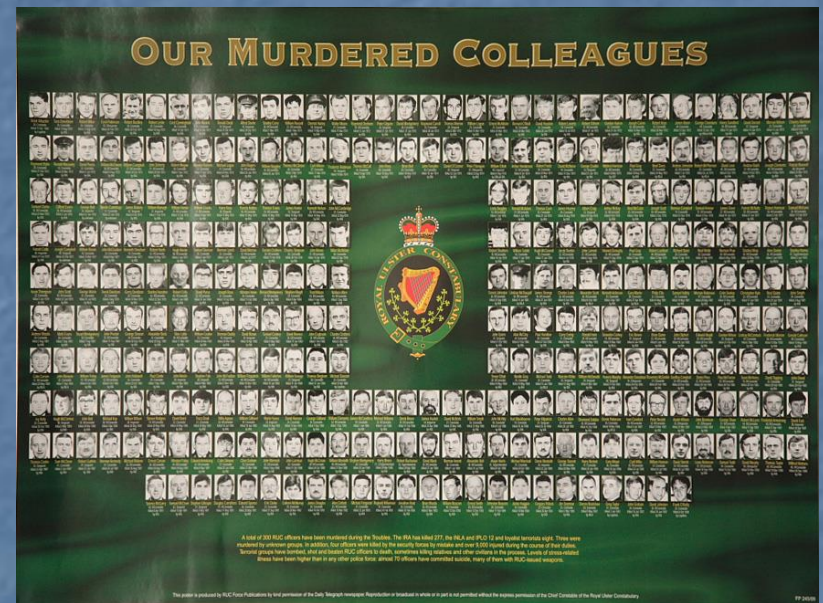
- Supported by UUP, Progressive Unionist Party (UVF) and Ulster Democratic Party (UDA). Opposed by DUP and some smaller unionist groups
- UUP strong input into role and extent of North South Ministerial Council (Strand 2) - limited and power for expansion carefully circumscribed
- Main concerns: security – prisoner releases, decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, extent of police reform
- In run up to referendum on GFA Blair tells people of NI: 'Those who use or threaten violence to be excluded from the government of Northern Ireland.'
- 'Prisoners to be kept in prison unless violence is given up for good.'





# Declining Protestant Support for the GFA

- Belief the GFA benefited unionists and nationalists equally fell from 41% of Protestants in 1998 to 22% in 2003 (NI Life and Times survey)
- Belief that nationalists benefited a lot more than unionists rose from 11% in 1998 to 55% in 2002 (NILT)
- Security issues – prisoner releases, police reform without decommissioning key factors
- DUP overtakes UUP as major party



RUC poster showing images of 303 officers killed during the Troubles

# The Future: The Union is safe?

- Combined Loyalist Military Command ceasefire statement October 1994 says:
- **'The Union is safe.'**
- BUT:
- What happens if loyalist groups do not believe the Union is safe?
- 'Peace dividend' little impact
- Academic under-achievement of working-class Protestant boys
- Perception their culture is under threat
- Impact of UK exit from EU
- Declining unionist percentage of vote - 2017 no overall unionist majority in Assembly election. 2019 Council elections unionist parties only 41.6% of first preference votes. Brexit partly a factor.

REPUBLICANS	LOYALISTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PRISONERS RELEASED</li><li>• SEATS IN GOVERNMENT</li><li>• FACILITIES AT WESTMINSTER</li><li>• VISAS TO THE USA</li><li>• ARMY-POLICE STATIONS CLOSED</li><li>• HOME BATTALIONS OF THE RIF DISBANDED</li><li>• ON THE RUNS ALLOWED TO RETURN</li><li>• COLUMBIA 3 REMAIN AT LIBERTY</li><li>• BIAS AGAINST PROTESTANTS IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES</li><li>• SEAN KELLY CHILD MURDERER SET FREE</li><li>• INCREASED IN INVESTMENT</li><li>• ACCESS TO SHARED ROADS DENIED</li><li>• LOYALIST CULTURE ERODED</li><li>• £26.6 MILLION PAK OFF</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PRISONERS RELEASED</li><li>• VISAS TO THE USA</li></ul>

THE LOYALIST PEOPLE OF EAST BELFAST DEMAND :-

- EQUALITY
- PARITY OF ESTEEM
- SHARED ACCESS TO MAIN ARTERIAL ROUTES
- NO BIAS IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
- CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY
- EQUAL INVESTMENT
- EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABLE POLICING

This is not equality - This is not parity of esteem - This is not what the Good Friday Agreement was meant to deliver.



## 'Show Me The Money' – The Peace Dividend Arrives?

- 2017 UK General Election leaves DUP with balance of power and potential to support minority Conservative government.
- Leads to heated reaction from some liberal and Irish nationalist commentators often centred round DUP conservative social policies (especially marriage equality issue).
- More realistic attitude was that DUP wanted more money for NI.
- On wider issues a senior DUP figure says:
- 'The DUP isn't asking the Government to take sides on the devolution issue or on the politics of Northern Ireland. It does expect the government of the day to be an advocate of the Union but that is a wider UK issue than an exclusively Northern Ireland one.' (Belfast Telegraph 21 June 2017)
- 26 June Conservatives agree £1 billion extra funds for NI infrastructure projects over two years.

# The Impact of Brexit

- Broadly: nationalists and middle class Protestants vote remain (56%)
- Broadly: unionists and working class loyalists leave (44%)
- Nationalists pro-Europe, has become an element in nationalist identity (eg John Hume)
- Republicans traditionally oppose external influences but in C21st become more pro-Europe
- Unionists suspicious of Europe – interfering in NI/UK internal matters. Like de-industrialised areas in England and Wales vote leave. EU Peace and Regional Development funds don't translate into support for EU
- 10 DUP MPs support Conservative govt at Westminster – influential on Irish 'Backstop' issue



# The Troubles: Who Was to Blame?

- Adapted from Colin Irwin 'How Public Opinion Polls were used in support of the Northern Ireland Peace Process' *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*. Vol.1 No.1 September 2001.
- (Ranking on a list of 19 factors)
  
- Protestants
  - The IRA and their use of violence **87%** (Catholics 11 – 45%)
  - All paramilitary groups and their use of violence **67%** (Catholics 7 – 56%)
  - Failure of govt/security forces to deal with terrorism **56%** (Catholics 12 – 34%)
  - Republic's territorial claim on NI **53%** (Catholics 16 – 21%)
  - Loyalist paramilitaries and their use of violence **53%** (Catholics 6 – 57%)
  - Republic's involvement in NI **42%** (Catholics 18 – 16%)
  
- Catholics
  - The lack of equality and continued discrimination **71%** (Protestants 14 – 21%)
  - The sectarian division of NI politics **66%** (Protestants 10 – 30%)
  - Failure to provide a police service acceptable to all **62%** (Protestants 18 – 9%)
  - The failures of NI politicians **59%** (Protestants 7 – 31%)
  - Lack of respect for people of the 'other' tradition **57%** (Protestants 9 – 30%)
  - Loyalist paramilitaries and their use of violence **57%** (Protestants 5 – 53%)
  - All paramilitary groups and their use of violence **56%** (Protestants 2 – 67%)
  - Unaccountable and secretive government **52%** (Protestants 8 – 31%)
  - Continued British presence in Ireland **51%** (Protestants 16 – 17%)

# David Trimble

- Former UUP leader David Trimble Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech 10 December 1998:
- 'Ulster Unionists, fearful of being isolated on the island, built a solid house, but it was **a cold house for Catholics**. And northern nationalists, although they had a roof over their heads, seemed to us as if they meant to burn the house down.
- None of us are entirely innocent. But thanks to our strong sense of civil society, thanks to our religious recognition that none of us are perfect, thanks to the thousands of people from both sides who made countless acts of good authority, thanks to a tradition of parliamentary democracy which meant that paramilitarism never displaced politics, thanks to all these specific, concrete circumstances we, Thank God, stopped short of that abyss that engulfed Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and Rwanda.'

