

POPULIST NATIONALISTS: *SINN FÉIN* AND REDEFINING THE 'RADICAL RIGHT'

EOIN O'MALLEY
SCHOOL OF LAW AND GOVERNMENT
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY
IRELAND

t +353.1.700 6473
f +353.1.700
e ecoin.omalley@dcu.ie

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VERY FIRST DRAFT

Abstract

The rise of the radical right has occupied a great deal of attention of political scientists; arguably proportionally much greater than the radical right's electoral or governmental impact. In defining the extreme right, writers often point to the ultra-nationalist ideologies of these parties and racist or anti-immigrant platforms, even though not all of these parties are racist or anti-immigrant (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn* for instance was more concerned with the failure of certain immigrant groups to adopt the liberal and tolerant Dutch outlook than their being there). However, in many other aspects of these parties' policies the 'radical right' is much more left-wing. This paper tests the proposition that Sinn Féin is a radical right party. It finds that while there are similarities with radical right parties, it is not sustainable to claim that Sinn Féin is right-wing. Rather it is a radical nationalist and populist party. Something, it is argued, might more usefully describe many 'radical right' parties.

Populist nationalists: *Sinn Féin* and redefining the ‘extreme right’

Eoin O’Malley

School of Law and Government, Dublin City University

Introduction

In the 2002 Irish general election the leader of the Labour party Ruairí Quinn compared Sinn Féin, Ireland’s most aggressively nationalist party, to the French National Front, and claimed that a vote for Sinn Féin candidates was akin to supporting Jean-Marie le Pen in France. He said that Sinn Féin is an ‘extreme nationalist party’ (*Observer* 12 May 2002). Although this was obviously an electoral strategy, Quinn is not alone in making this comparison. For decades Irish and British politicians have characterised Sinn Féin/ IRA as quasi-fascists. Joe Hendron of the SDLP spoke of Sinn Féin as a ‘fascist organisation’ (*Irish Times* 29 May 1996) and Ian Paisley, an exemplar of intolerance, talked about the objectives of Sinn Féin/ IRA as ‘the triumph of fascism’ (*Irish Times* 5 July 2000).

There is prima facie evidence to support this claim. The campaign of its military arm, the IRA, is often sectarian – even if it would deny this – targeting innocent Protestants and British people. The penchant for dressing in black berets, dark glasses and marching with an abundance of national flags is evocative of extreme right-wing organisations. The use of vigilantism and punishment beatings to meek out their form of justice to anti-socials – such as women who fraternised with British soldiers – may be an activity more closely associated with right-wing mobs than leftist revolutionaries.

However, Sinn Féin presents itself as a radical left-wing alternative to mainstream parties. Sinn Féin is one of the fastest growing parties in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and although still small, it has attracted support from a group that is traditionally depoliticised or apolitical. In one of the salient cleavages of Irish politics, violent or physical-force nationalism versus constitutional nationalism, it is undoubtedly radical. On social and economic issues it claims to be liberal and left-leaning, but this is less clear. This paper will study the ideology, policy positions, the voters and the organisation of Sinn Féin to test whether it is an extreme right, radical left or populist party. This will be done by looking at the statements of Sinn Féin, comparing its manifesto with that of the British National Party, analysing survey data and academic literature on the party.

Existing literature: Is Sinn Féin of the ‘Radical Right’¹, ‘Radical Left’ or a Populist party

There is an abundance of literature on Sinn Féin and on the radical right, but perhaps understandably, little has been written linking the two. Less understandable is the paucity of literature on Sinn Féin as a ‘normal’ political party. Most works deal with the more violent wing of the organisation the IRA. However a number of new works do consider the party in normalised politics. Tonge and Murray (2006) look at Sinn Féin policies, although the main focus of the book is to tell the story of its movement to party politics. Maillot (2005) devotes a good deal of space to studying ‘New Sinn Féin’ and it finds that it is a leftist party with strong equality agenda – she tends to give the party the benefit of the doubt. Another sympathetic study of Sinn Féin found no evidence that it is anything other than a radical left-wing party. Policies which are associated with the right such as Sinn Féin’s use of public-private partnerships to fund education in Northern Ireland in contravention to its stated policy, is an example of the party’s ‘pragmatism,’ (Doyle 2005: 7).

¹ There is a debate about what adjective should be used to qualify the degree of ‘right’. A number of authors argue that radical is the most neutral term, so I will use this.

This raises the question of the categorisation of parties as extreme or radical right and the categorisation of parties in general. In a recent book Pippa Norris (2005) there was shown to be a great variety in the strength of RR parties in Europe. Spain had none according to her (reasonable) selection criteria whereas Italy had two relevant RR parties and one fringe RR party accounting for on average 20 percent of the vote between them. It included one former fascist party in Italy, *Alleanza Nazionale*. AN had, even before it changed its name, dropped many of its fascistic aspects, moved away from corporatists policies, and was open to establishing 'relations with other parties, with a particular interest in the Socialist Party' (cited in Foot 2003: 191). On the other hand the Spanish party of fascist roots, the Partido Popular, a party that is certainly more antithetical to the left and more nationalistic than AN is not classified in this way.

So what is a radical right party and can Sinn Féin really be considered to belong to that party family? Von Beyme (1988: 1) differed between the conservatives, who want to maintain the status quo and 'right-wing extremists [who] want to restore the status quo ante...if necessary, [to] be achieved by the use of force'. Sinn Féin adheres to this definition quite well in that it attempts to revert to a (mythical) Gaelic united Ireland, and is willing to use violence to achieve this end.

In one of the most influential books on the topic Kitschelt puts RR parties into four categories; fascists; welfare chauvinists; right-authoritarian and populist anti-statist (Kitschelt 1995). The latter might be where Sinn Féin would sit. And in relation to the important philosophy of physical-force nationalism, again Sinn Féin appears similar to RR parties. Hainsworth (1992: 10) has argued that RR parties' brand of nationalism is 'usually aggressive, exclusive, chauvinistic and historically selective'.

However in many other ways Sinn Féin appears polar opposite to RR parties. Sinn Féin is socialist (it claims), anti-war and antimilitarist (inexplicably) and pro-immigrants and minority rights. It is in favour of state involvement in the economy.

Radical right parties are sometimes found to be inconsistent in policies terms, displaying a mixture of pro-capitalist, anti-communist sentiment, mixed with protectionism, and support for the welfare state. These hardly seem policies of the right. RR parties also tend to rail against globalisation and the EU. However the distinctive, some would say signature policy of RR parties seems to be the anti-immigrant attitude- although not all of these parties are xenophobic but this is rarely acknowledged. Might it be that these parties are in fact radical populist – willing to do or say anything to follow votes- rather than right-wing parties?

For populists the will of the people is sovereign regardless of its outcome, so there is no appeal to a political philosophy beyond that it is what the people want. As Riker (1982: 12) puts it;

According to the populist interpretation of voting, participation in rule-making is necessary for liberty. The rules thus made must be respected as right and proper because they embody that liberty. Were they not so respected, liberty itself might vanish.

Populist parties will, one would expect, not appear to have strong ideological ties, but will make appeals to people and call for less state power and more power to be devolved locally. Like the radical right, populism will be against the elite-driven European project, but may or may not blame immigrants for problems in society. Crucially populism, as a category can accommodate the inconsistencies in the Radical Right programmes, and go some way to explaining the similarities between Sinn Féin and RR parties. In order to compare Sinn Féin with RR parties it is first useful to look at the party's roots and development.

Sinn Féin's roots and development

While Sinn Féin (variously translated as 'Ourselves', inelegantly as 'We Ourselves' or incorrectly as 'Ourselves Alone') was founded in 1905 by non-violent nationalist, Arthur Griffith, it has split so many times that practically all political parties in Ireland (and none) can claim to be descended from this original party. Sinn Féin was a small, insignificant party in Ireland until following the 1916 Rising it became the focus for the electoral efforts of the unsuccessful military revolt. The British wrongly assumed Sinn Féin had been behind the uprising. Before that it was a nationalist party looking for a joint-sovereignty arrangement to achieve similar terms to Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Following the Rising it was taken over by the only leader of the Rising not to be executed, Éamon de Valera. In the December 1918 general election it received 47 percent of the vote on the whole island, and had all the seats been contested would probably have received two-thirds of the vote (Sinn Féin won 25 seats without a contest). Though some of this support can be put down to Sinn Féin's anti-conscription policy, the party's success is a measure of the extent to which Irish political consciousness had changed in the previous years. It took 73 out of the 105 Irish seats and proclaimed the First Dáil (Assembly). The party split initially on treaty arrangements with Britain. Cumann na nGaedheal was formed by those TDs (MPs) who accepted the terms of the Treaty, which controversially included the provision of an oath of allegiance to the British Monarch (partition was not seen as the crucial issue at the time). Sinn Féin split again when the majority of its remaining TDs left to form Fianna Fáil over Sinn Féin's policy of abstention from post-Treaty Dála (Assemblies). What Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael (the successor party to Cumann na nGaedheal) did not disagree about was the outlook of the new state- these revolutionaries were Gaelic, conservative Catholics (English 2003: 25). Sinn Féin was now a largely irrelevant rump party ignored by its military wing and master, the IRA. However, its support tended to come from people disillusioned with the conservatism of Fianna Fáil. Further splits on the issue of abstention led to the creation of Clann na Poblachta and Republican Congress. Pathetic IRA military campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s and the assumption of radical socialist policies further reduced its relevance.

In the late 1960s the IRA seized the opportunities provided by Unionist over-reaction to civil rights demands and assumed responsibility for 'defending' Catholic areas. The Sinn Féin/ IRA leadership in Dublin, which had become increasingly leftist and engaged in politics, was seen as militarily inactive and a split ensued. One leader of the Provisionals, Joe Cahill,

'had a feeling that ultra-left politics were taking over. As far as I was concerned, the main purpose of the IRA and Sinn Féin was to break the connection with England and get the Brits from Ireland.'

For the existing leadership of Sinn Féin, Cahill and people like him, 'were simply right-wingers living in a fantasy world and clinging to a romantic past' (Taylor 1998: 24). The Provisional IRA was founded in Belfast in 1970 with its political wing Provisional Sinn Féin. This is what is commonly referred to by the name Sinn Féin. Official Sinn Féin, as the original party now became known, went on to split again; the splinter group going on (eventually) to merge with the Irish Labour Party.

The leadership of Provisional Sinn Féin (henceforth Sinn Féin) was northern-based and closely connected with the armed campaign of the Provisional IRA. Anti-communism was high on the agenda for the new organisation. Republican News, the Belfast organisation's mouthpiece complained that 'into executive posts both in the IRA and Sinn Féin, the Red agents infiltrated...young men and women were brainwashed with the teachings and propaganda of the...Red infiltrators' (Moloney 2002: 75). The same paper later

claimed ‘our allegiance is to God and Ireland...’ (Moloney 2002: 75). For one IRA member, an early leader of the Provisionals, Billy McKee, was ‘an arch-Catholic bigot’ (English 2003: 112). However, this conservatism was not uniform in the Provisional movement and the ever present tensions between conservatives and socialists re-emerged. As time went on a debate on Sinn Féin’s politics took place and a left-wing agenda became current, but by the late 1970s Gerry Adams rejected the idea that Sinn Féin was or should be an extreme-left organisation, declaring ‘There is no Marxist influence within Sinn Féin. I know of no one in Sinn Féin who is a Marxist or would be influenced by Marxism’ (Murray and Tonge 2005: 152). By the mid-1980s Adams claimed that socialism, never a popular ideology in Ireland, was not on the agenda (Maillot 2005: 104). From the early 1980s an electoral strategy was pursued and Sinn Féin moved to moderate its public statements to make them more acceptable to the broader nationalist community in Northern Ireland. But Sinn Féin was still largely seen as beyond the pale in the Republic of Ireland, never receiving over two percent support. Continued negotiations with the British and Irish governments led to an IRA ceasefire in 1994 and eventually to the Belfast Agreement, a sectarian peace agreement institutionalising the ethnic divisions in Northern Ireland, in 1998. This ‘peace’ was broadly welcomed with Sinn Féin dramatically increasing its support in Northern Ireland as it became seen as the party best able to ensure the implementation of the Belfast Agreement for nationalists. In the south the party’s increased acceptability enabled it to increase its support base. However its campaigns in the South (understandably) had less to do with the ‘peace’ agenda, but emphasised and campaigned on issues such as housing shortages, bin charges and anti-social behaviour – the concerns of its voters in deprived urban areas.

Sinn Féin as radical right?

As modern Sinn Féin describes itself as a left-wing party, and as it has often called for a thirty-two county socialist republic², it may seem stretching plausibility to label it an extreme right-wing organisation. It can be seen in the last section that a conservative catholic and anti-communist element was always strong in Sinn Féin/ IRA, and that this (in part) explains the foundation of the Provisional movement. This section looks at four elements to test whether the charge levelled at it holds credibility. Firstly I will look at its policies and actions regarding non-nationals. Then I look at broader policies to see if these are similar to those of radical right-wing parties. I then study the Sinn Féin supporters to see if these are similar to supporters of radical-right parties in Europe, and finally look at the organisation, looking for similarities and differences between the Provisional movement and radical right parties.

Policy: Immigration, Race and Xenophobia

The trademarks of an extreme right-wing party include its attitude to foreigners or out-groups, beliefs around the predominant ethnic group and protecting that country’s culture. The attitude to foreigners is to tend to see them as a threat, but not foreigners per se. There is less concern about immigrants from the US than sub-Saharan Africa. In one aspect seemingly common to radical right-wing parties, immigration, Sinn Féin is without doubt the most openly pro-immigrant parties in Ireland. Ireland has seen a rapid rise in the non-national population; from negligible levels to ten percent of the population in as many years. While

² It is noteworthy that call for this are, in the words of one disaffected nationalist, ‘no longer mentioned’ (English 2003: 320). The county system of Ireland that nationalists so often appeal to are, ironically, an English invention that have been accepted by the Irish population. Indeed nationalist call for a united independent Ireland is something that has never existed. Before coming under Norman influence in the 12th century, Ireland was split into rival kingdoms continuously struggling for dominance. Like most nationalist ideology, Irish nationalist ideology is usually based on myth.

the main left-wing party in Ireland has expressed concerns about immigrants driving down wages and job security in ‘a race to the bottom’, Sinn Féin has consistently called for greater supports to immigrants and in its 2002 manifesto called for ‘the right to work or study for asylum seekers while their claims are being processed’ (Sinn Féin 2002: 16). It explicitly states that immigrants should not be blamed for housing shortages or hospital waiting lists. Sinn Féin is vocal in its support for a pluralist society and its opposition to sectarianism. It is quite clear that Sinn Féin does not have a policy akin to the BNP’s –and it certainly is not saying Ireland is full.

However, in its analysis of the ‘in-group’, the Irish, Sinn Féin is happy to accept and propagate myths. The analysis of Irish history is of a coherent Gaelic Ireland invaded and colonised by the English, followed by a continual struggle for freedom against an evil but wily oppressor. Traditional nationalism has for a long time proposed an Ireland that should be Gaelic and Catholic. For Pearse, a poster boy for nationalists, it was a battle between two civilisations, the Gaelic Irish and the Anglo-Saxon.³ Pearse’s writings are medieval and at times bizarre, but he was essentially a conservative Catholic. He advised the Irish to remain true to Irish-Ireland, and steer clear of communism and other foreign ideas (Cronin 1980: 103). For Pearse ‘the Gael is not like other men, the spade, the loom and the sword are not for him’ (cited in O’Malley 1997: 293). According to Cronin this attachment and reverence to mythical Gaelic values meant that Irish history was (mis)interpreted in racial or ethnic terms (Cronin 1980: 99).

Sinn Féin/ IRA has assumed much of Pearse’s philosophy and in their *Éire Nua* (New Ireland) the Irish would reject the ‘consumer pop-culture’ of the Anglo-Saxon. In this document the Provisionals claim ‘the Irish language and Irish culture will play a basic role in the national effort and their strengthening will have special attention. Sinn Féin will strive for a situation where the Irish language will become the everyday language of the people’. There hardly seems much place for those who do not feel Gaelic. In more recent documents Sinn Féin put an emphasis on reviving Irish culture and language.

Though the attitude to modern immigrants is welcoming, the attitude to those who settled in Ireland centuries ago is hostile. Gerry Adams has written some books in which he sets out his political beliefs. These tend not to show a desire for a pluralist society. His justification for his campaign is that Ireland has a right to self-determination which the British prevent the Irish exercising. By contrast unionists cannot claim this right:

‘they are a national minority; a significant minority but a minority nonetheless. To bestow the power of veto over national independence and sovereignty on a national minority is in direct contravention of the principle of self-determination’ (Adams 1988 cited in Whyte 1990: 134).

As Whyte points out, Adams assumed what is to be proved. There seems no recognition that Ulster Protestants may themselves form a separate nation with its own identity and rights. Murray and Tonge (2005: 165) report that in 1987 early drafts of the unreconstructed nationalist document *Scenario for Peace* contained a suggestion that Unionists unable to accept a united Ireland could be repatriated (presumably to somewhere they are not from). Protestants must learn to live in Sinn Féin’s vision of Ireland or leave. Even today Adams (2006) still displays basic majoritarian instincts by suggesting that unity can come about when there is a 50 percent plus one majority in favour of unity. Nor does the attitude to recent immigrants sit easily with the activities of Sinn Féin/ IRA during the Troubles, many of which were blatantly sectarian such as the murder of Protestants in Tullyvallen Orange Hall, La Mon, the bombs in Birmingham and Guilford, or the Enniskillen Remembrance Day

³ In fact there was a significant group of ‘Old English’ or Normans who remained Catholic after the reformation and as a result joined with the native Irish to remove Protestant rule and eventually became indistinguishable.

bomb. While it may support the plight of modern day immigrants, the descendents of those who travelled to Ireland 400 years ago are less welcome.

One Provisional was possibly more honest and certainly less subtle in analysing how he felt about Protestants: 'that's my dream for Ireland. I would like to see those Orange bastards just wiped out' (English 2003: 123). For another he saw that the rationale for many trying to join the IRA was 'just to get stuck in to the Orangies' (Moloney 2002: 81). Another member, who left and wrote about his experiences, became disillusioned partly at the sectarianism in the organisation. (Collins 1998: 36-7).⁴ Indeed one of the (more accurate) rallying calls of Sinn Féin was that Catholics in Northern Ireland were being cheated of work and good housing, something the British extreme right also (less accurately) feel (cf. Hainsworth 2000: 11).

More recently Sinn Féin has removed less subtle sectarian demands. The party also appeals to Wolfe Tone's spirit, for a separate state in which 'Catholic Protestant and Dissenter' would be known just as Irishman.⁵ But one would struggle to sustain the argument that the Provisional movement is no longer sectarian. Its use of flags and painted kerbstones is a sectarian device learnt from Protestant paramilitaries. The organised and often violent protests against Orange marches are, like the marches themselves, sectarian in nature and hardly consistent with appeals to pluralism. Sinn Féin may call for respect of other races, but has little respect for another major tradition on the island of Ireland. That it is essentially a sectarian party can also be seen in its peace strategy. Sinn Féin accepted (and in part designed) the set of institutions to bring a solution to the Troubles- the Belfast Agreement. The Agreement, which is on semi-permanent hiatus, creates sectarian structures to govern Northern Ireland in which people must identify themselves as belonging to one community or another. Indeed its attitude to this, that it is effectively a stepping-stone to a United Ireland would not indicate that either.

In its writings and actions we can see that the Provisional movement sees itself as part of a group, and strives to protect and increase the power of its group. This party, of course is competing in elections and must mark out a policy platform suitable for its likely constituency. It is also developing a programme and may be genuinely moving away from a sectarian past, while at the same time unwilling to reject past positions for fear of alienating existing supporters. One can hardly criticise it for developing a coherent policy programme, without admitting that all parties strive to do this. But its policies toward the other group in its society, while inclusive in language, tend to be populist and sectarian in action.

Other policies

In other areas of policy what would we expect to see of Sinn Féin if it were a radical right wing party? There are few systematic analyses of policy beyond the attitude to the 'out group'. Most studies concentrate on identifying the typical RR voter and/ or the conditions favouring such parties. Neither type of work tends to analyse the typical RR policy platform beyond attitude to immigration. Kitschelt (1995: 19) argues that the most successful RR parties will combine authoritarian and capitalist appeal. Swank and Betz (1995: 1) found that '[c]oncretely, RRWP [radical right-wing parties] combine radical free-market programmatic commitments with xenophobic and strident ant-establishment positions'. Given (2005: 38) points out that there tends to be 'a contradictory combination of neo-liberalism on the one hand and economic protection'. The British National Party manifesto (2005: 33) shows it to

⁴ He was subsequently murdered by the IRA.

⁵ They are unaware of or ignore the fact that Wolfe Tone was motivated mainly by a desire to improve the terms of trade for Belfast and Dublin merchants, and that his appeal was to catholic middle classes, and then only to get enough numbers to make the revolution possible. Nor did he have any time for Gaelic culture (see Elliot's biography of Tone).

be a traditional protectionist party seeking support for small business and a curb on global capitalism.

The BNP stands for a British national economy and is opposed to globalism, international socialism, laissez-faire capitalism and economic liberalism. We stand for rebuilding a strong national economy operating solely in the national interest. We favour as much national self sufficiency as is practicably possible. We will trade with other nations when it is the best interests of our people and nation to do so.

On Europe it is vehemently anti-European Union. Socially the BNP tends to conservatism, but claims to be very much in favour of human rights and democratic procedures, and in culture it calls for greater state investment. In health, transport and education, it is in favour of further investment. For instance on the NHS, the BNP (2005: 26) is;

wholly committed to a free, fully funded National Health Service for all British citizens. Contrary to popular political and 'right-wing' myth, the British NHS is actually very good value for money – the problem is that we do not put enough money into 'front-end' staff. The key reason that our health service is in many ways inferior to those of other leading industrial nations is that we spend less on it that they do.

Sinn Féin's policies are not dissimilar. Sinn Féin is anti-European Union: it has consistently opposed EU treaties and the single currency as a diminution of Irish sovereignty. Though it has tempered its language against globalisation, its economic policies emphasise support for small indigenous business. Sinn Féin (2002: 22) argues that;

current government policy is overdependent on inward investors...The same quantity and quality of resources made available to inward investors should be made available to indigenous enterprises... In a small economy like Ireland's we need to provide a sound economic base and infrastructure that is not dependent on the whims of international investors.

Its main policy proposals focus on support for small business and local brands, though it calls for maintenance of the low rate of corporation tax. In education it calls for greater investment and for Irish culture and language teaching to be improved. Unusually for an avowed left-wing party, the document focuses heavily on crime. It calls for community policies, victims' rights and measures to drug pushing and anti-social behaviour. The focus is on populist local action and a distrust of the state. Sinn Féin also gives some attention to human rights. This may be interpreted as being a post-material concern, consistent with its radical description of itself, but others have shown that the appeal to human rights in Northern Ireland is less a reflection of post-materialist values but a reflection of politics in that place (Curry and O'Connell 2000). This would make it similar to the BNP who because they see themselves as victims of censorship tend to emphasise human rights, democracy and free media.

For a self-proclaimed socially radical party Sinn Féin's social policies are surprisingly conservative or non-committal. For instance Sinn Féin joined the DUP to support a motion in the Northern Ireland Assembly (20 June 2000) against extending the 1967 UK Abortion Act to Northern Ireland. Ambivalence on the abortion issue may only reflect social realities in Ireland which makes *all* Irish politicians uneasy. For instance former Labour party leader Dick Spring has said that as a social liberal representing a rural constituency he did not even want the word abortion to be mentioned in the same sentence as his name. Adams, despite describing himself as a devout Catholic, also said he would not oppose gay marriages. However he was willing to allow Sinn Féin participate in a parade from which gays were banned.

Mixed with this are calls for policies that Sinn Féin will never be able to effect or on which it will never be listened to, but ones which are typical of a radical left liberal party. The party is against the war in Iraq; call for an end to the US blockade of Cuba; and for nuclear disarmament.

Excepting the policy on Northern Ireland, in general, Sinn Féin policy documents do not appear radical; rather they are banal statements of desired outcomes rather than actual policies. Where policies are proposed these too are banal. For instance (2002: 7),

Sinn Féin supports the development of a comprehensive all-Ireland strategy to eradicate poverty and deprivation in Ireland. This must be properly resourced and carried out within a specified time frame.

A systematic study of Irish party manifestoes using computer-coded word-scoring find that apart from its distinctive position on Northern Ireland Sinn Féin appears ‘interested in moving into the territory of the mainstream Irish parties rather than marking out a distinctive position on the liberal left’ (Benoit and Laver 2003: 104). Indeed these authors point to the party’s focus on urban crime, drug dealing, and the support for small and indigenous business, which would position the party closer to conservative parties than on the left. Overall their study finds Sinn Féin to be an economically centrist party and socially the most conservative party after Fianna Fáil.

A centrist party is not radical – left or right. But an Irish election is a series of small local elections. It might be that the positions taken in manifestos (which are never read by voters anyway) may differ from the message being put to voters in deprived urban areas. There is evidence of the ability of the Provisional movement to be inconsistent. Sinn Féin is vocal in its anti-drugs campaign, yet there is evidence that it is, or rather its members are involved in the illegal drug trade (Maillot 2005: 93). Sinn Féin also tends to downplay (or ignore) its socialism when speaking to an Irish American audience (Rafter 2005: 229).

When one looks at Sinn Féin campaigns one can see it making essentially populist appeals. Though it campaigns as an environmentally sensitive party it has opposed the efforts of councils to force householder to recycle by making them pay for refuse collection. It gives the incorrect impression that large businesses do not have to pay its rubbish disposal. A recent campaign is for a motorway to be built to the north-west of the country. There is no coherent political philosophy at play here.

This section does not, nor does it aim to demonstrate that Sinn Féin is an RR party. Rather it aims to show that it is not at all clear what a radical right party is and that appeals tend to be populist in nature. It was shown in the recent British general election that voters for the BNP were more likely to have switched from Labour as the Tories. What these parties share in common is the attempt to portray themselves as *the* radical alternative to the establishment. So the BNP (2005: 7) claimed;

The reality is that falling turn-outs can only be reversed by efforts by politicians to show that they can make a difference, and that between them they provide a real range of genuine alternatives. The prevailing choice of “More of the same or none of the above” is the reason for voter apathy

Sinn Féin (2002: 1) argued that the election offered a choice;

It is a choice between the only growing force in Irish politics and the stagnant array of parties who have failed to inspire the electorate...It is a choice between real change and more of the same.

Functional equivalence: supporters

As was noted above, most works on the radical right tend to study voters attitudes and characteristics. This has led to some firm conclusions and consensus. Given (2005: 46) finds

that ‘in general, survey evidence indicates that radical right voters are predominantly male, blue collar workers or small business owners who have a low level of education’. This is because these are ‘modernisation losers’ – people who neo-liberal policies of free trade and increased globalisation of manufacturing and services has left worse off. The concomitant downgrading of public services and welfare supports hits them hardest, and the fault of immigrants may appear obvious to them. Having become disillusioned with the state and the liberal establishment these people will have anti-system, anti-establishment attitudes.

A respected Irish political commentator recently proposed that there are two types of Sinn Féin voter. Traditional anti-British republicans mainly in rural areas and people living in deprived urban working class areas disenchanted with the ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy and the established parties (Collins 2003: 34). Where the former may be conservative and Catholic the latter may be more radical. Sinn Féin’s support in the Republic is strongest in rural border counties and in working class areas of Dublin.

Table 1 shows some demographic characteristics of Sinn Féin votes in the last two elections. Overall we see an increase in support for Sinn Féin. Within that the figures are very much in line with what are usually called radical or extreme right parties. Sinn Féin’s voters are (statistically and substantively) significantly more likely to be working class. There is an obvious and strong relationship with age. Support among the young is four times higher than among over pensioners. The rural urban divide exists but is less pronounced than one might expect, but this can be accounted by Collins’ observations. Should Sinn Féin voters be similar to radical nationalist party voters one would expect to see a gender gap. This also exists.

Table 1: Sinn Féin voters 1997 and 2002

	Sinn Féin 1997	Sinn Féin 2002
Total	3.3	7.1
Middle class	1.41	4.5
Working class	5.0	10.3
Farmers	1.0	2.4
18-24	5.4	14.5
25-34	4.4	8.7
35-49	3.1	6.7
50-64	1.8	4.6
65+	1.8	3.6
Urban *	4.2	8
Rural	2.9	5.8
Male	4.4	8.4
Female	2.0	5.8

Sources: own analysis of RTÉ/ Lansdowne exit poll 1997 and 2002. * For 1997 urban refers to Dublin versus not Dublin.

Sinn Féin voters are also likely to feel aggrieved or not part of the economic growth Ireland has experienced in the last fifteen years. 21 percent of Sinn Féin voters though the quality of life had not improved in the five years up to 2002 compared to 12 percent among voters of

other parties (own calculation of RTÉ exit poll data 2002). However, these figures would be consistent with what Sinn Féin claims itself to be- a radical left wing movement.

We can see how Sinn Féin supporters view themselves in terms of left and right. As one moved up the scale of probability to support Sinn Féin one also becomes more left-wing. The difference is statistically significant different between those who give a probability between 1 and 3 (antipathetic to Sinn Fein), whose mean is 6.02 and all others whose means are 5.48 (prob. 4-6), 5.58 (prob. 7-9) and 5.03 for those who gave as 10 the probability that they would vote Sinn Féin. However this is hardly typical of voters of a radical left-wing party.

Sinn Féin support has undoubtedly increased in the last number of years, and is predicted to continue increasing. Where has it come from? Table 2 shows support of the mainstream parties in 1989 and 2002. While Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have lost support generally, what is noteworthy is that Labour has become a much more middle class party. Fianna Fáil has lost support among the young, presumably to Sinn Féin.

Table 2: percentage support for mainstream parties 1989 and 2002

	Fianna Fáil 1989	Fianna Fáil 2002	Fine Gael 1989	Fine Gael 2002	Labour 1989	Labour 2002
Total	51.6	42	27.9	20.6	7.4	12.5
Middle class	47.5	39.1	28.7	20.8	7	14.1
Working class	53.5	44.2	21.1	18.5	10.2	11.9
Farmers	52.7	48.2	43.7	37.1	1.2	3.5
18-24	50.4	35	33	17.5	7.4	13.5
25-34	46.5	39.9	25.7	17.6	10.2	13.9
35-49	48.5	41.2	25.5	19.9	7.4	12.2
50-64	58.2	44	27.7	22.7	5.1	13.3
65+	55.6	50.8	30.4	26.5	6.7	8.6
Urban	47.4	38.4	22.8	16.6	9.7	15.7
Rural	56.4	47.8	33.9	27	4.7	7.3
Male	53.9	43.1	25.4	19.8	7.2	11.2
Female	49.4	40.6	30.3	21.3	7.6	13.9

Sources: own analysis of Lansdowne survey 1989 (n=945) and Garry et al's (2002) analysis of RTÉ/ Lansdowne exit poll (n=3175)

A multivariate analysis of Irish voters will help understand both the socio-demographic characteristics of Sinn Féin supporters, and their attitudes to other factors. I use Irish National Election Study data. This dataset is not ideal in that it does not contain measures on a number of factors of interest here. Probability to give Sinn Féin a first preference vote (PTV) is used as the dependent variable. PTV has a number of advantages over taking just the respondents who will or have voted for a party (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Small parties, by their nature, translates into a small number subjects in surveys (usually less than 100). By using PTVs it increases the sample size. Because PTVs are on an interval scale we lose less information and can reasonably use OLS regression. As we are usually interested in voter

change, we want to identify those on the cusp of changing electoral action. PTVs allow us to pick up on this, and enable us to work under the assumption that people are aligned to more than just one party.

Model 1 in Table 3 looks at socio-demographic variables and confirms that what we see in Table 1 using a different dataset. Age, sex and income are all significant and in the expected directions. So the younger and poorer you are the more likely you will consider voting for Sinn Féin. Men are more likely to vote Sinn Féin than women, and education level is also important. Sinn Féin voters are less well educated, even when controlling for age. So Sinn Féin voters are more likely to be young, poor, poorly educated men. But this model explains less than ten percent of variance, so not all young, poor, poorly educated men will vote Sinn Féin.

However to make the case that Sinn Féin voters are more or less like supporters of RR parties we need to see their attitudes to certain groups and issues. In 2004 there was a referendum on Citizenship, in which it was proposed that those born in Ireland would not automatically be entitled to Irish citizenship, rather they would have to prove some connection with the country. The referendum was easily passed with nearly 80 percent of voters supporting the change. Sinn Féin opposed the change and campaigned vigorously on the issue. An opinion poll taken at the start of campaigning showed a majority of people (54 percent) in favour of the change, including 56 percent of Sinn Féin supporters. This is despite the fact that C2DE voters were less likely to support the change (Irish Times 24 May 2004). The second model adds opinions on certain public issues and on private attitudes. Some results are notable. Contrary to what one might expect, given Sinn Féin's policies, Sinn Féin supporters are more likely to feel that there are already too many immigrants in Ireland. Sinn Féin supporters are not more likely to consider asylum seekers entitled to full state welfare benefits. This is surprising given the tone of Sinn Féin policy. Also surprising given the party's support for 'an inclusive pluralist society' and its claims that it is socially radical, is that those with anti-homosexual views are more likely to support Sinn Féin. Those who feel that there is no duty to vote – people with anti-system sentiments – are also more likely to support Sinn Féin. Again, Sinn Féin supporters tend not to be as anti-EU as their party policy would suggest they might. Sinn Féin is Ireland's most Eurosceptic party, but opinion on this issue does not predict Sinn Féin support.

Model 3 includes measures of voter type. Political efficacy is a two-item, 14-point measure, and shows that those who think their vote not count and changes in party not to matter are more likely to consider voting for Sinn Féin. This is unsurprising for an anti-system party. The other variable measures the extent to which respondents consider it their duty to vote. One might think in an anti-system party (of left or right) that there would be no duty to vote, whereas in a populist party supporters might think it their duty to engage in the electoral process. This variable is not a useful predictor of Sinn Féin support.

Table 3 – OLS models predicting PTV Sinn Féin

Not probable / probable to give to Sinn Féin 1st preference

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>					
Age in years	-0.05 (13.68)***	-0.05 (13.64)***	-0.05 (12.90)***	-0.05 (11.70)***	-0.02 (5.43)***
Sex of respondent (Male=1, female=2)	-0.39 (3.43)**	-0.35 (2.97)**	-0.35 (3.01)**	-0.22 (1.77)	-0.06 (0.62)
Level of education (7-point scale)	-0.25 (5.13)***	-0.24 (4.74)***	-0.21 (4.14)***	-0.19 (3.57)***	-0.08 (1.83)
Household income (4-point scale)	-0.27 (4.22)***	-0.26 (4.10)***	-0.24 (3.74)***	-0.19 (2.81)**	-0.04 (0.82)
<i>Social attitudes</i>					
Immigrants in Ireland- already too many		0.10 (2.66)**	0.09 (2.49)*	0.11 (2.76)**	0.04 (1.40)
Asylum seekers-same rights as Irish		0.06 (1.70)	0.05 (1.65)	0.05 (1.48)	0.11 (0.40)
Homosexuality justified		-0.04 (2.06)*	-0.04 (2.03)*	-0.01 (0.75)	0.00 (0.05)
EU unification- push further		-0.01 (0.45)	-0.01 (0.30)	-0.01 (0.39)	-0.01 (0.30)
<i>Voter type</i>					
Duty to vote in election			-0.07 (1.76)	-0.07 (1.53)	-0.04 (1.28)
Efficacy- vote doesn't counts/ parties don't matter			0.041 (2.08)*	0.05 (2.60)**	0.01 (0.70)
<i>Partisan attitudes</i>					
Insist/ abandon united Ireland -self				-0.18 (8.99)***	-0.04 (2.19)*
Left/right-self placement				-0.07 (3.10)**	-0.04 (2.10)*
Not competent/competent to country-Sinn Féin					0.20 (8.17)***
Thermometer degree - Adams, Gerry					0.00 (1.61)
Thermometer degree-Sinn Féin					0.06 (16.73)***
Constant	8.05 (21.34)***	7.47 (15.01)***	7.37 (12.80)***	7.77 (12.36)***	3.08 (4.67)***
Observations	2262	2230	2222	1967	1633
R-squared (adjusted)	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.13	0.53

Absolute value of t statistics in brackets. * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%; *** significant at 0.01%

Model 4 adds some partisan attitude variables measuring opinions on Northern Ireland and left-right self placement. Both are on ten point scales, where lower responses indicate greater insistence on a united Ireland and more leftist positions. These show that as one might

expect, subjective left-wing voters are more likely to support Sinn Féin and that those who are more demanding of a united Ireland will vote Sinn Féin. However the model still does not explain much variation in attitudes toward Sinn Féin. The R-squared of 13 percent is quite low.

The final model adds in variables directly about Sinn Féin. These vastly increase the R-squared but do not offer a satisfying or deep explanation of Sinn Féin support. Indeed one could question whether thermometer scores of the party and attitudes about competence are causally prior to the probability to vote. As one would expect, those who regard Sinn Féin competent to govern Ireland also consider it probable that they will give the party their first preference vote. And those who have 'favourable feelings' towards Sinn Féin think it probable that they will vote for that party. Interestingly, Gerry Adams' thermometer score is not significant – although it may correlate too closely with the Sinn Féin score. This would seem to question, however, the contention that Adams is the party's best electoral asset. Overall, what is of interest is that Sinn Féin supporters, it seems, are in some way more authoritarian, less tolerant of immigrants and gays. This is especially unexpected among a party with such young supporters. This result would seem to indicate that Sinn Féin's supporters at least are authoritarian and right-wing. It would also lead one to question how Sinn Féin is seemingly so at odds with its supporters except on the 'national question'.

Functional equivalence: organisation

Again the literature on radical right-wing parties' organisation is limited. But there are certain features one might expect in a RR party organisation. RR parties might be anti-democratic in their structures, authoritarian in nature and leader-driven. That leader, one might expect to be charismatic. There is the likelihood that the party may use violence.

On these points, numerous books make the point that Sinn Féin and the IRA are essentially two branches of the same organisation. It is also obvious that within the IRA factional disputes are sometimes ended using violence. One work in particular alleges that Gerry Adams has been the effective leader of both branches since before he became the titular leader of Sinn Féin in 1983. The insinuation is that Adams' critics have been silenced, some through intimidation or even murder. Moloney (2002) in particular suggests that the organisation is tightly controlled by the leader and a cabal around him. Adams tenure as leader (especially when compared with his predecessors) would certainly indicate that Sinn Féin is a leader-driven party.

One Sinn Féin TD (MP) has said about Adams that he 'has the charisma of a pop star' (Rafter 2005: 6). Adams dominates the press coverage of the party. He is regarded as its main electoral asset and within the Provisional organisation he 'commands almost unswerving support and inspires deep loyalty...He is the strong leader. He has the quality of decisiveness' (Rafter 2005: 8, 10). For others he is the 'undisputed leader of Sinn Féin' (Maillot 2005: 98). An example of the awe in which Sinn Féin holds Gerry Adams can be seen from a report of the 1986 Ard Fheis (party conference) in the Provisional's own newspaper *An Phoblacht* (6 November 1986) - 'At 11:32 and 25 seconds, Gerry Adams lit his pipe. That was the signal that we were really down to business'.

In policy terms, the move toward political strategy was Adams own strategy which he pursued successfully if slowly. That the Sinn Féin leader can direct the IRA can be demonstrated by the IRA's willingness to turn off its violent campaign for electoral purposes. If military hard-men controlled the IRA, this would not happen.

Compared to most radical parties, Sinn Féin is remarkably well-organised and active. There does seem to be an active membership visible at elections, and Ard Fheiseanna (party conferences) are organised democratically (on paper at least) and do not always produce

decisions that the leadership suggest, although the leadership has been able to reverse decisions subsequently. The membership is also active in community issues, and this is possibly one reason for its success in the Republic of Ireland. The issues on which it campaigns tend to be populist in nature, and are not always consistent with the radical left party, Sinn Féin portrays itself as. Anti-drugs campaigns have been high on Sinn Féin's list of activities, and given the types of communities Sinn Féin aims to represent it is unsurprising. However, there is evidence of vigilantism and beating alleged drug dealers (see Maillot 2005 pp. 91-3). During its ceasefires, the IRA used the cover name, Direct Action against Drugs, to murder people while theoretically remaining under ceasefire. The types of direct actions that Sinn Féin members are alleged to be involved in are inconsistent with stated policies on justice and are certainly authoritarian and populist in nature. Furthermore there are allegations that Sinn Féin/ IRA effectively licences drug dealers. Unlike many extreme groups, of the left or right, that are often poorly funded and be riven with splits. After Fianna Fáil it was probably the best funded party receiving fund from US supporters and there is evidence to suggest from illegal activities. Certainly there seems no doubt that the IRA was involved in bank robberies to fund its campaigns and that the electoral campaigns were regarded as one part of the overall movement.

Ireland: the same, only different?

Irish scholars usually delight in the peculiarity of Irish politics. Here again Ireland seems unusual in having very high levels of immigration, a large non-national population, a centripetal party system, an electoral system that enables small parties, particularly ones with localised support, achieve representation, yet no successful party exploiting this issue. An organisation called the Immigration Control Platform fielded some candidates but it failed to make any impact. One might argue that the Irish economy is such that there is no need for an anti-immigrant party.

It could be argued, however, that Ireland is the same as most European countries, only slightly different in a number of different ways. First, Ireland is a country in which the established or mainstream parties that have ruled the country are neo-liberal. Unlike most of western Europe, Ireland has not had a post-war social democratic consensus such as one might see in Germany, Austria, Britain and to some extent even France. Ireland's movements, since the late 1950s have been to (slowly) liberalise the economy. So a populist, anti-system reaction against the prevailing mood would be anti-right, rather than anti-left as you see in the other parts of Europe. A party that sought to be anti-establishment in Ireland would need to position itself (at least rhetorically) on the left.

Second, and perhaps more crucially, nationalist ideology in Ireland has a very different experience on which to draw, compared to those of the crumbling Empires throughout Europe. All nationalist parties attempt to reserve power for their group. Irish nationalists tend to argue that Catholics in Ireland and latterly in Northern Ireland were victimised and so seek power and resources for this group— so nationalists are against internationalism as it cedes power out of the country. Nationalist parties tend to engage in mythmaking and in glorifying the past, so for British nationalists it is an appeal to empire. Ireland has no colonial past, in fact Ireland's 'glorious' past was that of a struggle against colonial powers, so we'd expect to see that the rhetoric of an ultra-nationalist party would be different.

One of Irish nationalism's rallying cries is a call to arms against discrimination of Irish by Britain. To engage in anti-minority campaigns would be inconsistent with the other (more important) aspect of its nationalist campaign. Such dissonance would, presumably, damage opinion of the party, especially in the media, and hence damage it electorally.

Additionally as a party that can portray itself as a minority under threat, it can appeal to immigrants as source of potential voters. Evans and Ivaldi (2002), and Norris (2005) argue that the radical nationalist parties that are successful are the once which carve out a niche for themselves in the electoral market place. Sinn Féin is an increasingly successful niche party, which has been able to make essentially populist appeals to voters unencumbered by the baggage of ideology. However in one crucial area, Sinn Féin seems willing to sacrifice popular appeals for party unity, and that is the issue of violence. Though Sinn Féin/ IRA was able to reduce the levels of violence at election time, it was always a source of concern for some potential voters. That Sinn Féin never disowned the IRA indicates either that the national issue is more important than populism, and/ or the unity of the movement would have been threatened by such a move. Hence we may conclude that the nationalism takes precedence over populism, and that populist policies are means to serve the nationalist end.

Conclusion

The brief analyses of Sinn Féin's ideology, development, policy, supporters' attitudes and organisation, though showing some similarities with radical right parties, but it is too explicitly and self-avowedly in favour of immigrants' rights to be called RR. The leaders of Sinn Féin seem to have genuine left-wing beliefs, e.g. Mitchel McLaughlin (Moloney p. 80). However the similarities with the radical right persist. Hooge et al (2002) in attempting to explain attitudes to the EU have argued (convincingly) that the left-right definition of politics is essentially meaningless to understanding attitudes to the EU. They argue that parties can be categorised into two types: GAL or TAN. These are Green, alternative, libertarian parties and traditional, authoritarian, nationalist parties. TAN parties are more likely to be anti-European. Sinn Féin certainly falls into the TAN type of parties.

One of the reasons for this puzzling relationship is that the radical right is not consistently right-wing. Many of the BNP policies are leftist. In fact it seems that RR parties are a mix of populism and violent nationalism, and in this way Sinn Féin can fit more neatly into the same category as racists such as Le Pen. Crucially however nationalism in Ireland cannot sit easily with anti-immigrant bigotry (as long as the immigrants are not long settled Protestants), so it is less likely that a xenophobic party could prosper in Ireland.

What this paper does highlight is the need for more research. There needs to be more analysis of the 'radical right' and their actual programmes. Because Manifesto Research Group data is not blind-tested, it may tend to reproduce conventional wisdom and biases. Expert surveys suffer the same problem. Given the major shifts that appear to be happening in party system throughout Europe, a different way to measure party policy and categorise party types is needed. In Ireland research on the local campaigns of parties would be useful to see if candidates and parties tailor campaigns locally even if these are out of sync with the national campaign.

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