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Academic Unionists or Unionist Academics?

The Impact of Political Science in the Discussions of Northern Ireland Unionism

Workshop 12: The Comparative Dynamics of Problem Framing.
**Introduction**

This paper will take off from my PhD thesis, which I am currently writing in the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. In my paper I will analyse the role and impact the academics, especially political scientists, have had in the discussions and argument building inside the Northern Ireland unionist movement. I will discuss how members of the academia have, for example, raised and proposed solutions to the political and philosophical questions facing the political movement of Unionism. I will also take a look into cases where non academic participants, e.g. politicians, have used concepts and ideas taken from science to pursue their goals in politics.

 Academics have historically had a major role in the conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. Perhaps the best example is the impact which Arendt Lijphardt had to the democratic and power sharing discussions in Northern Ireland. The thinking of Lijphardt, in relation to power sharing, has been extremely influential and formed a basis for the consociationalist model, currently applied in the Northern Ireland local administration. Nevertheless that is the case of impartial, and somewhat outside influence, while I am taking a look to the political interventions by the academia.

 In my paper I will analyse how academics with Unionist tendencies have influenced the discussion inside the Unionist movement. I am particularly interested of the way these academics are using concepts and ideas taken from the field of political science or political philosophy as a form of academic politicking. This also raises an interesting question of the dual role of the academic. There are situations where the academic is taking sides and using impartial scientific knowledge, such as a political theory, to gain a partial political influence. In fact the conflict in Northern Ireland might be a situation, where even imaginary impartiality of the academic is impossible, and the academic is forced to “take sides” in order to be taken seriously.

 The timeline of the paper covers the era of the recent “troubles” period of Northern Ireland from the late 1960’s to the present, while I will concentrate on the 1990’s until the signing of the Belfast Agreement of 1998, which was the golden era of academic unionism. As an introduction I will define the concepts of unionism and nationalism as well briefly explain their political beliefs in terms of Northern Ireland politics. Then I will discuss the history of academic influence in Northern Ireland, starting from the 1970’s and the Marxist phase of the academic involvement, which is important since it created the background and mode for the future academic politicking.
After the Marxist phase I will illustrate the dominant strand of academic unionism, which builds heavily on the argumentation grounding on British liberalism, which academic unionism contrasts to its reading of the Irish nationalism. This liberal unionist strand is illustrated by two writers out of which one is a politician and one is a political scientist. I will then move on to discuss the notion of the political as understood and applied by the academic unionists, highlighting some aspects of political thought they are capitalizing. One act of academic politicking is illustrated in the political reading of an article written by an academic unionist, commenting the ongoing peace talks. I will conclude my paper with a contrasting look to the text of the Belfast Agreement, and how its text complies with the arguments given out by the academic unionists.

1. Unionist and nationalist dogmas

The basis of the conflict form two conflicting dogmas of the political situation of Northern Ireland, with the contrasting hopes and fears shared by the two communities, unionist and nationalist. I will start by introducing these two dogmas and their evolution from their traditional stand points. My introduction follows the lines of the famous and seminal study of the different interpretation of the conflict by John Whyte: *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (1990). A simple and adequate definition, at least for our purposes here, for the two concepts; unionist and nationalist is found in the study mentioned:

A nationalist is someone who aspires to a united, independent Ireland. A unionist is someone who wants to retain the link between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. (Whyte 1990, 114-115)

For the purposes of this paper, I will not go deeper into the discussion of the part played by religion, or culture, in the forming of the political identities of unionists or nationalists. For our purposes it is sufficient to conclude that cultural identities, such as based on religion, do have role to play, but they also can be separated from the political aspirations of unionism or nationalism¹. In some sense it is fair to say, that unionism as a political idea has been a reaction to the Irish nationalism, and without the existence of Irish nationalism unionism would not exist. This is nevertheless a different thing than saying that the ideology, character, or core beliefs of that idea are reactions to Irish nationalism. They can be products of a long tradition, predating Irish nationalism, and be the products of culture, Protestant ethos, British liberalism or all of these. The point still being that their

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¹ Of the discussion of the role of the religion in Northern Ireland see e.g. Aughey 1989, 3-12.
formulation to become the political idea of unionism cannot predate the birth of Irish nationalism, therefore implicating that the discourse of Irish nationalism is something unionism must answer to.

**The nationalist case**

The traditional nationalism sees Ireland as a one nation and blames Britain for keeping that nation divided. Partition itself was seen as either a product of British internal politics (between the conservatives and liberals) or as an act of pure malignancy by the British state. The traditional view stresses the fact, that partition was not wanted neither by the nationalist or the unionist population and Northern Ireland as a viable entity was possible only with the British subsidies, born out of British political interests, which followed the ‘divide and rule’ strategy. This traditional nationalist reading fails to give any credit or status to the feelings within the Protestant community. The revision of the tradition nationalist interpretation started in the 1950’s, when it was acknowledged that the partition existed because of the northern Protestants and the only way to secure united Ireland was to convince this population to join it. The revisionists also accepted the right of the northern Protestants to exist as a distinct people on the island as well as their reasons and moral right for not joining the south. The partition was forced on the British government, because of the conflicting demands by the two sects, rather than that it was originated by it. (Whyte 1990, 117-120)

The key principle of traditional and revisionist nationalism was that Ireland constituted one nation. This was maintained also after the start of the troubles in the late 1960’s, with only the appendix that there did exist different cultures within that nation. The Protestants were seen as mislead, although their fears where understood. The situation would correct itself when the Protestants would understand, that they share the same nation with the southerners. On the other hand some nationalist writers did challenge this assumption and claim the rightful existence of the two nations or states on the island. The writers of the 1980’s like Gerry Adams, who is the leader of the republican Sinn Féin party in Northern Ireland, maintain much of the traditional nationalist discourse, such as that the British presence is the main reason preventing the Irish people from exercising their self-determination. Adams does not give the same right to unionists, since he considers them as a national minority, not a nation, and a veto preventing the full exercise of the Irish self-determination by that minority is a violation of that right. However, the convention between the nationalist parties north and south, the New Ireland Forum of 1984 accepted the root
cause of the conflict being the clash of two identities, not the British presence. The acknowledgement of the unionist identity as genuine, not a fabrication by the British is a remarkable transition from the traditional nationalist explanation. This said, the Forum confirmed that the responsibility for the suffering on the island of Ireland was still on the British state. (Whyte 1990, 121-145)

The unionist case

The unionist argumentation claims that there are two distinct peoples in Ireland, unionist and nationalist and the root cause of the conflict is the nationalist refusal to acknowledge that the unionist people have the same right for self determination as the nationalists. Instead of seeing Britain as the root cause of the problem, the unionists consider Britain to be an ally, though quite unreliable one. Interestingly the most comprehensive study backing the unionist case is done by a Dutch scholar M.W. Heslinga in 1962. Heslinga emphasised the unity of the British Isles by stating that the differences inside the British islands are between north and south and not between north and west, with the Republic having more similarities with England than with the North. The greatest division within the archipelago, according to Heslinga, is the religion, with the division drawn to exclude the south of Ireland from the rest of the British Isles. Heslinga also sees Ulstermen as a separate nation, and therefore in all aspects recognizes the border as a logical and important divide. (Whyte 1990, 146-147)

The weak point of the unionist argument has been the claim that the nationalist demand for the reunification is the root cause of the conflict. Still, the revision movement inside unionism has been small, at least before the 1990’s. Completing the unionist case there are the arguments based on economics and nationalism. The economic argument stresses the impossibility of the Republic to take care of the subsidies needed for Northern Ireland, while the nationalist argument claims that there exists a British nation in which the unionists belong to. The fear towards the strong Roman Catholic ethos of the Republic has also historically played a major part in the unionist rhetoric. This defence was weakening, when in the 1970’s there seemed to be a strong tendency towards secularisation in the Republic, but the two referenda held in the 1980’s to prevent a law permitting abortion (1983) and a rejection of the possibility of a limited form of divorce (1986) gave it new strength. (Whyte 1990, 149-162; McCartney 1985)
The weakness of the traditional unionist case is its failure to take into regard the actual conflict. Unionist rhetoric does not seem to acknowledge the presence of the other community at all. This has been the case especially in the history of unionism, with some later evolution in recent decades. Playing down the division makes the conflict itself incomprehensible. Why is there a conflict, if there is nothing to disagree on? The fact nevertheless remains that the biggest difference between north and south is that the south is by far more homogenous than the north. (Whyte 1990, 163-172)

Although it might be difficult to see the overlapping in the nationalist and unionist argument, they do share a paradigm, which believes in the existence of some natural unit of self-determination. For nationalists this unit is the geographical island of Ireland, while unionists see themselves as a distinct community concentrated on the north of Ireland. This difference between the two communities is something, which cannot be solved by redrawing of the border, in any place in the context of the British Isles.

2. The Marxist phase of the academic intervention

The politicizing of the academia can be argued to start in the 1970’s in line with the school of Marxist revisionism. Before that the academic discussion had concentrated on constructing different defences for nationalist or unionist cases, without interaction to each other, or the politicization of the political theory itself. One interesting example of politicking by a unitary movement consisting of scientists was the “scientists against Home Rule movement in the late 19th century Home Rule debates (Jones 2001). The politicking starting in the 1970’s, when the unionist revisionists Marxists started to operate with the same conceptual tools the traditional nationalists Marxists had used earlier, was still different and original.

The traditional nationalist Marxist interpretation of the Irish question was formulated by James Connolly (1870-1916) and can be compressed like this: The prime objective was the struggle for workers victory. However, this victory could not be achieved without a struggle for national independence, since socialism could not be built in Ireland without a total break from Britain. Home Rule for all Ireland would melt away the difference between Protestant and a Catholic, since Irish people constituted one unitary nation, and the unionist self consciousness was fabricated by the oppressive British and was therefore false. The unity of the Irish working class must be maintained with all costs, since the only thing capable of destroying the harmonious future was the partitioning of Ireland. The partition would keep alive the national question on the expense of the class question.
The partition would therefore mean a ‘carnival of reaction in both North and South’. (Connolly 1987 (1910))

In the politicization process of the academia the People’s Democracy (PD) movement was important and interesting, since it included both the traditional nationalist Marxist writers like Michael Farrell and new revisionist, or red unionist, writers like Paul Bew. People’s Democracy was founded in 1968 by the students of the Queen’s University of Belfast and its main “ideologist” was Farrell, who later became a straightforward Marxist IRA supporter, while Paul Bew moved into another direction, becoming a professor of politics at Queen’s University of Belfast and an informal adviser of David Trimble, a leader of the main unionist party the UUP (Richards, 2004). Interpreting the PD pamphlet *The Struggle in the North* (1972), by Farrell, the argument of the movement is in line with the traditional Marxist interpretation, seeing the oppressive actions (gerrymandering or inequality in terms of employment or housing) of the unionist state straightforwardly as actions of the oligarchic state to divide the working class, in order to prevent its unification (and slide towards Irish nationalism) and to purge potential traitors (Catholic nationalists) from the Orange state. In People’s Democracy’s pamphlet Connollyte conceptualization of Northern Ireland, where the unity of the working class is prevented by the oppression of the capitalist oligarchs, is used to legitimize the nationalist politics challenging the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state, and the unity of the working class is taken as a face value, with the implication of the fabricated nature of the unionist political consciousness.

The backbone of the nationalist Marxist interpretation of the conflict was the claim that the conflict was between the colonial oppressor (Britain) and the progressive, unitary working class of Ireland. The actions of Britain throughout history were explained by the British state following a divide and rule strategy, which explained the use of the unionist people as agents of oppression and domination. The explanation rested on the ‘one island, one nation’ thesis of the traditional nationalism. This was questioned by a new type of red variant of unionism British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO), which was hugely influential in Northern Ireland, but virtually unknown anywhere else. BICO came to the conclusion that economic development had produced two nations in Ireland, with separate identities and aspirations and the malign intentions of the British state had nothing to do with that development. (BICO 1971, 1972). The ‘two nations’ theory itself was familiar from the unionist rhetoric of the 19th century, but the new way in which it was conceptualized, using the framework of Marxism, and contrasting economic development north and south, in contrast to argument on race, character, work ethics and origin, was a new type of unionist.
defence. Without the reformulation of the unionist case, the argument of the difference between the two nations had rested on a myth of racial superiority, leading the Irish left had unitarily supporting nationalism, which was seen a political idea far more progressive than unionism. Therefore the inversion of the ‘one nation’ thesis on the grounds of Marxist political theory was a huge coup for the unionist camp. (Whyte 1980, 34-36)

If the BICO publications did not necessarily stand the scrutiny from an academic standpoint, this was corrected with the publication of Peter Gibbon’s *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: The Formation of Popular Protestant Politics and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (1975). Gibbon’s work is often described as the first Marxist analysis of the development of Unionism, since it is more systematic and relies more on Marxist theory and concepts derived from that theory than the earlier Connolly tradition. Gibbon asks why unionism developed into a regional and sectarian ideology and why did it concentrate and condense into a political mass movement particularly in Ulster? Methodologically Gibbon conducts his study by using the concept of political economy and sub-concepts derived from it. Gibbon argues the development of two political economies by pointing to multiple dualisms is Irish society on the religious, political, economical or social grounds. He is pointing out, that all these dualisms overlap and correlate with the division of the mode of production between north and south, which produced two types of economical and political systems on one island. The internal division of unionism, of which Gibbon was one of the firsts to point out, can be explained by using the same methodology. (Gibbon, 1975)

Red unionist interpretation by Gibbon provoked criticism from the traditional nationalist strand of unionism, criticizing Gibbon of misusing Marxist theory, and grounding his explanation of the development of the two nations on the fabricated differences of socio-economic relations (Smyth 1980). The relation to Britain, which Gibbon saw as contingent, was also questioned on the more traditional Marxist grounds, and argued to be a planned colonialist intervention. These arguments also repeated the claim that unionism is a product of the British oppressor (ibid.). Gibbon’s view of the unionist movement as a diverse product of different interests of its followers was argued false, by repeating the traditional nationalist claim, which saw unionism as a unitary movement steered by the interests of the capitalists (Farrell 1980, 17).

Bew, Gibbon and Patterson continued the red unionist revision of Irish nationalist Marxism in their *The State in Northern Ireland 1921-1972: Political Forces and Social Classes* (1979), which concentrated on the argument of the internal division of unionism, thus at the same time explaining
the evolution of the movement stemming from the pro-imperialist and anti-nationalist politics. The authors claim, that by failing to acknowledge the diversity and depth of the unionist thought, the Irish Marxists lost their momentum of uniting the Irish working class under the same banner. This mistake was largely the fault of James Connolly and the other Irish Marxists. With this argument the inversion was complete: The Irish nationalist Marxist argument blaming unionists for the partition, and the division of the working class, turned the other way round: Now the ones to blame were the nationalists who failed to see unionism in its true character and caused the division of the pan-Irish working class. The weakness of the nationalist argument describing unionists as marionettes, given privileged position in the fabricated state of Northern Ireland only to buy their loyalty for the oppressive purposes of Britain (e.g. Farrell 1980, 81) was repealed by giving logic and reason for the unionist existence, and, most importantly, this was done by using the same lexicon of Marxism than the nationalist counterpart. In a ‘sequel’ of their work mentioned above *The British State & the Ulster Crisis* (1985) Bew and Patterson argue further that the nationalist claim of the irreformable nature of Northern Ireland is false, on the grounds that this reform has never been tried, partly because of the inconsistent (and therefore un-imperialist) strategies of the British state. In their argument they neatly counter the nationalist claim of ‘failed political entity’ and return the ball to the British with the request for a more consistent policy.

3. Politicking with political theory

Robert McCartney

When the centre of gravity for the red, or academic, unionism in the 1970’s was the revision of the Marxist nationalist understanding of the Northern Ireland, from the mid 1980’s to present it can be said to have been a certain kind of search for an ideology. I use the word ideology here in a sense that the concept works as a veil to legitimise and justify the politics of Northern Ireland unionism, and indeed the whole existence of unionism. Ideology is used as a concept to create logic, reason and legitimacy for the political action carried out in the name of it. Central to this ideology construction, or speech acts creating a dichotomy favourable to unionism, has been the political thought of British classical liberalism, which has been moulded by the academic unionists to be an intellectual defence of unionism. One of the first persons to use this rhetoric was not actually an academic, but a Belfast solicitor Robert McCartney QC, who later on established his own party, the United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP) and has been subsequently elected to the Westminster parliament on numerous accounts. But as his argument building and rhetoric is similar to the
subsequent academic politicking and he is one of the firsts to conceptualize the unionist argument grounding on British liberalism he cannot be bypassed.

The backbone of McCartney’s argument uses the conceptualisation of freedom into two different aspects; positive and negative. McCartney constructs his rhetoric on the definitions of those aspects by Isaiah Berlin:

"The negative sense, is involved in the answer to the question ‘What is the are within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be without interference by other persons?’ … The positive sense is involved in the answer to the question ‘What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?’ (Berlin 2002, 169)

McCartney argues, that the Republic of Ireland has been build on the positive aspect of freedom, which is linked to totalitarianism and anti-liberalism, whereas United Kingdom, and therefore Northern Ireland, builds on the aspect of negative freedom, and is therefore more concerned on the individual liberties and inclusiveness, whereas the Republic represents a “political imperative hostile to pluralism” with its national ethos being profoundly exclusivist. The spearhead of McCartney’s attack on the ethos of the Irish Republic is on the co-dependence between the state and the church and the impossibility of an individual not sharing that ethos, to be a part of that polity. Typically for unionist writers McCartney does not really discuss the role of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and explains the historic inequality uphold by the unionist regime as an act of “defending freedom by denying freedom”. The rhetoric of McCartney building on the one hand to the “hostile to pluralism” nature of the Republic and on the other hand to the inclusive and liberal ethos of United Kingdom goes like this:

No man has such complete vision and knowledge that he can dictate the form of another man’s religion… Secondly, each individual is a moral being responsible before God and this presupposes freedom… Thirdly, no compulsion that is contrary to the will of the individual can secure more than an outward conformity. (McCartney 1985, 22-24)

By accusing the Republic, Irish nationalism and the Roman Catholic Church he is at the same time liberating the unionist ethos from these since and he then goes on to enclose this ethos with the positive notion of British liberalism creating a veil of ideology securing the continuity of unionist politics. (McCartney 1985)
Liberal academic unionism

The open politicization of the academia started in the aftermath of McCartney and the integrationist Campaign for Equal Citizenship-movement, which attracted many academic members from the two universities of Northern Ireland. In contrast to 1970’s when scholars were trying to distance politics, power and science from each other, the scholarly debate of the 1990’s was openly political and started with the seminal book *Under Siege* (1989) by a unionist political scientist Arthur Aughey. In the opening Aughey defined his mission:

> Events can never speak for themselves. Events must be judged, assessed and interpreted, and it is absurd to believe that they can have any status apart from the effort of that intellect.

> ...  

> This book makes no claim to allow events to speak for themselves. Nor does it make any pretence to be impartial. It is designed to provoke a new debate about the state in Northern Ireland. It is an attempt to address the experiences of a particular phase of Ulster politics...from a particular perspective on the Union. (Aughey 1989, vii)

Aughey's mission in *Under Siege* is to clarify the unionist character, which has been misinterpreted in a negative light, thus giving the upper hand in argument to the Irish nationalism. Aughey calls for the clarification of the unionist message stemming from the same foundation, than in the case of McCartney, the British liberalism. The clarification of the unionist ‘character’ is done according to Aughey by a more active agenda setting, without falling back to tactics of reactionary rhetoric inside the nationalist discourse. The key concepts to use in order to prevail in the conflict of thoughts against nationalism would be liberty and citizenship, which would give unionist rhetoric the lexicon it needs to prevail. Later Aughey calls for unionism a sense of itself as a larger political idea, which it needs in the forthcoming “intellectual war” (Aughey 1995a, 12, 14). (Aughey 1989)

The problem with separating the ethos of unionism and the ethos of nationalism and pointing out to the exclusivist and hostile nature of the nationalist ethos is difficult, especially when we take into consideration the notion of self determination, crucial to the unionist political thought, if such can be isolated from the political rhetoric of unionism. The unionist notion of self determination is very strong, so strong than to call the nationalist claim of the Irish republic exclusivist would be difficult. In order to solve this problem Aughey explains the self determination via the conceptualization of the United Kingdom. Since the United Kingdom is a Union constituting no single nation, the loyalty of the people is not to any nation or to state, and the loyalty of the unionist people, as well as the
loyalty of all the people in the UK has always been on the idea of the union as a “willing coalition of citizens united…by recognition of the authority of the union”. Therefore the will for self determination of the unionist people is not a will directed against any other will in a sense that the unionist will would seek superiority over Irish nationalist or any other. Irish nationalism on the other hand is a will seeking superiority in the island of Ireland over any other will. In the unionist lexicon the relevant concept derived from the will of self determination and loyalty is citizenship, not nation, like in the Irish nationalism. Aughey sees the situation as follows: Inside Northern Ireland there are two political factions struggling over power. One of them is inclusive, building its politics on the principles of British liberalism and the other one is exclusive nationalist, which wishes to act out its superior ethos on the expense of the other faction. In order to preserve its ethos, both politically and culturally since in the case of unionism these seem inseparable unionism must act in order to prevent the exclusive nationalism from gaining power. When exercising this power the unionist politics must work in a way to separate the nationalist cultural identities from each other and allow the manifestation of the cultural identity, while encouraging the political identity to wither away. (Aughey 1995b, 11-12)

Case: Politicking with Fukuyama

Now, I am taking a closer textual look into one of the academic interventions in practise. In the spring of 1998 the Northern Ireland peace talks were in their final stage, soon to be culminating in the Good Friday Agreement. During the heated debate Arthur Aughey published an article in the Irish times titled *Fukuyama and the Irish Question*. In the article Aughey analyses the peace talks and the roles of the negotiating parties; the British and Irish governments, the unionists and the nationalists by using as his conceptual tool the book *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama. Especially building on the utilization of the concept *thymos* Aughey rationalizes an outcome favourable to unionism.

*Thymos*, is a concept originating from Plato and meaning spiritedness, a desire for recognition. Aughey argues that in the centre of the Northern Ireland conflict are the two aspects of *thymos*; *isothymia*, which is a desire of one’s equality and *megalothymia*, which is a desire for recognition of one’s superiority. Aughey does not explicate, in which way the unionist or nationalist standpoints traditionally manifest their *megalothymotic* nature. Is the *megalothymos* of nationalism the desire for recognition of the superiority of the Irish race, and is the *megalothymos* of unionist the desire for
the superiority of the unionist character, since the unionists obviously do not constitute a nation, even in the UK perspective? This is never outspoken but at least this implication can be read in the text. In every case the purpose of the negotiations therefore is to transfer both manifestations of *megalothymia* into common recognition of *isothymia*, or in the language of the peace process though the concept of *parity of esteem*. This is the task of the negotiation teams and the two governments, of whose position Aughey sees as “privileged”, since they are not wholly implicated in the passions of Northern Ireland, and are in the position to resist the destructive claim of simple unionism and simple nationalism (in their *megalothymotic* forms). The talks itself are, according to Aughey, about reckoning the impossibility of winning. Since this is, again, not explicated we are not able to say what is the winning situation for each of the parties involved? Again we can make the assumption, that winning situation for the Irish nationalism would be united Ireland, because assuming this to be just the recognition of the cultural tradition of Irishness, and denying it as impossible would be absurd. But what is the impossible winning situation for unionism, full integration? By not stating the premises of his logic Aughey is able to construct a quasi-logical argument, where discarding the nationalist claim is made to look fair, or inevitable, while the unionist are not losing any substantial, or constitutional grounds. The act of the union still remains. (Aughey 1998; Fukuyama 1992)

The end product from these premises, the metamorphosis of two *megalothymias* into two jointly accepted *isothymias* is found when both of the parties accept a distinction to be made between symbol and substance and deal is to be made based on these grounds in such a way that both parties a ready to accept certain amount of distasteful symbolism in order to secure the substantial gains they need. In practice: Unionists would be willing to accept the symbolism of cross-border cooperation, if they are able to secure the substance of Northern Irelands place within the United Kingdom. Nationalists on the other hand would have to swallow the symbolism of Northern Ireland in order to secure the substance of parity of esteem for their own tradition. For Aughey, this would mean an ‘end of history’ in a way that it would end the pattern of mutual denial in Northern Ireland and would be, quoting Fukuyama, “a supremely rational act”. This would also open the anti-political element of the politics of Northern Ireland, which has led both of the sides involved to sough something, which they have at the same time believed the other side is incapable of giving.

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2 From the evolution of the concept see Thompson 2001
There is nevertheless nothing anti-political in Aughey’s article. What Aughey does is, that he separates the wish for a political recognition from a wish to a cultural recognition and then grants unionists the political recognition they are asking for, while the Irish nationalists and republicans are given their cultural recognition, while the political aspect of recognition is denied. In short the solution Aughey is presenting does not constitute a situation where the megalothymotic elements of both unionism and nationalism would be satisfied, but instead a situation where the unionist wish for the constitutional status quo would gain the recognition, on the expense of the nationalist transforming their wish for a political recognition to a cultural one. In Aughey’s rhetoric the logic seems to make sense. By giving something, both of the parties stand to win considerable gains. But the political aspect of the text lies in the definition of the core substances of unionist or nationalist politics. By defining these substances on different grounds, Aughey is able to sustain the logic of the argument, while at the same time substantiating the nationalist claim for political recognition with the claim for cultural recognition.

Concept of the Political

The spearhead of the academic unionist conceptualization of the Irish question is the claim that the island of Ireland consists of two different polities, the Irish republic and Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the United Kingdom. The unionist understanding of the nationalist thought is on the other hand that the island consists of one entity, out of which Northern Ireland, or the six counties, has been arbitrarily separated. Out of this logic comes the understanding, that granting an equal recognition to the nationalist political ethos in Northern Ireland would be impossible. According to Aughey the key concept in the unionist lexicon should be citizenship, since it is the linchpin of the unionist political though concerned with the integrity of the state. Citizenship rhetoric should therefore form a counter force to the nationalist discourse, building on the right for the nationalist self determination. For unionists, only a polity based on citizenship could guarantee the liberalist freedom of public and private life that the parity of esteem, in the sense of equality of the nationalist and unionist traditions, would fail to secure. (Aughey 1995a, 18) With this we turn to the understanding of the political of the academic unionist rhetoric. How are the concept of the political and politics understood, and what is the model of the political for Northern Ireland that liberal, or academic unionism was offering?
The political philosophy of the academic unionists is fixated on the concept of the union, which as the only possible end product of reasoning makes their rhetoric in some sense determinist and inflexible. The idea of the union rests on the thought that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland cannot be altered, and the unionist politics should concentrate its vigour in preventing this. Therefore, any significant evolution in the polity of Northern Ireland is out of the question, at least as far as it is considered to present a threat to the constitutional status quo. In terms of negotiation process in Northern Ireland the input of the academic unionists have been clear; it has been a continuum of presenting arguments for a solution within the constitutional framework of unionism. Therefore the texts predating the Belfast Agreement of 1998, like the Frameworks Document (1995), or the Downing Street Declaration (1993), with their pan-Irish rhetoric was distressful for unionism. It was evident that the language of the peace process was moving into a direction where certain recognition for the tradition of Irish nationalism was to be granted, and not only in its cultural formation. The danger facing unionism therefore was, that recognition going to alter the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The defence was taken from the heritage of British liberalism and the claim that only unionism based on the inclusive character of that liberalism could guarantee the pluralist character of the Northern Ireland state with the expressions of both unionism and nationalism inside that same polity. The impossibility of the expression of the political nationalism was something, which was not addressed. For some the defence of unionism based on these grounds was not enough, and therefore the academic unionism divided, with a new strand of civic unionism evolving to search for a more consensus oriented approach where neither the end product of traditional unionism or traditional nationalism would prevail, but something completely different would be born.

Whatever the level of modernisation in Aughey’s argument is, the core principal combining the unionist argument, new and old is that the end product of the Union must prevail. Norman Porter on the other hand with his book *Rethinking Unionism* (1996) differs with his concept of “civic” unionism in contrast to cultural or liberal unionisms, by not taking the end product for granted. Still this does not prevent him calling his construction as a “civic unionism”. This “shocking inversion” as Porter calls his construction for new political thought for unionism and Northern Ireland, tries to take a more holistic view of Northern Ireland and find a kind of “unionism”, which could combine all the people of Northern Ireland into one polity. This is done by locating civic unionism and the idea of the union in what Porter refers as a “Northern Irish way of life”, depicting Northern Ireland
as a ‘place apart’ and therefore not completely British or Irish but a ‘cultural corridor’ between them. Direct implication of this thought is a parochial view of independent Northern Ireland apart from UK or the Republic, but Porter denies the of independence by introducing ‘difference through recognition’ thinking in relation to Northern Ireland both internally and externally. In terms of ‘cultural corridor’ Porter seems to take the cultural impulses and equate them with political sovereignty, so in a sense Porter is not acknowledging the possibility of apolitical Irishness which would be attached to a geographical place, without any connotations to the political Irishness. (Porter 1996)

McCartney and Aughey are building their defence of unionism on British liberalism, with citizenship as their key concept in contrast to the reductionism of Irish nationalism. This is crystallized in the quote “The identity of unionism has little to do with the idea of the nation and everything to do with the idea of the state” (Aughey 1989, 18). Therefore, political for Aughey is attached to the matters concerning the state and limited to an activity carried out by the citizens of that state. The political in the civil society is not recognized, which is peculiar especially when we take into consideration how widely the state penetrates the civil society in Northern Ireland (O’Dowd 1998, 86). Contrary to Aughey, Porter is advocating the republican tradition of political thought, and uses it for his argument of the ‘thick’ concept of citizenship. Porter criticises the Aughey/McCartney line of reasoning which builds the argument on the triumph of citizenship over the narrow concept of identity in Irish nationalism. Porter’s critique takes criticises Aughey for using the concept of citizenship too narrowly, and concentrating only on making citizenship as inclusive and accessible as possible, while totally failing to question the content and usability of citizenship in politics. The concept of citizenship is seen by Aughey as totally detached from culture, only as a political identity based on liberalism. Porter argues that if this would be the case, all modern societies based on the notion of citizenship would live in the constant threat of disintegration and atrophy. Therefore, goes the reasoning of Porter, liberalism cannot and does not constitute the basis of citizenship of the Northern Ireland unionists, it may constitute their political identities, but it as such is not enough without the substantive cultural identities, which together form the basis for a United Kingdom identity shared by unionists. Porter and Aughey therefore seem to agree that distinction is necessary between citizenship and substantive identities, but whereas Aughey completely ignores the presence of substantive identity in relation to citizenship,

3 A concept borrowed from a literary critic Edna Longley.
Porter is willing to think the two together and believes it can be done without contradiction. (Porter 1996, 159-161)

Another point of critique Porter is making is on the “depth” of the citizenship in the philosophy of Aughey/McCartney. Porter argues that their concept of citizenship is purely procedural and very thin, producing no cohesion or linking the citizens of the polity to its institutions and public life. The concept of citizenship for Aughey sees citizens sharing a cosmopolitan, universal identity, which he sees as a sufficient base for a polity. Porter on the contrary is seeking balance between substantive and political identities to produce an active, substance producing citizens. What is missing for Porter in the political community of the liberal unionist thought is political activity, and with the loss of activity the polity described by Aughey loses its vitality. Instead of a shallow notion of citizenship Porter is claiming for a participatory citizenship, which would allow dialogical interaction between citizens and institutions, with a continuous circle of strengthening citizenship. To put it short, for Porter politics is an activity, for Aughey politics are more procedural and his stance towards politics is more cautious. (Porter 1996, 162-164)

The basic difference between the two strands of academic unionism is in their different understanding of politics and freedom or liberty. Porter constructs his model of the “cultural corridor” as a polity of Northern Ireland on the basis of Habermasian consensus oriented discursive politics. Porter emphasises thick citizenship and a polity where all the conflicts and differences between the two traditions would be accommodated by dialogical argumentation, which Porter sees as the only workable solution for Northern Ireland, within its constitutional position as a part of the UK. Porter believes that the institutions providing more than mere procedural participation for citizens are necessary in creating an atmosphere, encouraging dialogical argumentation leading to the victory of the most rational and best of arguments. Porter seems to make great assumptions. First, for this consensus oriented polity to be possible we must assume that the rationality of the citizens in Northern Ireland really does exist in unified way.

Porter’s solution is basically a ‘top down’ model in terms that it is building on heavy conceptualization, and on the need to create institutions to evoke citizen participation. On the other hand Porter is not dictating the outcome of the polity, but as a unionist writer encourages unionist politics to evolve in order to cope in the new situation. Therefore the similarity between Porter, Aughey and the rest of the academic strand of unionism is a consensus on the political situation. Unionism is seen to be in crisis and in the need for a rethinking and a new more rational and
effective thinking and rhetoric. The difference between Porter and Aughey is that when Porter sees the best chance for unionism in the creation of a discursive polity, where unionism by presenting a best argument would prevail, Aughey sees the future in developing the unionist argument and rhetoric in order to secure a lasting constitutional settlement. Whereas Porter sees changing the institution and the political structures as the only chance in getting a long term solution satisfying unionism, Aughey wants to concentrate politics on cementing the constitutional status and to accommodate the cultural identity of Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland in such a way that the political identity could eventually wither away. If the ideal civil society of Northern Ireland for Porter can be called Habermasian, then the strategy of Aughey/McCartney is to be seen more power oriented, perhaps following the footsteps of Nietzsche, Foucault or Carl Schmitt, of which the latter is also implicated later by Aughey himself (Aughey 1999). (Flyjberg 1998)

4. Conclusion: Academic Unionism and the Belfast Agreement

The defence for Northern Ireland unionism constructed by the unionist academics from the late 1980’s aimed to correct some of the misinterpretation on unionism and the bad press it had received during the decades of the Northern Ireland troubles. This was done by clarifying the concept and character of unionism and “selling” it better to constituencies, not only in Northern Ireland, but in the context of the British Isles as a whole, and indeed worldwide. The message of academic unionists was that unionism is a secular political conscience building on a positive liberal philosophy based on the inclusive and progressive notion of British citizenship. Unionism declared itself to be a political identity open to everyone, nor excluding the Irish nationalists, as long as their manifestation of Irishness remained only cultural. The future polity of Northern Ireland was to be constructed on that philosophy. (O’ Dowd 1998, 77-80)

It is very difficult, or impossible, to find out if the academic unionism has had nay impact in the real politics of Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, I will conclude by a reading of the 1998 Belfast Agreement (a.k.a The Good Friday Agreement) with the purpose of reflecting the objectives of academic unionism with the actual product of the negotiation process. In the negotiations leading to the Agreement Robert McCartney of the UKUP boycotted the negotiations, while another politician sometimes attached close to the academic, or “new” unionist movement David Trimble (O’Dowd 1998, 70) was the leader of the largest unionist party the UUP. So, while not active on the party political field, can the objectives of the academic unionists be found fulfilled in the text of the
Belfast Agreement? Imperative in this sense is the section two of the Agreement defining the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

1. The participants endorse the commitment made by the British and Irish Governments that, in a new British-Irish Agreement replacing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, they will:

(i) recognise the legitimacy of whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland with regard to its status, whether they prefer to continue to support the Union with Great Britain or a sovereign united Ireland;

(ii) recognise that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland;

(iii) acknowledge that while a substantial section of the people in Northern Ireland share the legitimate wish of a majority of the people of the island of Ireland for a united Ireland, the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, freely exercised and legitimate, is to maintain the Union and, accordingly, that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom reflects and relies upon that wish; and that it would be wrong to make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people;

(iv) affirm that if, in the future, the people of the island of Ireland exercise their right of self-determination on the basis set out in sections (i) and (ii) above to bring about a united Ireland, it will be a binding obligation on both Governments to introduce and support in their respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish;

(v) affirm that whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction there shall be exercised with rigorous impartiality on behalf of all the people in the diversity of their identities and traditions and shall be founded on the principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos, and aspirations of both communities;
(vi) recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland.

2. The participants also note that the two Governments have accordingly undertaken in the context of this comprehensive political agreement, to propose and support changes in, respectively, the Constitution of Ireland and in British legislation relating to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. (http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm)

The constitutional section of the Agreement clearly states the territory of Northern Ireland as the natural polity of the people in Northern Ireland and the citizens of that polity as the actors in it. The right of the people of Northern Ireland is nevertheless to politically identify themselves as British, Irish or both, which in some way blurs the definition of Northern Ireland polity as primary. Most importantly for unionists, academic or not, the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland polity as it stands now is granted in the section iii. Therefore the claimed nationalist argument of the illegitimate and failed political entity of Northern Ireland is not supported in the text of the Agreement. The legitimate wish of the majority of the Northern Ireland polity has chose to remain in the United Kingdom and that wish is legitimized in the Agreement. Therefore, although the agreed substantial differences upon the status of the Northern Ireland state the political aspiration of unionism is given what it wanted. Reflecting upon the article by Arthur Aughey analysed earlier, this is the substantial gain unionism needed to secure, in order to prevail. But the wish of the unionists, that the aspiration of the political aspect of Irishness, in the form of Irish nationalism, should not be granted its wish for legitimate manifestation is not fulfilled, The Belfast Agreement supports the full aspiration of the political identities of unionism and nationalism. The problem following from this for the unionists is that they have to accept the existence of the nationalist anti-Northern Ireland state ethos in the polity of Northern Ireland. The problems following from the legitimate manifestation of political ethos, seeking the abolition of the same state it is functioning in, are not addressed.

In constitutional terms the Agreement was a good result for the academic unionist, since it gave unionism the substantial recognition it needed, as cementing the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. Another question is, whether the parity of esteem for the nationalist and unionist political aspirations, given by the Agreement, is only one of those symbolic concessions unionism was willing to make. If asked from an academic unionist, probably not. Completely another question is
whether the form of consociationalism agreed upon in the Agreement is functional. From the point of view of the politics understood in the way of the academic unionist it is not. The problem is related to the political sovereignty needed for the formation of the polity. In the political philosophy of the academic unionism the sovereignty forming the polity needs to have the obedience of its citizens, which have to be attached to it as willing actors inside that polity. The aspiration of the political Irishness invalidates the sovereignty of the polity and creates a situation where politics in its consociationalist as in any other form, becomes impossible. Also from the perspective of literature on consociationalism the application of it in Northern Ireland is questionable (e.g. Reynolds, 1999).
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Academic support services, offered at UNIST help students achieve their academic goals. UNIST runs highly specialized curriculums through various training classes, related specialties, and high tech educational facilities to cultivate global talents. Library, Language Education Center (LEC), UNIST International Center, Center for Teaching and Learning, Leadership Center. What are unionists? Here are some definitions. Noun. plural of unionist. Find more words! Reconciliation, as Porter sees it, puts republicans and unionists centre stage. Laudable too are the recent measures by republicans aimed at reassuring unionists that the war really is over. You whip up hatred against minorities, asylum seekers, working people, and trade unionists like me. Large numbers of riot police were deployed against the small demonstration and confiscated banners and posters being carried by the unionists. And once again we have a community assembly of unionists, clergy and civil rights activists taking a stand on high moral ground. See Also. What is the opposite of unionists? Liberal-Unionist. From Academic Kids. Liberal-Unionists were supporters of the Liberal Party of Canada who, as a result of the Conscription Crisis of 1917 rejected Sir Wilfrid Laurier's leadership and supported the coalition Unionist government of Sir Robert Borden. Much of the Ontario Liberal Party declared themselves to be Liberal-Unionists, including provincial party leader Newton Wesley Rowell, who joined Borden's Cabinet, and a variety of Liberal MPs. In the 1917 election, many Liberals ran as Liberal-Unionists or Unionists against the Laurier Liberals. After the war, most Liber