

Northern Ireland and the Political Economy of Peace

Neo-Liberalism and the end of the Troubles

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ABSTRACT

Since the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the conflict has been mainly analytically understood in terms of ethno-nationalism and competing identities. However, as this thesis argues, economics have played a crucial role in the instances of violence in Ireland, and after partition, in Northern Ireland. With every development of the economy, from rural, to industrial and to social democratic, the complexity and intensity of violence shifted, but never disappeared. The current shift, the transformation to neo-liberalism, is the only conjuncture that has not adhered to this pattern.

This thesis argues that the resolution to the long-standing conflict in Northern Ireland is primarily caused by the new material conditions, generated by the neo-liberal globalisation of that economy. The thesis re-examines the theoretical debates on the conflict through this globalisation framework to reveal how the Catholic community and its political representatives have embraced the new material discourse and its form of governance, therein making the previous debates on the intractability of the Northern Ireland conflict a product of a historic moment, where economics, civil rights and state power were discriminatory barriers to the full integration of the Catholic population. The changed conditions are not reducible to mere economic global forces but these were essential to breaking down the historic impasse.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to David Cannon and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Signed

David Cannon

Date:

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This thesis has changed character several times since it was first conceived. Sometimes, as a result of life's unpredictability, it was placed on the back-burner. It was an undertaking that sometimes tested my emotional and intellectual capabilities and occasionally, my sense of humour. Nevertheless, while I look forward to its completion, it is the most significant single endeavour I have undertaken so far. Many people deserve gratitude for their assistance over the years in helping to bring this about, as I could not have done it without them.

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If there is a single person who contributed the most to the completion of this thesis, it is Greg McCarthy. As my principle supervisor, Greg was attentive and timely with all reviews and feedback. I cannot recall waiting long for his input in order to keep moving forward. However, Greg's contribution extended far beyond the professionalism with which he dealt with me on a weekly basis. He struck, without fail, an extraordinary balance between active encouragement and gentle consideration during what was an intense and extended period of upheaval and loss. Therefore, the contribution Greg made to my thesis was unique and went far beyond his professional obligations; without his understanding, it may have taken many more years to complete, or not have come to completion at all.

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