

Introduction

This thesis examines nationalism and the influences that sustain it. I have selected Northern Ireland and the Protestant nationalist movement for an examination of the relationship between a nationalist ideology and the principles and values of the institutions that support it. In this case, The Orange Order is one of the leading actors amongst many other Protestant associations and fraternities in supporting the Protestant nationalist ideal of keeping a political, legal, economical, religious and cultural *union* with Great Britain. Because of the fear that the Irish Republic will recover the north of Ireland, which is considered part of the Irish homeland, through political lobbying and with the paramilitary support of the Irish Republican Army, the Protestant community has maintained a state of resistance to avoid being part of the Republic.

In many ways resisting Irish re-unification has meant the creation and re-creation of a distinct identity different from the Irish. In Northern Ireland, the Northern Irish Protestants have constructed an identity based on a subtle link between religious identity, common ancestry and national identity. For this community, the appellation British is a given political fact considered part of their ethnic cultural background. For Northern Irish Protestants, being a Protestant is not only a personal-spiritual choice, but part of the cultural heritage bestowing British identity. Hence, religion and national identity merge into one national structure of identification. If Protestantism was the legacy of the British, religion is understood to be part of the British culture and hence part of the British identity.

However, this complex relationship is quite controversial since it rejects those citizens who do not meet the Protestant cultural and religious profile. The Northern Irish Protestant identity is exclusive in nature. Even Catholic citizens who accept British rule are segregated due to their Catholic origin. The narrowness of the kind of identity constructed by the Protestants in

Northern Ireland has been based in a Protestant nationalist movement that rejects any relation with the Irish including the Catholic religion. As a consequence religion stands as one of the most important markers of identity in Northern Ireland.

In the public sphere, the Protestants are represented by Unionist political parties that pursue policies that preserve the union with Britain in many ways, such as governmental autonomy without the intervention of Catholic or Irish third parties. Moreover, the Protestant identity and Unionist policies are backed by the support of Protestant cultural institutions like the Orange Order. Thus I argue that the nationalist Protestant movement in Northern Ireland is composed of convergent ideologies such as *Orangeism* whose purpose is that of keeping the union expressed in a strong religious-national identity and deference towards the British institutions: the Protestant religion and the Crown.

The *hypothesis* of my thesis is that the Orange Order illustrates one of the leading Protestant institutions in developing a sense of identity and common history amongst the Protestants. By providing a symbolic religious framework and ideological differentiation it holds certain leadership in maintaining group hostilities and segregation towards Catholics and Irish nationalists. Hence I propose that the Orange Order is an institution whose religious framework and values are reserved only to the Protestant community with the specific purpose of preserving it. To explain the structure between Protestant nationalism and the Orange Order I have divided this thesis in two complementary parts, totaling six chapters.

The first part of the thesis is designed to the understanding of nationalism, national identity, religion and conflict plus a selection of two approaches to the nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland. To achieve this goal I present a theoretical framework to clarify the concepts that relate to nationalism and religion in a neutral perspective. Chapter 1 defines nationalism, but

it also gives an explanation of what it is the state, the nation and what does the term ethnic represents to the nation. Finally, at the end of the chapter a brief typology of nationalism is provided to distinguish from the use of nationalism in its civic, ethnic and official form.

Chapter 2 focuses on religion in its pure form, but also on how religion relates to nationalism and conflict. Accordingly, one of the main purposes of this chapter is to explain the intertwining of religion and national identity and how different they are. As special feature, this chapter includes a brief description of how did Protestantism came into being a national symbol of paramount importance for the creation of Great Britain. In the last point of this chapter, the social functions of religion are explained according to Jonathan Fox's theory of *Ethnoreligious Conflict*. How these functions contribute to conflict and what attributes of religion are prone to be politicized are among the questions that I try to elucidate.

Chapter 3 includes two approaches that explain from different views the present conflict in Northern Ireland. *Consociationalism* or Government by Elite Cartel is a conflict resolution method oriented to accommodate two or more ethnic or national groups in conflict. This policy of accommodation suggests a shared government so minorities can alleviate among other things its equal rights demands. How this system works, how it has been applied to Northern Ireland and what implications does it have for the future of the conflict are the questions that are addressed in this part.

The second approach presented is the Model of Ethnic Democracy proposed by Sammy Smooha. This model explains a system of governance where a dominant national group keeps its supremacy by means of discrimination and group privileges but without being undemocratic. In Northern Ireland this system pervaded private and public life during 1921 and 1972. Regarding

this model, we explain how this was applied and how it affected the relationship between Catholics and Protestants until today.

The second part of this thesis is dedicated to the analysis of Northern Ireland and the Orange Order. In Chapter 4 I have decided to provide the historical background of the Irish conflict. Here I explain the origins of the Irish Republic and the Northern Irish province. My intention is to demonstrate that the “Irish Question” is neither a new nor a contemporary issue. From Colonial times until today the idea of Catholic subordination and Protestant supremacy is part of enduring disputes in Northern Ireland. Also in this chapter I go through the idea of Unionism, how it is associated with the union of Ireland to the United Kingdom, and how it is perceived by the Protestant population.

Included in this chapter there is a brief account of one of the most ferocious periods of nationalist violence in Northern Ireland called The Troubles (1968-1998). The strong feeling of loyalty and patriotism towards Great Britain has been a constant source of recurrent violence reflected in this period. Violent reactions in this stage are explained according to a theory on nationalist violence and how it nourishes the nationalist sentiments of both factions. At the end of the chapter I describe the current political structure of Northern Ireland and how it is ruled until these days under the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 comprehend the case study of this thesis where I introduce the Orange Order. In the former, a brief history of the Order is provided as well as the main ideological and political principles it abides. In the latter I intend to prove the hypothesis I previously presented. I propose that the Orange Order is a religious, cultural and political institution whose members are governed by a religious framework that provides rules and standards of behavior that can generate conflict. These rules include a restrictive behavior

towards the Catholic population as well as the condemnation of the Catholic Church as illegitimate. Furthermore I argue that the Unionist/Loyalist ideology of the Order institutionalize loyalty to the British Crown and the Preservation of Protestantism as the dominant traditional values in Northern Ireland.

As a conclusion I elaborate on a projection of the conflict according to the points and elements of the Protestant nationalist movement. I suggest that the sectarian attitudes of both Catholic and Protestants have only increased the divide reproducing it. As a reflect of this division the new pacifying initiatives of the British and Irish governments have only fired the fears of many Protestants who think that their rights will not be protected in the event of a Nationalist majority in the Assembly or in a United Ireland.

As a final note, I propose that the influence of the Orange Order is still important to sustaining a strong Protestant community in every county of Northern Ireland and is strong enough to influence the Protestant bargaining position in the peace process. However, it must be said that this member of the Northern Irish civil society has been neglected in the peace negotiations, and its cultural power should be addressed. The latest victory of the hard-line Democratic Unionist Party shows that the Protestant population still supports the ideas and political platforms of the Unionist/Loyalist Parties which are just in tandem with the Orange Order's main religious values and secular goals: the Protestant ascendancy in Northern Ireland.