4 White Negroes and the Pink IRA

External Mainstream Media Coverage and Civil Rights Contention in Northern Ireland[1]

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As emphasized in the introductory chapter to this volume, levels and forms of ethnonationalist contention vary over time and are shaped by contingent historical contexts. Local, national, and transnational processes may all impact contention. Surprisingly little scholarship has focused upon how transnational processes have shaped political contention in Northern Ireland.

Social movements scholars studying other cases have devoted considerable attention to international mainstream media coverage as a transnational process. Regarding forms of contention, McAdam and Rucht (1993) highlight the international media as a non-relational mechanism that sends protest ideas across borders. Even in the context of new social media, Aday et al. (2013) stress the ongoing importance of the international mainstream media to bringing about the Arab Spring. With respect to the outcomes of contention, some studies find that the mainstream media hinders the ability of social movements to achieve their objectives (e.g. Solomon 2001; Rosie and Gorringe 2009) while others find the opposite relationship (Layton 2000).

Below I develop an analytical framework that uses the concepts of movement and media-generated master frames to help explain these contrasting findings. An analysis of external media coverage of civil rights contention in Northern Ireland lends empirical support for the approach. By impacting the legitimacy of the British and the Northern Ireland governments, coverage that aligned movement and media master frames initially generated moral and material pressure for concessions to civil rights demands. As the forms, leaders, and goals of civil rights protests shifted, and as the Northern Ireland government developed its communications infrastructure and strategy, a change in media master frames no longer generated this pressure. If anything, external coverage legitimated repressive responses to the civil rights movement. Beyond demonstrating the relevance of a transnational process to the outcomes of contention, the analysis presented

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in this chapter yields three additional, significant findings that highlight the interplay between agency, culture, and structure. First, local actors were often successful in their efforts to encourage or discourage external journalists to align movement and media master frames in their coverage of contention. Second and consistent with the analysis provided by Turner and De Fazio (in this volume), the ability of external media coverage to legitimate or de-legitimate movements, opponents, and targets by generating moral shock suggests that responses to contentious events are often deeply emotion-laden and identity-driven. Third, changes in the forms, goals, and primary participants over the course of contention (as noted by Ó Dochartaigh and White and Demirel-Pegg, both in this volume) can influence which master frame is applied by journalists.

This analysis was made possible through collecting a sample of news coverage of civil rights contention in Northern Ireland by external media outlets along with discussions of external media communications strategies by participants in contention using several sources, including clippings of and references to coverage found in the archives of organizations based in Northern Ireland (Linen Hall Library Political Collection and an anonymous collection) and the United States (American Irish Historical Society), the archives for the Stormont cabinet (Public Records Office of Northern Ireland), a regular feature in the *Derry Journal* on external media coverage, a search of two issues per week of *The Times* (of London), and the memoirs of participants in the civil rights movement, opponents, targets and bystanders. The findings of others scholars (e.g. Wilson 1995; Ward 1984) collecting similar news coverage samples are referenced below and cross-validate my analysis of predominate coverage frames at different points of contention.

Movement and Media-Generated Master Frames

Snow and Benford (1992: 138) theorize that master frames are responsible for the emergence of international cycles of protest. The authors state that like collective action frames, master frames are 'modes of punctuation, attribution and articulation'. The key difference between the two lies in that master frames 'may color and constrain those of any number of movement organizations'. Drawing from Tarrow (1983: 36-39), the authors describe international protest cycles as 'sequences of escalating collective action that are of greater frequency and intensity than normal' that occur on an international level.

Like activists, journalists frame collective action. Just as movements can develop frames that spawn a host of imitators and produce an international protest cycle in the process, journalists can develop frames for covering these same movements; frames that are used repeatedly in coverage of subsequent movements emerge during the cycle. Media master frames are likely to emerge during international protest cycles. Time and space constraints compel journalists to develop news routines (Tuchman 1973). The standardization of coverage of protests is particularly necessary during periods when many such events occur. Because of the exigencies of news routines, journalists look for hooks for their pieces. Furthermore, the more the frame is used, the more its potency increases. In an effort to make foreign events interpretable to domestic audiences, reporters often apply the same themes and topics used in coverage of domestic news (Gans 1980; Ward 1984). For all of these reasons, coverage that is faithful to a frame underlying previous coverage of similar protests is likely to appeal to mass audiences.

Differences between movement and media master frames can have important implications for contention. In a longitudinal study of the German peace movement, Cooper (2002) finds that divergences between the collective action frames used by activists and the coverage frames used by the media resulted in lower levels of mobilization. Not all movements taking place during a protest cycle are framed the same way by the mainstream media. Divergences are most likely to occur when organizations within a movement make demands for fundamental social change, or engage in violent or destructive tactics. Events involving such organizations are likely to be covered using extremist, deviant, and dismissive frames (e.g. Hertog and McLeod 1995; Boykoff 2006). By impacting claims, demands, and tactics, changes in the organizational composition and the power dynamics within a movement can result in changes in the media master frame that is applied. It is also possible that contention itself can have radicalizing effects upon actors previously making moderate claims and demands and engaging in non-violent tactics (e.g. Tarrow 1994; Kriesi, Koopmans, Dyvendak, and Giugni 1995; Alimi, Demetriou, and Bosi 2015; Ó Dochartaigh and White and Demirel-Pegg, both in this volume). Such radicalizing effects can result in a divergence between movement and media frames to the detriment of the movement.

In addition, non-violent movements can be eclipsed by, as well as conflated with, armed rebellions whose actors can attempt to legitimate their violence by referencing claims and demands by non-violent movements. Newspaper editions, radio broadcasts, and television programmes have limited space/time within which to present news (Gans 1980; Ryan 1991). Thus

the chance of any particular event getting in the news is a function not only of its own news value, but also of the sheer number and news value of other potential news events that day. An event that would ordinarily be news can be crowded out by bigger news (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). The space/time available for coverage of foreign political events is generally smaller than the space/time devoted to domestic affairs. Moreover, political events in over 160 countries compete with one another for attention. As a result, only events considered to be highly newsworthy and easily interpretable to domestic audiences receive coverage. This makes it likely that non-violent protests, if mentioned, are covered as a minor subset of news items focusing upon armed rebellion. To maintain thematic consistency, journalists are likely to apply the same frame to protesters and armed insurgents.

With regard to the possible influence of media coverage on outcomes, Rojas (2006) hypothesizes that protests can bring about social change through de-legitimating targets, imposing material costs, or encouraging targets to mimic or imitate other comparably positioned actors making concessions to protesters. I argue that media master frames that converge with movement master frames are likely to contribute to each of these mechanisms of pressure. Conversely, media master frames that diverge from movement frames are likely to impose material costs upon movements, de-legitimate them, and encourage targets to mimic other comparably positioned actors repressing protesters. During international cycles of protest, coverage of events by mainstream media outlets based outside of the primary geographic site of contention is particularly likely to influence outcomes. Beyond interstate competition for spheres of influence (Layton 2000), outside media coverage can also influence outcomes by prompting external intervention and international isolation, damaging international legitimacy, jeopardizing inward investment, and deepening intra-party divisions (e.g. Risse-Kappen, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Maney 2000; Turner and De Fazio, in this volume).

While the concept of an international media master frame may suggest an inability of participants in contention to shape coverage, this is not the case. Because of the possible consequences of coverage, movements, targets, and opponents often develop communication strategies. Media master frames are either harnessed or challenged depending upon their perceived favourableness (Maney, Woehrle, and Coy 2005). Savvy activists will harness movement master frames that have converged with media master frames so as to garner sympathetic coverage of their events. Conversely, savvy targets and opponents will challenge these media master frames and harness media master frames that diverge from movement master frames.

Often this involves efforts to persuade journalists that the movement is not what it seems, and is more like a movement to which negative media master frames have been applied. The implementation of these conflicting communication strategies constitutes a discursive form contention – a battle of words for the hearts, minds, and choices of frames of journalists. I now present a case study that inspired the development of this framework and illustrates its potential.

External Mainstream Coverage of Civil Rights Contention2

External media coverage of Northern Ireland politics during the late 1960s and early 1970s provides an example of the interactive relationship between contention and transnational processes. Coverage of protest events taking place in other societies not only shaped the goals and forms of contention prevailing in Northern Ireland, but also influenced the frames applied by external media outlets. External media coverage was initially favourable to the civil rights movement and helped to generate pressure on behalf of its demands. Later coverage, however, was less favourable and de-legitimated the movement.

Two master frames were developed with regard to mainstream media coverage of protests during the 1950s and 1960s. First, as an early riser in the international protest cycle, the civil rights movement in the United States influenced other movements' framing both domestic and abroad. The movement's framing also became dominant among mainstream media outlets covering civil rights protests. Second, the emergence of the New Left in the United States influenced student movements' framing in other societies (McAdam and Rucht 1993). In contrast to civil rights contention, the mainstream media, on the whole, diverged from the movement's framing in favour of extremist, deviant, and trivializing frames (Gitlin 1980). Both media master frames were applied to civil rights contention in Northern Ireland. Both were cultivated by opposing actors. Coverage using the different media master frames had contrasting effects upon the civil rights movement's ability to achieve its goals.

2 This study examines coverage of contention in Northern Ireland by mainstream media outlets located outside of Northern Ireland, including outlets in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. Because many consider Northern Ireland to be a part of the United Kingdom or, alternatively, a part of the Republic of Ireland, I have chosen to use the term *external* rather than *international*.

Media Framing of Early Mass Civil Rights Contention in Northern Ireland

The reformist, non-violent orientation of the US Civil Rights Movement, combined with the Cold War-infused salience of egalitarian and democratic discourses, legitimated the movement in the eyes of influential mainstream media outlets throughout the world (Layton 2000). Dooley (1998: 108) suggests that the initial, positive media coverage of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland was a welcomed, but largely unanticipated product of contention. In contrast, my research indicates that while journalists may have independently drawn parallels between the struggles of African Americans and Irish nationalist activists, the latter left little to chance.

During the first mass civil rights march in Northern Ireland from Coalisland to Dungannon in August of 1968, Fionbarra Ó Dochartaigh received loud applause when he declared, 'We are the white negroes of Northern Ireland' (Farrell 1988: 57). Key organizers had their sights focused upon producing favourable international publicity. An organizer of the march, Austin Currie (1998: 16), writes: 'A prime objective of the proposed civil rights marches was to publicise internationally injustices to Northern Ireland and to force the British government to intervene to redress them'. External media coverage of protests, therefore, was envisioned as the primary tool for generating pressure on behalf of civil rights demands.

International condemnation over the actions of the police force in Birmingham, Alabama, and other instances of brutality against civil rights protesters in the US offered an important tactical lesson; repression of peaceful demonstrators asking for equal rights would prompt extensive outside media coverage and widespread condemnation of the government. Organizers of the 5 October 1968 civil rights march in Derry/Londonderry were fully aware that their publicly stated plans to march through the Diamond would probably produce a violent response by the police and loyalist civilians (McCann 1993: 92-97). As anticipated, a repressive response to the Derry/Londonderry march by the Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs William Craig and the Royal Ulster Constabulary brought a worldwide outpouring of criticism and demands for British government intervention. The publicity surrounding the event underscored the efficacy of taking to the streets and remaining non-violent in the face of repression (e.g. Ó Dochartaigh 1994: 26-27).

Most observers agree that in the year following 5 October, the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland had won 'the media war' (e.g. Moloney

1998: 139-141; Dooley 1998: 108-110). External television coverage focused on images of brutality against non-violent demonstrators (Farrell 1976: 247; Guelke 1988: 86). After examining coverage in ABC, NBC, and CBS evening news broadcasts, *Newsweek*, and *Commonweal*, Andrew Wilson (1995: 21) concluded that police assaults on civil rights marchers received extensive coverage in the United States. Cued by civil rights activists and eager to make foreign events intelligible to a domestic audience, these outlets highlighted similarities between African Americans and Catholic nationalists. By highlighting minority grievances, newspapers outside of Northern Ireland also legitimated their civil rights demands.

From October of 1968 through August of 1969, the mainstream international media largely dismissed allegations by Unionists that the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland consisted of communists, republicans, Trotskyites, and anarchists. Northern Ireland Minister of Home Affairs William Craig's repeated assertion that 'the Pink IRA' was behind the 5 October march was derided as paranoid fantasy. An editorial in the *Baltimore Evening Sun* on 15 October stated: 'Take some civil rights protesters. Place them in reach of policemen who tend to 'overreact'. Throw in an underground conspiratorial movement on which to blame all the blood and broken heads that result from the proximity of the first two. Where are you? Chicago? No, this time the scene is Londonderry, N. Ireland' (Derry Journal 1968a). The piece was not exceptional in rejecting efforts by Stormont officials and loyalists to apply extremist frames to civil rights activists.

Even after Stormont announced a series of reforms on 22 November 1968, the media continued to cast a critical eye upon the government. During an evening news broadcast, ABC covered a civil rights march from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry in early January of 1969. With demonstrators singing 'We Shall Overcome' in the background, the television network's reporter Bill Beutal noted that 'some observers have compared the plight of the ghetto residents in Northern Ireland to ghetto residents in this country' (Ward 1984: 204). Overall, external media coverage of political contention in Northern Ireland initially favoured the civil rights cause. The consequences of civil rights activists' winning the early rounds of media contention will now be examined.

A consensus exists among both participants and observers of the period that international publicity surrounding civil rights events in late 1968 placed significant pressure upon Stormont to enact reforms. Civil rights activists like John Hume (1998: 4) believe that it was the critical component to success:

> The positive effect of October 5 was very strong. It had a worldwide impact through television. It led to the establishment of the Derry Citizens' Action Committee of which I was proud to be a member. Harnessing the maximum strength of the city against injustice, the DCAC achieved more change than had been achieved in the 50 years previous in 48 days in response to the massive national and international pressure created by the consequences of October 5.

The effects of coverage upon domestic and international public opinion prompted the British government to intervene. Negative publicity beyond the United Kingdom jeopardized Stormont's international standing and, in the process, threatened the vitality of an economy heavily dependent upon external investment. Within Northern Ireland, negative publicity deepened splits among Unionists. Each of these sources of pressure is now reviewed in turn.

First, negative publicity prompted British government intervention by de-legitimating Stormont. By wrapping its demands in sacrosanct principles of British political culture, the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland ensured sympathetic media coverage that, in turn, placed moral pressure upon the Labour Party-led British government to intervene on its behalf. With the emphasis upon equal rights as British citizens, government officials could not easily turn a blind eye to the forceful denial of civil rights within its own backyard. With the public focused upon events in Northern Ireland, feelings of hypocrisy helped to override a longstanding aversion to intervening in Irish affairs.

Beyond moral pressure, negative publicity created practical political incentives for intervention. Inaction threatened not only a possible revolt by Labour backbenchers at Westminster, but also a backlash at the polls. Just as the call for equal rights under the law by African Americans generated considerable sympathy and support among liberal Americans, similar demands by the nationalist minority in Northern Ireland resonated widely and deeply with British public opinion. In the words of the Northern Ireland Minster of Commerce and future Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner (1978: 48):

> It sounded to a world attuned to such protests, a positive humanitarian cry from an oppressed people. It also seemed to involve a very basic right [...] Many well-meaning but ill-informed people, even in Britain, were under the impression that the 'evil Unionist government' had made it illegal for Catholics to vote in elections.

By creating moral shock (Jasper and Poulsen 1995), coverage of police brutality placed British public opinion even more firmly behind the demonstrators and their demands. The British government could only ignore these sentiments at its peril.

Stormont found itself unprepared to fight a war of words with civil rights activists. Ministers and civil servants were soon overwhelmed in trying to respond to a barrage of criticism issued from media outlets throughout the world. By deliberately avoiding issues of partition, civil rights activists had rendered standard Unionist counter-frames obsolete. Without sufficient public-relations capacities to counteract civil rights propaganda, Stormont capitulated to British government demands for changes, announcing a series of reforms on 22 November 1968.

The reforms package, however, did not alleviate the pressure caused by negative publicity. The pattern established in late 1968 of negative international publicity, ineffective public-relations efforts, and policy concessions would repeat itself. British media coverage of violence against civil rights demonstrators participating in the march from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry in early January of 1969 gave the government another black eye. Stormont responded by trying to develop its publicity machinery. Less than a week after the march, the cabinet decided to provide the RUC with a senior press officer from the Government Information Service until the recently created Police Public-relations Officer position could be filled (PRONI 1969a: 1-2). Agreeing that 'publicity arrangements must be reviewed and improved both at the Government and Party levels', the cabinet also reactivated its publicity committee. Only by March of 1969, however, did the government begin to formulate a coherent strategy. The following month, O'Neill committed the government and the Unionist Party to universal franchise in local elections.

With the ousting of O'Neill as Prime Minister in late April 1969 and the strengthening of the government's public relations capacities, loyalists intensified their efforts to block reforms. When dramatic political events on the streets of Northern Ireland once again focused the international media spotlight on Northern Ireland, the usual pressures for concessions to the civil rights movement resurfaced. British media coverage of the August 1969 riots prompted the Labour government to once again intervene. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson stated that:

> [E]very London news reporter and leader-writer, whatever the political complexion of the paper for which he was writing, was appalled by the situation he had to describe. It was the culmination of three centuries

> of atavistic intolerance. It was also the culmination of nearly fifty years of the unimaginative inertia and repression of successive, unchallenged and, because of Ulster's history unchallengeable, Ulster Unionist Governments. (1971: 692)

With the British Prime Minister and the British Home Secretary knocking at the door, Northern Ireland Prime Minister James Chichester-Clark agreed to announce further concessions. The cabinet agreed to set up an advisory body to review the organization and practices of the police forces. Two months later, the Hunt Commission would recommend the disbanding of a part-time, auxiliary police force, the B Specials, and the disarming of the RUC. More immediately, on 19 August, the British and Northern Ireland governments issued a joint declaration stating their mutual agreement that 'it is vital that the momentum of internal reform shall be maintained' (Deutsch and Magowan 1973: 152). By the end of the month, the two governments issued another joint statement. The communiqué focused upon both implementing promised reforms and taking additional initiatives envisioned, such as introducing legislation to establish 'machinery for the investigation of citizens' grievances against local authorities or other public authorities'.

As evidenced by its preoccupation, Stormont would not have readily signed the statement in the absence of increased British government pressure resulting from negative publicity. The day before the joint communiqué, the Minister of Development, Brian Faulkner, called for 'an urgent examination of the publicity machinery and the methods needed to improve the Government's public-relations' (PRONI 1969b: 2). In addition, the Prime Minister asked the Publicity Committee of the cabinet to meet later to 'consider how outside professional advice could best be harnessed'. Beyond the threats posed by British intervention, negative international publicity placed other policy priorities in jeopardy.

Second, negative publicity imposed material costs. As a devolved government, Stormont officials worried primarily about how the British government would respond to international criticism. The government, however, also had a more direct economic stake in keeping its own reputation in good standing among foreign nations. Negative publicity stemming from civil rights contention threatened to undermine the government's efforts to attract inward investment. Speaking to a Publicity Association luncheon, the Minister of Commerce, Brian Faulkner, voiced his concern:

> Bad publicity costs nothing. And it travels further, faster and with more immediate effect than good publicity. That is a hard fact of life illustrated

> only too clearly by the news coverage given to the recent disturbances in Londonderry. 'Image' is a much overworked word. But it is vitally important that a true image of Northern Ireland is projected to the world at large. This is not just a question of pride or prestige. The picture which others have of Ulster can affect us in a most direct way – financially. (PRONI 1968)

External organizations supporting the civil rights movement like the American Congress for Irish Freedom sought to take advantage of Northern Ireland's external financial dependence by threatening to take legal action against US corporations with operations in Northern Ireland that discriminated against nationalists. Stormont's concerted efforts to counteract the campaign provide evidence of the degree of pressure generated by these activities.

Third, while the case provides support for the expectations that sympathetic external media coverage would create moral and material pressure on behalf of the civil rights movement, there was no support for Rojas' mimicry hypothesis. Nonetheless, the case reveals an additional source of pressure, namely how coverage created a political opportunity for the civil rights movement by deepening ideological and strategic splits among Unionists. Most researchers and participants have stressed the importance of loyalist mobilization in limiting the scope of reforms. Few, however, have highlighted the role of Unionists in promoting reforms. Some Unionist politicians agreed with the depiction of Northern Ireland presented by the outside media and sought to use it to their advantage. Bolstered by the negative external reaction to the events of 5 October, some government officials spoke about the moral imperative of reforms. During a speech to a Unionist gathering at Larne, the Unionist Chief Whip, Roy Bradford, stated:

> A turning point has been reached in Northern Ireland's history and if the Unionist Party does not keep abreast of the tide of change they will be swamped by events instead of fashioning them to our own purpose. We have never had a worse press. Our reputation with our fellow-British citizens of the UK has been badly tarnished. Any talk of UDI [Unilateral Declaration of Independence] for Ulster was dangerous lunacy. There is a high road and a low road in politics. The high road is the road of fair play and enlightened government. The low road is the road of repression which ends in anarchy. We must act now to clear our name of any allegations of injustice. To do nothing is to invite shame as well as violence. (Derry Journal 1968b)

In summary, multiple pressures resulting from external media coverage of civil rights contention between 1968 and 1969 forced Stormont to announce reforms and reaffirm its commitment to implementing them. The lack of similar instances of political accommodation in over 40 years prior to the advent of modern mass communications underscores the importance of external mainstream media coverage to the policy gains achieved by the civil rights movement. Nonetheless, just as this coverage contributed to initial victories, it also contributed to the civil rights movement's subsequent inability to 'maintain the momentum of internal reform' (NICRA 1978: 7).

External Media Framing of Later Civil Rights Contention in Northern Ireland

As the main forms, demands, and leaders of civil rights protests shifted, the tenor of external media coverage changed. Beginning in 1969, correspondents increasingly focused their attention on violent civil rights protests and outspoken activists using New Left and republican frames. Along with the emergence of armed rebellion in 1970, these developments resulted in the use of extremist, deviant, and trivializing frames in coverage of civil rights activists and events. As a result, the pressure for reforms and for the restraint of repression that outside media coverage had once placed upon Stormont largely dissipated. Just as civil rights activists had cultivated international publicity to promote their objectives, their opponents exploited the sea change to discredit the movement.

As civil rights demonstrations turned increasingly violent in 1969, external media coverage focused upon the actions of protesters rather than their messages. For example, following a civil rights protest in Newry involving violence by a large number of demonstrators on 11 January 1969, Van Wormer (1998: 46) recalls: 'Predictably the next day's headlines are devastating: "Riot Breaks Out during Civil Rights Protest"'. The press also began to convey Stormont's spin on events, viewing their assertions as being empirically credible. An article in the Dublin-based *Irish Times* quoted Northern Ireland's Minister for Home Affairs, Captain Long. Long asserted that the aim of the civil rights protesters 'now appears to be the creation of civic strife in an attempt to disrupt the harmonious relationships which have grown up among all sections of the community in recent years' (Irish Times 1969).

Starting in 1969, a New Left student group, People's Democracy (PD), took the lead in organizing a series of civil rights protests. With striking similarities in opinions, appearances, and actions, foreign correspondents

drew upon the same frames used to cover student protests at home. The pictures painted were hardly flattering. Weary and wary of student protests in their societies, the mainstream media applied extremist frames when reporting violence by civil rights demonstrators in Northern Ireland. In late April 1969, PD held a sit-down in Lurgan. As the RUC wielded their batons, protesters fought back. Subsequently, PD remarked about the way journalists portrayed the event: 'The events at Lurgan during the Easter PD march have been represented by the press as trouble-making, long-haired students being restrained by our peace loving police' (PD Voice 1969: 3).

When some student civil rights activists vocally asserted their socialist agenda, the content of media coverage outside of Northern Ireland became increasingly negative. Their youth and controversial views made good copy. As a result, outside reporters sought them out disproportionately in relation to more conservative civil rights leaders. During her visit to the United States in August 1969, Bernadette Devlin openly advocated a Socialist Workers' Republic of Ireland. A growing number of papers in the US came to agree with the Unionist characterization of the MP as 'Fidel Castro in a miniskirt' (Wilson 1995: 33). During a speech in Detroit as part of a fundraising tour for the civil rights movement, members of the audience heckled Devlin when she called for civil rights in the United States. Devlin responded by having the person employed to sing John McCormack songs sing instead the African American civil rights anthem 'We Shall Overcome' (McAliskey 1988: 87). A number of Irish-American dignitaries seated in the front row refused to stand for the song. After the event a *Detroit News* staff editorial described Devlin as a 'mini-skirted Danny the Red' (Dooley 1998: 107). Establishment anxieties over social unrest permeated several subsequent features.

Other journalists went beyond Devlin to apply extremist frames to the civil rights movement as a whole. A month after the August riots, the British *Daily Mail* ran a series of articles entitled 'How World Revolutionaries Took the Lead in Ulster's Civil Rights Struggle: The Professionals behind the Barricades'. Whereas the pre-split republican leadership took great pains to stay in the shadows of the civil rights movement so as not to discredit it, New Left activists like Devlin, Farrell, and McCann basked in the media spotlight, welcoming the opportunity to expound upon their beliefs.

Once international correspondents wielded the red paint, they smeared it rather indiscriminately. After verifying Unionist allegations of communist involvement, the external media increasingly portrayed the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) as an 'extreme socialist' organization (Farrell 1988: 62). An organizer's report discussed the organization's 'bad

image': 'Image-wise, NICRA has been accused of being a Republican, Communist or Provisional Front. We are also called "extremists". A lot of this smearing has stuck. So that now the media distinguishes between the early Civil Rights movement and the NICRA of today' (NICRA 1974: 1). Beyond image problems, civil rights organizations faced declining coverage with the emergence of armed rebellion which was generally deemed to be more worthy of coverage.

The outbreak of armed conflict in the early 1970s accelerated the decline in outside media coverage of civil rights events in Northern Ireland. Riots and bombings were deemed more newsworthy than civil rights marches. An NBC correspondent told one researcher: 'We cover Northern Ireland, but the stuff that gets on the air is the rough stuff. If there's something fairly peaceful, or something that involves their parliament, it's hard to get it on' (Epstein 1973: 247). NICRA's campaign to end internment, repeal the Special Powers Act, and secure passage of a bill of human rights at Westminster rarely made the papers. Even statements by those interned often did not make the papers. Two years into the rent and rates strike against interment, NICRA continued to experience difficulties in getting coverage of its campaign (e.g. NICRA 1973a). Paramilitary violence crowded non-violent civil rights events out of the media spotlight.

After 1969, the frames that outside correspondents used to interpret events in Northern Ireland changed. With its soldiers on the streets of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and its sovereignty under direct challenge, the British mainstream media generally responded to events in Northern Ireland in a nationalistic manner. Reporters mostly portrayed British soldiers as a peacekeeping force. Upon the introduction of internment in August 1971, the British press frequently omitted reference to allegations of the torture of nationalist detainees during interrogations by British officers (see Sunday Times 1972: 289-291; Curtis 1983: 30).

Beyond Britain, armed rebellion also resulted in a changing of frames used by the media to interpret political contention in Northern Ireland. Parallels with the Vietnam War became the primary frame deployed by US correspondents (e.g. Ward 1984: 207). As British soldiers became targets of republican paramilitary operations starting in 1970, the US media drew parallels between British troops in Northern Ireland and US troops in Vietnam. The media also highlighted republican violence against civilians. Whereas mainstream journalists internationally viewed peaceful protests for civil rights as legitimate, they viewed armed challenges to an ostensibly democratic state's sovereignty as illegitimate. Increased political violence in Western societies heightened anxieties and disdain for armed insurgency.

With the introduction of direct rule in Northern Ireland by the British government in March 1972, Irish republican activities were further de-legitimated. While sometimes criticizing its repressive policies, the Western media generally refrained from a frontal assault on the credibility of the British government and its rule over Northern Ireland. Along with its geopolitical power, the British government's superior public-relations capacities, including control over the BBC's coverage, helped to insure this transformation. Like Stormont did prior to its dissolution, the British government put a self-serving spin on events in Northern Ireland (see ACUJ 1972: 1). As the wave of international media coverage deploying terrorist frames to characterize rebellion in Northern Ireland grew to tidal proportions, the civil rights movement got caught up in the swell.

Just as the international media increasingly red-baited civil rights organizations, it frequently portrayed them as republican fronts. As a consequence, even the most egregious acts of repression against civil rights activists received justification from some quarters of the outside media. An editorial by the *Daily Express* asserted in regard to NICRA that 'many members of this organization are neither civil nor right. They simply promote the aims of the IRA' (Dooley 1998: 113). The uniform condemnation of the RUC's actions on 5 October 1968, vanished even in coverage of Bloody Sunday – the most repressive response to a civil rights demonstration in Northern Ireland's history. The policy consequences of the shift were equally contrasting.

While sympathetic international media coverage contributed to the ability of the civil rights movement to force Stormont to agree to reforms, subsequent negative coverage alleviated pressures to follow through on promised reforms and to restrain repressive activities. After 1969, the British public's clamour for intervention on behalf of civil rights demands died down. In September 1972, NICRA's Executive Committee introduced a resolution at a special conference stating: 'One of the main tasks facing NICRA is to re-win the support of British democracy [...] for our basic demands. This support was lost through the bombing campaign' (NICRA 1972). NICRA also recognized the success of the British and Northern Ireland governments in promoting the use of anti-extremist frames in outside media coverage (e.g. NICRA 1973b). In an open letter to the press, the Tyrone Regional Executive of NICRA stated:

> It must now be obvious that violence in Northern Ireland in opposition to the British Government's policies merely results in the perpetrators being manipulated by that Government to create a climate of opinion favourable to Britain's policy of changing the structures of the old outdated

> system rather than implementing democratic standards of political, administrative and social behaviour. (NICRA 1973b)

Beyond the United Kingdom, international media coverage no longer placed the international reputation of the British government in jeopardy. Reflecting upon the development, NICRA (1978: 46) lamented:

> The British Army is free to harass, arrest and brutalise and the UDR is actively encouraged to continue with its policies of sectarian violence. In brief Britain is determined to put the boot in. It is a policy easily justifiable to the world press in the light of seven years of para-military violence.

In the relative absence of negative domestic and international publicity, the British government focused more singularly upon ending rebellion. Subsequent reforms reflected counter-insurgency strategies more than a direct response to civil rights movement demands for the policy changes.

With the resurgence of armed republicanism, Unionists found themselves on more familiar ground. The 'Orange card' could once again be played effectively. Their efforts to both red-bait and republican-bait civil rights organizations contributed to increasingly negative coverage. In the process, moderate Unionist pressure largely dissipated. Efforts to sustain momentum for reforms through the formation of the Alliance Party failed as reflected by its weak showing at the polls. Both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mobilization resulted in the ascendance of hard-line Unionists in the Orange Order, in the Unionist Parliamentary Party, and in the Stormont cabinet. Unionists' economic fears remained, but armed rebellion, not civil rights mobilization, most threatened inward investment. In the relative absence of external pressures for reform, Stormont opted (until its demise in March 1972) to pursue political and economic stability through intensified repression.

Conclusion

Social movements research to date assists us in understanding the role of external media coverage in civil rights contention in Northern Ireland during the 1960s and the early 1970s. Media coverage of the civil rights movement in the United States as well as the New Left student movements in Great Britain, France, and elsewhere diffused protest ideas, influencing minority insurgents in Northern Ireland; specifically, what demands

were made, how demands were framed, and the ways that demands were pursued. At the same time, a closer examination of the Northern Ireland case assists in building social movement theory by helping to explain contradictory findings regarding the effects of media coverage, and by filling in gaps in the literature; gaps such as lack of attention to the communication strategies of movements and their opponents, and the specific mechanisms by which media coverage influences the outcomes of contention. The role of the external media in the dynamics and outcomes of the case studied here mirror those of the first Intifada (see Wolfsfeld 1997), suggesting that ethnonationalist insurgents engaged in political violence are likely to be de-legitimated internationally. Further research is needed to ascertain the generalizability of the findings to other ethnically divided societies.

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