

Andrew Sanders, *The Long Peace Process: The United States of America and Northern Ireland, 1960-2008* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019)

Margaret M. Scull, *The Catholic Church and the Northern Ireland Troubles, 1968-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)

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In René Girard's impressively titled *Des choses caches depuis la foundation du monde* (Things hidden since the foundation of the world), he sets forth his famous theory on social relations. This combines his contingent ideas of mimesis, conflict, the surrogate victim and violence, an explanatory model applied to many international conflict situations, including Northern Ireland. Whilst the dynamics of making war have had much coverage in relation to that conflict over the years, the mechanics of peace-making have received rather less attention. These two single-authored works therefore, essentially on very different aspects of repeated attempts at conflict resolution, are a welcome addition to a narrow canon.

The Long Peace Process by Andrew Sanders is however, somewhat of a misnomer as a title given that it suggests the peace process in Northern Ireland pre-dated the actual conflict. Of course, had this been framed as an argument more broadly about the resolution of Anglo-Irish constitutional politics on a longer timeline within which the conflict known as the 'Troubles' was merely the latest phase then the title may have been justified. However, if there is a *longue durée* approach here, it is not clearly signalled, and neither is there a sustained analytical approach. The study nevertheless is a unique, engaging and comprehensive narrative account of the United States' shifting and complex relationship with Northern Ireland during the most critical period in the region's history. It draws on a wide range of archival research and charts a different path from two recent path-breaking studies by Alan MacLeod focusing on the early 1970s and James Coopers' 2017 work, *The Politics of Diplomacy: US Presidents and the Northern Ireland Conflict, 1967-1998*.

Sanders' book is divided into seven chronological chapters spanning the 1960s through to the time of the Obama presidency, so its scope is larger than any previous publications though the later chapters, perhaps predictably given the issues around the availability of primary source material, are much thinner. Of specific interest to some readers will be the genealogy of Irish nationalist solidarity work by figures such as John Kerry and Joe Biden in particular, given the latter's inclusion in the Democratic Party contest and potential forthcoming race for the presidency. Both featured prominently at times as members of the influential Ad Hoc Congressional Committee on Irish Affairs established in 1977, which appears in the book as a rival to the more well-known Congressional Friends of Ireland. That group was set up in 1981 by House Speaker Tip O'Neill and Senator Edward Kennedy who with another two leading Irish-Americans, Hugh Carey and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (famously dubbed the 'Four Horsemen'), had been engaged with trying to resolve the Northern Irish conflict from its inception. Much has already been written about this group however, especially given the Kennedy connection, to the neglect of the larger Ad Hoc Congressional Committee, who the Four Horsemen felt were often at best ambivalent about if not sympathetic to violent Irish republicanism. It is clear though that the Ad Hoc Committee represented a large swathe of

opinion on Ireland generally in spite of the occasionally more muscular rhetoric used by figures such as Mario Biaggi, and Sanders is to be commended for its centrality in much of the discussion. Ultimately neither it nor the Four Horsemen however, were able to produce the conditions which contributed to the eventual peace process. They were eclipsed by newer figures in the Irish-Americans for Clinton and later Americans for a New Irish Agenda group, who succeeded in welding together a broader coalition of politicians, businessmen and campaigners. Like Girard, their understanding of the Northern Ireland conflict as less innate and more relational, that it had a triangular structure, seemed to chime increasingly not only with the strategy known as Clintonian Triangulation but with the growing appreciation of the idea that peace initiatives had to recognise, in the memorable phrase, 'the totality of relationships'. Irish America became part of that and its subsequent role in the negotiations through the chairing of the talks that led to the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement in 1998 was a reflection of this.

There is surprisingly little detail in Sanders' book on the earlier Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, something which may be a reflection of the concentration for much of the work on the security rather than political questions. This also leads to a marginalisation in some respects of the role played by the moderate constitutional nationalist politician, John Hume. His influence on the Four Horsemen is certainly acknowledged but his central role in the eventual granting of a visa to Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams is absent, as is any discussion about Adams' purpose in visiting the US beyond fund-raising. This is all the more surprising in many ways given the credit which goes to the Irish diplomat, Seán Donlan, a consistent and vocal supporter of Hume as well as an acerbic critic of Adams. Donlan's close relationship with successive British governments and abiding friendship in particular with British Ambassador to the US, Peter Jay which Sanders covers well, helped also to cultivate Hume's political vision and standing among Irish-Americans. In other places there are some notable gaps, such as the decision to appoint Senator George Mitchell, rather than the leading lobbyist, Bruce Morrison as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland in 1994 not long after the paramilitary ceasefires. While Mitchell proved a very skilled and adept chair of the subsequent talks, there is no speculation from Sanders as to why Morrison, who was fancied for the position, did not in the end acquire it. Elsewhere, there is possibly too much credit given to later special envoys under George W. Bush, Richard Haas and Mitchell Reiss for taking 'tough' positions on paramilitary de-commissioning (pp. 264-7) when the process was affected by so many other factors. Finally, there is an obvious error in the labelling of Ulster Unionist politician Chris McGimpsey as a 'loyalist' alongside former loyalist paramilitaries (p. 237). In spite of these issues, Sanders' very readable book will no doubt become a useful text which fills a current need for this type of broader study.

Margaret M. Scull's book on the Catholic Church and the Troubles also ably presents an important study on a largely neglected subject: the role of religious bodies in a kind of unofficial diplomatic process that occasionally mirrors, if it does not quite compliment that normally assigned to high politics. Although like Sanders' work, this book is occasionally episodic in approach, it more readily engages with the political process at the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict and deals with the security situation in a more muted way. The focus therefore, is primarily on explaining the growth of the soft power of various figures in the Catholic Church whilst the relative influence of the Church as an institution was in decline.

Scull, a graduate of Boston University and King's College, London where the PhD on which this work is based, was completed in 2017, has produced what will probably become the seminal study on this topic, which covers the years from the outbreak of the Troubles through to the 1998 Agreement. Perhaps its most substantive parts are chapters three and four which deal with the 1976 to 1990 period, including the hunger strikes, during which the role of the Catholic Church came into prominence under the leadership of Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, seen as someone sympathetic to the cause if not the conduct of the IRA. The latter's death in 1990 led to the All-Ireland Primacy passing to Cardinal Cahal Daly, a much more trenchant critic of Irish republicanism in a time of withering support for political violence in nationalist communities. It was, however, Scull argues, the increasing inability of the hierarchy to impose its will on lower clergy, particularly individual priests, that laid the groundwork for much of the later peace endeavours aimed at creating a dialogue between nationalists and republicans.

A series of important oral history interviews with various representatives of the Catholic Church form an important part of the research for this work which is primarily driven by the otherwise limited diocesan archival material. Scull has augmented this with documents from the English and Welsh Catholic Churches (though strangely, not the arguably equally important Scottish Catholic Church), and a wide range of British and Irish government papers. There are frequent references (p. 117-18, pp. 136-137 & pp. 190-1), to the Scottish Catholic bishops as well as their English and Welsh colleagues but no real inclusion of the closest sister Catholic Church to Northern Ireland. An additional, though acknowledged, neglect in the work, is the perspective of important lay organisations, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Legion of Mary, who had a strong presence in most Catholic communities throughout the conflict. This lay Catholic perspective would have helped further counter-balance the tendency towards a top down approach though the use of the interviews does help minimise this to an extent.

Scull's book is not a study of those members of the Catholic clergy who became actively involved in republican violence and the controversies surrounding this relating to the Claudy bombing in 1972, arrests in England and Scotland in 1973, and the attempted extradition of Patrick Ryan to Britain from Belgium in 1988 receive only passing mention. In a sense this is justified by the wider perspective of the study as well as the extreme rarity of such cases which make them wholly unrepresentative, but they do also potentially reveal a great deal about the Catholic Church's response to the conflict in general. Instead, this is a study of newer insights and perspectives which tell us much about non-state actors and their ability to help as well as hinder political change whilst attempting to weather the increasingly stormy waters around clerical abuse allegations and declining social, political and cultural influence.