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FROM PROTEST TO PRAGMATISM

The Unionist Government and North-South Relations from 1959-72

David McCann

From Protest to Pragmatism

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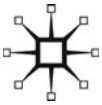

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To the memory of my late grandmother, Mary-Ann Fitzpatrick.

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Note on Terminology

The term 'cross-border' refers to the various co-operation initiatives conducted between the two governments whereas 'North-South relations' is meant to refer to wider political relations between the two states. Where the terms 'Unionist', 'Northern Ireland' and 'Stormont government' appear, they are used either as a reference to the variety of descriptions of that time, or to allow the author to use a range of different descriptions within the thesis. Similarly, the terms 'Southern' or 'Irish government' are meant as a direct reference to the governments headed by Seán Lemass (1959–66) and Jack Lynch (1966–1973).

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List of Abbreviations

AIFTA	Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTA	British Tourism Authority
CIE	Coras Iompair Éireann
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MP	Member of Parliament
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NIE	Northern Ireland Electricity
NILP	Northern Ireland Labour Party
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
RTE	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
TD	Teachta Dála
UCD	University College Dublin
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UTA	Ulster Transport Authority
UTV	Ulster Television
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

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Summary

Why are not just North-South relations but more particularly the Unionist government worthy of further examination? Until the late nineteen-nineties, it was impossible to conduct any proper analysis due to the lack of archival material available for scholars to examine. The work conducted by academics, such as Kennedy and Craig, has helped shed new light on the various aspects of how relations between the two Irish states evolved since partition to the outbreak of the Troubles. However, since this piece of work has been completed, new material has been released which can allow academics to conceptualise in a more informed way the rationale and motivations of key political actors as to why they sought an improved relationship and where it ultimately went wrong. In addition to this, with access now available to the state archives in Belfast, London and Dublin, an examination can be taken up to the introduction of Direct Rule in March 1972. All of this new material creates a powerful case for a re-examination of the North-South relations and the Unionist government's role in developing that relationship. This book aims to bridge the gap that exists within the current literature by focusing on a much more defined period of time and government to tell the story about why the drive to improve relations occurred, what initiatives came out of it and where it all went wrong. This is the story of what happened.

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Introduction

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What do we really know about the development of relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic during the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies? The key events like the O'Neill/Lemass summits in 1965 and the public declarations of constitutional integrity are well known, but little is ever recorded about the views and policy-making processes that took place within the Unionist government over this issue. Where examinations have been conducted on the Northern Ireland government during this period, the focus tends to be on the internal dynamics of Unionism, its relationship with the British government or its inability to broaden its base to include significant Catholic support for the Northern Ireland state. Yet, there is an interesting story to be told about how Unionism dealt with their counterparts in the Irish government during one of the most politically tumultuous decades in Irish history.

Where studies of Unionism have been conducted during this period, there is a tendency to make contextual references to the North-South relationship, but very few go into any in-depth analysis of just what policy positions were adopted and why. There is useful material from works such as Mulholland's Unionism in the O'Neill years and Patterson and Kaufmanns Unionism and Orangeism since 1945 on the internal dynamics that were ongoing within Unionism with disagreements over modernisation and overall policy direction of the government. The presidential style of leadership adopted by Terence O'Neill and the ensuing destabilisation that events like the summit with Seán Lemass caused is noted within the research. This book will add to the current level of literature by examining solely the relationship that the Unionist government had with their Irish counterparts and will analyse why relations improved and then ultimately declined again from the perspective of the Northern Ireland government.

The first important event of this story comes about with not a change in Belfast, but Dublin. The rise of Seán Lemass to the position of Taoiseach in June 1959 represented a departure from the old anti-partitionist rhetoric that had been commonplace in the Irish government since the partition of the island. A shift away from emphasising constitutional change to economic co-operation became the new mantra in Dublin. However, the Unionist government under Lord Brookeborough responded to Lemass' attempts to improve relations with intense suspicion, as Mulholland highlights that politics in the province was reduced to an almost exclusive focus on the border. The mistrust between the two governments was

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compounded by the Irish Republican Army's border campaign (1956–62).[1] The effect of the IRA campaign was to expose the feebleness of militant republicanism, whilst bolstering the confidence of the Unionist government which had successfully seen off the organisation. However, under Brookeborough, the cabinet followed a policy of non-co-operation with the Irish government, until it took tougher action against the IRA and removed its constitutional claim on Northern Ireland.

The continuing decline of Northern Ireland's staple industries, leading to rising unemployment, put real pressure on Brookeborough's cross-border co-operation policy. As Lemass began dismantling protectionism, pressure began emanating from Northern industrialists for a more pro-active approach in dealing with the Irish government. The inability of Brookeborough to deal with Northern Ireland's worsening economic position led to his resignation as Prime Minister in March 1963 and to his being succeeded by Terence O'Neill. In literature, O'Neill is generally regarded as being the most moderate of all the Unionist leaders in dealing with the Irish Republic.[2] Yet, as this book will argue, O'Neill did not depart from the approach established by his predecessor. During the first 22 months of O'Neill's administration, he persisted with the same policy of linking progress on cross-border co-operation to border security and constitutional recognition. The real driving force behind the attempt to change this policy came from within Unionism, the media and the British government.

When the new period of formal co-operation (1965–8) emerged in the aftermath of the O'Neill/Lemass summit of 1965, both Premiers sought from the outset to limit the scope and focus of cross-border co-operation. This approach of pursuing a narrow policy was illustrated in the communiqué that followed their summit, which placed an emphasis on what the two Premiers did not talk about.[3] The ministerial and official discussions led primarily by Brian Faulkner and Erskine Childers, that did the bulk of the detailed work on co-operation, over issues such as electricity and tourism, effectively operated without any coherent agenda to follow. Co-operation during this period was essentially ad hoc and subject to political scrutiny, forcing ministers such as Brian Faulkner who were pro-active on this issue to consistently follow an limited approach of 'this far and no further' when trying to get proposals through an often sceptical cabinet. An already rudderless co-operation process was made worse, as sectarian trouble began to escalate in Northern Ireland throughout 1966, destabilising O'Neill's position as the Unionist leader.

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The lack of any new ideas or political will to pursue formal co-operation ensured that when sectarian violence broke out in Northern Ireland, political leaders would lapse into reaffirming constitutional aspirations from which previous leaders had attempted to separate formal co-operation. This became evident early in the Lynch administration, as Irish unity began featuring more prominently in speeches made by ministers and documents that discussed Northern Ireland. While there was a policy vacuum in Dublin by 1967, it was becoming increasingly evident that a political vacuum was also emerging in Northern Ireland. O'Neill's increasingly precarious position as Prime Minister, along with the rise of Ian Paisley, led him to make increasingly critical statements of the Irish government, which only served to undermine his policy of friendly neighbourliness with Dublin. While a link between the outbreak of the Troubles in late 1968 and the demise of co-operation is often made, it will be argued that effective co-operation between the two governments was over months before the escalation of civil rights protests that followed on from the controversy surrounding a civil rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968.

Throughout the Troubles, the entire realm of North-South relations would be dominated by border security and Irish reunification. For Stormont, the emergence of the Provisional IRA in early 1970 was seen as a massive threat to the stability of Northern Ireland. As attacks on security forces along the border escalated, the perception developed within the Unionist government that Lynch was allowing the Provisionals a free rein in the Irish Republic. The demands for tougher action on the IRA would be a constant theme emanating from Stormont.

When Chichester-Clark was succeeded by Brian Faulkner in March 1971, there was an attempt to re-start the process of co-operation between the two governments, as permission was given by Faulkner to civil servants for meetings with officials from the Irish government. Yet much like the earlier attempts to improve relations with the Republic, this would only be feasible in a relatively stable political environment. But with a sharp increase in the number of bombings by the IRA in 1971, the only feasible form of co-operation politically for Unionism was on issues dealing with border security. When Faulkner met Lynch at Chequers in September 1971, the only way he could fend off attacks from hardliners within the Unionist party was to reaffirm the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and seek greater co-operation from Lynch on tackling the Provisional IRA. As the government attempted to gain effective

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co-operation over issues such as security, events like Bloody Sunday would only ensure that North-South relations would end the way they started before the O'Neill/Lemass summit in 1965.

Notes

1 Marc Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the crossroads, Unionism in the O'Neill years, 1960–9,* Basingstoke; MacMillan, 2000, ix.
2 Tom Garvin, *Judging Lemass*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009 and Dermot Keogh, *Jack Lynch; A Biography*, Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 2008.
3 'Our talks which did not touch upon constitutional or political questions' Communiqué *for O'Neill-Lemass summit,* 14 January 1965, National Archives of Ireland (hereinafter referred to as NAI) DT 98/6/249.

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Diplomacy via Press Release: North-South Relations from 1959–64

Abstract: *McCann provides an analysis of how relations developed in the aftermath of Seán Lemass becoming Taoiseach in June 1959. Focusing on the Unionist government, he details how the new economic and political approach from the Irish government wrong footed the Brookeborough administration in Belfast. As well as looking at the internal debates within the cabinet, McCann highlights that the arrival of Terence O'Neill in March 1963 did not immediately represent a new approach from Unionism towards the Irish government. The failure to create coherent policy on co-operation left O'Neill politically vulnerable, McCann argues. This weakness was exploited by rivals such as Brian Faulkner, who used North-South co-operation to appeal to the liberal wing of Unionism, who by 1964 were increasingly disillusioned with the O'Neill administration.*

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> The fact remains, however, that so long as those in authority demand Ulster, improved relationship will be very difficult to establish because this demand cuts right at our nerve centre.[1]
>
> Northern Ireland Prime Minister,
> J.M. Andrews to Major General Hugh Montgomery

These private thoughts delivered by Northern Ireland's wartime Prime Minister at the height of World War II are indicative of just how penetrating the issue of the constitutional recognition was for Unionist politicians. At a time of total war with Nazi Germany and not long after the Belfast Blitz, a major concern for Andrews was the fact that the relatively new Irish constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann, contained within it a territorial claim on Northern Ireland. This drive to maintain constitutional integrity would be a constant for his successor Lord Brookborough, who also took on the charge of facing down constitutional challenge from the Irish government. Whilst Southern Ireland pursued a policy of vocal anti-partitionism, it was relatively easy and at the time electorally beneficial for a Unionist leader to rebut the Nationalist challenge. In tandem with the rhetoric, the relatively favourable economic position of Northern Ireland compared to the Irish Republic allowed political leaders in Belfast to draw attention the higher living standards that the province enjoyed within the United Kingdom. Yet, by 1959, both of these pillars of the Unionist argument came under challenge with the ascension of Seán Lemass as Taoiseach, bringing a new approach to Northern Ireland and the economy.

1.1 Cautiously into the nineteen-sixties

As Eamon deValera brought the curtain down on his long 21-year period as Taoiseach, the debate over the positions and temperament of his successor was debated within the Northern Ireland media. The change in leader in the Irish Republic received a guarded welcome as the *Belfast Telegraph* ran positive editorials stressing Lemass' moderate instincts and greater interest in economic affairs. In their editorial, the paper referred to Lemass as a 'man of action' with the qualities of an 'efficient company director'.[2] Such positive comments from Unionist friendly papers would give Lemass hope that a new departure in North-South co-operation was possible. In attempting to change the conversation between the two

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states, Lemass did move quickly to shift the emphasis on North-South co-operation away from constitutional arguments to more practical economic co-operation. He proposed the creation of an all island trade committee to examine areas in which co-operation between the two states could be enhanced and barriers to trade removed.[3] Lemass persisted throughout 1959 with his message of economic co-operation with the Northern Ireland government delivering a speech in September to the Oxford Union arguing that greater trade between the two states would help eliminate the economic handicaps of partition. Likewise, speaking at his first Ard Fheis as Fianna Fáil leader, he made another pitch to the Unionist government in the area of recognition of Northern Ireland arguing, 'we make no secret that our aim is to bring partition to an end; but we recognise the fact that it exists'.[4] Lemass sought to assuage Unionist concerns by inviting them to talks that did not touch upon any constitutional issues.

However, the Unionist government was seemingly unimpressed by the more liberal attitude from Dublin. The Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough, dismissed Lemass' proposals for economic co-operation arguing, 'we would be conceding that in these fields at least we had interests which marched with the Republic rather than Great Britain'.[5] Brookeborough's rejection was a contradiction in terms as he had tacitly acknowledged this already by embarking upon joint projects in the nineteen-fifties with the Erne Hydro-electric scheme and Great Northern Railway line. The main problem for Unionism was not the economics of co-operation, rather the politics of it. Debating the issue of economic co-operation with the South in a cabinet meeting in July 1959, the Unionist government came to the determination that despite the positive changes in the Irish economy that even limited free trade could not be supported on 'political grounds'.[6] The prioritisation of political concerns over economic benefits would be the hallmark of how the government in Belfast viewed proposals for North-South co-operation for the next four years.

For Unionism, the Irish Republic's territorial claim on Northern Ireland coloured how they viewed the change in approach from Dublin. Speaking at the 1960 Unionist party conference, Brookeborough acknowledged that the arrival of Lemass did represent a change in approach but still believed that the end goal for the Irish government was dismantling the Northern Ireland state as he told delegates 'if Eire wanted friendship then they would have to accept the constitution of Northern Ireland, but if they were going

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to use that friendship as a means of inveighing Northern Ireland into the garden, Ulster would not have it'.[7] The fear within the government did not just extend to figures regarded as being on the conservative wing of the Unionist party, as even moderate ministers like Lord Glentoran, opposed joint ventures in tourism as he feared supporting publicity materials which might be regarded as 'anti-partitionist'.[8] Even the most trivial of events came under scrutiny if there was a perceived threat to Northern Ireland's constitutional position as the cabinet rejected an invitation for Sir Graham Larmour, President of the Irish Association, to visit the Governor, Lord Wakehurst, due to the association's liberal stance on co-operation with the Irish government and Irish unity.[9]

These retrograde steps from the nineteen-fifties of quietly supporting acts of co-operation between the two states, to public and private hostility have to be viewed in the wider political context of the IRA border campaign which by the early nineteen-sixties had dramatically escalated with attacks on RUC patrols along the border. The Unionist government regularly derided the security policies of the Irish government, over what they perceived as a sympathetic attitude towards what the IRA was doing in Northern Ireland. Attacks led by the Home Affairs Minister, Brian Faulkner, called on Lemass to do more arguing, 'If their security arrangements are serious they ought to know about the presence of armed men on their side of the border and they have a duty to act firmly on that knowledge'.[10] Despite Lemass' regular condemnations of IRA violence as being a hindrance to the cause of Irish unity, rather than an act of progression, it was still viewed from Northern Ireland as not going far enough. Not until 1961, when visible raids by and acts of co-operation by the Gardai and RUC began taking place did the any positive statements begin emanating from the Unionist government. Even after the IRA announced an end to their campaign, the tone from Northern Ireland was not one of gratitude to Lemass, rather it was one of not acting soon enough as Faulkner spoke about the military courts being introduced 'only when the recent campaign was on the wane, but next time they must not wait'.[11] Likewise, a *Newsletter* editorial argued that the Unionist government had been vindicated in their analysis that the Irish government were too slow to act on the IRA.[12] As Kelly notes, it was Lemass' hope that by tackling the IRA, he could possibly open the door to a more friendly relationship with the Unionist government, but in the immediate aftermath, the response from Northern Ireland was lukewarm at best to the policies he had put in place.[13]

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Frustrated by the intransigent attitude of the Unionist government on co-operation with the Irish government, a number of Northern industrialists began approaching Dublin, seeking their own trade exemptions.[14] Getting over the general surprise of the approach, officials in the Department of Industry and Commerce and even Lemass himself, were cautious as they feared taking unilateral action, without co-operation from the Northern Ireland government. Once the industrialists obtained the approval, but not co-operation, of the Unionist government, in early 1961, there was still some inertia on the Irish side as the Industry and Commerce Minister, Jack Lynch, worried about moving without consulting the domestic industry. Lemass, who by mid-1961 was supportive of some limited concessions to Northern industry, faced dissent from two key ministers, namely Jim Ryan and Paddy Smith, who opposed the move. The mix of division within the Irish government and lack of co-operation from Southern manufacturers effectively stalled any progress over the issue until July 1962 and eventually led to, as Kennedy notes, Lynch being left little option but 'steam rolling' the proposals through the cabinet in order to achieve any progress on these moderate tariff cuts.[15]

While the Irish government was conducting a prolonged period of debate over freeing up trade, the Northern Ireland government was in a state of paralysis over how to respond. When sections of the domestic industry approached Lord Brookeborough and Lord Glentoran to seek co-operation between the two governments, the only commitment they received was that they would do nothing to block any independent approaches to the Irish government.[16] The continuing reactive approach persisted throughout 1961 as the cabinet formally adopted this policy of non-co-operation just three months later.[17] When Brookeborough began hearing about the progress that industrialists were making over tariff cuts, he made much more favourable noises about freeing up North-South trade arguing that it would be 'all to the good' if the South reduced her tariffs against Northern goods and that the value of these protections would decrease in Common Market conditions.[18] These more positive pronouncements by Brookeborough were merely an attempt to hide the fact that his government was in a state of mild panic at the prospect of free trade between the two states and possible British and Irish membership of the EEC. The favourable coverage that the Irish Republic was receiving on its economic problems posed considerable problems for Northern Ireland as members of the cabinet worried the perceived lack of concern shown by the British government to the provinces

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socio-economic problems.[19] Once the tariff cuts issued by the Irish government became public knowledge, it caused an avalanche of other industries such as linen, to approach Dublin seeking similar concessions.[20]

This mix of pressure from local industry and the possibility of freer trade between Britain and Ireland placed the Brookeborough government in a difficult position in its dying days. The failure to halt the rise of the Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1962 Northern Ireland General Election and to develop an appropriate remedy for the provinces' ailing economy sealed his fate in early 1963. Interestingly, one of the final pieces of business that his government dealt with was developing a response to further tariff cuts from the Irish government. Symbolic of the majority of his government's tenure on North-South co-operation, the issue was not debated at length as his ministers simply concluded that any moves to support Northern firms from the Irish government should be welcomed.[21] From the minutes there appeared to be no discussion about how the government in Belfast could proactively support firms approaching the South or any overtures they could make to facilitate in reductions in tariffs. By this stage, however, Brookeborough's tenure was drawing to an end as he resigned as Prime Minister a week later, to be succeeded by his Minister for Finance, Terence O'Neill.

1.2 The rise of O'Neillism

The rise to power of O'Neill is generally regarded as another breakthrough in the area of North-South relations as academics like Keogh regard him as the most proactive and moderate of all the Prime Ministers who dealt with the Irish Republic.[22] However, in the first 18 months of his tenure, there was no apparent departure from the non-co-operation approach adopted by his predecessor. Diplomacy conducted via press release was still the order of the day and O'Neill was still unwilling to move beyond the policy of non-co-operation established by his predecessor. The only indication that there could be a possible change in policy came from the *Newsletter,* which noted the similarity between the language that O'Neill and Lemass were using in advocating economic development, stating, 'he speaks like a Lemass, only using Northern Ireland instead of Ireland; he makes the same demands on his people'.[23] In addition to this, O'Neill approved of meetings between the Young Unionists and members of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael parties.

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Outside of the similarly in rhetoric and the minor acts of political interaction, there was no sense that Unionism was preparing for any kind of formal co-operation with Dublin. When Lemass issued his first invitation to O'Neill for a meeting without any political preconditions,[24] O'Neill remained silent issuing no response to the offer and would not actually utter any substantive statement on North-South relations until September 1963. O'Neill's silence would be broken in the aftermath of a speech delivered by Lemass in Tralee, County Kerry, which gave de facto recognition that partition existed with the support of a majority of people in Northern Ireland. The speech which aimed to remove obstacles for a possible meeting between the two leaders successfully provoked the British government into putting pressure on O'Neill to take a more constructive attitude towards dealing with his Southern counterpart. Just weeks after the speech, the British Home Secretary, Henry Brooke, wrote to O'Neill saying, 'I believe that the new co-operation, which must accept the existence of the border, should grow into a sweetened relationship'.[25] He went further, arguing that it would not be in the economic interests of the UK to rebuff the recent overtures from Lemass to achieve a free trade area between Britain and Ireland.

The unpreparedness of O'Neill for the more liberal attitude from Lemass and pressure from the British government meant that it would take two months for him to develop a response to the Tralee speech. On 11 September, following one of his 'meet the people' tours in County Tyrone, O'Neill said, 'both Mr Lemass and I will show our patriotism by striving to better the lot and increase the prosperity of the people'. Referring to Lemass' words on recognition, he stated that while they included an acceptance of Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom, he believed that the Tralee speech was no more than a sophisticated approach to end partition, rather than a genuine change of heart.[26] This response would spark off another round of barbs delivered across the border as Lemass gave an immediate response to O'Neill saying, 'I gladly agreed not to reply to Captain O'Neill with a spate of words'. Trying to explain the rationale of his policy, he stated, 'in the times we live in I believe that the rate of increase in the prosperity of North and South will be accelerated by co-operation'.[27] He invited O'Neill to talks on issues of mutual economic importance without any political preconditions. Responding three days later, O'Neill thanked Lemass for his courteous remarks but claimed that until two main issues, the suppression of the IRA and the recognition of Northern Ireland were achieved,

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a more friendly relationship could not be developed.[28] This response is indicative of the political pressure on O'Neill as the IRA campaign had ended by late 1963; he was at this point using red herrings to justify his policy of non-co-operation.

In Dublin, Lemass aimed to put more substantive proposals on the table for Unionism as he went on a charm offensive to mend relations after some hard line comments he made while visiting the United States. Armed with his civil service talk's proposal that he had been developing with his advisors for the previous two months, Lemass decided to go public with his plan to the Unionist newspaper, *The Belfast Newsletter*. In an interview on 18 December, he floated the idea of initial Civil Service talks and listed specific areas where co-operation could be beneficial. All were on the agenda put together the month before. Lemass argued that 'there are also cases where the border causes inconvenience and frustrates area development in town planning. Surely we can get together on matters like these.' He also wanted to make a direct appeal to O'Neill saying, 'I would be quite happy to meet Captain O'Neill and am indeed anxious to meet him'. The interview went on to cover areas such as Lemass' ideas on what form a united Ireland might take and also his more controversial remarks which he played down saying 'this is a matter for us to settle ourselves'.[29]

In this interview, Lemass helped to alleviate the damage done by his earlier remarks and even had the interviewer, Ralph Bossence, calling him a 'realist' on the issue of partition. He also was critical of the Nationalist Party which he said had a 'negative attitude'.[30] This bolstered the community relations approach of O'Neill and those in the Catholic community like G.B. Newe, Secretary of the Council on Social Services, who were urging the Catholic community to change its abstentionist attitude towards the Unionist government.[31]

1.3 O'Neill and inconsistencies

While Lemass may have had his inconsistencies in his approach towards North-South relations, so did O'Neill too. It is important to note as Mulholland does that O'Neill typically went out of his way to appeal to the rank and file of his own party, rather than Catholics.[32] This was also true with North-South relations as O'Neill faced an election within months and with a weak grip on the leadership of the Unionist party,

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he was always willing to play the aggressor card with the Irish government when it suited him politically to do so. One example of this was his response to a visit by the Nationalist party to the Irish Embassy in London in mid-February. The purpose of the visit is noteworthy as it was not just to highlight partition; rather it was to promote the treatment of Catholics within Northern Ireland. O'Neill launched a scathing attack on the Irish government calling their hosting of the Nationalist delegation 'tasteless and impertinent intrusion'.[33] O'Neill went further arguing that the position of the Catholic community was largely self-inflicted, rejecting allegations of discrimination.

This failure to live up to the liberal image that O'Neill constantly tried to portray with visits to Catholic schools was coming unstuck just a year into his Premiership as close supporters began privately expressing doubts. In a review of O'Neill's first year as Prime Minister, the *Belfast Telegraph* editor, Jack Sayers, cast doubts upon the substance of O'Neill's assimilatory Unionism, arguing, 'it is a fair reading of the situation that Nationalism has become more impatient because it has found that the new government offers no early action on what is called discrimination.' Sayers continued highlighting the internal pressures on O'Neill moving forward with reform, stating, 'he is the leader of a party with a powerful instinct for preserving unity, for closing ranks. This entails a constant deferring to the views of the Orange Order; some would say a yielding to the intimidation of factions that are far more extreme.' Concluding, Sayers reflected on the conservative nature of the Unionist party's policy making arguing;

> the fact is that the whole official party has no identifiable element pledged to back the Prime Minister in a real effort to reform Unionist thinking. It's plain that, here too, progress can only be long-term and that the new image hides the conservative reality.[34]

If liberals within Unionism were unhappy about the direction of the party and government under his leadership, his actions during the 1964 Westminster General Election campaign would do little to either assuage their concerns or give any sense that a new relationship with the Irish government was forthcoming. This election would be important for O'Neill, as with key rivals like Brian Faulkner and JLO Andrews as possible successors to him, he would need to give a strong performance. The campaign began with O'Neill hoping that it would be fought largely on economic issues. Yet events would ensure that this election would bring constitutional issues to the fore in a violent way,

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not seen in Northern Ireland since the disturbances in Belfast in 1932. Two events during the campaign caused damage to O'Neill's policy of easing communal tensions. The display of an Irish Tricolour on the Falls Road by Republicans contesting the election caused fury among many Unionists in Belfast, but one person in particular who took exception was the Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, Ian Paisley. The reaction to the flag and its subsequent removal came in the form of protests and riots with an estimated 4,000 people taking to the streets.[35] The coverage of the riots featured pictures of Ian Paisley being cheered on as a triumphant leader. Indeed, it is telling that in one event, Paisley had received more extensive coverage than O'Neill had all year.

The second event that placed pressure on O'Neill was a short speech by the Chancellor of Queens University, Sir Tyrone Guthrie, who attacked partition saying, 'it may not be in our lifetime that the political border will be abolished' but 'I am sure those of you who have had the advantage of a university education will agree that the border is hopelessly artificial.'[36] Guthrie's speech, which was on the front pages of both the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Newsletter* was the last thing O'Neill needed after the sectarian clashes that had taken place. To have the titular head of the main university in Northern Ireland attacking the basic premise of partition left O'Neill with little choice but declare, contrary to his earlier hopes, in the last days of the election, that the border was the number one issue.[37] The election returned all 12 Unionist Members to Westminster, representing the only period where the Unionist party would win every Westminster seat in two consecutive elections.[38] More worrying for O'Neill, the election also brought Harold Wilson and the Labour party to power, ending 13 years of Conservative government. The campaign had also exposed that O'Neill's efforts thus far to heal communal wounds in the North were superficial.

The damage inflicted upon O'Neill's liberal image as a result of the election was evident in a correspondence after the election from *Belfast Telegraph* Editor, Jack Sayers, to former Unionist MP, Connolly Gage, complaining about the depressing way in which the election campaign was conducted. Sayers was particularly critical of the Unionist party and O'Neill's response to the outbreak of violence, arguing, 'there seems to have been panic all around, with Glengall Street[39] ready to use every means to get the vote out. Result; Paisley left lording it, and a very general impression that the party is now dependent on the support of his faction'. Turning to O'Neill's performance during the campaign, he was

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particularly scathing, stating, 'Terence failed pretty miserably. Either he simply hasn't got it, or he was shaken by the backbenchers who proved to be all for the drum.'[40] This correspondence illustrates the growing disillusionment among liberal Unionists at O'Neill's below par performance as Prime Minister, as allies such as Sayers began to question his leadership.

1.4 Change in policy

The sectarian violence that erupted during the election would indirectly have a positive impact on North-South relations. The pressure for a change in attitude did not come from Nationalism, or from the new British government but from within Unionism. In November, Lemass accepted an offer to address the Queens University Literary and Scientific Society in February. The news that he was visiting Belfast provoked the Republican Labour MP, Harry Diamond, to ask whether O'Neill would extend the 'usual courtesies' to Lemass by meeting with him. O'Neill replied that as Lemass' visit was purely a private one he had no intention of seeking a meeting with him.[41] However, in this instance, pressure for a change in policy under O'Neill would come from within the Unionist fold as an editorial in the *Newsletter* would pose the simple question to O'Neill of 'Meet Lemass; Why Not?' The paper went on to argue for the practical merits of co-operation, stating, 'are there not problems that involve both countries and which a meeting of the two heads of state might help to solve? Several come to mind; tourism, transport and trade among them'. They went further, recognising the difficulties between the two states over partition, arguing, 'both leaders have fixed and conflicting ideas on the issue of partition...this should not prevent uncommitted talks on practical measures of mutual interest'. Concluding, the editorial made reference to O'Neill's weakened position and acknowledged the overriding political concerns of the Northern government in meeting Lemass, arguing, 'no danger to the Unionist cause would be involved in the meeting, in agreeing Captain O'Neill would show the strength of his position. He would do well to think again'.[42]

The mis-step in November of reaffirming the traditional Unionist line of non-cooperation until recognition was achieved was, as Mulholland notes, 'proving too conservative even for the Unionist mainstream'.[43] It was to be this move to the right that would provide an opening for one of O'Neill's main rivals, Brian Faulkner, to outmanoeuvre him on the

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liberal wing of the Unionist party. The rivalry between the two men had existed from the moment O'Neill had become Prime Minister in March 1963. Just months into his premiership, reports of a Faulkner-led coup against his leadership surfaced in the press. This ensuing battle between the two men was only heightened as Faulkner received plaudits for his strong performance as Commerce Minister in securing investment from outside Northern Ireland and the energetic approach he took in carrying out his duties. More worrying for O'Neill, Faulkner carried with him strong Unionist credentials from his time as Home Affairs Minister which saw the defeat of the IRA border campaign, for which he largely received the credit. This sense of rivalry had unintended consequences on North-South relations as Bloomfield recalled that even though he formed a different view when he came to work for Faulkner in the early seventies, that during this period from 'the O'Neill camp, he (Faulkner) was always seen as a rather ring wing, devious plotter'.[44] It was in this context that the following sudden shifts in policy have to be understood. In early January, Faulkner publicly stated his desire to meet Lynch, saying, 'I will meet him at any time and at any place'. He went further in a bid to distance himself from O'Neill's earlier intransigent statements, saying, 'I would welcome an extension of cross border trade. If Mr. Lynch wants to make any suggestions for increasing trade, or for anything else that is the concern of our two departments … No question of protocol ought to be allowed to interfere with such discussions'.[45]

Faulkner began immediately drafting proposals to bring to cabinet seeking a meeting with the Minister for Transport, Erskine Childers, to discuss co-operation in tourism. Faulkner started off the memorandum by saying, 'I think the time has come to look again at the possibility of tourist co-operation with the Republic'. He began by addressing concerns that the Northern market would be swamped by the Republic if there was co-operation, arguing, 'provided the publicity material is in a form acceptable to both us and the south, we should gain from a joint programme'. Faulkner wanted to challenge the general aloofness of the Northern Ireland government by taking a more 'positive line' on co-operation with the Irish government.

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Conclusion

This shift by Faulkner made a meeting between Lemass and O'Neill inevitable. A weakened leader, he could not afford to be outflanked by his rival on this policy file. In reality, this was not a departure from the environment in which North-South co-operation had operated before. A political premium by both sides was always part of each state's calculation for Lemass it was free trade with Britain, while for O'Neill, it was political survival. Political concerns had kept a meeting off the table for nearly four decades by this stage, now, that the internal political dynamics within Unionism and Republicanism were more closely aligned it was easier to bridge the gap and take the risk. Going forward, politics would continue to play a dominant role in how political leaders on both sides interacted with one another; challenging constitutional shibboleths would continue to play a secondary role to what was politically possible. The next chapter will illustrate how the O'Neill/Lemass summit was organised, the ministerial meetings that emanated from it and where politically things began to go wrong for the entire process.

Notes

1 Letter from J.M. Andrews to Hugh Montgomery, 30 July 1941, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereinafter PRONI) D2661/C/1/A/1/20.
2 *Belfast Telegraph,* 23 June 1959.
3 Dáil Debates, *Committee on Finance; Department of Taoiseach,* 21 July 1959, Volume 176, Available on; http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0176/D.0176.195907210059.html accessed 15 February 2014.
4 *Address to Oxford Union by Mr Sean Lemass*, 15 October 1959, NAI DT 9361I/94.
5 *Newsletter,* 13 August 1959.
6 *Cabinet Meeting*, 7 July 1959, PRONI/CAB/4/1097.
7 *Newsletter*, 4 March 1960.
8 *Memorandum on Tourist co-operation*, 21 November 1960, PRONI CAB/9F/114/4.
9 Irish Association was a group that promoted social, cultural and economic contacts between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.
10 *Newsletter,* 19 March 1960.
11 *Newsletter,* 3 October 1962.
12 *Newsletter*, 27th February 1972.

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14 *Memorandum by TJ Cahill*, 28 November 1960, NAI DT 16272B.
15 Kennedy, *Division and Consensus*, 188–9.
16 *Cahill Memorandum*, 16 March 1961, NAI DT 16272C/61.
17 *Cabinet Meeting,* 1 June 1961, PRONI CAB/4/1161.
18 *Newsletter,* 14 August 1961.
19 *Cabinet Meeting,* 29 November 1961, PRONI CAB/4/1180.
20 Ibid, 7 December 1962.
21 *Cabinet Minutes*, 15 March 1963, PRONI CAB/4/1223.
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23 *Newsletter,* 9 April 1963.
24 Dáil Debates, *Oral Questions; Co-operation with the Six Counties*, Vol 201, Available on; http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/0201/D.0201.196304020002.html accessed on 19 March 2011.
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26 *Newsletter*, 12 September 1963.
27 Ibid, 13 September 1963.
28 Ibid, 16 September 1963.
29 *Newsletter,* 19 December 1963.
30 Ibid.
31 *Irish Press*, 8 October 1963.
32 Mulholland, *Northern Ireland,* 62.
33 *Newsletter*, 15 February 1964.
34 Cited in Andrew Gailey, *Crying in the wilderness: Jack Sayers 1939–69*, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1995), 84.
35 *Newsletter,* 30 September 1964.
36 Ibid, 9 October 1964.
37 *Newsletter,* 14 October 1964.
38 Sean Swan, 'The Accuracy of the Ethnic Conflict Paradigm; A Reply to Aaron Edwards' *Politics;* Vol 28, 2, 2008, 118–23, 118.
39 Glengall Street was the headquarters of the Unionist Party in Belfast.
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41 StormontPapers, *Oral Answers*, Vol 58, Available on; http://stormontpapers.ahds.ac.uk/stormontpapers/pageview.html?volumeno=58&pageno=687 accessed 29 March 2011.
42 *Newsletter*, 20 November 1964.
43 Mulholland, *Ulster at the Crossroads*, 82.
44 *Interview with the Author*, January 2011.
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2

The Politics of Co-operation: North-South Relations from 1965–66

Abstract: *The political manoeuvring within the Unionist government starts off this chapter. McCann argues that the Faulkner/O'Neill rivalry was essential in provoking a change in policy in Belfast. The secrecy, with which O'Neill kept his invitation to Lemass, is cited as the main driver of opposition from within Unionism. The presidential style of leadership that O'Neill adopted is contrasted with the more open approach adopted by Faulkner on this issue. This sense of distance allowed O'Neill to remain aloof from the mainstream of his party, whilst, Faulkner delivered the big co-operation initiatives in areas such as tourism and electricity.*

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> I'll meet him (Jack Lynch) anytime and at any place, if I can be sure that the talks would be worthwhile.[1]
>
> Brian Faulkner, 3 January 1965

The lull in exchanges between Lemass and O'Neill, coinciding with the lack of political activity, generally would leave even top civil servants and politicians astonished at what was about to happen in January 1965. The secretive way in which the meeting was set up was one of the major sources of opposition to this new policy of improving relations with the Irish government. The fact that both leaders wanted to keep the organisation of the summit a secret put civil servants in an increasingly important position. The agenda for the summit and the ensuing co-operation had huge input from civil servants. The co-operation that did happen would ultimately be subject to political pressures and as sectarian violence escalated throughout 1966 placed pressure on O'Neill's leadership making formal co-operation with the Irish government a politically untenable policy.

As Faulkner was preparing proposals to bring to the cabinet, O'Neill was preparing to issue an invitation to Lemass for a meeting. In setting up the meeting, O'Neill enlisted the help of his private secretary, Jim Malley, and the Secretary of the Department of Finance in Dublin, T.K. Whitaker. Whitaker, Malley and O'Neill had formed a strong friendship as a result of meetings on visits to the World Bank. Whitaker viewed O'Neill as a different type of Unionist leader who stood out in the North by not having the same roots within the community, which in Whitaker's view allowed O'Neill to rise above narrow party interests.[2] It was as a result of these meetings that O'Neill decided to approach Whitaker, in order to convey the invitation to Lemass. Both of these civil servants were central in facilitating contact between the two Premiers.

On 4 January, as Faulkner's co-operation proposals appeared in the newspapers, Malley was dispatched to Dublin to meet Whitaker for lunch in the Shelbourne Hotel to convey the invitation. The rapid change in the space of a month from no direct co-operation to full prime ministerial meetings would leave his party bewildered. The mistake of keeping the invitation to Lemass a secret would begin to erode his leadership among his parliamentary colleagues. An extract from O'Neill's memoirs on Malley's journey to Dublin illustrates the level of secrecy that surrounded even approaching Whitaker with the invitation, as he recalls when Malley boarded the train that Arthur Algeo, the head of the

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Northern Ireland Transport Authority, was there with a BBC journalist. Fearful of being recognised, Malley had to hide behind his newspaper to avoid detection.[3]

As the meeting between Whitaker and Malley got underway in Dublin, the invitation from O'Neill was presented to Whitaker, who contrary to the assertion in O'Neill's memoirs that he was 'surprised',[4] was actually delighted that such a move was being brought about.[5] Before bringing Malley to meet Lemass, Whitaker contacted Nicholas Nolan, Secretary of the Department of the Taoiseach, to give O'Neill's message to him and to set up a meeting later in the day with Malley. The message from O'Neill asked for a 'fresh approach' in the matter of co-operation and specifically listed the area which Faulkner was working up a memorandum on, co-operation on tourism.[6] As Whitaker spoke with Lemass about the invitation to his 'great relief and some surprise', he accepted immediately.[7] By 7 January, 14 January had been agreed as the date for the summit. Lemass had favoured making the announcement on the morning of the meeting; however, because of the concerns that O'Neill had about extremists hijacking the event, he wanted the announcement to be made at 1pm just as Lemass arrived at Stormont.

As preparations for the summit got under way, the Irish government conducted a series of reviews on the state of relations between North and South in the areas of transport, electricity and tourism. The Secretary of the Department of Transport, T.J. Beere, reported on tourism that 'there have been a few straws in the wind to suggest the possibility of a greater degree of co-operation.' However, she noted the poor relations between Bord Fáilte and the NITB stating, 'no proposals for co-operation have come from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, and any advances made by Bord Fáilte seem to have met with a negative response.'[8] On electricity, she reported that there had been discussions between the ESB and the Northern Electricity board during the summer of 1964, but the report from the Northern side was that any talk of co-operation would be 'political dynamite' in Northern Ireland. Although if the recommendations of the Eccles Report that Northern Ireland should have just one electricity board was implemented, then there could be the possibility of technical discussions.[9] The most positive area of co-operation was in the area of transport where there had been close co-operation over the future of the Belfast to Dublin railway line and the inauguration of the Derry to Dublin bus service. Beere concluded on the official status of

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relations saying, 'good relations exist between the Ministry now responsible for transport (Ministry for Development) and the Department for Transport and Power and between CIE and UTA.'[10]

2.1 The summit

The day before Lemass was due to come to Belfast, the Unionist government held a cabinet meeting. Consideration was given to proposals to help the aircraft industry, the implications of the Lockwood report on higher education and the disclosure of political contributions, but nowhere in the minutes of this discussion did O'Neill even give the slightest hint at who was coming for lunch the next day.[11] The only people who were given notice the day before were the Minister of Finance, Ivan Neil, and the Governor, Lord Erskine. On the morning of the summit, Whitaker and Lemass drove North; recalling the journey Whitaker noted that, 'when I was alone with Mr. Lemass on the drive to the border you might expect we would be discussing the historic visit and what might come of it. I don't think we speculated much about this ... Mr. Lemass was not given much to small talk.'[12] As the motorcade reached Stormont at 1pm, the visit was announced to the press. Ken Bloomfield recalled his meeting Lemass on that day, saying he 'was burly, leonine, and rather gruff, resembling some veteran French politician of the left. He spoke with a delicious growl.'[13]

The meeting lasted 75 minutes and had no focus on any constitutional or political issues, only matters of practical co-operation in the economic field were discussed. Co-operation in areas like tourism focused on ideas like the Erne-Shannon waterway scheme, along with greater freedom for cars crossing the border.[14] These issues would be discussed in more detail at a later stage between the respective ministers, Brian Faulkner and Erskine Childers. Other issues such as possible co-operation in nuclear power, trade and industrial promotion were discussed, but no definitive action would be taken on them. This general, ad hoc approach, with certain departments taking a more active part in the co-operation process, would become the hallmark of how co-operation between the two governments was conducted. The only tangible result from the meeting was that both sides would draw up papers on possible co-operation, after which O'Neill would make a return visit to Dublin.[15] The short Communiqué issued after the meeting illustrates the fact that symbolism

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of the meeting was a more important aspect than any substantive measures that were talked about;

> We have today discussed matters in which there may prove to be a degree of common interest, and have agreed to explore further what specific measures may be possible or desirable by way of practical consultation and co-operation. Our talks which did not touch upon constitutional or political questions have been conducted in a most amicable way, and we look forward to a further discussion in Dublin.[16]

Although, O'Neill's sudden policy shift and the secretive way in which he went about it was a serious mistake. Gordon argues, 'the ridiculous secrecy with which he (O'Neill) surrounded the whole Lemass visit certainly planted seeds of suspicion and mistrust within the Unionist party and Protestant community'.[17] There is some evidence that gives credence to this argument. In O'Neill's own memoirs, he states that on the morning of the visit he proceeded to tell all the ministers who were to come and meet Lemass.[18] However, both Brian Faulkner and Ken Bloomfield's memoirs reveal that ministers were not informed until O'Neill was actually meeting Lemass in Stormont House and they had no time to prepare for the meeting.[19] Bloomfield recalled that 'when we telephoned through to members of the cabinet to tell them that Lemass was even now at Stormont Castle, I could tell that some at least were not only astonished but displeased.'[20] The question of why not to tell a small group of ministers about the meeting is discussed by Bloomfield, who notes O'Neill's fear was that had he taken the proposal to the cabinet, the proposal would have stalled as more cautious voices in the cabinet would have given the view 'a good idea, but not now'.[21] Although, this view ignores that the pressure for a change in policy with the Republic was coming from within Unionism. Furthermore, contrasting O'Neill's approach with Faulkner's casts further doubt upon how politically unviable it would have been to get a meeting with Lemass through the cabinet. Faulkner had felt confident enough to not only announce publicly his desire for a meeting with Lynch, with no rebuke from any cabinet minister, but to also draw up formal proposals for a meeting with Childers. Faulkner, unlike O'Neill, while attempting to change government policy was doing it in a much more transparent way by identifying specific areas of co-operation with the Irish government and favouring a gradual process in achieving more formal co-operation with the Republic. The fact of the matter was that it was not that the Unionist base did not get

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the case for co-operation; the real problem was that O'Neill could not and did not sell it.

It is important at this juncture to mention something about O'Neill's presidential style of government. When he became Prime Minister, he, as Walker notes, spent most of his time confiding with his close advisors, rather than his cabinet colleagues.[22] The sea change in this style going from the collegial Brookeborough, to a leader who was trying to mimic the approach of John F. Kennedy, was an incredible shock for his cabinet colleagues. O'Neill, unlike Lemass, was not leading a party accustomed to strong direction from the centre; rather the Unionist party had grown to accept a tradition of local associations being given a central role and that any changes in policy would be done through the Unionist Council. By inviting Lemass, without any consultation, O'Neill had broken most of these traditions. The problem with his secretive style has been noted by officials who witnessed first-hand his style of government. Ken Bloomfield regularly warned O'Neill that he did not spend enough time with members of his parliamentary party and depended for advice far too much on his close circle of advisors.[23] Likewise, Robert Ramsay, an official in the Department of Industry and Commerce, recalled in his memoirs that O'Neill's major flaw was his secretive style and his inability to lead his colleagues in the direction of modernisation.[24] In regards North-South relations, this is an accurate description, as his inability to consult with other sections of his government and articulate a case for a change in policy would have detrimental consequences on his leadership which could steadily over the next year become apparent.

Despite the secrecy around the meeting, the response of many external pressure groups to it was largely positive. Harold Smith, Chairman of the Ulster Furniture Federation and the person who began dialogue with Lynch five years before, congratulated both men and set out his hope for further co-operation saying, 'our aim is for a free trade market in Ireland. Already some progress has been made.'[25] The media was largely positive; *The Irish Press* gave a slightly sober welcome to the meeting saying that while it was a surprise it 'nevertheless has been widely approved because co-operation to further the economic interest of Ireland ... is clearly desirable'. The article went further arguing, 'the recognition by all Irishmen, North and South, of their mutual interests is to be encouraged.'[26] *The Irish Times* was more forthcoming with praise, arguing that the meeting was a successful 'coup' but the editorial went further, highlighting the halfway house approach of the meeting, arguing, 'in no sense could even the

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most extreme Unionist convince the reasonable observer that it implied any danger to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland, nor would everyone in the Republic agree with the view that the visit of Mr. Lemass to Belfast involved a formal recognition of the state of Northern Ireland'.[27] In the North, a similar argument came from the *Newsletter,* which stated, 'there never was and never has been any danger to the constitution of Northern Ireland in talks between the two heads of state'.

The reaction to the visit amongst sections of Northern Ireland society was mixed, both the Nationalist party and George Clark, the Grand Master of the Orange Order, welcomed the visit. The only murmurings of dissent were from Ian Paisley, who argued that O'Neill had forfeited his right to govern by meeting Lemass.[28] The message from London also heaped praise on O'Neill with Prime Minister Harold Wilson saying, 'the visit seems to have been well prepared and made just the right public impact'.[29] O'Neill's gamble with Lemass was starting to pay dividends in giving his image with the British government a much needed boost.

However, despite all the external sources praising the meeting, the seeds of his eventual downfall were sown in this visit, as many Unionist Associations wrote letters of congratulations on meeting Lemass, but a number of them were critical of the way the meeting was arranged.[30] The East Down Unionist Association wrote to O'Neill saying that 'nothing but good' could come from his meeting, but the letter continued that 'no such enthusiasm was felt for the manner in which the meeting was arranged or the circumstance under which it took place'.[31] It is clear from these various correspondences that O'Neill's sudden policy shift had not just isolated him from his cabinet but also his party.

2.2 Seeds of suspicion and cold shoulders

In Belfast, the day after the summit, Brian Faulkner began making contacts with the Irish government in order to set a date for a meeting with both Erskine Childers and Jack Lynch. The note of the phone call reported that he was 'anxious' to come to Dublin and also had his Department Secretary, H.E. Jones, sending a letter suggesting a date of 2 February for a meeting.[32] In attempting to win over his colleagues, Faulkner argued for an ad hoc approach in co-operation with the Republic. At a cabinet meeting on 20 January, he introduced his memorandum on tourism co-operation. He began by stating the exploratory nature of the talks

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with Childers and that no movement would be made without the explicit consent of both the cabinet and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. Unlike O'Neill, Faulkner, in this instance, was empowering the cabinet by handing them an effective veto over the policy. He continued setting out how the Northern Irish tourist market was squeezed between their larger counterparts in the Republic and Britain, and how a co-ordinated approach with the South would alleviate the situation. The only dissenting voice on the proposal was the Minister for Finance, Ivan Neil, who worried about surrendering control of publicity material, but Faulkner argued that no agreement would be made without proper safeguards and that he believed that 'the Dublin authorities were prepared to go a long way to meet the Northern Ireland view'.[33]

Outside the cabinet, O'Neill faced difficulties as some people within the Unionist community began to criticise his new policy with the Republic. The most ardent criticism came from the hard-line Stormont MP, Norman Porter, who in a speech to the Evangelical Protestant Society stated, 'if the secrecy attached to the recent meeting was solely for security reasons then we do not complain, but owing to the lack of information on this matter we cannot help but have suspicions'.[34] Similar protests came from Ian Paisley, who challenged O'Neill to go to the polls over his new policy arguing, 'if he is so confident that he has the people of Ulster behind him test at the polls where they stand'. In rebutting O'Neill's earlier statements about the need for bridge building between the two states,[35] he stated 'traitors are like bridges, they both go to the other side'.[36] O'Neill had succeeded in handing both Porter and Paisley ammunition to attack him and although the religious nature of their protest cannot be overlooked, the secrecy helped plant the seed of doubt.

Although politically more damaging for O'Neill were statements from Lemass following the summit reaffirming Irish unity as a central plank of his government's policy. On 26 January, speaking to the Seosamh Hudson Cumann, Lemass began saying, 'nobody could think of Fianna Fáil ever contemplating the sacrificing of any one of its basic national aims for reasons of political expediency'. Turning to Northern Ireland, he continued, 'our aim is to reunite the Irish people in one nation and one state. We recognise all the realities of the situation. Recognising realities has never been a difficulty with us'. Lemass went further, setting out his agenda for a federal arrangement believing that Stormont could be maintained within the united Ireland. The confused approach of Lemass,

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who just the week before was talking about dialogue with the North not touching on political issues, and now was reaffirming the old policy of Irish unity was highlighted by the *Irish Times;*

> While the government has learnt how to deal with Westminster on the subject it still treads clumsily when it approaches Stormont. Responsible politicians in the Unionist party who sincerely want to see better relations developing between North and South have been perplexed.

The article went on to quote a Unionist who said, 'in one speech we got a handshake ... the next we get a cold shoulder'.[37] The reversion to a traditional Republican position by Lemass continued to put pressure on O'Neill, as the speech simply reinforced the intransigence of sceptical members of the Unionist party.

2.3 Formalisation of co-operation

In late January, officials within the Department of Commerce in Belfast began work on proposals examining the possibilities for co-operating with the Republic in electricity. The memorandum stated that since the O'Neill-Lemass meeting, a new, high level approach could be taken on the issue and that an inter-governmental committee under Josiah Eccles could be commissioned to study the possibilities.[38] In Dublin, Erskine Childers began briefing Lemass before his meeting with Faulkner the following week on the possibilities in tourism co-operation. He noted that Bord Fáilte viewed co-operation with the NITB as something which would benefit Northern Ireland almost entirely but that the real benefits for the Republic would come from co-operation with the British Tourist Association as it had hitherto been the case that the NITB had always vetoed possible co-operation with Bord Fáilte. In terms of formal machinery for consultation between North and South, they favoured a more ad hoc approach by establishing a consultative committee which would look into specific subjects. The only difficulties envisaged would be those surrounding the use of literature selling Ireland as a single entity and such issues as describing Derry as Londonderry. Childers was optimistic and concluded his letter saying, 'we would hope to find a less rigid approach to the political difficulties on the part of the NITB and we should presumably for our part take the most flexible view possible'.[39]

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When the two ministers met on 4 February, Faulkner proposed that in any map of Ireland the border should be marked but also that some mention should be given to the fact that there are two administrations on the island. The response from Childers to Lemass the following day highlights again his pragmatism, saying, 'I think this is not so bad, we already mark the border on some publications'.[40]

In Dublin, Faulkner also met Jack Lynch on the issue of furthering the elimination of tariffs on Northern goods. Faulkner claimed the Republic's policy of eliminating tariffs on only goods of Northern origin was impossible for his department to administer and that the recent reduction in duty for carpets from the North was of little value, as no woollen carpets were made in Northern Ireland. Similar problems between the two ministers came to the surface over the issue of encouraging trade between the two states. Lynch complained about a bias in Northern Ireland against Southern goods, which Faulkner rejected, arguing that in reality, tariff barriers in the Republic were the real hindrance to trade.[41] While the meeting with Lynch did not achieve any substantive progress, there was agreement on a further meeting in Belfast at a later stage. Moreover, Faulkner declared his hope for further co-operation with the Republic in electricity, tariff reduction and trade promotion.[42] The response to the meeting from industry was largely positive. The Belfast Chamber of Commerce congratulated Faulkner, saying, 'the Northern Ireland business community is conscious of the need to develop cross border trade'. Moreover, the Chamber reported a meeting with the Dundalk Chamber of Commerce on preliminary talks on ways to develop cross-border trade.[43] These meetings formed consultative committees that linked the Dublin, Dundalk, Newry and Belfast Chambers together, with a view to put forward proposals to both governments on co-operation.[44]

The high level ministerial contacts would continue in early February as O'Neill made his return visit to Dublin on 9 February. At Iveagh House, the two Premiers discussed a range of issues.[45] The Northern side said that they were in broad agreement with the agenda put together by Whitaker, but that trade was a reserved issue for London. However, they felt that the agenda could be expanded into other areas such as fisheries and crime detection. Further agreement was reached on setting up a meeting between the Northern Minister for Development, Bill Craig, and the Irish Minister for Local Government, Neil Blaney, to discuss regional and municipal planning.[46] This meeting, like the one before it, was again a short and rather narrowly focused event but the meetings between

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ministers that emanated out of it would prove to be more substantive. Although, the lack of substantive results from the summits or any feasible agenda for the future would prove to be a problem for O'Neill, as it created a policy vacuum within his government that would allow his opponents to define his cross-border policy agenda before he could. The need to downplay the lack of substantive results from the O'Neill-Lemass summits was illustrated in an editorial from the *Newsletter,* which warned against the over selling of the talks, arguing;

> What we must guard against at this stage is any over-optimism. It would seem in some quarters, the Stormont talks have been invested with a deeper significance than either of the two leaders engaged in them would themselves allow ... there must be a greater awareness on all sides, of their exploratory nature.[47]

In the aftermath of the summit meeting, attacks from Unionist MPs were growing at an alarming rate due largely in part again to the secrecy with which O'Neill surrounded his return visit to Dublin. On 13 February, the former Attorney General, Edmund Warnock, attacked O'Neill's style of leadership, accusing him of an 'unwarranted assumption of personal dictatorship' and claiming that O'Neill had treated the Unionist party with 'contemptuous indifference'.[48] Further attacks followed from the West Belfast Unionist MP, James Kilfedder, who claimed 'overnight the vital plank in the Unionist platform has been changed, not by vote of the people, not by party conference, not even by the cabinet, but changed by the sole decision of the Prime Minister'.[49] Here, again, O'Neill had not learned the lessons from his first meeting with Lemass and was again not collegiate and collective in his approach during the second meeting with him. Moreover, it is important to contrast O'Neill's elitist approach and all the political mistakes that came with it with Faulkner's more transparent approach. During this entire period, no attack was ever made on Faulkner or his policies on cross-border co-operation. Faulkner had been the most visible minister in the cabinet in conducting meetings with Irish ministers. The criticism was almost always on O'Neill and the way in which he organised the meetings.

Despite O'Neill's political troubles within the Unionist party, further meetings between ministers continued. In early March, following a meeting between Department secretaries, H.E. Jones and T.J. Beere, Childers reported to Lemass that his department was making progress with the North on co-operation on electricity and drew up a memorandum on 8

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March for the government, with more concrete proposals.[50] In partnership with Childers, Faulkner was also putting his proposals before the cabinet. In his memorandum, he reported 'considerable progress' with Childers on both tourism and electricity. The two ministers proposed a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Josiah Eccles, to investigate scope for economies in cross-border electricity supply systems, with examination limited to technical and economic matters only.[51] On introducing his first memorandum since meeting his southern counterparts, Faulkner argued that electricity presented an obvious field for co-operation, but concerns were raised by both Bill Craig and Ivan Neil on the possibility of a joint nuclear power station being suggested. Faulkner reassured both that any proposal of that nature could only be completed after the government's current capital spending programme had finished, but in any event he did not foresee it being suggested at all as the committee had a limited remit.[52] The following day, both Faulkner and Childers announced the creation of the Eccles committee and its terms of reference.[53] In introducing such a significant proposal such as this Faulkner had again, by emphasising the limited scope of this project, used a gradualist approach to win over the more cautious elements within the government in beginning the process of electricity co-operation.

2.4 Tourism and the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement

As Lemass formed his new government after the 1961 general election, there were moves between Childers and Faulkner in the area of tourism. On 2 April, both men announced the creation of a new committee, to give advice on ways in which cross-border traffic could be improved. The committee would be comprised of representatives of both Bord Fáilte and NITB. The easement of border traffic made perfect sense, with Northern visitors to the Republic spending £22 million in 1964 and Bord Fáilte arguing that there was still more room for improvement.[54] The announcement of the committee received a very positive response from the hotel and catering industry within Northern Ireland who gave an 'enthusiastic' response to the announcement saying there is an 'outright keenness for borderless traffic points'.[55] Furthermore, with more than half of Northern Ireland's total revenue in tourism coming from the

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South, there was an added impetus to open the southern tourist market further.

In early April, both CIE and UTA began co-operating on ways to open up the tourism market. On 7 April, both companies announced a new ticket to cover travel for a period of 11 days across all of Ireland.[56] This move in simplifying the ticketing system between both bodies encouraged hopes that their counterparts in the tourist boards would be keen to follow up on improving the previous poor relations that existed between the two organisations. On 12 May, W.L. Stephens, Chairman of the NITB, and R.J. Frizzell, Managing Director of Bord Fáilte, met in Dublin to discuss joint activities that would be of mutual benefit to both the boards. Indeed, the meeting concluded with a very 'optimistic and enthusiastic' feeling about the possibilities of co-operation going forward.[57] This optimistic view of the future in co-operation was even highlighted by Brian Faulkner, who in a speech to the Ulster Development Tourist Association, said that he expected Northern Ireland to double its revenue from tourism. Furthermore, he added that he felt, 'we are on the threshold of great development in tourism in Ireland as a whole.'[58] Faulkner was correct in his analysis as both Bord Fáilte and NITB announced at their second meeting on 28 May that they would work together on selling Ireland as a single unit at exhibitions. Furthermore, formal machinery would be set up to co-ordinate the training of staff in both areas.[59] This important announcement by the two tourist boards coincided with the release of figures which showed that during the first five months of 1965 cross-border traffic had increased by 21 per cent.[60]

The announcement by the NITB caused serious political problems for Brian Faulkner, as it had emerged that they had announced the decision to pursue joint exhibitions in advertising but they did not have any authority from the Northern government. Developments like these caused alarm with civil servants and cabinet ministers. In late May, Eric Montgomery, an official in the Government Information Service, wrote to the Cabinet Secretary, Harold Black, arguing for a go slow approach on joint tourist publicity, stating, 'the plain fact is that there is a feeling abroad that we are going too far too fast in our co-operation with the South'.[61] But, Faulkner, as he did with the Eccles committee, sought immediately to assuage concerns by arguing that promoting joint literature would be no danger, providing that it recognised two states on the island and that 'it was a considerable achievement to have persuaded the southern government to agree to this'. Faulkner had, after

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numerous questions from ministers, managed to get the NITB and Bord Fáilte proposals through the cabinet by assuring them he would keep a tighter rein on the NITB and that any literature would be cleared by the Department of Commerce before publication.[62] Like his proposals for co-operation in electricity, Faulkner managed to keep cross-border co-operation moving by adopting an ad hoc approach on tourism, allowing him to get his proposals through a sceptical cabinet.

The proposals over co-operation throughout 1965 had become overshadowed by the trade agreement currently being negotiated between Dublin and London. The Northern government began considering the implications of a free trade agreement in late April. A memorandum prepared by Faulkner on the issue argued, 'my Ministry welcomes the industrial proposals, as they represent, at long last, a chance for our manufacturers to compete on equal terms with the South'. Faulkner continued arguing that the local firms in the North would also have to compete with the larger industries in Britain. In addition to this, he worried that the preferential duties negotiated by various industries in the North would be abolished within the ten-year tariff reduction period envisaged under the terms of the agreement.[63] The cabinet considered Faulkner's memorandum on 28 April and what is striking is the feebleness of their approach. The Minister for Agriculture, Harry West, virtually conceded that on any concessions to the Irish Republic on the agriculture side, the process at this stage was irreversible and that the best that could be hoped for was 'suitable safeguards'. A similar situation existed on the industrial aspects of the negotiations, as the cabinet considered the split in opinion between the purist constitutional position of Unionist MPs at Westminster, who were sceptical about trade with the Irish Republic and the practical business approach of government over the preferential duties given to Northern industries.[64] Kennedy notes the futility of the Stormont government's position during this period, as the British and Irish governments had virtually reached an agreement at this stage.[65] This was illustrated in a letter from the Home Office official, Ronald Guppy, to Harold Black, the Northern Cabinet Secretary, informing him of the decision to proceed with talks at an official level with the Irish Republic on an agreement.[66] Guppy had been liaising with the then Cabinet Secretary, Cecil Bateman, from December 1964 on the possibility of a new agreement with the Republic and the fact that in less than four months both sides had agreed the broad parameters of a possible deal illustrates the desire of the Wilson government to get

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an agreement. Furthermore, it is telling that between December and April, no consultations or updates had been provided to the Northern government. It was, as Harry West was later to complain, as if 'Northern Ireland's interests were of no great account in the bargain which was now likely to be struck'.[67]

The debate over the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement continued throughout the summer of 1965. In late July, Lemass met Wilson in London to put the 'finishing touches' on the new trade agreement. In Belfast, Faulkner publicly stated his support for the possibility of having a free trade agreement, saying, 'the tariff barrier is a one-way business imposed by the South. Anything that will remove it can only be warmly welcomed by us'.[68] Faulkner was clearly putting on an enthusiastic front for the media, as the reality was the Stormont government was in subdued panic over the free trade proposals. Despite the somewhat sceptical view within the cabinet, there was some optimism within Northern Ireland over the prospect of an agreement as an editorial in *Newsletter* argued that a closer integration of the two economies would only benefit Northern Ireland.[69]

In August, Partick Hillery reported to Lemass that he was ready to introduce further tariff reductions on handbags, silencer exhausts and leather watchstraps of Northern origin. He went further, listing other goods such as furniture, footwear and clothing that were currently under consideration but because of the various interests involved it was a time consuming process.[70] On 19 August, H.E. Jones, Secretary of the Northern Department of Commerce, visited JCB MacCarthy in Dublin to discuss the Anglo-Irish Free Trade agreement. In terms of North-South trade, Jones noted from talking to the British Board of Trade that anything that could be done with preferential treatment would have to be made through a unilateral gesture from the Irish government. Jones expressed the hope to have an arrangement that would be a continuation of Northern goods getting preferential treatment from the rest of the UK. Jones stressed that he was speaking only from his department's point of view and conveyed an offer from his minister to Hillery, for a meeting in Belfast to discuss this issue. Moreover, Jones felt it was time that some contacts between the two governments should be made but that the initiative should come from the Republic. All MacCarthy would commit to was conveying the offer to his minister.[71] This was clearly an attempt by Faulkner to give an informal message to the southern government on what he would like to see emerge from possible negotiations with Britain.[72] He had already been discussing with the British government

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whether he could make informal approaches to Dublin on the issue of preferential tariff concessions for the North.

Faulkner's independent approaches to the Republic for closer economic ties during the summer period mirrored the calls coming from business and industrial organisations. A statement published on 1 September by the Irish National Industrial Council advocated closer economic ties with Northern Ireland arguing that counties which bordered Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone would benefit particularly from new industries if closer co-operation was fostered. In addition to this, further meetings were held between the presidents of the Belfast, Dublin and Cork Chambers of Commerce, Irene Calvert, E.C.G. Mulhern and Thomas Doyle, who met in Belfast to discuss the implications of the AIFTA. The President of the Belfast Chamber, linen manufacturer, Irene Calvert, supported the possibility of free trade, saying it would be 'very welcome,' but going further she highlighted the 22.5 per cent duty on linen that was still in place arguing, 'we have got to jump that and it is quite something to jump'.[73] Calvert had good reason to argue for bringing down tariff barriers, as the Northern linen industry in 1964 exported £14.2 million worth of goods to the Republic, which represented an increase of £1.3 million from 1963.[74]

After months of anxiety and debate the new free trade agreement was finally signed by Lemass and Wilson on 14 December. The completion of this agreement was a major triumph for Lemass who had begun the process of opening up trade with Britain. The agreement would see all tariffs eliminated within ten years, with a provision to allow accelerated reduction in goods from Northern Ireland. The agreement would also represent a boost for Ireland's prospects in admission to the EEC. In a moment of self-congratulatory jubilation, Lemass claimed in an interview on BBC Radio, that better relations with Britain would lead in the long term to Irish reunification, while also arguing that his new approach with Stormont had created a new climate of opinion which 'enable us to think further than is now possible'.[75] Despite Lemass' claims, the Northern government welcomed the agreement. However, the statements made by Lemass on the political implications of the treaty received what the *Newsletter* called an 'icy' response from Unionist circles at Stormont.[76] The *Newsletter* believed that Lemass' statements were merely an attempt to pander to public opinion in the Republic, arguing;

> His words should not be taken too seriously but should be judged in the context of placating opinion in his own country. He recognises only too well

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> the difficulties that beset the economy of the Republic ... Once again Ireland sees her destiny linked with that of a larger economic unit.[77]

Despite Lemass' early Republican statements about the political implications of the agreement, Brian Faulkner was still interested in securing preferential treatment for Northern goods. On 16 December, Faulkner announced to the Stormont Parliament, the details of the agreement and its impact on Northern Ireland, but also announced that he would be seeking a meeting in Dublin with Patrick Hillery, to discuss concessions for Northern goods.[78] Lemass was also looking for ways to formalise the trading relationship with Belfast. Before Faulkner visited Hillery to discuss the impact of the agreement, Lemass sought to move away from the hitherto ad hoc approach of the government on tariff reductions for Northern goods. In late December, he wrote to Hillery asking him to 'work out a fairly comprehensive policy rather than proceed as heretofore to respond to individual applications from Six County interests'.[79] Lemass followed this up three days later by making a public announcement of his desire to set up a more formal approach in dealing with tariff reductions for Northern Ireland, instead of dealing with various industries making approaches to the government.[80] In tandem with Lemass, Whitaker also tried to set the agenda within the civil service by asking the Department of Industry and Commerce to take advantage of the new opportunities opened up with the AIFTA and Faulkner's response to it. He argued, 'Mr. Faulkner's initiative is a clear indication that the Northern government wish to take full advantage of the agreement as a whole.' Moreover, noting the change in policy from the previous non-interventionist policy that had been followed on trade since 1961, Whitaker sensed an 'opportunity of making a substantial advance in North-South relations'. He suggested that, in order to build on the good will, the Republic would have to improve upon its previous record on tariff reductions, suggesting the possibility of removing the 'cumbersome' restriction placed on products that were of bona fide Northern origin. Whitaker reminded MacCarthy of Faulkner's complaints to Jack Lynch on the issue earlier in the year. Moreover, Whitaker suggested that if the Republic dropped this provision there was a possibility of getting Northern Ireland's agreement for a joint committee to examine tariff cuts.[81] Yet, on these suggestions, Whitaker would not get a great deal of support from his Civil Service colleagues. JCB MacCarthy responded by stating that these issues were complicated matters and would be considered in the New Year.[82] Almost

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a year after the O'Neill/Lemass summit, most of the important civil servants within the Irish government resisted Whitaker's approaches to shift away from the ad hoc approach in dealing with Northern Ireland in terms of trade.

2.5 1966: crisis of commemoration

As Whitaker attempted to link the AIFTA to improving North-South relations, external pressures on O'Neill would undermine the attempts of both governments to improve relations throughout 1966. The problematic situation surrounding the coinciding of the golden jubilees of the 1916 rising and the Somme, O'Brien notes, undermined the approach towards better relations that had been made throughout 1965. He goes further, highlighting the irreconcilable positions of both the Unionist and nationalist communities, arguing, 'Ulster Protestants, in the summer of 1916, commemorated...the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, when the Ulster division was cut to pieces at Thiepval Wood. From the perspective of those who commemorated these events, the commemorations in Dublin seemed a celebration of treachery.'[83] Both sides' fears and misunderstandings provoked on the unionist side fears of IRA resurgence and on the Irish side a misunderstanding of how their commemoration, which was more about the achievements of contemporary Ireland, rather than a retrospective on the revolutionary aspects of the Rising, would be portrayed north of the border.

O'Donnell sums up the view of the golden jubilee in the North as 'the Stormont government and Unionist community were predominantly opposed to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in Northern Ireland. Attitudes ranged from total contempt to disapproval'.[84] On 2 January, Bill Craig, in a speech to the Central Armagh Unionist Association, stated 'every effort we can command must be summoned up to combat and defeat nationalism and if possible eradicate it from our society'.[85] These hard-line statements coincided with concerns being raised by officials within the government about the tensions being raised over parades celebrating the 1916 rising. In a letter from J.E. Greeves, a Home Affairs official, to the RUC Inspector General, Albert Kennedy, he reported the concerns of his Minister, Brian McConnell, over parades in Coalisland and Dungannon, 'that the feeling is getting so intense that there could well be civil strife'.[86] This potential

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trouble could be avoided should both the parade itself be restricted from passing by a Protestant church and flying the tricolour. There were differing reports from the District Inspector, M.J. Loughlin, in Tyrone who argued that the atmosphere on the ground was not hostile at all and that the general public were, apart from militant Paisleyites, largely indifferent about the parade being held in Coalisland. Moreover, he argued that the best approach was a wait and see policy, urging that the Unionist party or Orange Order put pressure on certain Loyalists in the area causing trouble.[87] However, Loughlin's appeals would be in vain as Orange Lodges and Unionist branches throughout Northern Ireland passed motions condemning the parades which in turn put pressure on Unionist politicians to try and get these parades restricted.[88]

Meanwhile in Dublin, the tenor of the commemoration had a much more unified narrative, which was largely due to the situation that existed in the Republic at that time. As Kehoe notes, 'revisionism was largely unheard of, there was no questioning of the motives of the men of 1916.'[89] When Lemass announced the plans for the commemorations in mid-February, costing £128,000, it is apparent that his view of the celebration was actually not just celebrating the sacrifice of Pearse and Connolly, but also noting the achievements of Irish independence, particularly the advances made throughout his tenure as Taoiseach. Indeed, Lemass himself noted that these commemorations would be emphasising 'pride in the past and our confidence in the future'.[90] Lemass had good reason to feel confident, as Ireland, for the first time since its foundation, saw its population between 1961 and 1966 increase by 2.3 per cent. This was the first ever population increase since the creation of the Irish state in 1922.[91]

What is remarkable about the Republic's entire commemoration is the partitionist nature of it. The event was not seen by Lemass as a chance to affirm old attitudes of national unity, but a chance to effectively turn the page on the past which displayed the divisions that had emerged between northern and southern nationalism. As Daly and O'Callaghan assert, 'what the south wished to jettison by marching over the bridge of commemoration into normal modernity was precisely what northern nationalism needed to hold on to and assert.'[92] Indeed, there is actually a lot of evidence that gives credence to this claim, as Lemass, when asked about Irish reunification and the commemorations, stated that he did not wish to attribute anything to else to the event other than celebrating 1916.[93]

Despite the focus Lemass was trying to give the commemorations in Northern Ireland, pressure from Unionists was being put on the government

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to implement a full ban on 1916 celebrations. The pressure placed by this more conservative element of Unionism had a sizeable impact on how the government decided policy on this issue. Deputations were arriving to both Unionist politicians and the RUC stations, complaining about parades not being banned. In early March, the Minister of Home Affairs, Brian McConnell, set out the government's policy on the issue. The decision made was that, where parades did not cause offence to the local community or would not cause civil disorders, they would be allowed to take place.[94] This compromise did not quell the discontent among the ranks of Unionism. The tensions around the parades continued in the weeks after McConnell's announcement. In places like Moneymore, County Derry, RUC officers reported that there was a real threat of physical force from Loyalists, should the parades take place.[95] In addition to this, the Orange Order passed a resolution asking O'Neill to curtail demonstrations throughout the North.[96] O'Neill, during this period, had to avoid not just the civil disorder that could break out as a result of the parades taking place, but he also had to take into consideration the fears that were building up over a possible resurgence of the IRA. These fears were exacerbated in the wake of Nelson's Pillar being blown up in Dublin. There was also the image of Northern Ireland in Britain, should a blanket ban be introduced on parades.[97] Even though it appeared that O'Neill did pander to this pressure by banning trains from Dublin over the Easter weekend, the reality was this only affected one train service and overall the Easter celebrations passed off peacefully. O'Neill's policy was vindicated, which allowed him to boast of his triumph to the Unionist Party Conference the following week saying 'the peace was kept, to the great disappointment of our enemies everywhere. All that happened was that Republicanism exposed more clearly than ever its total moral bankruptcy'.[98] In this speech, O'Neill made no mention of the extremists within Unionism who were really the source of his political problems throughout the entire period and the significance of this speech is that it illustrates how unprepared O'Neill was for what came next from hard-line Unionism. However, O'Neill did face problems on the nationalist side of politics as he would now have to contend with an enhanced source of pressure in Gerry Fitt. The UK General Election on 31 March saw Fitt defeat Jim Kilfedder for the Westminster seat of West Belfast. The significance of this result is noted by Ryder who states that Fitt's arrival at Westminster had;

> in fact, discomforted the Unionists far more than he could ever have imagined ... for years before hand the Unionist parliamentary party, bolstered by almost total Westminster disinterest, had sheltered behind the convention

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> and had used its position to promote Northern Ireland's interests narrowly as it suited them.[99]

2.6 Co-operation and extremism

The ministerial contacts throughout 1966 were largely overshadowed by the commemorations but there were still meetings between Northern and Southern ministers during this period. In early January, co-operation in tourism forged ahead. The UTA, Bord Fáilte and British Travel Association agreed to co-operate on a publicity tour of North America, which included a joint travel brochure aimed at bringing tourists to Ireland and Britain.[100] In the area of trade, Faulkner and Patrick Hillery attended a meeting of junior chambers of commerce which comprised representatives from both North and South, and where both ministers reaffirmed their desire to see the tariff barriers come down quickly.[101] The optimistic mood about the direction in which co-operation was going was highlighted by the *Newsletter*;

> The pace of co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic is showing every sign of acceleration. Yesterday Dr. Hillery...came to Belfast and met Mr. Faulkner and further talks between them on improving trade... are planned to take place this summer. Later this month Mr. Faulkner is to go to Dublin to help launch an Ulster tourist drive in the Republic...these are all fruitful fields for joint working between the two parts of the country.[102]

Throughout April, Hillery drafted proposals for a new approach in dealing with tariff cuts for Northern goods. On 13 April, a memorandum was drafted by the Department of Industry and Commerce outlining a more comprehensive policy on tariff cuts. Hillery argued for cuts on as wide a basis as possible on industrial goods from the North. Furthermore, he argued that from 1 July, the import duty on Northern goods should be reduced by 20 per cent and this should be followed up by four further reductions over four years of 10 per cent per year. In order to speed up the process of reducing tariffs, Hillery argued against consulting industry and that following discussions with Brian Faulkner, he should have the power to amend the list of items that might be excluded from the cuts in tariffs.[103] By June, the Department of Finance was briefing the government that the British administration approved of the concessions proposed, although tariffs

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on fisheries would be increased to protect the domestic market.[104] The Department of Agriculture had raised its concerns with Whitaker five months earlier and while Whitaker did not get the all island trade committee he had advocated in January, he did get a more formalised procedure set up in trade with a plan to make further cuts over the next four years. At last, the Irish government was finally beginning to depart from its previous ad hoc approach. Despite the progress made by the Irish government, the response from Faulkner over the limited nature of the cuts gave Whitaker's earlier protestations about furthering concessions some vindication. When Faulkner met Hillery in mid June to discuss the proposed cuts from the government he announced that, 'I told Dr. Hillery that I was very disappointed that his government was not able to make worthwhile reductions'. He went further outlining his problems with the limited nature of the concessions 'while 20 per cent sounds good, the reduction applies only to a limited range of our goods already bearing a high tariff, so that it will not give much scope for us to get into the markets in the south'.[105]

Further progress was made in the area of electricity as the Eccles committee produced its recommendations. The committee argued that interconnection between the two states was a worthwhile economic pursuit, with an estimated saving of £200,600 per year. The Minister of Transport and Power, Erskine Childers, recommended the report's acceptance by the government and that the ESB be given authority to enter into discussions with the Northern authorities to get implementation underway. The only objection raised was by Frank Aiken, who worried about the use of 'Republic of Ireland' in the report.[106] In Belfast, Faulkner was submitting the proposals of the committee to the cabinet for consideration. Faulkner as with all other matters of co-operation, sought to appeal to the cabinet's sceptical nature arguing that 'while the interconnection of the two systems would make a small part of Northern Ireland's requirements dependent on efficient management of the supply in the Republic there was no reason to believe that this would constitute undue risk'.[107] He went further giving the cabinet a veto over the final agreement that would be negotiated with the Irish government. Faulkner's ad hoc approach had worked again, as the government accepted the proposals made in the report. By the end of June, department officials in both Northern and Southern departments were contacting each other over both when the report would be published and how its recommendations were to be implemented.[108]

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As the summer period approached, O'Neill continued to face problems, as the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland would overshadow and hinder any attempts to further co-operation between Northern and Southern Ireland. The tensions began to rise in early June, when Ian Paisley led 500 protestors to the Presbyterian General Assembly to protest about the 'Romanising' of the church. As the march proceeded through the nationalist Cromac Square, rioting broke out, resulting in an RUC baton charge to disperse the crowd.[109] The following day, O'Neill, who was in London when the riot broke out, condemned the violence and announced stricter rules on religious processions taking place. Still, Paisley remained unrepentant, accusing O'Neill of 'dictatorial' action in restricting parades.[110] The primary concern in this instance for O'Neill was Northern Ireland's image both in London and around the world. This was illustrated in his first real attack on Paisley in Stormont on 15 June, where he stated:

> we like to encourage the world's press and television to visit us...but the spotlight of publicity now being turned upon us is not concerned with our buoyant economy...it is concerned with the activities of a man who seems determined to make sure that the outside world will think of Ulster mainly as the place of the protest march.[111]

O'Neill was right to be worried about Northern Ireland's image, as newspapers from the *New York Times*[112] to the *Adelaide Sunday Mail*[113] carried stories about Paisley and the domestic trouble that was going on throughout the province. Moreover, even Paisley's imprisonment in July served, as O'Callaghan and O'Donnell note, to only strengthen his support and cause further domestic disturbances throughout the North.[114]

Despite the trouble being caused by Paisley, another group on the Unionist side was to emerge in late June that would, like Republicans earlier in the year, hark back to former heroes of their ideology. On 26 June, an 18-year-old Peter Ward was murdered on Malvern Street by a group named after the old paramilitary group set up by Edward Carson in 1912, called the Ulster Volunteer Force. The killing provoked almost universal criticism. O'Neill, who was in France, rushed home to Belfast and on 28 June, announced that the UVF was now an illegal organisation. He stated, 'we stand at the crossroads. One road is the road of progress...the other way is a return to pointless violence and civil strife.'[115] O'Neill was caught off guard as his government had spent the previous six months being completely preoccupied with the IRA and ignored

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the extremists within the Unionist community who had been emerging as a real threat throughout the golden jubilee of the 1916 rising. A very poignant editorial from the *Newsletter* during this period illustrates both the anger at the killing but also the fear that more people were getting involved in extremist movements. It argued;

> Recent armed attacks in Belfast have led, with a tragic inevitability, to a killing. The gun in the hands of private citizens can lead nowhere else. It is a truth which must be learned anew in Northern Ireland and acted upon. The time has come for the government and the people to call a halt to a drift of events that, unchecked, can only take the city and Province back to a period that lingers like a nightmare.[116]

As the Stormont government clamped down on parades, as a result of the continual rise in tensions, there was still support for co-operation with the Republic. In early July, the Minister of Development, Bill Craig, announced the completion of an agreement with the Irish Department of Transport on a one-year freight licensing agreement, which would make it easier for hauliers to cross the border.[117] Furthermore, during the 12 July celebrations, Unionist ministers Harry West, Bill Craig and Herbert Kirk all praised the O'Neill-Lemass meetings and the furthering of co-operation with the Republic.[118] A similar message was advocated by the *Newsletter,* which argued that the ministerial meetings 'have been valuable in opening up new and profitable contacts and it is still for Captain O'Neill and his colleagues to meet their counterparts in the south whenever the economic interests of Northern Ireland demand it'.[119] Even though this co-operation was advocated by the political establishment, the worsening trouble still had a detrimental effect on cross-border co-operation, as evidenced by T.K. Whitaker, in late July, telling Nicholas Nolan that it was not desirable for him to visit Belfast at the present time.[120] The remarkable aspect of Whitaker's concerns is highlighted by Kennedy, who notes, 'it was the first time probably since the late 1950s, and definitely since January 1965, when it was judged too sensitive for North-South contacts'.[121]

As the summer ended, the O'Neill Cabinet began examining proposals suggested by the three tourist bodies in April for a new tourist brochure for the American market. Faulkner reported the delay in issuing a joint brochure was over disagreements in wording between the two states, but felt that if the brochure was to be available for the 1967 tourist season then there could be no further delay. The Chief Whip, James Chichester-Clark,

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argued for further changes such as emphasis on the two parts of Ireland, as well as references to Derry and Belfast airports. Faulkner agreed to the possibility of further amendments to the brochure, and on that basis the cabinet gave him the approval to proceed.[122] Faulkner had already gained some concessions from the Republic over the use of the border in maps but that the additional amendments to North and South in the travel brochure would most likely be met with opposition from the Republic; tourism at this juncture had hit a stumbling block.

Following the publication of the Eccles report on 15 September and its positive reception both north and south, troubles within the Unionist party again overshadowed the proposals for co-operation as O'Neill faced leadership problems. The challenge came about through a motion signed by at least 12 members of the parliamentary party, claiming that O'Neill did not have support within the party or the province. O'Neill's position, however, was bolstered by the cabinet rallying round his leadership and also key figures like Lord Brookeborough supporting him. Indeed, O'Neill took a combative attitude toward the rebels, going on BBC and UTV the night before the party vote saying, 'I intend to tell the discontents that I have absolutely no intention of fulfilling their wishes.'[123] On 27 September, O'Neill won a clear victory of 30 votes to one in favour of his leadership and proclaimed after the meeting 'the Unionist party is now a united party'. He promised that there would be closer liaison between the government and backbenchers going forward. O'Neill's presidential leadership had obviously been an issue of dissent at the meeting. On the issue of North-South relations, he argued that too much significance had been attributed to the meetings in the first instance by the press. Moreover, he argued that if both sides resorted to hatred over a policy of friendly relations, then it would be difficult to make any positive advance.[124] O'Neill had reaffirmed his desire to continue with the North-South dialogue. However, O'Neill had problems as Ian Paisley was due to be released from prison in October and the threat from extremism still loomed. Also, O'Neill was quick to brush off an issue that got minor coverage throughout the first half of 1966, but nonetheless would ultimately dominate the next two years of his Premiership; local government reform.

Conclusion

The contrasts in the approaches of O'Neill, who followed a much more elitist approach in pursuing meetings with the Republic, and Faulkner,

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who followed a more transparent approach is critical in understanding Unionist response to the summit. As O'Neill prepared for a sizeable shift in government policy, he only kept close advisors aware about his meeting with Lemass and never properly defined any real policy objective for meeting, aside from the platitude of building bridges. He isolated himself from his party and allowed sceptics like Paisley and Porter to sow seeds of suspicion about his intentions. On the other hand, Faulkner, who not only made public his intentions, briefed his colleagues and defined clear policy objectives to be achieved gradually, avoided the political mistakes that O'Neill was making.

At a ministerial level there were some real advances; the areas of tourism, electricity and transport, in particular, had made real progress. Faulkner, Hillery and Childers had led the way, illustrating what could be achieved by both states working together. Moreover, the impact of these meetings spurred on many sections of industry to link up with their counterparts across the border, to make joint proposals for co-operation. The Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement had a considerable impact on hastening both the summit between O'Neill and Lemass, as well as bringing the two states closer together on trade, allowing civil servants like Whitaker to argue for accelerated tariff reductions for Northern goods. The ad hoc approach to cross-border co-operation adopted by the Irish government in 1961 still persisted over a year after the summit, as important civil servants resisted Whitaker's attempts to achieve more formalised co-operation with Northern Ireland.

The politics of North-South relations was not immune from political pressures that would emerge. The impact of the coincidence of the Golden Jubilees of the 1916 Rising and the Somme undermined the benefits of co-operation, as well as overshadowing the substantive proposals that came from bodies like the Eccles committee. The pressure placed on the government by conservative Unionists forced O'Neill to take measures like sealing the border. Moreover, it created the environment where ministers like Bill Craig would begin to use more hard-line language on defeating Nationalism. These internal pressures had a detrimental impact on the expansion of cross-border co-operation, as evidenced by Whitaker's refusal to go to Northern Ireland due to security concerns.

The debate about whether the summits achieved any real change in relations needs to be approached by separating the changing ideological perspectives in Ireland, from the implementation of successful cross-border programmes that brought mutual benefit to the entire island. It should be noted in all of the editorials in the Unionist *Newsletter* or

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the various Unionist ministers' cross-border proposals, it was never argued that a new rapprochement with the Republic was the desired objective; the objective for the Unionist government was working on practical matters of co-operation for mutual benefit of both states. By September 1966, co-operation in this regard had slowed, largely due to O'Neill's leadership problems and the rise of extremism within Northern Ireland. These issues, however, would be sidelined in the months ahead as O'Neill moved to reassert his leadership. There would also be change in the Republic as Lemass announced his retirement at the end of 1966.

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37 *Irish Times*, 28 January 1965.
38 *Department of Commerce Memorandum,* 27 January 1965, COM/58/1/158.
39 *Childers to Lemass,* 27 January 1965, NAI DT 98/6/429.
40 *Childers to Lemass*, 5 February 1965, NAI DT 98/6/429.
41 *Memorandum on meeting between Faulkner and Lynch*, 4 February 1965, NAI DT 98/6/430.
42 *Newsletter*, 5 February 1965.
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44 *Irish Press*, 5 February 1965.
45 Iveagh House was the headquarters of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.
46 *Meeting between Lemass and O'Neill*, 10 February 1965, NAI DT 98/6/430.
47 *Newsletter*, 9 February 1965.
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56 *Newsletter,* 8 April 1965.
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3

Co-operation Falters: The Politics of North-South Relations: 1966–68

Abstract: *McCann begins this chapter with the resignation of Sean Lemass and his successor Jack Lynch. The change in leadership in Dublin helped create a policy vacuum on North-South co-operation which was ultimately filled by rhetoric on Irish unity. The rising tensions between the two states put real pressure on a fragile relationship between the two states. During this period, McCann highlights that co-operation in a number of areas stalled and by early 1968, effectively ended due to increasing tensions and the weakened positions of both Premiers.*

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> This is all very well, but we can't have too much of this.[1]
>
> Brian Faulkner speaking about the opening of the new Aer Lingus office in Belfast in February 1967

North-South relations at the end of 1966 had largely stalled as a result of the political instability within Northern Ireland, as civil servants from the Republic felt it was unsafe to make visits to Belfast to discuss proposals on co-operation due to the level of sectarian violence. As more conservative Unionists attempted to destabilise O'Neill's leadership, it became politically difficult for a further summit with the Taoiseach to materialise. Despite the political pressures on O'Neill, aspects of co-operation between civil servants and cabinet ministers did proceed in areas such as electricity and tourism, proving that co-operation could withstand some political turbulence. Nevertheless, O'Neill would have to deal with a new Taoiseach, as Jack Lynch succeeded Seán Lemass in November 1966.

3.1 Lynch takes over

In examining Lynch's background, there is a striking similarity with O'Neill in that both were somewhat aloof from the mainstream of their parties. O'Neill was raised outside of Northern Ireland which liberated him from many of the political shibboleths within Unionism. Similarly, Lynch was not born into a typical Fianna Fáil family as his cabinet colleague, Pádraig Faulkner, noted, 'as Taoiseach and as a relatively new leader of the Fianna Fáil party, Jack Lynch faced an extremely difficult task. He was the first Fianna Fáil leader not to have had any involvement, personal or family, with the struggle for Irish independence or with the Civil war.'[2] In an interview after he stepped down as Taoiseach, Lynch noted that it was his father, Dan, who had the greatest influence on his politics and that his father was neither a supporter of Eamon deValera or Michael Collins, but the nationalist politician William O'Brien.[3] O'Brien's approach of co-operation and consent over militant republicanism would become the hallmark of Lynch's approach in dealing with Northern Ireland throughout his time as Taoiseach.[4]

While Lynch may have been lacking some of the Republican credentials of his predecessor, his background on co-operation with Northern Ireland was probably aside from Erskine Childers, the most progressive

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and dynamic in the cabinet. In an address to the Dáil on becoming Taoiseach, he aimed to continue with Lemass' friendly relations policy, saying, 'I intend to promote actively the policy of good relations and a spirit of co-operation with Northern Ireland'.[5] Although, Kennedy notes that while Lynch had excellent administrative skills, he did not have the knowledge or overview of Northern policy that Lemass had, which left him unlikely to breakout with new thinking or fresh ideas to further co-operation with Northern Ireland.[6] It was these limitations in Lynch's mindset that provoked him to reaffirm the old platitude of Irish Unity when speaking about cross-border co-operation, saying, 'our aim is the re-unification of the Irish people...a reunification based on agreement and mutual toleration'.[7]

Lynch's linking co-operation with Irish unity would have direct impact on the policy options of the Unionist government, as many Unionists within Northern Ireland had become distrustful of the co-operation process. In late October, a leading member of the Bernagh Unionist Association, James Gregg, wrote to the new Minister for Home Affairs, Bill Craig, complaining about aspects of the co-operation in electricity with the Irish government. Gregg worried that the Republic's real purpose in co-operating with Northern Ireland was Irish reunification. Moreover, he noted a worrying trend from a local branch meeting when the issue of co-operation in electricity came up that 'every man in the hall was against such a thing, they all said there was too many links already with the Republic'.[8] Despite attempts by Faulkner to reassure the sceptical members of the association that co-operation with the Republic did not touch upon political issues, Gregg still reported the fears among the members that co-operation would ultimately lead to Northern Ireland being absorbed into the Republic.[9] He also noted that leading members of the Fermanagh and Derry Unionist Associations shared the view that no further co-operation with the Republic should take place.[10] As certain elements of Unionism became more hostile towards co-operation, it left O'Neill too weak to consider meeting Lynch immediately. As the change from Lemass to Lynch sparked off debate around when O'Neill would meet Lynch, the *Newsletter* delivered an editorial on Lynch's first press conference as Taoiseach, welcoming his desire to continue with Lemass' policy of friendly relations. The editorial went further, commenting on how Lynch's protestations limited the opportunities for the Unionist government to pursue co-operation, stating, 'at the same time the field for fruitful negotiation is severely limited. The new Prime Minister has

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shown his awareness of the fact in agreeing that his country's aspirations provide an obstacle so far as the people of Northern Ireland are concerned'. The editorial, aware of the growing scepticism among some Unionists about the cross-border initiatives, gave a warning to O'Neill to remove the secrecy around cross-border summits, arguing, 'in any cross-border negotiations on which he (O'Neill) may embark he must carry with him the full sanction of his colleagues in the cabinet and the party'.[11] What is striking about this editorial, compared to the one written two years previously about the North-South summit, is a marked lack of enthusiasm for such a summit taking place. Furthermore, the main purpose of this editorial appears to have been setting down markers for O'Neill on how to proceed in organising a meeting with Lynch.

But also, more worrying for the co-operation process, certain aspects of the old approach of diplomacy via press release between the two states was beginning to creep back in the relationship. On 12 December at a symposium on North-South relations, the Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, launched a bitter attack on the Unionist government arguing that people should work to expose the inequalities that existed in local government and employment within Northern Ireland. In addition to this, Lenihan added that the British government was now taking an active interest in removing these discriminatory practices which the nationalist community were operating under.[12] The response from O'Neill dismissed Lenihan's claims about the need for reform, claiming his government had never opposed reform where it was necessary and dismissing Lenihan's attack as a politically motivated, unwarranted intrusion into the affairs of Northern Ireland.[13]

As Lynch went into his first meeting with Wilson, relations between the two states were beginning to deteriorate as the Irish side attempted to balance pushing for discrimination to be ended with better relations with the Unionist government. There was hope that some progress could be made, as Bill Craig declared in mid-December that he had an open mind on reform of the local government franchise.[14] It was this belief in reform being introduced voluntarily by Stormont, rather than forcing it upon them, that left Northern Ireland off the agenda at the first meeting between Lynch and Wilson. At a press conference following the meeting, Lynch took the opportunity to speak about North-South relations stating his desire to create a better atmosphere between the two states. Going further, he also spoke of his desire to meet O'Neill saying, 'at a propitious time I would hope to have another meeting with Captain O'Neill. For my

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point, I have no inhibitions about meeting Capt O'Neill either in Dublin or in Belfast.'[15] The *Newsletter* praised Lynch's sentiments on improving North-South relations, arguing that Lynch's readiness to meet O'Neill in either Belfast or Dublin showed a 'co-operative spirit'.[16]

As events moved into 1967, the field for co-operation was increasingly limited as the only noteworthy co-operation was between civil servants like T.K. Whitaker and Cecil Bateman, over exchanging information between both states respective economic councils.[17] Nevertheless, these instances of co-operation were overshadowed, as O'Neill prepared to meet Harold Wilson and reaffirm his leadership after the difficulties he faced in 1966, with detrimental impact on cross-border co-operation. In early January, rumours abounded that a decision to invite Lynch to Stormont was imminent, with reports appearing in some newspapers. The response from the Unionist government was swift and decisive, as a spokesman said, 'the report is complete nonsense. No such decision is being taken and the matter is not being discussed...there is no prospect of any such meeting taking place in the near future.'[18] The damage inflicted by Lenihan's speech was evident as the Unionist party secretary, J.O. Baillie, argued against such a meeting in view of Lenihan's intransigent comments the previous November.[19] The *Newsletter* followed a similar line of argument, stating that there was no place in any cross-border talks for issues surrounding partition and, again, repeating its warning to O'Neill that any further talks with the Republic must be sanctioned by the cabinet.[20] The sceptical response from usually positive sources illustrate that the initial enthusiasm generated through the various meetings between both governments was beginning to wane going into 1967. Furthermore, the reaction of the Irish government towards Stormont's refusal to host a meeting highlights that Dublin was aware of O'Neill's precarious position, with reports that Lynch was content to wait until a time that was 'politically convenient' for O'Neill before seeking a meeting.[21]

The first statement O'Neill would make on North-South relations in 1967 would come on 7 January to the Armagh Unionist Association. During the speech, O'Neill claimed that he had put two objectives at the forefront of Unionist policy. First, the proclamation abroad that Ulster's destiny was inextricably linked to the UK, and second, that a friendly relationship with the Republic was not detrimental to Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom. Obviously aware of the discontent among some border Unionists about aspects of his co-operation policy and the protest outside the meeting being conducted by Ian Paisley, he

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began by attempting to reassure the membership, stating, 'I can assure you that co-operation in practical matters does not mean and will not mean allowing politicians or others from the Republic to meddle in our domestic affairs'. O'Neill went further attacking Lenihan's speech, stating that a united Ireland would not meet the needs of the modern world and in language reminiscent of his predecessor he stated, 'we will not have it. Our decision to remain part of the United Kingdom is irrevocable'.[22] O'Neill was clearly trying to shore up his support against Paisleyite criticism, ahead of a difficult summit with Wilson which would take place five days later.

O'Neill travelled to London with his colleagues, Brian Faulkner and Bill Craig, to meet Wilson, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins and Minister of State Alice Bacon. The meeting began with Wilson saying that the reforms announced by Stormont in December were a 'move in the right direction'. However, he quickly moved the discussion onto the local government franchise and what Stormont intended to do about it. Craig attempted to prevaricate, arguing that while a review of local government was ongoing, a change in the franchise could not be implemented. Bacon brought up a report from the NILP, which highlighted comments from Craig over the desirability of maintaining the present franchise system; Wilson noted further problems with allegations of discrimination in jobs and housing, to which O'Neill argued that there was a tendency to exaggerate such claims. Wilson, clearly exasperated, set out the political difficulties he faced within his own party, with around 150 MPs within his own party who were actively involved in campaigning for reform. In addition to this, Wilson railed against the obstructionist attitude of the Unionist MPs at Westminster regularly voting on issues which did not affect Northern Ireland.[23]

As the meeting came to an end, Wilson softened his approach, thanking the delegation for submitting 'patiently to much probing on matters which were their affair'. But, he was determined to leave the Northern delegation under no illusions of the consequences of refusing to listen to the British government which he told them;

> could expose Northern Ireland to a number of undesirable consequences; there would be first pressure from Labour members on finance and then the question of Northern Ireland matters being discussed at Westminster would also automatically arise since the Labour back-bench would insist despite the devolution of powers Westminster had at least an indirect responsibility for what took place in Northern Ireland.[24]

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The following week, O'Neill briefed his colleagues on Wilson's pressure for reform. He spoke of Craig's lengthy interrogation over local government reform and to his surprise the continuing reference to Unionist MPs at Westminster.[25] Prince argues that part of O'Neill's rationale for choosing to bring Faulkner and Craig to the meeting with Wilson was a calculation on O'Neill's part to see both men relax their resistance towards reform if they witnessed first-hand Wilson's pressure.[26] Yet, if this was part of O'Neill's strategy, then this cabinet meeting would illustrate how badly he had miscalculated. Faulkner reiterated Wilson's threats about financial sanctions and voting rights of Northern Irish MPs, but still concluded on the issue of 'one man, one vote' that 'at some stage it might be necessary for the Northern Ireland government to make it clear that it did not accept this principle'.[27] Craig followed a similar obstructionist line, arguing that the current position on the local government franchise could be defended as long as the restructuring of local government continued. Kennedy argues that in this meeting, the Northern Ireland ministers were in a state of panic over Wilson's threats.[28] Yet, aside from W.K. Fitzsimmons, Minister of Development and Herbert Kirk, Minister for Finance, there seemed to be more focus among the big personalities in the cabinet on how to slow down, not accelerate, the pace of reform. The sense of little being achieved from the Wilson meeting on reform is reflected by the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association just two weeks after the Wilson meeting.[29]

Wilson would pile more pressure on O'Neill in what was perhaps an unintentional way that would damage North-South relations. At a Council of Europe Assembly in Strasbourg, Wilson was asked about Irish unity in the context of entering the Common Market. Wilson's answer linked cross-border meetings with advancing Irish unity as he said, 'I have been encouraged by recent events, such as the O'Neill-Lemass meeting, but the problem of unity is a problem for the people of Ireland and nobody would be happier than the British, if the Irish could find a solution.'[30] The response from Unionism was instant as Unionist MP for South Belfast, Rafton Pounder, who according to news reports following Wilson's statement, rose immediately to challenge him.[31] If Wilson's statement was ill-timed and ill-judged, then the Irish government's response to it would make matters worse, as the Irish Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, gave a statement welcoming Wilson's remarks on unity.[32] The response from O'Neill came a week later as he told Stormont, 'while I share his (Wilson) wish for a better relationship

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between the Irish Republic and ourselves, I must reiterate that an acceptance of this same principle would constitute the greatest possible contribution to such a relationship.' The principle O'Neill was referring to was the Irish government's territorial claim on Northern Ireland. He argued, 'it is the continuing refusal of successive Dublin governments to accept this principle and the foundation of plain fact upon which it is based, which constitutes any real Irish problem which exists today.'[33]

Outside of the Belfast-London-Dublin relationship, other aspects of cross-border relations were hitting stumbling blocks. The Northern Ireland Railway network was suffering from a loss of £200,000 per year and in an effort to affect savings, the Stormont government attempted to cut back on existing services. W.K. Fitzsimmons, Minister for Development, announced that a single line track would be introduced from Belfast to Goraghwood, just outside Newry, County Down, in order to achieve savings of £17,000 per year. In addition to this, Fitzsimmons gave a commitment to improve the road to Dublin, by linking Newry with the M1. However, it would be years before this would be completed.[34] The decision to reduce capacity on the Belfast-Dublin railway line caused alarm in the Irish Republic as Erskine Childers, Irish Minister for Transport and Power, told the Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Group that the decision might cause delays on the line.[35] The General Manager of CIE, Frank Lemass, was more forthright in his criticism of the decision, arguing while transport authorities in both states had to look at economic concerns, the reduction in parts of the Belfast-Dublin line he believed can along be regarded as a 'retrograde step'.[36] Relations between the two transport bodies, which had typically been very good, had soured as economic pressures hit cross-border services.

Further problems emerged within North-South relations as the pressure continued to mount on O'Neill. As always, when O'Neill was under pressure politically, he reverted to harsher language when talking about co-operation with the Irish government. In Stormont, the Nationalist MP, Patrick Gormley, asked O'Neill about Wilson's statements on Irish Unity in Strasbourg and accused the Unionist party of not having enough confidence in O'Neill to discuss constitutional issues in a meeting with Lynch. O'Neill responded by reaffirming the current parameters of cross-border dialogue which focused exclusively on economic issues and that a 'constant reiteration of outworn anti-partition sentiment makes no contribution to that process whatever'. O'Neill concluded by arguing that Northern Ireland existed with the majority support of the people

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dismissing Irish unity as 'sentimental nonsense'.[37] This would continue to be the problem going forward for O'Neill as people from Wilson to Gormley constantly linked cross-border meeting with the possibility of Irish unity.

The following day at a cabinet meeting, Faulkner informed his colleagues that he would be meeting his Irish counterpart, George Colley, to discuss tariff reductions. O'Neill followed Faulkner, telling his ministers that he was becoming 'increasingly embarrassed' at the constant speculation around when he would meet Lynch. Faulkner argued that he could not see any real political embarrassment in a meeting. The type of meeting discussed by the cabinet would involve a more transparent process with a prior announcement of the meeting, in order to avoid the criticism levied at the Lemass summit. The timing of the summit was also canvassed, with winter or spring emerging as the least controversial politically times of the year to hold such a meeting. Although, disagreement over whether the meeting should focus on substantive issues or merely be a social event split the cabinet and the Leader of the House, James Chichester-Clark, thought that the time was not right for Lynch to visit Belfast arguing that it might unsettle the country and the Unionist party.[38] This cabinet meeting is evidence of the paralysis that existed at the beginning of 1967 in North-South relations, but it also represented a different approach by O'Neill, canvassing opinion of his colleagues well in advance of a possible meeting with Lynch.

3.2 The most normal thing in the world

The first joint ministerial meeting of 1967 took place in early February between Faulkner and George Colley, Minister for Industry and Commerce. Faulkner's primary aim was to achieve greater tariff reductions on goods from Northern Ireland as there was a trade deficit of £11 million with the Republic.[39] During the meeting, both ministers agreed that separate discussions should take place with industrialists on both sides of the border as a preliminary step to tariff cuts. On the issue of whether he could give any concessions to Faulkner, Colley being more conservative than his predecessor refused to offer anything concrete only agreeing to more discussions on further concessions. The only direct result from the meeting was a reduction from 30 per cent to 20 per cent on carpets entering the Republic. Colley's approach of limiting

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tariff concessions would prove to be the hallmark of co-operation in trade throughout the next two years. The reaction to this limited concession by Northern carpet manufacturers illustrates how much enthusiasm had been lost in the co-operation process, as they said, 'we feel that the Minister of Commerce to have accepted anything less than complete abolition of duty does a grave injustice'.[40] Despite the lack of tangible results from the meeting, Faulkner said that it had been worthwhile and that he hoped Lynch would visit Belfast, claiming that it would be 'the most normal thing in the world'. Faulkner's comments helped reignite speculation about when an eventual summit would take place between O'Neill and Lynch. An editorial in the *Newsletter* argued that;

> There will an early meeting between the Prime Minister, Captain O'Neill and the Taoiseach Mr Jack Lynch. Mr Faulkner has said so. We are now beyond the phase of idle speculation in this particular serial...Now that the decision is firm let the two Premiers get on with it. Let them make the event the most natural thing in the world of which Mr Faulkner spoke in Dublin the other day. If that is to be the way of it and it should be then a slow long build up can only be harmful, ludicrous too.[41]

While it may have just been a standard throw away comment, Faulkner had been present at the cabinet meeting just two days before this and knew that there was no such decision taken over when to hold and what should be discussed at a possible meeting with Lynch. Moreover, at the end of that cabinet meeting, Faulkner noted that constant speculation around a possible summit could cause O'Neill mounting embarrassment.[42]

Further co-operation happened throughout February, as Aer Lingus' new Belfast office was opened by Erskine Childers and Belfast's Lord Mayor, W.D. Geddis. While Childers was in Belfast, he met Faulkner for an informal lunch where Childers proclaimed their complete agreement over extending North-South relations.[43] Yet, trouble was brewing under the surface about co-operation in the area of electricity. In a press conference after meeting Colley and Faulkner discussed the level of opposition within Northern Ireland on improving relations with the Republic, claiming that 'he had never come across any kind of difficulty in Northern Ireland with regard to North-South co-operation'.[44] He had spoken too soon as the South Antrim Unionist MP, Sir Knox Cunningham, wrote an open letter to Cabinet Secretary, Sir Harold Black, complaining about the focus of the Eccles Committee on just cross-border electricity issues.[45] In the letter, Cunningham asked why no consideration was being given

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to a link with Scotland which, in his view, offered better terms for the province. He went further, worrying about the political implications of Northern Ireland becoming dependent on the Irish Republic, listing the various references to Irish unity made by Lynch and Frank Aiken and asked that further study be carried out on electricity links between Northern Ireland and Scotland.[46]

The response from Black was generally dismissive of Cunningham's warnings on the growing hostility among Unionists over co-operation, arguing, 'the government has no evidence that the grave anxiety in South Antrim to which you refer is widely shared in the province generally'. On the concerns that Northern Ireland would be overly dependent on the Republic for electricity supply, he used a statement by Faulkner claiming 'that Northern Ireland would not under the proposed arrangements be dependent upon the Republic for part of its firm demand for electricity'. Black also sought to rebut the political concerns set out in Cunningham's letter, arguing that;

> The Minister of Commerce and the Government feel that this wholly practicable and financially beneficial measure of co-operation involves no political risk whatever. Links similar to that proposed already exist between other European countries of totally dissimilar political outlook.[47]

Cunningham's response to Black illustrates how public statements were damaging to the cross-border co-operation process, with a direct reference to a recent statement by Faulkner to the Derry Unionist Association attacking statements made by Lynch and other members of his government over the issue of partition.[48] Cunningham argued that, despite Black's arguments, Faulkner regarded electricity co-operation as a politically neutral aspect of co-operation and his recent statements in Derry 'showed a change in attitude'.[49] In this instance, Faulkner's more conservative pronouncements on co-operation had given heart to more hawkish Unionists to persist in their opposition to the government's policy on co-operating with the Irish Republic. As the *Newsletter* reported that the chances of a summit between Lynch and O'Neill had 'sharply receded'[50] in light of Faulkner's attack on Lynch, it can be seen how damaging these kind of politically driven speeches were on relations between the two states.

Outside of the divisions within unionism, the political environment continued to deteriorate, with discrimination becoming a more prevalent issue. In late April, a group of British Labour MPs issued a report on

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discrimination in Northern Ireland which was followed up by a feature article in the *Times* on the same topic.[51] Lynch was coming under pressure in the Dáil to put ending discrimination as a pre-condition for his first meeting with O'Neill.[52] But, more worrying for Lynch was that the tone of language directed at the Unionist government was becoming hard line. An editorial in the *Irish Press* attacked O'Neill, stating;

> Since he became Premier Captain O'Neill has been talking about changing the image of the Unionist party. But more than a face-lift is needed to transform Northern affairs. The change must be reflected in action against discrimination, against privilege and the canker of bigotry.

But going further, the editorial commented on the problems within Northern Ireland, generally arguing 'the six counties is a sick society because it is an unreal political entity ... it is not merely out of step but out of touch with modern democracy.'[53]

O'Neill's primary concern during this period was not attacks from the Republic, but from within his own party, as he sacked his Minister for Agriculture, Harry West, after a Lands Tribunal investigated him for the purchase of land from him by Fermanagh County Council. The West dismissal provoked a public leadership battle and exposed the deep divisions within the Unionist party. The Fermanagh Unionist Association passed a motion condemning the smear campaign against West and voting no confidence in O'Neill continuing as Prime Minister. The following night in Derrygonnelly, County Fermanagh, a meeting of 500 Orangemen passed another vote in favour of West, with former Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough publicly supporting West's position.[54] In contrast, the Queens University Unionist Association passed a motion supporting O'Neill, condemning what they called the 'irresponsibility and blindness' of the Fermanagh Unionist members in withdrawing their support from O'Neill.[55]

The crisis got worse for O'Neill as Faulkner gave an interview to the BBC where he protested West's innocence, claiming that he was 'very distressed' about the issue.[56] Faulkner's statement sparked off days of speculation about whether he would either resign from the government himself or launch a bid to unseat O'Neill as leader.[57] During a debate in Stormont over the West dismissal, Unionist MP, Robert Porter attacked Faulkner for his earlier interventions causing leadership speculation, stating, 'I implore the minister for the sake of sanity and dignity to make it clear where he stands'.[58] Similar calls for clarity were made by the Chief

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Whip, James Chichester-Clark. Faulkner, following the debate, did eventually back O'Neill, claiming that he would resign from the cabinet, if he did not agree with every item on the government's agenda.[59] While O'Neill eventually won the backing of the back-bench Unionist 1966 Committee for his actions over West, the fact that he won by a single vote illustrates the growing level of hostility towards his leadership.[60]

On the traditional wing of the party, O'Neill was alienating important figures over his handling of the West case and his attempts to cultivate a more liberal image as a letter from former Prime Minister, Lord Brookebrough, on 21 May illustrated.

Brookeborough wrote about his personal support for West, but went further commenting on his North-South policy giving his support to O'Neill's initiatives stating, 'I did not disapprove at all of your more liberal attitude towards the South, and said so. You had the advantage, which I never had of coming in when no IRA activity was on, nor threats to law and order, and no murders.' But, Brookeborough highlighted how many Unionists in the border counties were uncomfortable with the new policy arguing;

> I thought the moment you choose quite appropriate for a rapprochement with the South, but I did not like the way you did it. I said so at a parliamentary meeting. It was a big step for us Border counties and we would have taken it better if you had come and discussed it with us all, at a Standing Committee or down here, after you thought secrecy was necessary at the moment of meeting Lemass. This raised considerable doubt, and distrust which had not yet been allayed.[61]

3.3 Prologue to the O'Neill/Lynch summit

Over the summer in 1967, co-operation was still ongoing between North and South. Meetings were conducted between the National Farmers' Association and Ulster Farmers Union to discuss livestock trade, which leaders of both Unions described as 'the best yet'.[62] Lynch continued to receive deputations from people North and South who wished to see more customs points along the border to ease trade.[63] In addition to this, speculation around a summit between Lynch and O'Neill persisted, as reports that sources in Stormont believed that a meeting would take place in late 1967 emerged in the newspapers.[64] The leadership trouble O'Neill had experienced gave a glimmer of hope that the co-operation process

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could go on. Nevertheless, the two areas in which progress would really be made were in the areas of tourism and electricity.

In tourism, advances since 1965 were being lauded by people like P.L. Coyle, Chairman of the North-Western Regional Tourist Organisation, who told a tourism conference in Belfast about the various initiatives that were being investigated such as the linking of the Erne and Shannon and the reopening of the Ballinamore-Ballyconnell canals.[65] Further progress in the industry came in July, when an agreement between Bord Fáilte, NITB and BTA was reached over co-operation in advertising, travel promotions and film shows.[66] This was an important agreement, as the tourist figures for 1966 revealed that of the total revenue gained from tourism in the Irish Republic over a third of it came from tourists from Northern Ireland.[67]

Further progress was also made in electricity. On 5 July, Faulkner prepared a memorandum on the agreed principles and intentions with the Republic. Faulkner noted the benefit to Northern Ireland as being savings of £500,000 per year for a number of years to come. The agreement also highlighted the further development of the Ballylumford B power station in County Antrim, by building 200 MW sets, instead of the proposed 120 MW sets. Faulkner's memo also sought to eliminate any fears that his colleagues might have about being dependent on the Republic's electricity, stating, 'the extent to which our own system will be committed to the support of the Southern system, at the possible risk of reducing our own security of supply, will be kept within acceptable limits'. Faulkner concluded, 'in my opinion the very substantial advantages offered, and the relatively minor risks involved, should lead us to agree with the Republic to adopt the proposals.'[68] The proposals on electricity were introduced by Faulkner at a cabinet meeting on 27 July and approved with virtually no opposition.[69] Faulkner's approach of limiting co-operation in the field of electricity to just the inter-connector had worked in winning over sceptical cabinet ministers in what was a hostile political environment.

Following approval from the cabinet, Faulkner travelled to Dublin on 11 August to have an informal meeting with Childers, where they agreed that a formal signing ceremony for the agreement would take place. Sensing the difficult political environment, Faulkner requested that no advance press statements would be issued about the agreement.[70] The agreement itself would cost £2.5 million and mean constructing a link from Tandragee, County Armagh, to Maynooth, County Kildare with the

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interconnection being completed in October 1971. In October 1967, both ministers signed the agreement in Belfast in what the *Newsletter* called the first practical step of co-operation since the O'Neill-Lemass summit.[71] After signing the agreement, Childers said that this was the fulfilment of a hope that he had personally cherished for years and he hoped that this would not be the last example of cross-border co-operation.[72] Faulkner commented that he looked forward to implementing the agreement but when asked about further co-operation over the possibility of a nuclear power station he argued that they would consider the matter carefully but that he did not envisage this happening in the near future.[73] Clearly, Faulkner had been aware of some of the discontent among Unionists in border counties over the agreement which was illustrated in his desire not to have any public statements on the inter-connector leading up to the formal signing ceremony and in his attempts to limit further co-operation in this field that could take place in the near future.

The stagnation in relations persisted into departments which traditionally had been to the fore of the co-operation process. In late September, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, George Colley, following approaches to his department from industrialists in Northern Ireland, stated his desire for further tariff cuts. However, Colley, on making his announcement, appeared to downplay the scale of any further reductions in tariffs, stating, 'we expect there will be some cuts but anything that would give an impression that we are going to have large scale or wide spread cuts would certainly be wrong'.[74] Further problems were being reported in co-operation between Industry and Commerce and its Northern counterpart on firms from the Irish Republic tendering for public contracts in Northern Ireland. On 4 November, Secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce, JCB MacCarthy, complained to the Permanent Secretary of the Northern Department of Commerce, H.E. Jones, that various companies from the Republic had been informed that the policy of the Northern government was not to enter into contracts with firms outside the United Kingdom. MacCarthy argued that this was in violation of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement, under which firms from the Republic could tender for public contracts in Northern Ireland.[75] MacCarthy concluded on the 'strong pressure' that his department was coming under from local manufacturers to protect their right to tender for these contracts. These complaints illustrate that at the end of 1966, progress in a key area of industry and commerce had,

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by and large, stalled with tariff cuts delayed on the Southern side and cross-border tendering halted by the North.

At a political level, there were various speeches made by senior political figures in Dublin and Belfast. Throughout the latter half of 1967, North-South relations were debated in the context of Ireland and Britain's entry into the EEC. On 24 September, former Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, speaking at an event hosted by the New Ireland Society in Belfast, argued that within the EEC 'the people of Ireland will be encouraged and facilitated to seek a solution of old problems, which now seem intractable'. He continued commenting on Northern Ireland's image abroad arguing that it was perceived as an area that had not moved forward with the rest of the world and an area where discrimination still persisted.[76] Lemass' speech provoked O'Neill to respond in kind arguing in Stormont that, while Lemass was someone who he had considerable respect for, he had very odd ideas about life in Northern Ireland. O'Neill, mindful of an upcoming summit with Lynch, continued; 'comments like this prove the desirability of more, not less, cross-border contact, because part of the trouble has always been that people in the South simply do not know what the real situation here is.'[77]

Although, O'Neill's statement, compared to other statements made by Unionist politicians throughout the year, was relatively moderate in the political environment at that time. Moderate statements would continue to emanate from Unionist politicians in the lead up to the first meeting between Lynch and O'Neill. On 2 November, Faulkner attended a debate in Trinity College Dublin with his Southern counterpart, George Colley, on the topic of Ireland's entry into the EEC. Faulkner began by reiterating that Northern Ireland would not wish to leave a union of over 50 million people in the UK for a smaller union with Ireland. He went further, arguing, 'this does not mean that we are not keen to be good neighbours with the Republic ... we are always ready to co-operate with the South where it is to our mutual benefit.' As the debate proceeded onto the possible implications of the EEC on Northern Ireland's sovereignty, Faulkner appeared unworried, arguing that while it is inevitable that these questions should arise, that it should be remembered that the Common Market's primary focus is economic rather than political.[78] The moderate statements by O'Neill and Faulkner provided a useful boost to the cross-border relationship, as practical co-operation had stalled going into the O'Neill/Lynch summit in December.

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3.4 O'Neill/Lynch summit

Three days before Lynch travelled to Belfast to meet O'Neill, the Department of External Affairs prepared a memorandum on Northern Ireland. The document is remarkable for its intransigent view of progressing relations with the North and a further illustration of the Department's role in limiting the government's policy options, with a predominant focus on partition. The memo highlighted the pressure on the Irish government to formally recognise Northern Ireland in its constitution as a way to promote better relations between the two states, but listed two objections in doing so arguing, 'first is that international law does not provide for it ... The second is that the intent is to impose politically unacceptable terms, acceptance of partition and the abandonment of reunification'.[79]

The document examined the issues of discrimination in local government and housing, expressing support for groups like the Campaign for Social Justice and Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, but concluded that open association was a delicate matter and had been avoided. Dublin was clearly happy, almost a year after the formation of NICRA, to wait for reform to be implemented by O'Neill, rather than ally itself with the civil rights movement. This was the overall tone of the document, focusing on the political aspects of relations with Northern Ireland, rather than practical co-operation, as the memorandum dedicated just two paragraphs out of a seven page memorandum to North-South talks. Part of the rationale for this approach is explained in the concluding section of the memo, as it argued;

> Because of our constitutional position in relation to the North and to avoid promoting the notion of a foreign status for the Six Counties, it has been the general practice of the Department of External Affairs not to come unnecessarily to the fore in dealings with the Northern authorities.[80]

Speculation about a possible summit between O'Neill and Lynch persisted throughout the latter half of 1967. In September, in an interview with the BBC, O'Neill, stated his desire to meet Lynch at a time that was 'propitious' for both of them.[81] Rumours around a possible meeting was not just confined to O'Neill; Lynch too was being asked in the Dáil by Labour TD, Michael O'Leary, about the possibility of a summit with O'Neill and in a similar response to his Northern counterpart Lynch stated that he had no immediate plans to meet O'Neill, but he looked

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forward to a meeting at a time and place that was convenient for both of them.[82]

When the eventual meeting happened on 11 December, unlike the previous summits, O'Neill had briefed the cabinet earlier in the year about Lynch coming to Belfast. Kennedy argues, 'this publicity was a sign of the growing confidence in North-South relations.'[83] Still, while O'Neill may have improved upon keeping his cabinet colleagues informed about a meeting, in terms of informing the wider public his policy still aimed at keeping the organisation of the summit a secret. The protests led by Ian Paisley at Stormont, with snowballs being thrown at Lynch's car as it passed Carson's statue, were not as a direct consequence of the Unionist government adopting a more open approach. Rather it was due to the fact that Lynch's visit was leaked to the press beforehand, which led to the announcement being made earlier.[84]

Despite the protests from Paisley, Lynch, who was accompanied by his department secretary, Nicholas Nolan and T.K. Whitaker, told O'Neill, 'I am glad to be here' as they proceeded to a luncheon with the entire Unionist Cabinet in attendance. After the luncheon, a more formal meeting was conducted between the key policymakers, namely O'Neill, Lynch, Faulkner and the Minister of Agriculture, James Chichester-Clark, to conduct a review of general matters related to recent co-operation between the two states. Unlike the previous summits, this meeting focused on more substantive issues on the cross-border agenda. Faulkner began the discussion, highlighting the Republic's £9 million trade advantage over Northern Ireland, stating his desire for further tariff reductions on a list of 12 items that were currently being considered by the Department of Industry and Commerce.[85] Faulkner continued making a request for a concession road for goods across the border between Belcoo and Florencecourt.[86] On electricity, both sides noted their satisfaction with the electricity agreement negotiated earlier in the year. Further progress in tourism was hoped for, with the design of a new joint booklet.[87] The meeting did not stray away from contentious issues. Whitaker brought up the complaints made by Southern companies about tendering for public contracts in Northern Ireland. Faulkner sought to reassure Whitaker, telling him that it was now government policy to accept tenders from the Irish Republic for contracts, but that 'it was only fair to point out that Northern Ireland manufacturers were virtually excluded from public contracts in the South'.[88] The meeting proceeded onto possible co-operation between the two governments over the foot-

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and-mouth disease outbreaks in Britain. It was agreed that Chichester-Clark should meet his southern counterpart soon to review the problem. Chichester-Clark raised with Lynch the concern that Northern Ireland had about the possibility of an outright travel ban. Lynch sought to reassure Chichester-Clark that his government did not favour such a course and that Blaney's reluctance to state this position was not to create a sense of relaxation in people's minds about the disease spreading.

The O'Neill/Lynch summit illustrated how cross-border co-operation had evolved since 1965 with the three areas of trade, tourism and electricity being the only portfolios where co-operation had progressed. While this meeting focused more on substantive measures than the summits that preceded it, there is still evidence of inertia among the Unionist side over the meeting taking place. In the press conference that followed the summit, after hearing shouts of 'Lundy' and 'Keep Ulster Protestant' from Paisley, O'Neill reiterated that the summit did not touch upon constitutional issues, stating, 'there never will be a discussion on the constitutional question at such talks'.[89] Yet, neither in any of Lynch's statements after the meeting nor in the communiqué issued was there any hint that constitutional issues would be discussed.[90] O'Neill, bowing to pressure from Paisley, decided to reintroduce the issue of partition to the meeting with Lynch and again the entire focus on the co-operation process became limited to constitutional issues.

The inertia of O'Neill mirrored the response by many external pressure groups and political parties to the meeting. Eddie McAteer, leader of the Nationalist party, gave a lukewarm welcome to the summit, complaining that he was not, as leader of the opposition, invited to take part in the talks. On the Unionist side, George Clark, Grand Master of the Orange Lodge, welcomed the talks with Lynch. The only dissenting voices were Ian Paisley and the Unionist MP, Knox Cunningham, who argued, 'so long as Mr Lynch continues to voice territorial claims to Ulster … .he is not welcome in Ulster. These views are held by thousands of people in Ulster and the Northern Ireland government would be wise to take notice of them.'[91] In the media, the summit was warmly welcomed. The *Newsletter* argued, 'they were bound to meet some time, and now that they have there can only be regret that they did not do so sooner.' The editorial continued, noting the secrecy was just as extensive as it was in 1965, but that a major difference was that the cabinet was fully briefed beforehand. The editorial concluded on the value of formal co-operation in certain fields like agriculture, arguing that, 'it is only good sense that all of them

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should be explored at top level, both in Belfast and Dublin, and here the true value of yesterday's coming together lies'.[92] *The Irish Press,* while welcoming the summit, focused on Paisley's role, arguing that it represented a more fundamental problem with Northern Irish society, noting 'the real danger of renewed disorder and violence imposes a secrecy and discipline on all formal cross-border consultations ... No one doubts that the snowballs hurled by Mr Paisley's supporters were symbols not merely of disapproval but of violence'. The editorial concluded that the structure of Northern society had created an environment for Paisley to thrive, stating, 'bigotry and privilege have created a sickness in Northern society that only radical surgery can cure. Paisley is only the present open manifestation of a long line of bitterness and fear that has been permitted to sever this nation'.[93] However, opinion polls conducted in 1967 illustrate that Paisley was not a lone wolf amongst unionism when it came to opposing North-South co-operation. One in four Unionists opposed O'Neill's meetings with his Southern counterparts and nearly one third believed that the government should not be pursuing better relations with the Irish government.[94] In relatively benign political environment these numbers would not be a concern to a secure leader, but by the end of 1967, O'Neill was not in a position of strength.

As support for Prime Ministerial meetings declined and the political environment became more hostile going into 1968, O'Neill with four senior officials travelled to Dublin on 8 January for his second meeting with Lynch. Speculation was rife the day before the meeting about the visit, as reports appeared in the newspapers that O'Neill was travelling to Dublin.[95] Unlike the three previous summits, the announcement of O'Neill's visit was made two and a half hours before O'Neill arrived in Dublin. Like the previous meeting in Belfast, O'Neill had discussions with not just Lynch, but other members of Irish government. The meeting began with Lynch stating that the only new item on the co-operation agenda since the meeting in Stormont was a proposal from Aer Lingus to extend their transatlantic services from Belfast. In the general review of progress in co-operation that was conducted, the Minister for Transport, Erskine Childers, reported satisfactory progress in tourism and in electricity arguing that some consideration should be given towards sharing the outputs from larger generating plants, even pivoting towards the possibility of an atomic plant in Ireland. In agriculture, Neil Blaney reported his desire to maintain a vigilant attitude towards the foot-and-mouth disease and was opposed to relaxing any of the measures to keep the disease out

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of Ireland. In trade, the Minister of Finance, Charles Haughey, agreed to make the Belcoo-Florencecourt near the border a concession road. However, while progress was made on concession roads on tariff cuts, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, George Colley, could only report that a reply to requests from Northern industries for reductions in tariffs would be ready soon. New issues such as replacement of the imperial system and decimalisation of the Irish currency came onto the agenda during the summit, with O'Neill asking for updates on what policy direction was being pursued by the Irish government.

Despite the attempts to broaden the co-operation agenda during this meeting, the response after it illustrated how the political environment was quickly turning against co-operation. As O'Neill returned from Dublin, he was forced to alter his route after the RUC received threats against his motorcade as he crossed the border. *The Irish Press* reported that the threats were allegedly from a Protestant extremist group which made O'Neill enter Northern Ireland via County Armagh, rather than through the more direct route of County Louth.[96] O'Neill's change of route left him open to attack from even the friendliest of sources, such as the *Belfast Telegraph,* which lambasted O'Neill for not ignoring the threats and returning via the main road.[97] In addition to this, even as the meeting attempted to broaden the co-operation agenda, the issue of partition still overshadowed the summit as the *Newsletter* reported concern in Belfast at the attendance of the Irish Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, which was construed as a chance by the Irish government to raise the issue of partition.[98]

Following the summit, progress was made in a number of key areas in co-operation. In late February, Lynch wrote to O'Neill, informing him of the government's decision to make the Belcoo-Florencecourt a concession road, which was one of the Unionist government's requests at the meeting with Lynch in January.[99] In trade, further concessions were made in woven carpets and tyre values entering the Republic from Northern Ireland.[100] Moreover, co-operation was continuing between the Dublin, Dundalk, Belfast and Newry Chambers of Commerce on eliminating trade barriers between the two states.[101] In transport, the Belfast-Galway bus service began bringing the Mayors of Belfast and Galway, William Geddis and Thomas Tierney, together for their first official meeting, with an eventual meeting with Terence O'Neill at Stormont.[102]

Despite the continuing co-operation in various areas, there was evidence that the worsening political situation was beginning to have

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a negative impact on North-South relations at every level. Among civil servants, problems were becoming apparent over the continuing dispute on firms from the Irish Republic tendering for public contracts in Northern Ireland. In March, T.K. Whitaker wrote to Cecil Bateman outlining the Irish government's position, stating, 'while there has been considerable correspondence and discussion about the position in Northern Ireland, from our point of view little progress has been made'. He went further, complaining that Southern manufacturers were being discriminated against in Northern Ireland, with goods being manufactured in the North being given preference in the tendering process, which was in violation of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement. Whitaker concluded that in light of the failure of the Northern government to effectively deal with their complaints, that the Irish government had no choice but to refer the matter to the British government.[103] This is important, as usually in disputes such as this an amicable agreement could be worked out without involving the British government.

At a ministerial level, Brian Faulkner, in late April, expressed his disappointment at the rate of tariff cuts being implemented by the Irish government. Speaking in Stormont in late April, Faulkner said that the power to cut tariffs rested exclusively with the Irish government and that he had done everything possible to get the Department of Industry and Commerce to use this power. Faulkner concluded arguing that it would be very helpful if further cuts could be made on goods originating from Northern Ireland.[104] In May, Colley responded to Faulkner, arguing that Northern manufacturers already had preferential treatment under the free trade agreement. Colley went further, condemning Northern Ireland's public tendering procedures which under the AIFTA had to be open to tendering from the Republic from 1967, stating, 'I am naturally disappointed that while we give concessions above what we are bound to give, the North have not honoured this obligation'.[105] Relations between the two most proactive government departments on cross-border co-operation were now beginning to sour, as a stalemate between the two governments emerged over the issue of public contracts.

There were further problems on the horizon for North-South relations, as key elements in both the Unionist and Fianna Fáil parties began to turn against cross-border co-operation. On the Unionist side, it was becoming evident that certain sections of the party were increasingly sceptical about co-operation with the Republic. At the Young Unionist conference in March, a motion on welcoming co-operation with the

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South was amended from welcoming co-operation generally, to supporting co-operation only in those areas that would bring direct benefit to Northern Ireland and noting the dangers of co-operating with the Irish government due to their position on partition. In moving the motion, James Laird, who would go on to be a Unionist MP, said that there was clear proof that the Republic regarded co-operation as central to achieving Irish unity.[106] What would have been worrying for O'Neill were the reports in the newspapers of the overwhelming support for Laird's position at the conference.[107]

The disillusionment about the cross-border co-operation process extended to the Irish Republic, as the Fianna Fáil leaning newspaper, *The Irish Press*, began became very critical; as Foley notes, 'during the first half of 1968 the (Irish) *Press* was a forum for a considerable amount of correspondence highly critical of the Irish government's North-South co-operation policy'.[108] After the O'Neill/Lynch summit in January, the paper began taking a much greater focus on the issue of partition, leading with stories such as a Gallup poll in April that purported to show that 54 per cent of people in Northern Ireland now favoured Irish unity.[109] This poll dominated most of the *Irish Press's* editorial and commentary throughout the latter half of April.[110] Furthermore, as Foley notes, the paper which generally shied away from criticisms of Fianna Fáil governments began criticising the Irish government for its lack of attention on the issue of partition. It began placing greater emphasis on events like the Nationalist party conference and Sinn Fein's critiques of the Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces, General Sean McKeown's attendance at RAF celebrations in Belfast.[111] Throughout 1968 it would be stories like these that would capture the attention of the *Irish Press,* not any substantive measures in co-operation that took place. As Foley notes, 'if the nascent reconciliation of the two governments was not going to make any impression on southern nationalist public opinion, it was not going to happen through the efforts of the *Irish Press*.'[112]

Conclusion

From late 1966, the agenda on North-South relations became increasingly limited due to the various political changes that had taken place in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. In Belfast, O'Neill continued to falter as the sacking of Harry West and the growing prominence of

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more hard-line Unionists like Ian Paisley began to erode his leadership, leaving him unable to consider an immediate summit with Lynch. His weakened position as Unionist leader forced him to revert to the position of attacking the Irish Republic, persistently reaffirming Northern Ireland's constitutional position which again played into the hands of those who were sceptical of the policy of bettering relations with the Irish Republic.

When substantive measures on co-operation were discussed at the various ministerial and Prime Ministerial meetings, any direct results were constantly undermined by the growing hostility that was becoming apparent as the political situation continued to deteriorate. The fact that Faulkner had to rule out further co-operation in electricity illustrates how the unstable political environment impacts upon cross-border co-operation. By late 1968, the co-operation process had stalled completely, as the novelty of Prime Ministerial meetings had worn off and O'Neill's unstable leadership now mirrored Lynch's leadership in Dublin; under these circumstances no co-operation proposals could thrive, as hardliners took over the agenda. Yet worse was still to come, as the emergence of the civil rights campaign and the outbreak of the Troubles would end the move towards better relations, forcing both states to reaffirm their traditional political aims

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4

Breakdown in Relations: 1968–69

Abstract: *The lead up to the outbreak of the Troubles sets the scene for the rest of the book. The unpreparedness of Lynch and O'Neill for the civil rights campaign left their North-South policy in tatters. The ensuing pressure from hardliners within Unionism forced O'Neill to make much more critical statements on his Irish counterpart. This in turn provoked more anti-partitionist statements from Dublin. The resignation of O'Neill and the rise of James Chichester-Clark provides interesting insight into the muddled approach that always existed on North-South co-operation. Clark initially tried to keep open the prospect of formal co-operation with the Irish government, whilst telling conservative Unionists that he would be more cautious than his predecessor. This approach ended with the outbreak of violence in August 1969.*

McCann, David. *From Protest to Pragmatism: The Unionist Government and North-South Relations from 1959–72.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
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> We are happy to converse across the garden fence with the attractive lady next door but we have no matrimonial plans.[1]
>
> Terence O'Neill on North-South relations, 1 June 1968

Co-operation between Belfast and Dublin had stalled by late 1968, but any prospect of an improvement in relations was hindered by the growing publicity garnered by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Before 5 October, the various marches and protests conducted by the association had largely been ignored by the Irish government, as they continued to pursue meetings with Unionist politicians making no comment at all about discrimination in Northern Ireland. This changed as Northern Ireland began to receive international attention following the outbreak of violence on 5 October, compelling Lynch to make more public comments on discrimination, which in effect reignited relations between the two states being conducted by press release. Lynch's more conservative statements must be seen in the context of a growing scepticism within his cabinet about direct co-operation with the Unionist government, with ministers like Neil Blaney making direct attacks on O'Neill.

In Belfast, O'Neill's position as Prime Minister became increasingly precarious as he attempted to placate the hardliners within his own party who were resistant to reform, while also addressing the concerns of the British government, who were pressing for change in Northern Ireland. In this environment, continuing co-operation with Dublin was politically unfeasible as O'Neill continued to denounce what he saw as the Irish government's intrusion into the affairs of Northern Ireland. The failure of O'Neill to stabilise the situation in Northern Ireland and overcome the hardliners in his own party ultimately ended his leadership. The failure to reconcile the competing demands of the British government, which sought to broaden the policy options of Unionist government, with the conservative members of his own party who sought to limit them, destabilised his government. This problem would continue for O'Neill's successor, James Chichester-Clark, as he struggled to meet the demands of the various pressure groups on the Unionist side of politics.

As the summer of 1968 approached, the civil rights association began to use more public and vocal means of opposition to the Unionist government. As Prince notes, since the association's formation the previous year their tactics had been largely ineffectual in creating the impetus for change as the Unionist government continued to hold the upper hand.[2] One Nationalist MP, Austin Currie, who was a follower of the actions

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being used by civil rights protestors in the United States, was inspired to make a very public demonstration to highlight the issue of discrimination in housing. On 20 June, Currie occupied a house in Caledon, County Tyrone, which had been awarded to a single Protestant woman with connections to the Unionist party, Emily Beattie. The publicity of the event was central. As Currie himself noted, 'I immediately recognised the propaganda weapon provided by Caledon...and the unique opportunity it presented to strike a blow, possibly a fatal blow, at the unjust system of housing allocation not only in Dungannon but throughout Northern Ireland.'[3] The protest had exactly the impact that Currie wanted, as he received a phone call from Labour MP and member of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, Paul Rose, telling him, 'Austin, the message is at long last getting through to those the Unionists fear-British politicians and British public opinion'.[4] The publicity gained from this event would give Currie and others encouragement to stage more public demonstrations. The protest at Caledon had changed the entire dynamic of the civil rights protests, as both the Nationalist party and NICRA began seriously considering Currie's appeals for moving political protest from Stormont to the street. At the Nationalist party conference that took place three days after Currie's eviction, the Nationalist party leader, Eddie McAteer, who was on the moderate wing of the party began warning over the slow pace of reform, stating, 'I detect a dangerous groundswell of resentment among our people'.[5]

While Currie's protests may have been gaining traction in Northern Ireland, there is little evidence that the Irish government had realised the changing nature of nationalist politics in the North. The Irish government's policy of improving relations with the Unionist government, in tandem with reaffirming their opposition on partition, was now coming unstuck with the situation in Northern Ireland becoming more unstable as Lynch began to face criticism from both Unionist and Nationalist sources. On the nationalist side, his government came under criticism from the United Ireland Association, which claimed that his government was giving 'aid and comfort' to Unionists with its silence on the issue of partition, arguing that the British and Irish governments were equally to blame in allowing what they perceived as abuses of democracy in Northern Ireland.[6] Despite the criticisms of the United Ireland Association, Lynch was far from silent on the issue of partition. Following a speech from Bill Craig in Dublin, which saw him request that the Irish government formally recognise Northern

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Ireland,[7] Lynch was asked in the Dáil, by Labour TD, Michael O'Leary, whether he would consider formally recognising Northern Ireland. Lynch's response was evidence of how he was limiting Northern policy to reunification as he reaffirmed the Irish government's long-standing claim, stating, 'we do not recognise that the partition of the country is a just or durable arrangement and there can be no question of abandoning that position'.[8] Lynch's references to partition damaged his relationship with the Unionist government and served to undermine the moderate elements of the government. As an editorial in the *Newsletter* pointed out, 'although there is nothing new in what he had to say to the Dáil about the recognition of the government of Northern Ireland, the timing of the statement is sure to produce a hard unionist line on Orange platforms.'[9] The paper believed Lynch's statements were little more than a sop to his supporters and that, in reality, he must be aware that reunification is out of the question. The editorial continued taking a critical line of progress made on cross-border co-operation, claiming that the gains from what they deemed as a 'limited field' had not been considerable.[10] This editorial is indicative of the loss of support for cross-border co-operation within Unionism, as typically pro co-operation sources like the *Newsletter* began to become increasingly critical of direct dealings with the Irish Republic.

During this period, O'Neill kept away from making public statements on either the civil rights protests or North-South relations. In September, O'Neill set off on a tour of the United States and Canada where he met with the Irish Ambassador, William Warnock. In the course of their conversation, the topic of North-South relations came up. O'Neill expressed his pleasure at meeting both Lemass and Lynch, feeling that out of the two men he was closer to Lynch and referred to the progress made in co-operation in tourism.[11] Even speaking after the meeting to the Canadian press, Warnock noted that O'Neill made reference to the fact that, by the Taoiseach meeting him in Stormont, they had in reality recognised Northern Ireland. In addition to this, while being asked questions, O'Neill was 'anxious' to point out that religious differences in Ireland were easing.[12] Events less than three weeks later were to show how badly O'Neill had miscalculated. These statements were not just putting up a strong front for the international press, but rather a genuine belief by O'Neill, through his promotion of civic weeks, that the Catholic minority would come to accept their position within the United Kingdom.[13] The stage was set for the disturbances of October, which would completely

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alter the dynamic of North-South relations with Lynch in total ignorance in Dublin and O'Neill in complete denial in Belfast.

4.1 North-South relations and civil rights

In the days leading up to a planned civil rights march in Derry on 5 October, the Minister for Home Affairs, Bill Craig, banned the march fearing a clash with the Apprentice Boys who had organised a counter demonstration. The following day, the organisers of the march decided to publicly flout Craig's ban, declaring it to be 'so foolish as to be an insult'.[14] Craig's hard-line response to the marchers arguably played right into the civil rights protestor's hands, as he himself noted that the 'proposal to hold a procession and meeting was merely to create a political situation'. The march before the ban was receiving little attention within the media and it was news of the possibility of a ban that increased awareness of the issue at the Labour party conference, where the Campaign for Democracy was holding a fringe meeting. The meeting, chaired by Paul Rose, sent a telegram to the civil rights movement expressing support for their march in Derry and deplored any attempt by the Unionist government to 'curb free democratic expression by United Kingdom citizens in Northern Ireland'.[15] Even before the march had taken place, the ban and the issues surrounding the march, such as discrimination in housing and employment, were gaining more attention outside of Northern Ireland. As an editorial in the *Belfast Telegraph* noted, the ban 'has also ensured that a protest that might have been of purely local interest has become the focus for wider discontent.'[16] When the inevitable confrontation with the RUC took place, the reaction could not have been better for the marchers, as the RUC baton charged the protestors in full view of an RTE camera which recorded the entire event. The *Belfast Telegraph's* prediction of the previous day had been borne out, as Northern Ireland was now beginning to receive international attention. The impact of the event on North-South relations was immediate, as the *Irish Press* published an editorial attacking both Craig and O'Neill, stating, 'the blame for this disgrace in the eyes of the world rests at this point of time on Mr Craig, who so facilely banned what should have been a peaceful demonstration'.[17] The editorial continued criticising O'Neill's role arguing, 'Capt. O'Neill on taking over the Premiership spoke in liberal terms of community relations, but he has since found out that

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the Orange Order must be obeyed in the fundamentals of Northern politics.'[18] The *Irish Press* concluded that the fault of disturbances lay with the Government of Ireland Act, which maintained Unionist domination in Northern Ireland. The response from Lynch followed a similar line to that of the *Irish Press* as he blamed the riots on partition arguing, 'the people of Ireland know what these root causes are … .partition is the first and foremost root cause'.[19] For Lynch the issues of gerrymandering and discrimination in jobs and housing were inextricably linked to the issue of partition, as he believed they 'could not be continued without the political and the huge financial support received from Britain'.[20]

This approach would have detrimental effects on North-South relations. As an editorial in the *Newsletter* issued a critical response to Lynch's speech arguing that 'when Capt. O'Neill had the courage to put Southern co-operation and professed friendship to the test at the highest level there were many among his own ranks who thought he was wrong. Not unreasonably they can chorus today, "We told you so." '[21] The paper continued attacking Lynch's weakness in tackling extremists within the Irish Republic and arguing that Lynch's proposals for co-operation with Northern Ireland 'must now be regarded with the utmost suspicion. Capt. O'Neill can see them in no other light'.[22] The editorial concluded by condemning Lynch for exploiting the riots and lambasting his interference in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland.[23] This editorial from the *Newsletter* is significant as it was the first in over four years that directly campaigned against direct co-operation with the Republic. It was also poignant that the first Unionist-leaning newspaper to directly advocate a meeting between the two Premiers had now turned against it.

As Lynch focused on partition, O'Neill was attempting to agree on a package of reforms with his cabinet. The minutes of the cabinet meeting reflect that the government were not just unprepared for what had happened but in denial about the significance of the event. In the meeting, Craig defended the actions of the police, arguing that they had shown great restraint in difficult circumstances. He believed that in order to prevent further demonstrations from having a similar impact, the government needed to adopt an attitude of 'considerable firmness'.[24] Faulkner intervened, arguing that the government should put forward a motion condemning the demonstrators while praising the police. The only recognition that the increased attention had altered the situation came from O'Neill, who told his colleagues that 'Northern Ireland's standing and reputation had been most seriously damaged'.[25] Furthermore, O'Neill

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noted the pressure on Wilson to intervene and that this pressure would grow if no reforms were in prospect. O'Neill's position was supported by Herbert Kirk, Minister of Finance, who argued that while a strong response might meet the internal situation, the concerns being raised outside of Northern Ireland could not be placated without movement on reform. He continued urging that any statement from the government should indicate reforms to be implemented, as waiting would be counterproductive in light of the interest from the press at the time. But, Kirk's view was not adopted as Faulkner and Craig argued for an immediate statement that congratulated the police and claimed to correct some of the inaccuracies that they believed were being reported in the press.[26] The more conservative elements had gained the upper hand in the cabinet from the outset, as O'Neill failed to assert his authority to ensure that a detailed statement was issued indicating future reforms.

The failure of the Northern Ireland government to announce a serious set of reforms led the Nationalist party to embark upon a strategy of bypassing Stormont completely. On 9 October, McAteer travelled to Dublin to ask the Irish government to raise the Northern issue at the United Nations and with the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson.[27] McAteer spoke of the disappointment in O'Neill's support of the actions of police in Derry. While he appealed for calm, the fact that his first visit to complain about the actions of the RUC were to Lynch and not O'Neill illustrated how his party had effectively lost confidence in Stormont as means to lobby for change, which was ultimately proved as the party ended its three and a half year tenure as the official opposition on 15 October.

When Lynch met Wilson on 30 October, he began by emphasising the role of partition in the outbreak of violence in Derry and discrimination in the structure and franchise of local government. Wilson told Lynch that partition was a matter for Irish people on both sides of the border but he warned Lynch that if relations between Northern and Southern Ireland were soured by public statements, it could weaken O'Neill's position, delaying the introduction of reform.[28] Nevertheless, the damage had already been done to North-South relations; as Lynch arrived in London he told reporters about his desire to raise the issue of partition with Wilson.[29] The linking of partition with the disturbances in Derry would have a detrimental impact on the relationship between the two states as Unionist politicians criticised Lynch for his comments. Brian Faulkner argued that Lynch was merely using the situation in Northern Ireland as a political tool to deflect attention from his defeat in a referendum

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to change the electoral system.[30] O'Neill was more forthcoming in his comments, criticising Lynch for an 'unwarranted intervention' into Northern Ireland's affairs. O'Neill criticised what he saw as a policy of 'Ulster's difficulty is Eire's opportunity' stating that 'in the long term it can only have a negative effect, both upon North-South relations and community relations within Northern Ireland'.[31] In response to O'Neill, Lynch argued that in reality he had said nothing new in his remarks and that his views on partition were well known. Moreover, just because the constitutional position of Northern Ireland was not discussed, did not indicate a change in the government's position on partition.[32] This was a remarkable statement from Lynch after he had been warned by Wilson to refrain from such statements as they would serve to undermine O'Neill's position, and also a key defence he had in pursuing Prime Ministerial summits. It was, as the *Newsletter* argued, that Lynch had put a 'full stop' to further co-operation between North and South.[33]

O'Neill's unusually speedy and harsh criticism of Lynch came while attempting to persuade his cabinet colleagues to adopt reforms before his meeting with Wilson on 4 November. O'Neill set out his position in a memorandum, warning his ministers that 'unless we approached the forthcoming meeting with Mr Wilson in a realistic way, we run the greatest risks of an intervention'.[34] O'Neill set out the case for approaching Wilson with a specific set of reforms, arguing that the government needed to get off the defensive over these issues. He proposed an examination of four proposals for reform, namely a new commission for Derry, removal of obstacles in housing in Derry, clear commitment to the restructuring of local government and legislation to abolish the company vote at local government elections. O'Neill concluded with a warning, arguing, 'I must repeat that if we are not prepared to show a willingness to cope with these problems ourselves, we are inviting intervention by others.'[35]

However, O'Neill's appeal for reform was not well received by some of his cabinet colleagues. Faulkner, Craig and Andrews expressed doubts over the issue of reform, worrying about the reaction of Unionist backbenchers and the fear that immediate concessions might encourage more protests. The cabinet decided that Craig should indicate to Wilson the government's intention to have the restructuring of local government completed in three years' time.[36] O'Neill had, once again, been outflanked by the more conservative elements of his cabinet that resisted reform. Instead of going to Downing Street with a list of measures that

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would appease the civil rights protestors, he limited his policy options to a vague commitment to restructure local government by 1971 and a defensive attitude as they attempted to rebut charges of discrimination.

When O'Neill, Craig and Faulkner met with Wilson and Home Secretary, James Callaghan, the Unionist ministers were left in no doubt about the British government's concern regarding the slow pace of reform. Wilson began by reassuring the delegation about the issue of partition that came up during his meeting with Lynch, telling the delegation that Irish unity was not up for discussion. O'Neill and Faulkner began by outlining the attempts by the government to attract more industry to the west of Northern Ireland and particularly in Derry. Faulkner continued arguing that it was politically difficult to make concessions to the nationalist opposition, as their ultimate aim was the abolition of the border. Such concessions would be regarded by the government's supporters as undermining the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.[37] The meeting then turned to the critical issue of local government franchise, with Craig making his case that reform of the local government franchise should be considered in tandem with the restructuring of local government that would be completed within the next three years. Wilson and Callaghan dismissed Craig's argument, seeing no reason why the reform could not be implemented at a faster pace. They also expressed their disappointment at the lack of progress in the implementation of a points system for housing allocation and the establishment of a Parliamentary Commissioner to look into allegations of discrimination. Wilson reminded them that the British government had shown great financial generosity towards Northern Ireland and that the slow pace of reform put this at risk. Moreover, waiting two years for reform to materialise was not a position he was prepared to defend in Parliament. This was the dilemma for O'Neill as he faced two competing influences, with the British government attempting to achieve a broader range of policy options on reforms, and on the other side elements of the Unionist party seeking to limit them.

Even though O'Neill's warnings to his cabinet about Wilson's impatience for reform had been vindicated, he was now in the position of trying to appease the British government who wanted speedier reforms and the Unionist party, where many prominent members sought tough action against the violence that had taken place in Derry. In order to consolidate his position before he returned to brief his cabinet, O'Neill made a speech to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association attacking

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Lynch, stating, 'we do not intervene in the domestic affairs of the South of Ireland. No terrorist bands from the North have sought to coerce the South'.[38] He continued arguing that formal co-operation with the Republic would be more difficult, due to Lynch's statements on partition, stating, 'you cannot talk business with someone who come blundering into your back garden kicking over the plants'. He concluded, saying that Lynch had a choice between making statements on partition or a friendly relationship with Northern Ireland but he could not have both.[39]

4.2 Decline of O'Neill

While harsh rhetoric towards the Republic bought O'Neill some political capital in the short term, it still did not heal the divisions within Unionism on how to deal with Wilson's requests for reform. Upon their return from London, the *Newsletter* urged that the right to govern Northern Ireland should be left to the Unionist government and nobody else.[40] The cabinet meeting that followed the meeting at Downing Street highlighted the divisions, as O'Neill attempted to get his ministers to take Wilson's threats of economic sanctions against Northern Ireland seriously. In doing this, he faced opposition from Craig and Faulkner who argued that while they were not opposed to making justifiable reforms, they would not make them under pressure from the British government.[41] Faulkner argued that if Wilson were to withhold funds from companies like Short's, then the responsibility for the unemployment that would result would rest with him.[42] O'Neill disagreed, arguing that Stormont would receive the blame for allowing the situation to develop in the first instance. Moderates in the cabinet, like Roy Bradford, backed O'Neill's position, arguing that the Unionist party was formed to maintain the link with the British government, not to defy them.

Although, as Patterson and Kaufman highlight the pressure on the government to resist pressure from the British government for reform came from another key pillar of Unionist support, the Orange Order.[43] On 14 November, a deputation from the Grand Lodge met O'Neill and Craig to discuss the outbreak of violence in Derry. The delegation reported their support for the actions of police during the 5 October and the desire for tougher action in future.[44] A member of the delegation, Captain Armstrong, brought up the issue of pressures from the British government over the issue of local government reform arguing that

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concessions would cause 'deep resentment' as it would prove that there was something wrong with the present system.[45] O'Neill responded with his usual ineffective rebuttal by highlighting Northern Ireland's financial dependence on the British exchequer. The approach, which did not work on members of his own government, was sure not to work on members of the Orange Order, as they warned, 'money or no money...motorways or no motorways, we would be prepared tighten our belts in order to retain our particular way of life'.[46] While O'Neill was closer to the British opinion on what needed to be done when it came to the grassroots of the Unionist party, Craig's hard-line position was more in step with the party faithful.

Throughout November, the cabinet met several times to discuss various reforms that could be agreed. Following further disturbances in Derry on 16 November, Craig adopted an increasingly hard-line in dealing with the protestors, arguing that further trouble had taken place because the RUC had been deterred from using effective force to deal with the militants in the march. He told the cabinet that he was bringing reinforcements into Derry to cope with the situation, as he believed that if the situation was to be contained then the firmness of the police and implementation of law and order should be on show.[47] Craig's defiance would continue at another emergency cabinet meeting the following day, where he questioned the legality of the British government intervening against Stormont. Further dissent was also expressed by Faulkner, William Morgan, William Long and James Chichester-Clark over implementing the reforms in local government franchise under duress from the British government.[48] O'Neill buckled under the pressure, agreeing to a package of reforms that would be presented without the introduction of one man, one vote at local government elections and in order to appease his party, would seek a meeting with Wilson to show that the government would not surrender to every demand made by the British government.[49]

While O'Neill was attempting to put together a reform package, he persisted in a secretive way in the manner in which he did it. On 20 November, O'Neill and his cabinet ministers met with the 1966 Unionist committee over what should be included in a possible reform package. The *Newsletter's* Mervyn Pauley reported after the meeting that many members of the parliamentary party were 'in the dark' about what reforms were being considered by the cabinet, but he also reported that strong opposition from many members of the party to implementation

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of a change in local government franchise.[50] In addition to this, six Unionist MPs were meeting to express their confidence in the conduct of Craig as Home Affairs Minister.[51] It was in this context that O'Neill had to put together a reform package as he faced the challenge of reconciling the demands of NICRA and the British government, who were pushing for reform, and the Orange Order and Unionist party who were trying to hold reform back.

On 22 November, O'Neill announced his five-point plan, which comprised the following elements: reform of the Special Powers Act, housing to be allocated on a points system, Derry Corporation to be replaced by a commission, appointment of an ombudsman and the abolition of the business vote in local government elections. The response to the package was unsurprisingly hostile. Leading figures in the civil rights movement, like Ivan Cooper of the Derry Citizens Action committee and Republican Labour MP, Gerry Fitt, criticised the package for not going far enough on local government franchise.[52] In his cabinet, O'Neill faced immediate dissent as Craig commented to the media on the possibility of the removal of the Special Powers Act; he argued, 'there is no change whatsoever. We continue as heretofore'.[53] Craig continued to undermine O'Neill by contradicting his statement that reforms would be implemented before the next Northern Irish General Election, telling opposition MPs in Stormont to be patient over the introduction of an ombudsman.[54] He continued his campaign of destabilisation into December, making increasingly hard-line comments about the Catholic Church and NICRA at Unionist Association meetings.[55] In an attempt to circumvent hardliners in his cabinet like Craig and Faulkner, O'Neill appealed to the nation in a televised address on 9 December. He began by telling the public that Ulster was at a crossroads and hit out at people like Craig, who speculated about the possibility of an independent Northern Ireland, labelling them 'Protestant Sinn Feiners' and outlining the financial dependence that the province had on the British government.[56]

The response to O'Neill's speech was largely positive, receiving endorsements from the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Newsletter,* with around 125,000 people writing into Stormont supporting O'Neill's speech. Despite this support, Patterson and Kaufmann highlight that the speech actually did little to win over the more conservative elements of Unionism, as they argue that 'although the speech brought a surge of support from a substantial section of moderate suburban Unionists, east of the Bann, it did nothing to convince his increasingly militant critics in the party and

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the Orange Order'.[57] There is some evidence that vindicates this argument, as less than 24 hours after O'Neill's address, Craig, while speaking to the Bloomfield Young Unionist Association, challenged whether the British government could intervene in Northern Ireland's affairs and demanded that the Unionist party should not tolerate blackmail of financial sanctions.[58] Bolstered by the support he was receiving, O'Neill moved and sacked Craig before he faced a confidence vote in a parliamentary party meeting later that day. The meeting endorsed O'Neill's leadership, but he faced resignation calls from Harry West and three others abstaining on the vote to support his leadership.[59] Outside the parliamentary party, rumblings were reported in the Orange Order and the Young Unionists over the dismissal.[60] The good news for O'Neill was that the civil rights association had issued a marching truce until after Christmas giving him time to re-assert his position, but once trouble flared up again divisions within the party would soon resurface.

During this period, the Irish government had remained silent on what was going on in Northern Ireland. Aside from a few minor insults traded across the border by Colley and Faulkner over both states' respective economic strengths, there was little comment from Irish government ministers on the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland.[61] The silence from Dublin led even outside commentators, such as the *Financial Times,* to argue, 'the silence from the Dublin government over the last weeks' events in Northern Ireland has been deafening'.[62] The paper argued that the Irish government had been giving issues like partition the 'soft sell' because it wanted to avoid harming O'Neill's attempts to introduce reforms.[63] Yet, Lynch's hesitation to make public comment on Northern Ireland during the Christmas period of 1968 was consistent with the advice he was receiving from Ken Whitaker. In early November, Whitaker wrote to Lynch on the government's policy on Northern Ireland, arguing that it ruled out any use of force in achieving Irish unity, believing that a sensible policy would require 'patience, understanding and forbearance and resolute opposition to emotionalism and opportunism'.[64] He continued affirming that the policies being pursued by O'Neill were the best in the long run for the nationalists in Northern Ireland and could also loosen the roots of partition. Whitaker argued against any attempts to capitalise on the disturbances, arguing that while it may pay political dividends at home, it will incur the distrust of the Unionists. He concluded by arguing that barriers to Irish unity could only be broken down by frequent and friendly contact between the two states.[65]

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While Whitaker's words on seeking unity via peaceful means would become the central basis of the government's policy on Northern Ireland, his desire to persist with formal co-operation with Northern Ireland would eventually come to nothing as the brief lull in civil rights protests would come to an end in early 1969. On 4 January, a march organised by a left wing student group called People's Democracy from Belfast to Derry, was attacked by loyalists at Burntollet, County Derry. Similar to the disturbances on 5 October, the optics of the situation did not reflect well on the RUC, as accusations flowed that they had done little to protect the marchers. The end result was the further outbreak of rioting in Derry which saw 104 policemen and 100 civilians injured along with an estimated £250,000 worth of damage.[66]

The response from O'Neill showed his frustration at how events had turned, he rounded on the civil rights association, saying, 'enough is enough, we have heard sufficient for now about civil rights, let us hear a little about civic responsibility. We are all sick of marches and counter marches'.[67] He went further, labelling the marchers as 'hooligans' who had attacked the police. The statement from O'Neill was clearly an attempt to shore up his position as he made no mention of the loyalist protestors who had attacked the marchers. This omission was picked up by one of the march organisers, Michael Farrell, who criticised O'Neill's statement for being partisan and supportive of the police who had, in his view, failed in their duty to protect the marchers.[68] O'Neill's advisor, Ken Bloomfield, recalled the level of frustration within the government during that period at the violence that emanated from the march, but also that O'Neill's hard-line response to the actions of the protestors helped drive away Catholic support for O'Neill and his government's reform programme.[69]

As, violence persisted throughout January, splits began to emerge within the cabinet about how to respond to the demands of the civil rights protestors. The first evidence of this fragmentation would take place at a cabinet meeting on 15 January. The day before the meeting O'Neill circulated a memorandum to his colleagues, outlining his view that he believed the government had been too pre-occupied with law and order measures to stop the violence. He continued warning that the police were being stretched to the limit and that following a policy of 'firm government' would not provide a solution to the problem and might ultimately create a situation where the army would have to be called in to aid the civil power. O'Neill proposed that the government

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look for political solutions to take moderate support away from NICRA, implementing a commission of inquiry to look into disturbances since 5 October.[70] He went further, telling his ministers that a consequence of this inquiry might be the recommendation of implementing a change in local government franchise, but that if this did happen the government should accept it and be prepared to advocate it to the Unionist party.[71] At the cabinet meeting, O'Neill's proposals were supported by the majority of the cabinet, with two ministers opposing them, namely Faulkner and the Minister for Health, William Morgan. Both men were worried that by setting up the commission, the government was abdicating responsibility and eroding police morale.[72] Faulkner argued that a better course of action would be for the government to agree to a change in the local government franchise and go to the party united in that view. Yet, this view did not prevail, as other ministers were worried about how such a decision would be perceived within the party and were not convinced that the implementation of one man, one vote would pacify NICRA.[73]

As a result of the government's decision to establish a commission of inquiry, both Faulkner and Morgan resigned from the government on 24 January. In an interview with the BBC's political correspondent, W.D. Flackes, Faulkner rejected accusations that he was making a bid to try and unseat O'Neill. He argued that his reason for resigning was due to the fact that the government was effectively deceiving the people and the Unionist party over the issue of the local government franchise.[74]

As Kennedy notes, the loss of Faulkner from the cabinet represented a major blow towards North-South relations, as he had led the way as Minister of Commerce in co-operation with the Republic.[75] In recalling his period in government, the *Newsletter* displayed a photograph of Faulkner and Childers, signing the electricity inter-connector agreement which represented the most substantive project undertaken during the entire period of formal co-operation between the two governments.[76]

While the Northern Ireland government was in crisis, Lynch was preparing to deliver his presidential address to the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis. In his speech, he reaffirmed the party's first aim of securing Irish reunification by agreement through removing barriers of suspicion and animosity that had divided the Irish people for 50 years.[77] He continued mentioning co-operation with Northern Ireland, arguing that he wanted to 'achieve the maximum possible measure of co-operation in practical matters of public concern between the two areas into which Ireland is now divided, without sacrifice of principle in regard to political or

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constitutional issues'.[78] Lynch went further saying that while he had no wish to inflame the situation, 'we want to see basic human rights granted and granted in full to our Northern brethren who are now denied to them'. This effectively was a public endorsement of the civil rights movement, as Lynch was continuing to distance himself from direct co-operation with the Unionist government. He concluded by effectively ending any attempt to co-operate with O'Neill, telling delegates nobody should be under any illusion that efforts to promote better relations with Northern Ireland 'indicates the abandonment by us of our just claim that the historic unity of this island be restored'. This was the first speech by either leader that indicated that the co-operation process was over and North-South relations would effectively revert back to the pre-1965 status of diplomacy via press release.

A further fatal blow to North-South relations was dealt as a result of the snap election called by O'Neill in February in order to try and undermine his rivals within the Unionist party. Despite garnering support from British and Northern Irish newspapers,[79] Mulholland notes support within the Unionist party, for his leadership was deteriorating as Unionist Associations fought bitter contests over nominating either pro or anti-O'Neill candidates.[80] The first setback for O'Neill came within 24 hours of calling the election, as three Unionist Associations in Belfast, namely St Annes, Willowfield and Shankill nominated candidates who were opposed to his leadership.[81] This was followed up by vocal criticisms from his predecessor, Lord Brookeborough, who criticised O'Neill for calling the election in the first instance and criticised his secretive style of leadership singling out his meeting with Lemass, arguing, 'when Lemass came up he didn't tell his own cabinet, people began to prick their ears and say is he going to do something else behind our backs'.[82] The actions of Brookeborough are representative of the views of many Unionists, particularly in border counties who, since 1965, had turned from giving qualified support for O'Neill's policy on relations with the Irish government to now expressing public opposition.

The public criticisms of the O'Neill-Lemass summit became a useful attack for O'Neill's detractors as more hard-line statements began emanating from Dublin. On the *This Week* programme on RTE radio, the Minister of Agriculture, Neil Blaney, argued that the majority of the Fianna Fáil party's membership would have second thoughts about staying in the party if it abandoned its core aims.[83] The particular core aim that Blaney highlighted was that of Irish unity, arguing that 'while there

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is Fianna Fáil and while there are Irish people in this country, partition must be a big issue and must continue to be a big issue until it is solved, gone and disappeared'.[84] Kennedy notes that this was an important departure for the Irish government, as they usually kept silent during elections so as not to embarrass O'Neill.[85] Blaney's statement during the radio interview, while more forthright than Lynch's Ard Fheis speech, still bore similarities in its message of directly critiquing the internal situation in Northern Ireland and reaffirming Irish unity as a central aim of the government. In addition to this, when Lynch was asked in the Dáil about Blaney's pronouncements on Northern Ireland, while he affirmed his desire to meet the new Unionist government after the election, he still supported Blaney's speech arguing that;

1. he rejected the allegation made recently by the Northern Premier that the claim in our Constitution to jurisdiction over the 32 counties of Ireland is "a legal fiction";
2. He advocated support for anti-Partition policies; and
3. He asserted that the unity of Ireland will always be an issue for the people of this country so long as the Border divides it. These three points accord fully with Government policy.[86]

When the election results came in on 24 February, 36 Unionists were returned, with 12 of those being declared anti-O'Neill members and to make matters worse O'Neill only narrowly defeated Ian Paisley in his Bannside constituency after running a lacklustre campaign. A week before polling day, the *Newsletter* had been noting a shift in support away from O'Neill as they argued that while it was normally 'a very safe seat for the Prime Minister, Captain O'Neill, there is a growing school of thought that the final verdict may not be so reassuring for him as was first thought'.[87] The attempt to undermine his opponents had backfired and his actions during the election did more to undermine his position as party leader. As Patterson and Kaufman note, 'the actions of the leader in calling the campaign and then supporting unofficial Unionist candidates was an affront to the party's traditional emphasis on the central values of unity and discipline'.[88] In an editorial, the *Irish Press* summed up O'Neill's difficult position stating, 'he will be facing a future as difficult as any party leader could be asked to contend with. Apart from the rebels of his own party who will be snapping on his flanks he will be confronted by an opposition more united in outlook.'[89] Following the result, Bill Craig repeated his calls for O'Neill to resign as leader and only 23 members of

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the parliamentary party voted confidence in his leadership,[90] whilst over a third of the Standing Committee of the Unionist party voted against a motion of confidence in his leadership.[91]

The destabilisation caused by the election had an immediate impact on North-South relations. At a press conference following the result, O'Neill was asked about whether he would consider meeting Lynch and stated that in the present environment it was not possible and criticised comments made by Blaney during the election campaign.[92] This was the first time since January 1965 that O'Neill directly ruled out any further meetings with the Taoiseach and it ultimately closed the door completely on any further meetings between ministers from the two governments. Now that Prime Ministerial summits were off the agenda, Lynch used his St Patrick's Day address to highlight the issue of Irish unity, reaffirming the government's commitment to reunification, stating, 'I wish to assure our friends abroad that we shall continue along this course'.[93] These statements from Lynch came as O'Neill was fighting for his survival as Unionist leader. In late March, O'Neill faced a confidence vote from the Ulster Unionist Council winning the ballot 338 to 263 against which was just 56 per cent of the vote down from the 61 per cent he received at the Standing Committee three weeks earlier.[94]

Uninterested in O'Neill's leadership difficulties, Blaney made a speech attacking partition at a dinner for Eddie McAteer in Derry. He began by saying that Unionists needed to recognise world opinion and needed to stop clinging to power through fear and mistrust, claiming that the border was 'artificial'.[95] Blaney continued arguing that a council of Ireland should be established with a view to 'undo the wrongs' of partition.[96] The speech was condemned by O'Neill, who called Blaney a 'party hatchet man,' believing that the speech was only made due to the upcoming Irish General Election and as an attempt to upstage Lynch.[97] He continued by sending a message to Lynch, stating, 'any government in the Republic genuinely interested in friendly relations with Northern Ireland should think twice about the wisdom of reappointing this party hatchet man who has done much to disrupt those relations.'[98] O'Neill was clearly sending a message to Lynch to discipline Blaney and rein in his hard-line statements. Yet, Lynch would fail to act as Blaney persisted in issuing harsh critiques of O'Neill and the Unionist government. Responding to O'Neill's rebuttal, Blaney was dismissive stating, 'I would regard any derogatory remarks by Capt O'Neill as a compliment rather than anything else...he is a very suave politician and not very sincere.'[99]

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He concluded, reaffirming his desire for Irish unity calling the Northern Ireland state little more than a 'sundered fragment'. What was remarkable about this statement was that it was by in large a personal attack on O'Neill's character which was a new development in North-South relations, even in the heights of the IRA border campaign in the early nineteen-sixties the statements from government ministers were attacks on policies rather than personalities.

The dispute with Blaney would prove to be O'Neill's last entanglement with the Irish government as his position deteriorated throughout April. The first blow came with the election of a senior member of the People's Democracy, Bernadette Devlin, in the Mid-Ulster by-election. This was the first time the Unionists had lost the seat in 12 years and worse for O'Neill there was now another voice alongside Gerry Fitt in Westminster to put pressure on the Wilson government to intervene in Northern Ireland. However, actions by the newly formed UVF, two days after Devlin's victory, took centre stage as they bombed the Silent Valley Reservoir in County Down. The Stormont government decided that with the police currently stretched to the limit, assistance would be needed from the army to protect a further 20 public installations, although concerns were raised about the implications of law and order being no longer able to be implemented by the government and RUC.[100] In total, 1,500 British soldiers were deployed to Northern Ireland to assist the police. In an editorial, the *Newsletter* commented on the rapid deterioration of the security situation, stating that within a year Northern Ireland had gone from 'the promised land to the battlefield'.[101] The situation continued to deteriorate as O'Neill pushed through the Unionist parliamentary party the issue of one man, one vote. The motion, which was passed by just six votes, ended his leadership after the Minister of Agriculture; James Chichester-Clark resigned in protest. Not only was O'Neill under siege politically, but the security situation was also worsening as further attacks were made on water mains that fed water from Lough Neagh to North Belfast.[102] O'Neill recognised that his position, both in the party and the country, had become untenable and on 28 April, he informed the British government of his intention to resign and speculated that his successor was likely to be the moderate, James Chichester-Clark.[103] In the leadership ballot on 1 May, he defeated Brian Faulkner by one vote. Responding to his resignation, Lynch, perhaps in an attempt to distance himself from Blaney's comments on O'Neill's character ten days earlier, said, 'Capt O'Neill was I believe very sincere in

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his efforts to improve conditions in the Six County area...and to encourage co-operation and good neighbourliness between North and South'.[104] Lynch concluded, arguing that he hoped that the policies of reform which O'Neill promoted would continue.

In reviewing O'Neill's time in office, the *Newsletter* dubbed him a man 'who always had to look over his shoulder.'[105] When it came to North-South relations, this was an accurate description, as O'Neill constantly cloaked his meetings with his southern counterparts in secrecy, which ultimately caused the greatest level of annoyance among the Unionist party. Kennedy argues that O'Neill was the one with the vision that began the co-operation process.[106] Yet, while O'Neill did have liberal instincts, he failed adequately to explain why formal co-operation with the Irish government was necessary. Moreover, he compounded this failure with his secretive style of leadership creating more distrust in co-operation with the Republic. When an examination is conducted from all the detractors, from Knox Cunningham to Lord Brookeborough, a constant complaint was the fact that the cabinet and parliamentary party were not consulted in advance of his meeting with Lemass. In hindsight, officials working within Stormont have come to share this criticism of O'Neill's approach as official Robert Ramsay argues, 'he kept his ministers in the dark about actions which might well have had a positive outcome had they been collegiate affairs, instead of secret personal initiatives. His famous invitation to the Taoiseach, Sean Lemass is a case in point'.[107] The O'Neill/Faulkner rivalry was crucial in understanding why O'Neill met Lemass in the first instance and, arguably, Faulkner was the real driving force behind co-operation throughout that period. Not only did he float the idea of meetings with ministers in the Irish government, he also got the most contentious proposals around co-operation in tourism and electricity through a sceptical cabinet. It is also notable that, as Faulkner began to withdraw from direct co-operation with the Republic, the entire process stalled. But what was ultimately evident from O'Neill's time in office, was that only in the benign political environment that existed from 1965 to the middle of 1968 could formal co-operation succeed.

4.3 Prologue to the troubles

A sense of how James Chichester-Clark and Jack Lynch would conduct North-South relations would become evident within days of assuming

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the Premiership. On 1 May, Lynch, speaking to the Cavan Comhairle Cheantair of Fianna Fáil, stated his hope that Chichester-Clark's commitment to reform would be as sincere and unequivocal as his predecessor's. He hoped that the Unionist government would proceed with 'a greater sense of urgency than before until all the wrongs that are at the root of the present strife and tension have been put right.'[108] Lynch continued talking about his right to speak about these issues as the head of the Irish government, making a hard-line comment, stating, 'I yield to no one in my duty to speak out on behalf of all Irishmen in defence of right and justice'.[109] He concluded, reassuring his audience that his government had not lost focus on the issue of Irish unity, stating, 'my concentration at this juncture on fundamental political and social rights in no way derogates from the right of the Irish people as whole to unity of Ireland'.[110] The only notable response from Unionist circles was an editorial in the *Newsletter,* which noted the political pressures emanating from the upcoming election provoking Lynch's statements, and called them a destabilising influence on Northern Ireland, arguing that 'not only has he no mandate to interfere, but also that his intervention could exacerbate tensions'.[111] This speech was ultimately pandering to his party base before a general election, which was due within a month, and supportive of the view held by the *Irish Press* which stated in an editorial that Chichester-Clark would ultimately be little more than a 'caretaker Prime Minister'. The *Irish Press* were not alone in that sentiment, as a memo from the Home Office illustrated the lack of confidence from the British government in Chichester-Clark's ability to be decisive and stay in office for a long period. The memo noted that he is known to 'waver in his decisions' and with his narrow win in the leadership contest it is 'questionable whether Major Chichester-Clark would last for longer than six months'.[112]

The combination of hard-line speeches from Lynch and a lack of confidence from both his own party and the British government did not give Chichester-Clark a strong hand to contemplate improving relations with the Republic. However, his early decisions showed an attempt to build up confidence as he brought into the cabinet critics of O'Neill like Faulkner, John Taylor and Joe Burns, while keeping prominent O'Neill supporters in key positions. He also indicated that he would continue with O'Neill's policies, reaffirming the government's commitment to one man, one vote arguing that Unionists need not fear nationalist controlled councils.[113] His most significant policy would be his declaration of an amnesty for offences which had occurred since 5 October 1968, which would

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see cases against civil rights leaders like Gerry Fitt and Austin Currie dropped and Ian Paisley released from prison. The release of Paisley from prison would provide an insight into Chichester-Clark's mindset on North-South relations as Paisley wrote to him expressing support for his government. Chichester-Clark replied that due care would be taken when meeting the Taoiseach in the future and that Northern Ireland and its borders were sacrosanct.[114] Scoular argues that this was Clark's attempt to placate his main opponent in Paisley.[115] Nevertheless, Clark followed up his letter to Paisley the following month by making more favourable statements on relations with the Irish Republic, as he told an Orange Order meeting in Dungannon, County Tyrone, that 'the North and the Republic could, no doubt, continue to do business in a practical manner'. He continued setting out conditions for how a more favourable relationship with the Republic could be developed stating, 'as far as I am concerned the Irish Republic is a neighbouring country, which will be treated as a friendly neighbouring country, as long as it reciprocates with sincere friendship'.[116] Clark also reiterated his position that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland was not a topic for discussion in any talks with the Irish government. While Clark did not rule out further co-operation with Dublin, his mixed messages to certain sections of Unionism illustrated a fundamental flaw in his leadership, failing to give a clear direction and pursuing with O'Neill's ad hoc approach in co-operating with the Irish government. Whatever Chichester-Clark's liberal inclinations about dealing with the Republic, the recurring theme in the North-South relationship over the next five months would be two weakened leaders putting off direct contact in order to keep their respective hardliners satisfied.

Chichester-Clark regularly had to placate the right wing of his party as they became more forceful and better organised. Throughout June, numerous liberal Unionists suffered defeats, most notably the replacement of Herbert Kirk and William Long in favour of the more conservative John Taylor and John Brooke on the officer board of the Young Unionist Council. With this situation in the Unionist party, formal co-operation was next to impossible. Combined with the reforms in housing, local government and continuing civil rights marches, Chichester-Clark's honeymoon as Prime Minister was coming to an end as Northern Ireland approached the summer marching season. The reaction in Northern Ireland to Lynch's re-election illustrated how much the relationship between the two states had declined, as an editorial

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in the *Newsletter* said, 'there will probably be a lukewarm welcome for the return of Fianna Fáil inasmuch as its attitude to the North is well established'.[117] Still, the editorial continued commenting on the necessity for improving the relationship with the Irish Republic commenting that 'greater two way interest by the people of the whole island would surely stimulate mutual respect, understanding and faster development in those areas where co-operation can be advantageous'.[118]

If the *Newsletter's* proposals for greater co-operation and understanding between the two states were to be realised, then a period of stability was necessary. Yet, the upcoming marching season would ensure that stability was not possible as a number of riots broke out in Belfast and Derry in mid-July forcing Chichester-Clark to return early from his holiday.[119] In Dublin, Lynch was asked by Labour leader, Brendan Corish, in the Dáil about whether he would seek a meeting with Harold Wilson to discuss the recent disturbances. Lynch attempted to deflect the issue saying that he did not wish to pursue a course of action that would add to the trouble in Northern Ireland. But, Corish, aware of the embarrassment caused to Lynch in April by failing to meet Wilson, continued pressing the case, asking what was different about the situation in the North in April that in Lynch's view mandated a meeting with Wilson and now.[120] Lynch's vacillating in the Dáil over the issue provided Corish with another opening, asking him if his government had changed its attitude towards the Unionist government and whether he had any plans to meet Chichester-Clark. The response from Lynch reaffirmed the government's policy on co-operating with the North, saying he would welcome meetings with the Northern government to deal with matters of mutual interest.[121]

When Lynch addressed the nation in mid August, he spoke of the 'deep sadness' at the events in Northern Ireland over the past few days. He continued deploring all forms of sectarianism and prejudice and spoke of the government's attempts to take their concerns to the British government, while not trying to embark upon a strategy that would make the situation in Northern Ireland worse. But he believed that 'it is evident that the Stormont government is no longer in control of the situation. Indeed the present situation is the inevitable outcome of the policies pursued for decades by successive Stormont governments.'[122] Following the direct attack on Stormont, Lynch issued the defining words of his statement saying, 'it is clear also that the Irish government can no longer stand by and see innocent people injured and perhaps worse.'[123]

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The confrontational tone of Lynch's speech pleased the *Irish Press,* which wrote that the speech was a 'bold gesture' and that Lynch's proposals for UN intervention and setting up field hospitals along the border 'add up to one of the most far reaching steps ever taken on the partition issue by a southern government'.[124] The paper continued emphasising the militaristic element in the government's response, saying, 'let no-one misunderstand the implications of the fact that it is army field hospitals which are being set up and not units operated by the Irish Red Cross'.[125] This misinterpretation of Lynch's speech was not just confined to the *Irish Press,* as people in the Bogside also following Lynch's speech believed troops to be coming into Derry, as one of residents of that area, Eamonn McCann, recalled being told 'so and so has seen them, they (Irish Army) are coming in the Letterkenny Road'.[126]

The reaction from Unionists in Northern Ireland was unsurprisingly critical. The Prime Minister, James Chichester-Clark, said, 'this clumsy intrusion in to our internal affairs will be deeply resented by a majority of people in Northern Ireland...I must hold Mr Lynch personally responsible for any worsening of feeling which these inflammatory and ill-considered remarks may cause.'[127] The *Belfast Telegraph* dismissed Lynch's intervention as silly and provocative, attacking his calls for UN intervention as a tired party trick.[128] The *Newsletter* summarised that in the aftermath of the speech, 'relations between the Stormont and Dublin governments dropped to rock-bottom.'[129] This was an understatement as the Northern government met after rioting had spread to Dungannon and Enniskillen, they were concerned about elements in the Republic exploiting the situation, taking a dramatic step of approving the spiking of border roads should the Inspector General of the RUC deem it necessary.[130] This was a serious step for the government to take but Lynch's speech, combined with a growing fear of IRA activity, made it seem a prudent move as reports were surfacing of mobs from the Republic crossing the border into places like Newry to attack the police.[131]

Lynch's speech also had reverberations in the corridors of power in London. The British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, wrote to Wilson about Lynch's speech believing that he had sided with the extremist forces in Irish politics. As he stated, 'Lynch, having just achieved the leadership of Ireland, was not prepared to lose it to the extremists and has therefore taken his place at their head.'[132] Gilchrist concluded with the one-sided reporting in the Republic of what was happening in Northern Ireland and the emotionalism that could be turned in the

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direction of the British government that 'we are in for a very difficult time with the Irish'. Gilchrist followed up his assessment of the political situation in the Republic with some comments on Irish military movements. He noted that several Irishmen, in conversation with him, had mentioned that for the Irish to properly air their grievances that it would be desirable to occupy a small town in Northern Ireland and provoke an international incident. Gilchrist believed that while he doubted that the Irish government would take part in such an operation he believed that the IRA had the capability of conducting such an operation. However, Gilchrist noted, 'much more Irish military activity than normal' and was unsure whether these were unexpected movements or just a termination of normal army exercises.[133] Gilchrist's views on what was being debated by the Irish government in terms of military intervention were incredibly close to the views being argued by Blaney and Boland in the cabinet, in terms of using the Defence Forces to force the UN to send a peacekeeping force into Northern Ireland.[134] Nevertheless, Wilson and Callaghan had already agreed to a request by the Northern Ireland government to send troops to assist with law and order purposes, with the hope of withdrawing as soon as possible.[135] The Irish government's influence over any British action was severely inhibited by Lynch's speech as the impact of the deployment of British troops to Derry and Belfast on Anglo-Irish relations was talked about during the meeting, to which Wilson replied that the Irish government's attitude thus far had been 'unhelpful'.[136]

Conclusion

In Belfast, O'Neill had ruled out further meetings with Lynch following his disappointing showing in the Crossroads election. Support drained away from O'Neill as he faced pressure from the British government to go further on civil rights reforms and opposition from elements of the Unionist party who sought to limit their scope. O'Neill's position by 1969 was so weakened that he could not have considered further formal contacts with the Irish government. The rise of Chichester-Clark would see confused statements on North-South relations, as he initially argued for caution on any future meetings with Lynch, but then appeared to take a more liberal tone when addressing the Orange Order in June 1969. However, the events of August 1969 and the Irish government's reaction ensured that no improvement in relations would be forthcoming, as

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Chichester-Clark railed against what he perceived as unwarranted interventions from the Irish Republic. The summer period ended with reports in the *Newsletter* of holidaymakers from Northern Ireland cancelling their holidays in the Irish Republic due to the worsening of relations[137] and more hard-line comments from politicians like Ian Paisley who argued for a ban on Irish goods in Northern Ireland and the closure of the border.[138]

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34 *Memorandum by O'Neill*, 28 October 1968, PRONI CAB/4/1412.
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36 *Cabinet meeting*, 31 October 1968. Ibid
37 *Meeting held at Ten Downing Street*, 4 November 1968, National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereinafter NA) CAB/164/334.
38 *Irish Press*, 5 November 1968.
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40 *Newsletter,* 5 November 1968.
41 *Cabinet Meeting*, 7 November 1968, PRONI CAB/4/1413
42 Ibid.
43 Patterson and Kaufmann, *Unionism,* 83.
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46 Ibid.
47 *Cabinet Meeting*, 19 November 1968, PRONI CAB/4/1417.
48 *Cabinet Meeting*, 20 November 1968, PRONI CAB/4/1418.
49 Ibid.
50 *Newsletter,* 21 November 1968.
51 Ibid.
52 *Irish Press,* 23 November 1968.
53 *Newsletter*, 23 November 1968.
54 *Irish Press*, 27 November 1968.
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70 *Memorandum by O'Neill,* 14 January 1969, PRONI CAB/4/1427.
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5

North-South Relations During the Troubles: 1969–72

Abstract: *In aftermath of violence, both governments are operating in a state of crisis management. For the Unionist government, the rising number of anti-partitionist statements and the mobilisation of the Irish army posed real problems for moderates within the government. The fear of an invasion and rising violence on the streets created a narrative of subversive Irish activity. This sense of fear was only heightened following the Arms Crisis which implicated ministers in a plot to smuggle arms toe Northern Nationalists. Whilst an attempt to end the violence was examined the rise of the Provisional IRA had a hugely destabilising impact on North-South relations. The ensuing tough security policies such as internment, made an improved relationship next to impossible.*

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> I know they were interested but I doubt they had given any great thought to Northern Ireland.[1]
>
> T.K. Whitaker on the Department of External Affairs response to the outbreak of the Troubles

By early September, any prospect of restarting formal co-operation between the two governments had been destroyed due to the violence during the summer marching season. In Belfast, the Unionist government lurched from crisis to crisis, as they failed to placate the hardliners within the Unionist party who called for tough security measures and greater isolation from both the British and Irish governments. The instability within the community and the government left the cabinet unable to pursue any new initiatives for co-operation with the Republic. It were these competing demands that led to a period of paralysis within the government and saw the introduction of tougher security policies such as road cratering and internment. The failure of the Unionist government to adequately assuage the concerns of its hardliners and the British government ultimately led to the prorogation of Stormont in March 1972.

In the aftermath of the violence in August, Lynch attempted to rebut some of the more hard-line views of members of his cabinet, most notably Neil Blaney, Kevin Boland and Charles Haughey. Speaking in Tralee, County Kerry, Lynch argued for reunification to be achieved solely through peaceful means. He set out the argument that the unity the Irish government wanted was a 'free' and 'genuine' union and not something that would involve the extension of domination from Dublin over Northern Unionism. The reassertion of the notion of the violence in Northern Ireland being one primarily rooted in partition ran through the speech as it was fundamentally anti-partitionist in tone and message. The attempt to sell Irish unity to a Unionist audience through the lens of constitutional Nationalism would be a recurring theme that Lynch would return to over the next two years.

As a result of the emphasis on reunification adopted by Lynch, the response to it from Unionists was cautious, as more conservative elements of the government picked up on the many references in the speech to Irish unity. The *Newsletter* commented upon this counter-productive strategy of prioritising reunification; 'whether they spell their Unionism with a large U or a small one, such harping on the united Ireland theme strengthens their determination to have no part of it.'[2] The first response from the Unionist government came from the Junior Home

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Affairs Minister, John Taylor, who attacked Lynch's ideas for a federal unity arrangement, arguing that Unionist's should adopt a 'not an inch' strategy, as he believed that a united Ireland would be both economically and politically detrimental to the Unionist population.[3] A similar response followed from Chichester-Clark, who argued that friendly relations were not going to be advanced by Irish army troop movements and approaches to the UN. He believed that there was a lack of realism within the Irish government on the issue of unity, but Chichester-Clark did not feel compelled to rule out further co-operation between the two governments, as he stated that not 'all possibilities of a friendly and fruitful relationship with the south need in all circumstances be foreclosed'.[4]

The interest in the Tralee speech was not just confined to the Unionist government, as British officials began re-examining their own approach to Northern Ireland. A Foreign Office memorandum analysing Chichester-Clark's response believed that his speech was 'very backward looking' and that Chichester-Clark should be reminded in 'the strongest possible terms' that the government should be consulted before statements dealing with relations with the Irish Republic were released.[5] The Home Office issued guidance on the Tralee speech, to be welcomed as a 'realistic appraisal of the situation and particularly its references to long term approaches and the need for patience and goodwill'.[6] Chichester-Clark's defence of his response to the Tralee speech illustrates the pressure he was under from hardliners within his own party, as he told Callaghan that he responded in the way that he did to fend off Craig and other extreme Unionists.[7] Unimpressed with this response, Callaghan told Chichester-Clark that in Tralee, Lynch did not pander to his hardliners. In this instance Callaghan displayed his ultimate lack of interest in the internal politics of the Unionist party, as he removed from Chichester-Clark a valuable tool used by his predecessors, attacking statements and comments from leaders in the Irish Republic. As Craig notes, these speeches were 'an important way of deflection and disassociation required to keep the support of electorates in both jurisdictions.'[8]

Following Tralee, there was evidence of some new thinking that was taking place within the British government. Callaghan began assessing how to improve relations between the British, Irish and Unionist governments. On 23 September, he met with the British Ambassador in Dublin, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, to discuss how relations could be improved in the aftermath of the Tralee Speech. Gilchrist told Callaghan that it was politically unfeasible for any Irish Prime Minister not to take an active interest

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in the affairs of Northern Ireland and that the old strategy of the British government rebuffing Hillery and Lynch's ideas on the Troubles, as it was an internal matter, would provoke an adverse reaction.[9] Callaghan stated that he wanted to raise relations between the three governments to a new plane. In achieving this, he believed that the first step was securing implementation of reforms within Northern Ireland, but that initial contact between the two governments should be done through diplomatic channels. Callaghan feared that close contact between the two governments might prejudice the entire programme if it were perceived as giving the Irish government a greater say in Northern Ireland. Yet, Callaghan believed that once the reform programme was completed over the coming months, Lynch should be prepared to attempt to improve relations with the Unionist government and offered his assistance in achieving this.[10] This conversation with Gilchrist was important as it illustrates that the Tralee speech had a much wider impact outside of Ireland. The speech provoked the British government to recognise that, in some aspects, formal dialogue with the Irish government on Northern Ireland was essential in solving the problem.

In Dublin, Chichester-Clark's response was also greeted with scepticism by the *Irish Press,* which argued that the Irish government's role in bringing the world's attention to the 'flaws of partition' helped highlight the wrong done to the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the editorial did notice a change in attitude from Chichester-Clark arguing that he recognised the 'inevitable fact' that Dublin should have a concern in Northern Ireland's people and future. The paper believed that his sincerity on developing improved relations with the Republic remained to be seen as he still would have to bring the more hard-line elements of the Unionist party along with him.[11]

5.1 External pressures and internal divisions

In October, there was evidence of some resistance from the Unionist government to Callaghan's strict guidelines on how to respond to statements from the Irish government. Chichester-Clark wrote to Callaghan, explaining that 'frankly we had not realised we had entered into such an obligation' and that after consulting his cabinet colleagues, he wanted to inform Callaghan that it was the unanimous view of the government that prior approval from the British government would 'raise the gravest

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difficulties'.[12] Chichester-Clark reiterated the main aim of the Unionist party to keep Northern Ireland as an integral part of the UK and that this meant responding to any attacks on the province's constitutional position from Irish government ministers was necessary. He feared that any lack of response would be raised at political meetings and this vacuum would ultimately be filled by more extreme elements of Unionism. Clark promised, as much as he could, to inform the British government beforehand, but he hoped that 'you would not seek to inhibit us from a swift reply in cases where we consider this really essential'.[13]

This letter from Chichester-Clark was an attempt to make Callaghan aware of his political difficulties over the implementation of a restriction of this kind, before they met the following week in Belfast. At the meeting with members of the cabinet, Chichester-Clark reiterated his case that restricting the right of the government to respond to statements from Irish government ministers would see the hardliners within Unionism gain support. Callaghan, however, did not accept the government's concerns, telling the Northern Ireland Cabinet that the British administration was responsible for foreign affairs and an ill-timed speech from Belfast could upset negotiations at the UN.[14] The Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, and Callaghan were anxious that Northern Ireland ministers should observe the same restrictions placed on members of the government in Westminster, which would mean that all speeches dealing with the Irish Republic would be cleared through the Foreign Office. Left with little option, Chichester-Clark instructed his government to clear all speeches through the government in Westminster. What was clear from the meeting minutes was that it was more a direct order from Callaghan than a negotiation between the two governments over the issue. The Irish government, which generally had more flexibility and publicity for their views over Northern affairs, now held an even greater advantage over its counterparts in Belfast, as hard-line ministers in the Republic who were subjected to no such censorship, began to vent their frustrations over the perceived lack of action by Lynch on the situation in Northern Ireland.

Chichester-Clark's warning about the growing strength of extremists within Unionism would prove to be accurate. Just three weeks after his meeting with Callaghan, the loyalist paramilitary group, the UVF, attempted to blow up a power station in Ballyshannon, County Donegal, and then the grave of Wolfe Tone in County Kildare. In a statement issued after the attacks, they stated, 'further installations in Eire will be

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demolished so long as the puny Eire army continues to keep its soldiers on the border of our beloved Ulster.'[15] The Irish government responded by drafting in Gardai reinforcements from Dublin, Galway and Waterford to patrol the border. Lynch called the attack a perpetuation of bigotry and hatred, which was really directed at stopping the implementation of the reform programme in Northern Ireland.[16] This would mark the beginning of an escalation of paramilitary activity across the border, as the UVF would go on to attack more nationalist symbols in the Irish Republic throughout 1969.

Whilst violence was continuing, hard-line rhetoric continued to dominate the North-South relationship. Throughout the latter half of 1969, Lynch struggled to stamp his authority on his government over Northern Ireland. The debate within Fianna Fáil over how to deal with the outbreak of the Troubles would give some of the leadership's detractors an opportunity to undermine Lynch and the peaceful approach he advocated. The first act of defiance would come from Blaney, who used an address to his local Fianna Fáil branch in County Donegal to set out his position on the problems in the North.[17] He began with a critique of Lynch's muddled approach, saying, 'we should be clear about where we stand here.'[18] Blaney followed by telling his audience that 'the ideal way to end partition is by peaceful means. But no one has the right to assert that force is irrevocably out.'[19] Directly contradicting Lynch's earlier speeches on Northern Ireland, Blaney argued that Fianna Fáil had never ruled out the use of force and that if nationalists were under sustained attack, 'we would not stand idly by', which was a quote with a small amendment from Lynch's televised address in August.

The response to the speech in Northern Ireland was negative, as the Minister for Development, Brian Faulkner, declared his 'amazement' at the divergence between Blaney and Lynch's rhetoric, calling it a 'body blow for North-South relations'.[20] In a similar tone, the *Newsletter* dismissed Blaney's speech as 'sabre rattling,' claiming that his speech was indicative of the intentions of the wider government, stating 'some of his colleagues have been no less threatening'.[21] The condemnation of the speech also came from nationalists, Roderick O'Connor, the leader of the Nationalist party, who rejected Blaney's rhetoric, declaring that only peace and goodwill could end partition.[22] A more harsh critique came from John Hume, who argued that it was irresponsible to talk of using force in the current situation and that it was not in fact 'Irish' to be talking about using force against fellow Irishmen of the protestant

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tradition.[23] Blaney took the opportunity to clarify aspects of his speech through an interview to RTE radio, stating that he did not regret making the speech, but he had concerns over how it was interpreted through the media, with the emphasis on his statements about using force.[24]

Outside of the internal rifts within the Irish government, there was evidence of an improvement in North-South relations, largely due to Lynch's rejection of the use of force during the Blaney debacle. In responding, James Chichester-Clark said he found Lynch's recent statements 'encouraging' and still hoped that it was possible to have further co-operation between the two governments.[25] The *Newsletter's* Meryvn Pauley reported that increased co-operation would not be pursued by the Northern Ireland government as a matter of policy, but it would not be obstructed if it became clear that there were areas where both states could benefit. On ministerial meetings, Pauley reported that the general feeling at the moment was that there was no antipathy towards meetings with Irish ministers, but that at the moment nothing could be gained from such meetings.[26] Moreover, the paper reported that there was little prospect of a Prime Ministerial summit at any time in 1970 and so it would prove to be, as Lynch in an interview talked about the possibility of a summit with Chichester-Clark, saying that he would be happy to have a meeting with his northern counterpart but 'only in the context of something much wider developing'.[27] In perhaps a critique of the Lemass approach to North-South relations, Lynch said about past summits;

> I felt that those tea parties are gone ... I did say that if there was something worthwhile, something practical, something that I would see to be beneficial to the people on both sides of the border in a practical way, then I would be glad to go.[28]

This was a new approach for a Taoiseach to take on cross-border co-operation, as previously Lemass had not placed any pre-conditions upon meeting a Northern Prime Minister. However, enhancing and re-establishing formal co-operation with the Unionist government would be difficult as, even in this interview, Lynch continued to link co-operation to Irish unity, as he spoke about changing articles of the constitution, raising social welfare rates and seeking a federal arrangement with Stormont to achieve a unified Irish state.[29] Lynch failed to understand that the more he tried to attempt to reach out to the Northern Ireland government with offers of change, the more distrust he aroused, as an editorial in the *Newsletter* commenting on his policy said, 'no one is seriously convinced that the ultimate aim is anything but the end of partition'.[30]

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Lynch ended 1969 hoping that the worst of the Troubles and the divisions within his party were over. There was renewed hope at the beginning of 1970 that a major initiative from the Lemass-O'Neill meetings was beginning to bear fruit, as two electricity boards reached agreement over establishing an inter-connector to become operational within a year.[31] Such hope was misplaced as violence would continue to escalate throughout 1970. Interestingly, while the media focused throughout late 1969 on divisions within Fianna Fáil, divisions within another political party, Sinn Fein, would come to a head over whether to recognise the legitimacy of Dáil Eireann. Little attention, however, was given to a statement issued by a new paramilitary group that had emerged from the IRA, rejecting parliamentary politics vowing to defend the nationalist community in Northern Ireland from the British army; it would be called the Provisional IRA.[32] This group would emerge in the coming months as a constant focus for both the British and Unionist governments in dealing with North-South relations.

While the Provisional IRA was set up, there was a continuing deterioration in North-South relations. In early February, the junior Minister for Home Affairs, John Taylor, addressed a meeting in UCD, where he had bottles and eggs thrown at him by students from Republican Clubs.[33] So aggressive was the attack that Taylor responded by cancelling all future events in the Irish Republic. This was significant, as Taylor had been a regular attendee at debates and functions in the Republic and the fact that he felt that that it was not possible for him to speak at events in the south illustrates how hostile the political environment had become. The Taylor incident also had repercussions for other ministers attending functions in the Republic, as the Minister of Commerce, Roy Bradford, cancelled an appearance at the Debating Society in Trinity College Dublin as other Unionist cabinet ministers expressed opposition to his attendance at such an event.[34] Even when relations between both states were at their worst point during the early nineteen-sixties, it was still possible for ministers to visit the Irish Republic. The Taylor incident and the Unionist cabinet's view that it was politically unfeasible for a minister to attend debates in the south, illustrates how hostile the environment had become in 1970.

5.2 Unionism and border security

In Northern Ireland, Chichester-Clark was struggling to keep the Unionist party together over pursuing reform of the Northern Ireland

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state. Patterson and Kaufmann note that early 1970 'would see a widening gap between a government keen to present itself as modernising and progressive to the UK elite...and ordinary Unionists who saw reform as an appeasement process forced on Stormont by pressure from the streets and Harold Wilson.'[35] The divide within the party was openly displayed in public, as in March, five Unionist MP's were expelled from the parliamentary party for rebelling against reforms to the police suggested by the Hunt report. Chichester-Clark's problems were compounded when he faced the first electoral battle of his Premiership in mid-April, with the Unionist party losing Terence O'Neill's seat of Bannside to Ian Paisley. It would be these divisions that would preoccupy Chichester-Clark throughout 1970.

However, the real issue that would dominate Unionist attention for the rest of 1970 would be allegations from the Fine Gael leader, Liam Cosgrave that senior ministers were attempting to secure arms for Northern Nationalists. The story around the event, now known as the 'Arms Crisis', has often been told. Lynch was forced to sack both Haughey and Blaney while Kevin Boland and Minister of State, Paudge Brennan, resigned in sympathy.[36] Still, a less known story is the reaction to the events in Northern Ireland. When the news broke in early May, most of the commentary from Unionist sources was one of shock that government ministers would have been directly involved. Reports said that while there was no immediate reaction from the government, a 'mood of apprehension' could be detected in some quarters.[37] This was due largely to the fear that if Lynch was deposed by hardliners within his own party, that it could have a serious impact on life in Northern Ireland. In an editorial, the *Newsletter,* in a surprising change, praised Lynch's response to the crisis saying that while no Irish Prime Minister could ever be more than a friendly enemy to Ulster, Lynch's actions deserved sympathy and showed real 'political courage'.[38] Other elements of Unionism were less impressed, as Ian Paisley claimed, 'the coming days will expose the double talk of Mr Lynch and his cabinet ministers. They talked peace but war was in their hearts.'[39]

Chichester-Clark's response followed a similar line to the *Newsletter,* telling the Standing Committee of the Unionist party that 'it came as a complete surprise to me. I am bound to say my breath was taken away'. He continued praising Lynch for his quick actions in dismissing his hard-line ministers and for rejecting violence. As Unionist cabinet ministers were restricted in their comments on issues dealing with the Irish Republic,

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a more hawkish and representative statement came from John Taylor who, when speaking to a Unionist Association in Fivemiletown, told his audience that the revelations proved that the Irish government was part of a 'secret agenda' to support violence within Northern Ireland.[40] Taylor believed that the rapturous reception that was given to Blaney, when he returned to Donegal, illustrated that actions like this have the support of a large portion of the Irish population. Taylor went further, commenting on the previous Prime Ministerial summits, calling both Lemass and Lynch deceitful in proclaiming they wanted a better relationship with Northern Ireland and the events of recent days proved that the North had to look elsewhere for allies in the world.[41]

As Patterson and Kaufmann note, in mid-1970 the driving force behind Unionist opposition moved from opposition to reforms of the Northern Ireland state to security issues, as the IRA campaign became increasingly violent.[42] The impact of the Arms Crisis only served to heighten fears among those Unionists situated in border counties, who began pressing the government for a stronger line of defence along the border. Such fears were highlighted by the Fermanagh MP, Harry West, who said that 'unionist people were losing confidence on the serious issue of what happened in Dublin. There was great concern that arms might have been smuggled into this country and might be stored in the Bogside and the Falls'.[43] These fears were heightened almost immediately, with front page newspaper stories of groups like Soar Eire conducting robberies in border towns to fund arms purchases.[44]

Throughout the 1970 Westminster General Election campaign, any mention of relations with the Irish Republic was in the context of border security. In their analysis as the election began, the Press Association reported the split amongst the Unionist party leadership, who were cautious about issues such as security being raised in the campaign as they believed it would expose recent divisions. They continued reporting that politicians, such as Ian Paisley and other right wing elements within the Unionist party, sought the rearming of the RUC along with recall of the recently disbanded B-specials 'to counter threats from the South'.[45] The Press Association believed that border security would be a winning issue for the rebels as they noted that the revelations from the Arms Crisis would give more conservative Unionists 'sympathetic hearing'.[46] This analysis of the election campaign would prove to be accurate, as senior government ministers were both inhibited in what they could say publicly about the Irish government and also trying to avoid a split

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in the party. In attempting to achieve this balance, Unionist ministers attempted to shift border issues away from security to the old central issues around socio-economic benefits.

This approach was laid out by Faulkner at a campaign rally in South Down. He attempted to link extremists in Northern Ireland, like Paisley, with Boland and Blaney in the Republic, arguing that 'the vast majority of people, both North and South condemn the use of force'.[47] He went further, defending Lynch's response to the Arms Crisis, saying he deserved 'credit' for refusing to bring the gun back into Irish politics. Faulkner concluded that the border was the central issue of this campaign and that people should focus on the 'disastrous ways' that Northern Ireland's living standards would be affected in a united Ireland. However, the results would show how badly they misjudged this, as the Unionist party ended up with just eight seats, their worst showing ever. The only glimmer of hope for Chichester-Clark was that there was a change of government as Edward Heath replaced Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. Responding to the victory Clark said to reporters that 'unionist political views coincided more with those of the Conservatives.'[48]

In the aftermath of the election, relations with the Republic continued to remain strained, as reports continued to flow into the province that Lynch's position was increasingly uncertain and a more hard-line element within Fianna Fáil was plotting to initiate a change of leadership.[49] The *Newsletter* believed that a massive increase in troop numbers to Northern Ireland would help not only calm rising tensions within the province, but also to stop any prospective action from a more republican government in Dublin. While pieces such as this may have been idle conjecture on what could happen, it is indicative of the instability within the Irish government having a direct impact on the political situation within Northern Ireland. Even with Lynch still in power, senior Unionist MPs began complaining that the government was not doing enough about arms being smuggled across the border. Joe Burns protested at a parliamentary party meeting in early July, that the Provisional IRA were bringing in arms to the Bogside with the knowledge of members of the Irish Defence Forces, as he believed that 600 men from the Irish army were now living in Derry and that the RUC were doing nothing about it.[50] Rumours such as this were only fuelled by continuing reports of the British army locating Provisional IRA camps situated just miles from the border in counties like Donegal.[51] But, the final straw would come in early August, with a bomb attack that killed two RUC officers in the

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border town of Crossmaglen, County Armagh. The attack was believed to have been conducted from the Irish Republic. This incident provoked the Northern Ireland government to begin a process of spiking unapproved roads that led to the south, within just a few days 25 border roads were closed to public use. The Unionist government from this point would follow a policy of public criticism of the Irish Republic, as they disallowed ministers and even the Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Grey, from attending functions in Dublin.[52] This would be the defining narrative on how Unionists viewed relations with the Irish Republic, as the Provisional IRA continued raids across the border throughout the early nineteen-seventies. The impact of such a hostile environment was felt most profoundly by the tourist industry, as Bord Fáilte reported that since 1968 the revenue from tourists arriving from Northern Ireland had dropped dramatically from £28.7 million to just £18.8 million in less than two years.[53]

In Dublin, Lynch was preoccupied with the conclusion of the arms trials which in October 1970 found both Blaney and Haughey not guilty of wrongdoing. The outcome of the trial did not have a sizeable impact on the political situation in Northern Ireland. The only notable response was delivered by Chichester-Clark, which represented more of a plea to the Irish government to keep Lynch, as he told the Victoria Unionist Association that the Irish Republic faced a choice between the approaches they wanted towards Northern Ireland. He believed that there were two strands of thinking, with those who believed in achieving unity through force or those who believed in using peaceful means.[54] Clark appealed to people of goodwill to reject empty rhetoric that appealed to violence. It is noteworthy that in a speech to members of the Unionist party, Chichester-Clark did not choose to attack Lynch, but rather appeal to the Irish electorate to support Lynch's continued leadership of the country. Archival evidence reveals that this was indeed the objective of Chichester-Clark, which did not go unnoticed in Dublin. Behind closed doors both Chichester-Clark and Lynch enjoyed a friendly relationship, as a correspondence in late 1970 from the British Ambassador revealed that Lynch wished to pass on to Chichester-Clark his high opinion of the courage and personal qualities of his leadership in difficult times.[55] In a comment that reveals the environment at that time, he thought that it would be inappropriate for him to say this publicly. Clark responded to Lynch with his appreciation, expressing his hope that he would survive the challenge to his leadership as a result of the arms trials.[56]

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Following the outcome of the trials, Lynch did speak to media outlets in Northern Ireland, which appeared to undermine the defence that Chichester-Clark had been making about Lynch's approach. In an interview with UTV following his survival in a confidence motion over the government's handling of the Arms Crisis, Lynch, was asked by the interviewer, David Dunseith, about whether he was surprised that Blaney and Haughey had voted with the government. Lynch's response not only appeared to explain their continued support but also, play down the divisions over Northern Ireland arguing that on reunification 'there is no major division there'.[57] Lynch went further, refusing to call Haughey and Blaney dissidents as he believed that on Northern Ireland policy the only difference was on emphasis rather than the overall approach of the government.

Outside of the arms trials and more indicative of the wider Unionist community's interest, was Lynch's new approach to border security, which began in late 1970 under his new Justice Minister, Des O'Malley. Throughout November, the government had taken a much tougher stand on the Provisional IRA, conducting more arrests of its members. But the real shock, as far as Northern Ireland was concerned was that following a discovery by Gardai of a plot to kidnap members of the government, Lynch threatened to invoke the Offences against the State Act, which would allow the government to intern people whom it deemed were a threat to national security. This announcement by Lynch made front page news in Northern Ireland, as he received praise from unusual quarters including the Grand Master of the Orange Order, Martin Smyth, who told reporters that he respected the strength of the Irish government. Inside the government, Chichester-Clark responded by simply saying that if security chiefs asked for special powers, then he would accede to their requests.[58] Nevertheless, reports in the media quoted senior Unionists as saying that if the Irish Republic were willing to take such strong action against terrorists when necessary, then the Stormont government should show the same urgency.[59] Lynch and O'Malley did face criticism from both the Nationalist party and the new SDLP, led by Gerry Fitt, who expressed their bitter opposition to the introduction of internment.[60] The near universal praise from Unionist quarters for this proposal, and its dominant coverage over the results of the arms trials just a couple of weeks earlier, are indicative of Unionism's focus on border security.

Despite Chichester-Clark's focus on the PIRA and Lynch's attempts to deal with the fallout from the arms trials, other areas of cross-border

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co-operation were affected by the wider paralysis that existed within both governments. On 17 November, the Minister of Commerce, Roy Bradford, drew up a memorandum on the electricity inter-connecter that had been agreed by both governments in 1967. He reported that the inter-connector was now able to allow Northern Ireland, in the case of an emergency, the ability to draw upon electricity from the Irish Republic while also allowing Northern Ireland to achieve significant saving in electricity usage.[61] Yet, when these issues were brought to the cabinet, a decision on the issue was delayed, as ministers expressed concerns over Northern Ireland's exposure to the closure of generating plants in the Irish Republic and the reaction of trade unions to the proposals.[62] Ministers were still not convinced two months later, when Bradford asked again for the cabinet's approval for the joint electricity authority to enter into negotiations with the Republic, as they wanted more detailed costing put before the government on how the inter-connector would work.[63]

The stagnation over the electricity inter-connector led to general scepticism about cross-border co-operation more generally, as *Fortnight* argued that 'co-operation remains piecemeal, vague in its ultimate object, a subsidiary and pragmatic by-products of policy in Belfast and Dublin rather than a fundamental part of it'.[64] While satirical in nature, this article did correctly note the lack of overall vision for co-operation that had existed since 1965. This lack of cohesion was largely due to the political environment at that time, as Patterson and Kaufmann note Chichester-Clark was struggling to deal with a deteriorating security situation,[65] while O'Beachain highlights Lynch going into 1971 was keen not to do anything that would ignite further trouble in the aftermath of the arms trials.[66] Despite the good personal relationship between the two men, Chichester-Clark's administration was coming to an end as he struggled to keep more hard-line elements of his party in line. After failing to secure a substantial increase in troops from the British government, he resigned as Prime Minister on 21 March 1971.[67]

5.3 Faulkner takes over

Two days after Chichester-Clark's resignation, the Unionist party chose Brian Faulkner as his successor. In his first press conference as Prime Minister, Faulkner set out the aim of his administration to bring the entire community together otherwise all other efforts to restore law and

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order would be 'futile'. During the first three months of his Premiership, Faulkner reached out to both the conservative and liberal wings of the Unionist party, appointing O'Neill critic, Harry West and the more liberal Robin Baillie to his cabinet. He also reached outside the party, appointing the NILP's David Bleakley to the new Department of Community Relations. In Dublin, Lynch welcomed the new administration, saying that his government would assist the Northern Ireland government in anything that would bring peace to Northern Ireland and welcomed Faulkner's attempts to include a variety of opinions within the community.[68] Faulkner took the unusual step, for a Unionist Prime Minister, of conducting a phone conversation with Lynch about his government's agenda; he recalled in his memoirs that the conversation was very cordial stating Lynch was 'pleased and congratulatory. It seemed possible that we could have a good working relationship'.[69]

In the immediate aftermath of Faulkner's succession, it appeared that relations between the North and South were improving. In early April, Lynch received praise over his recent clamp down on Provisional IRA activities, provoked by the killing of a Belfast man in County Wicklow. The *Newsletter* argued that, in light of the rising threat of the Provisional IRA on both sides of the border, more co-operation between the security services was needed, despite the conflict of interest that it posed for some people.[70] Since the departure of O'Neill, the change in portfolio for Faulkner and the emergence of the Provisional IRA, the Unionist government lacked any minister driving forward the cross-border relations agenda, which was largely the reason why for Unionism, co-operation on issues to do with border security was politically the only acceptable form of co-operation. Nevertheless, with Faulkner as Prime Minister and Bailie as Commerce Minister there were moves to kick-start the old O'Neill-Lemass agenda. In early April, Faulkner began the new initiative when, after a meeting in London, he complained about the level of tariffs levied on Northern goods entering the Republic while welcoming formal co-operation over economic issues.[71] Bailie quickly followed up Faulkner's statement by instructing officials in his department to make contact with officials in Industry and Commerce to begin a process of 'meaningful dialogue'.[72] Within a week, a meeting between department secretaries A.C. Brooke and JCB MacCarthy was agreed for 20 April. The *Newsletter* speculated that the meeting between the officials could represent a thaw in the cold war between both states and could possibly be a precursor to a ministerial meeting.[73] The significance of the talks was not

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lost on Hugh McCann in the Department of External Affairs, who saw an opportunity to restart formal co-operation with Northern Ireland. He warned Lynch that while it might be consistent with the government's policy of reunification to attract co-operation with Northern Ireland, it would be better at this point not to frighten Stormont off by attaching political overtones to this visit by civil servants.[74]

Initially, Faulkner appeared, both privately and publicly, to be adopting a more favourable attitude to the Irish Republic. After the meeting between civil servants in Dublin, arrangements were made with his approval for a delegation from the Irish civil service to visit Stormont. Further signs of an improvement in the relationship came with Faulkner's response to the death of Seán Lemass, whom he praised as a man willing to turn his back on the past whom he found to be a realist and business-like. He believed that Lemass' attitude was necessary for the development of any relationship between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.[75] Never since partition had a Unionist Prime Minister paid such fulsome tribute on the death of a former Taoiseach and not only did his statement come with praise of Lemass' record, but also comprised what he believed was necessary for a fruitful relationship between North and South. These public statements from Faulkner dovetailed what he was saying privately to officials within the civil service. On 24 May, while visiting their counterparts in Belfast, officials from the Irish Department of Industry and Commerce were brought to meet Faulkner, where he stated his desire that meetings between civil servants on issues like tourism and industry could be elevated to a ministerial level. He said that the talks had been well received in Northern Ireland and could hopefully be conducted without 'raising any matters of policy'.[76] Talks similar to the O'Neill/Lemass summit are what Faulkner wanted, but this conversation with Irish officials illustrates that his early overtures to Lynch were a genuine attempt to restart formal co-operation. However, pressure from within his party and the continued activities of the Provisional IRA would ensure that this initiative would not proceed. On the day he conveyed these wishes, a report in the *Belfast Telegraph* highlighted pressure was growing from a group of backbench Unionist MP's for Faulkner to introduce internment in Northern Ireland.[77]

Throughout the summer, the Provisional IRA escalated the number of bomb attacks rising from 40 in May and June to 94 in July.[78] These attacks led to increasingly hard-line statements from both Faulkner and Lynch over the summer period. In mid-July, Lynch made a speech at the

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Garden of Remembrance attacking Britain's legislative guarantee to keep Northern Ireland part of Britain. Faulkner's response on the eve of 12 July marches was not unsurprisingly hard-line, accusing Lynch's statement of bolstering terrorist organisations that were attacking a democratically elected government.[79] The sense of alienation between North and South was further compounded when the SDLP withdrew from Stormont on 19 July over the deaths of two Catholics. As his attempts to broaden the appeal of the Unionist government fell apart and speculation about internment dominated the headlines throughout the summer, Faulkner bowed to the pressure introducing the measure on 9 August with the arrest of more than three hundred suspected Provisional IRA members.[80]

Hennessey notes that there had been a general recognition among both Unionists and the British government, that for internment to be successful it would have to be simultaneously introduced by the Irish government.[81] Yet, in his memoirs the British Ambassador to Ireland, Sir John Peck, noted Lynch's unenthusiastic reaction to the proposition, saying, 'he (Lynch) not only stated most emphatically that there was not the remotest possibility of internment being introduced in the Republic, but he gave me the most serious and solemn warning that the consequences in the North would be catastrophic.'[82] As Patterson and Kaufmann note, the introduction of interment had two undesirable effects for Unionists, as not only did it actually cause a sizeable increase in Provisional IRA violence, but also led to more demands from the SDLP for Lynch to place more pressure on Heath for a solution.[83]

From this point on, effective co-operation with Northern Ireland was dead. This explains Lynch's critical response, as he lambasted internment as 'deplorable' and evidence of a government who were victimising the minority in Northern Ireland, proving that they were incapable of just government. Lynch went further, calling for the abolition of the Stormont government and for it to be replaced with a power-sharing executive.[84] Even though Hillery interpreted Lynch's statement as a one of non-confidence in the political system in Northern Ireland rather than an attempt to halt all formal co-operation with Northern Ireland,[85] Faulkner's response would not give Hillery's assessment much credence as he stated that 'no further attempt by us to deal constructively with the present Dublin government is possible'.[86]

While Faulkner may have ruled out dealing directly with the Irish government in the aftermath of internment, speculation was rife about

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the possibility of a tripartite summit between Lynch, Faulkner and Heath. Less than a week after the introduction of internment, the *Newsletter* began running articles about the possibility of a meeting. The paper believed that the Downing Street declaration in August 1969 removed any need for the Irish government to be consulted on any matters relating to the North.[87] Throughout August and September, the paper continued running more critical responses to Lynch's pronouncements on Northern Ireland, calling him a 'pathetic figure', arguing that he had 'forfeited any sympathy that was formerly running for him in the North'.[88]

The hostility towards a meeting displayed by the *Newsletter* was felt more widely within the Unionist community, as Faulkner faced questions from his cabinet over the possible content of a tripartite summit. In a bid to reassure his colleagues, Faulkner stated that he would not attend a summit that included discussions on Northern Ireland's constitutional position.[89] The following day, Heath formally raised the proposal of a tripartite summit with Faulkner, believing that the time was now right to conduct talks with the Irish government. In responding, Faulkner told Heath of the political difficulties he faced in meeting Lynch. He felt that unless strict limits were imposed on the talks he 'might well find it impossible to hold the line in Northern Ireland'.[90] Heath eventually managed to assuage Faulkner's concerns by pledging that it could be made public that security issues would be the main focus of the summit.

Though, Patterson and Kaufmann highlight a flaw with the logic of prioritising security issues to pacify malcontents within the Unionist party. They note that fears within the party were based in the concern that Northern Ireland ministers were effectively powerless against the British government and would be forced into accepting policies that they believed were harmful to Unionism.[91] There is evidence to vindicate this argument as a meeting between Faulkner and party officers illustrate. At the meeting, the Grand Master of the Orange Order, Rev Martin Smyth, called the prospect of a meeting with Lynch 'a complete sell out' threatening to resign his position. On the same day as Faulkner met hawkish party officers, opposition was being expressed from the grassroots, as both the Young Unionist and Pottinger Unionist Associations released a statement calling on Faulkner not to attend any meeting with Lynch.[92] Stories like this persisted, as a variety of Unionist Associations began expressing publicly their opposition to the tripartite summit.

When the meeting took place on 27 September, Faulkner set out the areas of co-operation that he wanted to see furthered, namely security

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and mutual economic interests. He rebutted the notion often stated by Lynch and the SDLP, that the source of the violence came from the actions of the Unionist government, arguing that if peace was restored he was willing to give nationalists a greater role in the process of government.[93] In responding, Lynch set out to challenge statements emanating from the Northern Ireland government, claiming that his government was not turning a blind eye to Provisional IRA activities, as Special Branch had raided a number of PIRA camps. Faulkner believed, however, that the Irish government could take stronger actions against illegal activities along the border. The two leaders agreed the sharing of information on an informal basis, between the RUC and Gardai, on explosives crossing the border.[94] Further issues of co-operation in economic areas were also discussed, namely the establishment of an inter-governmental body to look at areas of co-operation between both parts of Ireland. When both leaders attempted to discuss the details of these proposals it illustrated how constitutional issues had now become inextricably linked to formal co-operation. Faulkner would only give his approval to this body once more peaceful conditions had emerged within Northern Ireland. In contrast, Lynch saw the body as a component of his government's policy to achieve Irish unity.

It was precisely this fear about Irish unity that made contacts with the Irish government politically difficult for Faulkner. Throughout 1971, the only feasible co-operation with the Republic for Unionism was co-operation around border security. This was how Faulkner defended and rationalised his decision to meet Lynch as a way to effectively deal with the Provisional IRA campaign.[95] However, in a press conference immediately following the tripartite summit Lynch would undermine Faulkner's defence as he told reporters that the issue of border security was 'not discussed at any great length,' as he argued that the government was currently doing everything within its power to tackle the Provisional IRA.[96]

The failure to get tougher action on the Provisional IRA from the Republic was evident when Faulkner briefed his cabinet, informing them that the talks actually 'served little useful purpose' and the only politically helpful issue for the Unionist government appeared to be that Lynch had tacitly recognised the legitimacy of the Northern Ireland government.[97] This view of achieving recognition as a real political achievement illustrated the level of detachment between the cabinet and the Unionist grassroots, as a meeting with the Ulster Unionist Council in early October would demonstrate. A motion by dissident members of the party was

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introduced, asking for further consultations with the council before the introduction of Proportional Representation and reform of the Senate. Following a six-hour debate, the motion was defeated with around 40 per cent of the council delegates voting in favour of the motion. The *Newsletter* highlighted that the vote was being interpreted as a confidence vote in Faulkner's handling of the tripartite summit the previous week.[98] Faulkner's speech to the council recognised this threat, as he openly challenged dissident members, accusing them of seeking to erode the authority of his government. Yet, still, the level of opposition to a meeting with Lynch provoked a wide spread rebellion against his leadership.

Indeed, for the rest of 1971, the issue of border security overshadowed all aspects of cross-border co-operation. Faulkner had left himself vulnerable within his own party by meeting Lynch as backbench Unionist MPs like John Laird began pressing for a policy of non-co-operation with the Republic, while it allowed the Provisional IRA to carry out attacks on Northern Ireland.[99] This feeling of desperation about the Irish government's border security policies was not just expressed by hardliners. Liberal Unionists such as Robin Bailie criticised Lynch, arguing he was following a 'Jekyll and Hyde' approach to Northern Ireland, telling MPs in Stormont, 'the Dublin government cannot purport to walk hand in hand with us on economic co-operation and at the same time try to throttle us with the other'.[100] Bailie's critique of Lynch's approach is important, as just six months earlier he was encouraging and forging economic links with the Republic and was now, in the context of an escalating Provisional IRA campaign, expressing public criticism of the Irish government. Similar concerns about the perception that the Irish government were not doing enough to combat the IRA were expressed by T.K. Whitaker, who wrote to Lynch in mid-December, arguing for patrols along the border to be strengthened as he worried that the government was being seen as 'ineffective' or 'ambivalent' about IRA activities in the Republic.[101]

5.4 North-South relations from Bloody Sunday to direct rule

As 1972 began, the prominence of border security issues in North-South relations was still evident. The violence in Northern Ireland had an increasing level of coverage in the Irish Republic, as newspapers recounted the statistics of 1971 with 173 people killed with more than a 1,000 people

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injured.[102] The overall relationship between the two states would not improve in 1972 as British paratroopers shot dead 13 civil rights protestors in Derry on 30 January. The event, now known as Bloody Sunday, provoked universal condemnation across Irish society as newspapers carried stories of flights from London being cancelled, as Aer Lingus workers refused to handle British flights, and there were also reports of attacks on firms that were under British ownership.[103] Most famously, the British embassy in Dublin was burned down by a crowd of angry protestors. Bertie Ahern, who took part in protests outside the embassy, recalled in his memoirs when he heard about the event, 'I got really fired up, I was fuming … you could feel it in the atmosphere. Something had changed for us all'.[104] At a political level, Lynch withdrew the ambassador from London and lodged a protest at the UN. Some of his colleagues were more forthright in their criticism as Blaney argued for the mobilisation of the first line reserves to be dispatched to the border and the Minister of Finance, George Colley, implied that Faulkner and the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling had planned what happened in Derry.[105]

While the events of Bloody Sunday had united politicians in the Republic, it would be their hard-line response which united Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland. At a debate in Stormont, Faulkner, in a remarkable move for his government, accepted a motion proposed by his most significant rival, the Democratic Unionist Party opposing Irish unity. In his contribution to the debate, Faulkner pledged 'total and absolute' resistance to any plans for a united Ireland. He continued speaking about his government's efforts to seek further co-operation with the Republic over issues such as tourism, in return for dropping the Irish state's territorial claim on Northern Ireland. However, he accused Lynch of making a conscious choice to reject that offer, in favour of overthrowing the democratic institutions of the North.[106] It is noteworthy that, even after the events of Bloody Sunday, Faulkner still highlighted his proposals for co-operation with the Irish government, which in the lead up to the tripartite summit, was not a popular idea with the Unionist grassroots. This distrust over co-operation persisted in to 1972, as Paisley voiced objections to the Minister of Commerce, Robin Bailie, over proceeding with the cross-border electricity inter-connector.[107]

However, the progress in functional co-operation between the two governments remained secondary to the on-going megaphone diplomacy between politicians on both sides of the border. The last weeks of the Stormont government would see the continued stalemate, as Lynch,

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in his presidential address at the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis, repeated his desire for reunification, while in the interim period advocating the creation of a new administration in Northern Ireland.[108] Blaney made further republican statements declaring that it was now time for the British government to issue a statement of intent on leaving Northern Ireland. Seen in the context of Blaney's speech, Lynch delivered a measured statement in comparison. However, the interesting remarks actually came from his Justice Minister, Des O'Malley, who accurately pin pointed for Unionism the issue of border security. O'Malley called on delegates that it was time for the government to take on the PIRA, even floating the establishment of special courts, akin to those created by Lemass in the early nineteen-sixties, to ensure those involved were convicted. O'Malley ended his speech with a standing ovation and the passage of a motion supporting strong action against the PIRA.[109]

Meanwhile, Faulkner continued to place the emphasis on border security. The last weeks of his administration contained a focus on attacking the Irish government for not doing enough. Faulkner believed that Lynch allowed the Republic to be a 'safe haven' for terrorists, which was largely the reason why the Provisional IRA could continue their campaign against the Northern Ireland state.[110] The issue of border security did create a real impasse between the two governments as each state had fundamentally different views over what caused the violence and how the problem could be solved. For Faulkner he believed that measures pursued thus far by the Irish government were only 'face saving' and 'half hearted' measures. It was a useful attack for Faulkner politically as speculation in the press continued rise throughout March 1972 about the introduction of direct rule. This explains the growing vehemence with which Faulkner directed his attacks at Lynch as he lambasted the perceived approach of arresting a few IRA suspects for publicity purposes and then releasing them quietly. Faulkner summed it up as 'terrorism as you were'. Informed by his experiences as Minister for Home Affairs during the border campaign, the logic from Stormont appeared to be that once the Irish government introduced measures similar to that of the Lemass government in the early nineteen-sixties that the PIRA campaign could be neutralised.

Ultimately Faulkner and Lynch would end their North-South dialogue just as it had begun between Lemass and Brookeborough, with barbs and insults being traded across the border. By March, it was becoming increasingly evident that the British government was both losing patience

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and confidence in the Stormont government, as rumours of direct rule were gaining increasing prominence in the media. The speculation would be vindicated, as the British government suspended the Northern Ireland government on 25 March 1972.

Conclusion

During the last two years of the Stormont administration, the policy focus for both governments was limited to border security and Irish unity. In Belfast, there was increasing instability as the government attempted to reconcile the Unionist grassroots, many of whom were demanding a tougher response to the actions of the Provisional IRA and the British government who were increasing pressure for reform. In the past administrations, whenever there was a period of political turbulence at home, a useful tool for Unionist ministers was to raise the issue of the bogeyman across the border. However, by the end of the 1969, Callaghan had stripped the government of this tool, prohibiting any statements on the Irish Republic that were not cleared by the Foreign Office. Despite this directive from Callaghan, as events unfolded in 1970, relations continued to worsen as cabinet ministers agreed to cease conducting public engagements in the Republic and the Provisional IRA campaign began to escalate.

In the aftermath of the Arms Crisis, border security issues came to the forefront as Unionist MPs made various statements about Irish officials sneaking weapons in to Northern Ireland. Going into 1971, more attacks continued along the border, giving rise to the perception among the grassroots of the party that Lynch was effectively giving the Provisional IRA permission to conduct attacks on Northern Ireland. This failure to act over the Provisional IRA led to scepticism over the co-operation initiatives of the O'Neill era, such as the electricity inter-connecter, as more dissenting voices were being raised in cabinet about co-operating in such an important area with Dublin. When Faulkner attempted to broaden the government's agenda on co-operation upon becoming Prime Minister, it was quickly halted as the Provisional IRA campaign escalated over the summer of 1971. When he met Lynch in September 1971, Faulkner cited seeking more co-operation over tackling the Provisional IRA as the major reason for attending the summit and even that defence was not enough to satisfy many members of his party.

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It is telling that during this entire period, it was Faulkner and not Lynch who was the more proactive of the two Premiers in seeking formal co-operation. Despite the constant demands from Faulkner for action against the Provisional IRA, Lynch appeared aloof as he feared that strong action against the PIRA would result in greater public sympathy for their cause and the strengthening of the Unionist government. In 1972, the government was focused on the creation of a new power-sharing administration within Northern Ireland, in tandem with a strong Irish dimension. These components would form the basis of what would become the ill-fated Sunningdale Agreement in 1973. Lynch would not get the opportunity to put any of these ideas into practice as he called an early election for February 1973, which he lost to the Fine Gael-Labour coalition. When he lost office, the reaction in from Unionist sources in Northern Ireland illustrated how toxic political relations had become with the Fianna Fáil government. An editorial in the *Newsletter* summed up how they view his approach as they criticised his slowness in tackling the IRA and what they perceived as using crises in Northern Ireland for his political advantage arguing;

> Few tears will be shed over Mr. Lynch's fall from power in Northern Ireland. We have often tried to see the former leader as the figure of moderation he sought to present to the world ... Mr Lynch tended not to ease the difficulties North of the border but rather to accentuate them.[111]

The editorial concluded on the issue of border security which in the height of the IRA campaign it seen as Lynch's biggest weakness stating his 'procrastination in dealing with the men of violence will never be forgotten by the people of Ulster'. A similar response came from the Unionist leader, Brian Faulkner, who believed that the new government had a mandate from the electorate to take on the IRA and that if they were successful any future Northern Ireland government would be 'ready and willing' to co-operation on social and economic matters. The emergence of the Troubles had effectively set back North-South co-operation by a generation and as the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement a year later would prove formal co-operation with the Irish government would still be difficult to foster in such a politically difficult environment. By the time devolution was restored to Northern Ireland in May 2007, one time enemies of North-South co-operation, like Ian Paisley, felt able to embrace it as the Irish government removed its territorial claim from the constitution and the IRA had given up its armed campaign. In April

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2007, Paisley met with Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, in a public display of friendship not seen since January 1965. Yet in a supreme irony of history, the same criticism those dealt to O'Neill, ended up sealing his own fate as by the time of his forced resignation as First Minister in May 2008 an internal party survey of DUP MLAs believed that their leader had become too close to Ahern.[112] Even in a relatively benign political environment a close relationship between North and South, for Unionism, at any rate still seemed politically difficult.

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30 *Newsletter*, 31 December 1969.
31 *Newsletter*, 1 January 1970.
32 *Irish Press*, 29 December 1969.
33 *Irish Times,* 7 February 1970.
34 *Cabinet meeting*, 19 February 1970, PRONI CAB/4/1503.
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36 For more detail, Justin O'Brien, *The Arms Trial*, 126–31
37 *Newsletter*, 7 May 1970.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 *Newsletter*, 12 May 1970.
41 Ibid.
42 Patterson and Kaufmann, *Unionism,* 105.
43 Ibid,106.
44 *Newsletter*, 9 May 1970.
45 Ibid, 1 June 1970.
46 Ibid.
47 *Newsletter*, 4 June 1970.
48 Ibid, 20 June 1970.
49 Ibid, 25 June 1970.
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51 *Newsletter,* 8 July 1970.
52 *Cabinet meeting*, 24 September 1970, PRONI, CAB/4/1549.
53 Ibid, 28 October 1970.
54 *Newsletter*, 27 October 1970.
55 *Note from Gilchrist*, 16 October 1970, PRONI CAB/9/U/6/1.
56 *Note from Chichester-Clark*, 5 November 1970, Ibid.
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61 *Memorandum on electricity inter-connector*, 17 November 1970, PRONI CAB/9/F/227/3.
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72 *Newsletter*, 8 April 1971.
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74 *Note by McCann*, 16 April 1971, NAI DFA 2002/8/237.
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108 *Irish Press*, 19 February 1972.
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112 Paisley: *Genesis to Revelation*, BBC Northern Ireland, Broadcast on 13 January 2014.

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Conclusion

McCann, David. *From Protest to Pragmatism: The Unionist Government and North-South Relations from 1959–72.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
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> The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there.[1]

This quote is a particularly apt description of how history tends to record the events of the nineteen-sixties in Northern and Southern Ireland. In most studies on this decade in Irish history, events such as the O'Neill/Lemass summit and the joint co-operation initiatives that emanated from it was the high point of the more politically enlightened environment that had been fostered by two modernising Premiers.[2] This argument goes on to posit that relations between Northern and Southern Ireland, had it not been for the outbreak of the Troubles, would have flourished if it were given enough time. Yet, this is an overly simplistic analysis of this period and more particularly relations between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. As Evans correctly notes, there have been a variety of studies on key figures such as Seán Lemass.[3] Similarly, there has been a variety of work done by academics, from Keogh to Patterson, prompting the question of why does this period in Irish history need another one to recapitulate the often told story about various notable events that occurred during the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies.

Yet, within these studies there has been a noticeable omission of any in-depth analysis of the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. Aside from the work of Kennedy, little detailed examination has been given about the rationale and motivations of the various key figures that developed and implemented this policy within the two governments. This book, by focusing on the realm of North-South relations, has attempted to shed new light on this period in Irish history.

Examinations of political figures within this period are generally skewed towards leaders in the Irish Republic. This omission is particularly notable within the Brookeborough government, as aside from Patterson and Kaufmann, little analysis has been conducted on the policies pursued by his administration. While their study focused on the internal dynamics of Unionism during this period, this study has offered some insights into how not just Brookeborough, but the wider Unionist community, viewed relations with the Irish Republic. The decided policy of the government during this period was a reactive one of rebutting Lemass' overtures and resisting pressure from industrialists, who were eager to take advantage of a rapidly improving Irish economy. For the Unionist government, the problem in dealing with the Irish government was not economic;[4] it was fundamentally political. At many junctures

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throughout this period, the government rejected proposals that within the confines of the cabinet room were recognised as being economically beneficial, but politically detrimental.[5] Unionist strategy during this period can only be summarised as political hesitancy trumping economic advancement.

While Mulholland notes that it was Brookeborough's failure to deal with the Province's economic problems that led to his downfall, only to pave the way for O'Neill,[6] through extending the examination to relations with the Irish Republic, it can be argued that Lemass' policy of opening up the Irish economy fundamentally wrong-footed the Brookeborough government, as it persisted with its focus on the politics of dealing with the IRA border campaign and Irish state's territorial claim on Northern Ireland. Brookeborough is characterised as heading a laissez-faire administration. In the context of North-South relations, this is accurate, as his government continually followed a reactive policy that placed political concerns as the central deciding factor in making policy.

The book has also sought to challenge the narrative that the rise of O'Neill brought about a radical shift in policy on North-South relations. The research has found that O'Neill was actually content to continue with Brookeborough's policy of prioritising political concerns over economic advancement. The shift in policy when it came was fundamentally a reaction to internal and external pressures. This characterisation of O'Neill as a reluctant reformer chimes with the studies that Gordon[7] and Mulholland have conducted on his time as Prime Minister. Broadening this argument to the context of North-South relations, the research has found that the O'Neill/Lemass summit should not be conceptualised as a new dawn, but rather as a political manoeuvre designed to pre-empt the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement and halt the haemorrhaging of his support amongst the liberal wing of the Unionist party. While O'Neill's secretive style in organising the summit is often highlighted, there is little explanation as to why he felt this secrecy was necessary.[8] To argue, as Tobin does, that the O'Neill/Lemass summit was born out of a desire to break political moulds, neglects any consideration of the internal dynamics of the Unionist party at that time.[9]

The examination also offers some new insights into how wider Unionist opinion reacted to the summit with Lemass. Within the literature, the reaction from Unionism is often identified with figures like Paisley.[10] This narrative of opposition, driven by ideological fears, is often cited as not only the driving force of Unionist hostility, but also a main reason why

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the attempts to improve relations ultimately failed. From the primary evidence, it is clear that opposition within Unionism to the summit was driven by the secrecy with which O'Neill organised the summits. It is important to remember that O'Neill was forced to hold a meeting with Lemass, in a large part, due to pressures from within Unionism itself. Moreover, when contrasted with the approach of Faulkner, who followed a much more transparent approach and was never the focus of criticism, it is appropriate to conceptualise Unionist opposition as driven by O'Neill's presidential leadership style.

There is also a lack of consideration within the literature as to what the Northern Ireland government hoped to get out of formal co-operation with the Irish Republic. The most prevalent argument is in Kennedy's work, where he notes that, at the time, the summits were heralded as a new beginning in relations on the island of Ireland.[11] Yet, while this was the view that came from Dublin, as Lemass heralded road blocks being removed and nothing ever being the same again in Belfast, the approach to formal co-operation was more based on joint projects for mutual benefit.[12] Within the editorials of the *Newsletter*, various memoranda from government ministers and even O'Neill himself, the stated desire of this change in policy was not a new rapprochement with the Irish government, but rather the pursuit of joint projects for mutual benefit. While this approach, driven primarily by Faulkner, did achieve some real results, such as the electricity inter-connector, it also ensured that joint projects between the two governments would be limited to key areas such as trade, tourism and electricity, the progress in which would be subject to the political stability within the government, which by 1968 was nearly non-existent, as O'Neill's government crumbled.

Unionism and North-South relations during the Troubles

This book has conducted a much overdue analysis into the approach of O'Neill's successors, Chichester-Clark and Faulkner, in dealing with the Irish government. In the case of Chichester-Clark, it is important to highlight that his government operated in an environment of almost perpetual crisis, the impact of which would see more hard-line Unionists achieve more prominent positions within the party, which had a direct impact on North-South relations. Chichester-Clark followed a similar

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approach to Lynch of displaying, at times, a liberal attitude towards dealing with the Irish government, while at the same time being mindful of more conservative elements within Unionism. This approach of attempting to forge a consensus would, in effect, create a policy muddle. Still, it would be wrong to simply dismiss his time as Prime Minister as merely an administration that lurched from crisis to crisis. Chichester-Clark's administration was the first that had to operate under restrictions from the British government on what it could say about the Irish government. This restriction was imposed at a time when much more hard-line rhetoric was emanating from more republican ministers within the Irish government and just as the Provisional IRA was emerging.

The impact of the Provisional IRA's campaign on Unionist opinion is recorded in the work of Patterson and Kaufman, who note that by May 1970, border security issues had become a priority for most Unionists.[13] Examining newspaper reports and cabinet papers from that period, it is evident that the emergence of the Provisional IRA did have a substantive impact on North-South relations, as the focus of policy for the Unionist government became solely about border security. The book argues that Chichester-Clark, despite the growing concerns of members of his party, was reluctant to link the violence of the Provisional IRA to Lynch. In fact, archival evidence illustrates that during the Arms Crisis, Chichester-Clark actually sought to bolster Lynch's position as he faced a possible leadership challenge from Haughey and Blaney. But while at many times he illustrated an appreciation for the internal dynamics of politics within Fianna Fáil, Chichester-Clark was slow to realise the growing fears of many Unionists about the escalation of the Provisional IRA's campaign. This research has sought to expand the debate around this administration, instead of discounting it as a mere interregnum between the reformist zeal of the O'Neill years and the more substantial Faulkner era. In the context of relations with the Irish Republic, considering the circumstances, Chichester-Clark did a remarkable job in continuing with a policy of friendly neighbourliness, allowing for co-operation where political circumstances allowed for it. This highlights a need to re-examine the prevailing narrative of Clark as a weak leader, who merely pandered to the crowd and followed public opinion rather than attempting to shape it.

Chichester-Clark's successor, Brian Faulkner, has also suffered within the literature due to the lack of examination of his career. Within the literature, the acclaim for the attempts to improve relations with the Irish

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government is commonly given to O'Neill. Yet, as this examination has argued, it was actually Faulkner who forced O'Neill to begin talks with Lemass in January 1965. Moreover, Faulkner was, within the cabinet, the driving force behind the signature initiatives in tourism, trade and electricity that the entire O'Neill/Lemass summit would become known for. While O'Neill provided the symbolism for the improved relationship with the Irish government, Faulkner was the person who provided the substance. The various co-operative initiatives between the two governments provided Faulkner with an opportunity to portray an image of a dynamic Minister of Commerce, while also attempting to outflank O'Neill on the liberal wing of the Unionist party. This again reaffirms the need to view North-South relations outside of the context of challenging constitutional perspectives, but rather as a political pawn that was useful in attempting to further political goals.

When he became Prime Minister in March 1971, much is made about Faulkner's attempts to conciliate through bringing David Bleakley and Harry West into the cabinet and offering committee chairmanships to the opposition SDLP.[14] This examination has pointed to the need to include his initial overtures to the Irish government as not just part of an attempt to ease the concerns of nationalists, but also indicative of his wider intentions on how he envisaged conducting relations with the Irish government. Faulkner's approach of contacting Lynch upon becoming Prime Minister, in tandem with civil service dialogue, illustrates that even with the outbreak of the Troubles he had not lost his desire for formal co-operation between the two states. Archival evidence points to the fact that Faulkner consistently attempted, during his brief time as Prime Minister, to broaden the government's agenda with the Irish government beyond border security issues, but could not find a willing partner in either his party or Lynch to achieve this goal. The substantial rise in the attacks of the Provisional IRA over the summer of 1971 had the total effect of halting any initiatives between the two governments being taken. As Kennedy notes, co-operation from the nineteen-sixties had put down strong roots,[15] but in the context of an unrelenting campaign from the Provo's, this left moderately inclined politicians such as Faulkner and Lynch unable to persuade their respective parties to embark upon any new initiatives. Even where projects such as the electricity-inter connector did go ahead, they proved unable to withstand paramilitary violence, as they faced sustained attack by the Provisional IRA, eventually leading to its demise in 1975. Of all the various external pressures on the two

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governments the Provisional IRA was not just the most prevalent but also the most destabilising.

Notes

1 L.P. Hartley, *The go-between*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1954, 1.
2 Tobin, *The Best of decades* and Garvin, *Judging Lemass*.
3 Evans, *Sean Lemass; Democratic Dictator,* 1.
4 The Brookeborough government had during the fifties taken part in some joint initiatives with Irish government such as the Erne Hydro-electric scheme.
5 Cabinet conclusion was to oppose free trade with Irish government as it could not be supported on 'political grounds', *Cabinet Meeting*, 7 July 1959, PRONI/CAB/4/1097.
6 Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the Crossroads*, 22.
7 Gordon, *The O'Neill Years.*
8 Patterson and Kaufmann, *Unionism and Orangeism*, 68 and Mulholland, *Northern Ireland at the Crossroads*, 83.
9 Tobin, *Best of decades,* 124–5.
10 Garvin, *Judging Lemass,* 16–7.
11 Kennedy, *Division and Consensus*, 260.
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14 Hennessey, *Evolution of the Troubles,* 90–1.
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