

most other political parties, Cumann na nGaedheal was formed while already in government rather than as a result of the aspiration for power. This resulted in a government more concerned with the business of running a state than the business of winning elections. Nevertheless, through a comprehensive comparison of the voting results from all the elections contested by the party, Meehan convincingly argues that Cumann na nGaedheal's electoral defeat was not inevitable even after Fianna Fáil began contesting elections. She examines the specifics of each campaign to investigate exactly what led to the decrease in support for Cumann na nGaedheal. Using a multidisciplinary approach, she incorporates research from political theory in order to examine the impact that trends in political campaigning had on voting patterns during this period. For example, she contends that whereas negative campaigning was effective during the September 1927 election, which followed the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, during the 1932 election such tactics were ineffective compared to Fianna Fáil's vague but constructive platform. Furthermore, her analysis of voting patterns indicates that the majority of Cumann na nGaedheal support was transferred to smaller parties rather than Fianna Fáil.

Drawing on approaches deriving from the 'new political history', she moves her analysis past a focus on ideology and campaign rhetoric by examining the mechanics of campaigning. Meehan contends that Cumann na nGaedheal displayed a very modern attitude towards elections. For instance, the party employed advertising firms and used some of the most modern technologies, such as airplanes, automobiles and propaganda films, to help spread its message. Unfortunately, Meehan missed an opportunity to examine the impact of mass rallies and open-air political meetings on political campaigning. During this period, Irish politics continued to be public politics, as all of the major parties held frequent rallies throughout the Free State.

This is a well-researched and well-written book but it suffers from a cumbersome structure. The chapters are organised chronologically but, within each chapter, issues are dealt with thematically, resulting in a bewildering shifting of topics that often obscures important points. Nonetheless, it is an important contribution to the history of the Cumann na nGaedheal party and to the history of elections in the first decade of Ireland's independence.

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INSIDE THE I.R.A.: DISSIDENT REPUBLICANS AND THE WAR FOR LEGITIMACY. By Andrew Sanders. Pp vii, 280. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2011. £65.

This study offers a fluently written and well-referenced account of modern Irish republicanism. In the initial pages the reader is introduced to a stimulating research agenda, which promises to explore the 'schismatic tendency' within Irish republicanism, identifying the causes of this factionalism (ideological disagreement, personalities, wider context etc.) and their consequences. Moreover, as the book progresses there are numerous points of interest. In particular, Sanders is at his most original and informative when discussing the militant republican support groups in the United States over the course of 'the Troubles'. He highlights, for instance, the radical and relentless nature of Noraid's *The Irish People*, with its celebration of the 'armed Republican vanguard' (the Provisional I.R.A.) and their 'expert fighting tactics'. This reviewer was also intrigued to learn that it was in 1984 that the idea of Gerry Adams being invited to the U.S. was first mooted.

And yet, herein, one can perhaps see one of the weaknesses of this book, for it was not entirely clear how the history of the 'American connection' was directly relevant to the

key theme allegedly under consideration. Of course, the author does point to the splits that occurred within Irish America – which mirrored those in Ireland (as in 1986–7) – but this relationship is not explored in depth (or told in full). Indeed, across the volume, various potentially interesting ideas are left under-developed. Early on, for example, when discussing the decisions taken by Éamon de Valera in the period 1923 to 1927, Sanders implicitly raises the question of how far the options available to anti-state republicans (what social movement theorists would label ‘opportunity structures’), were shaped by the state itself. As he noted, ‘state-enforced legislation, effectively implemented [after the murder of Kevin O’Higgins in 1927], had brought the dissenters towards a constitutional position’ (p. 5). Yet this insight is not taken forward to reflect on the degree to which similar dynamics were present, or absent, in later contexts. Similarly, Sanders raises the idea of an interplay between ideological principles and political pragmatism (the ‘will to power’); yet there is little systematic analysis of this idea in later chapters.

Moreover, as the book progresses, there is a sense to which it seems to lack focus and structural clarity. Instead, the author seemed content to retell a largely familiar set of narratives concerning the evolution of different republican organisations (albeit utilising some interesting, additional sources). To those familiar with the various components of Northern Ireland’s recent history, there is little new here. The author relies heavily, to give but one example, on Brian Hanley and Scott Millar’s account of Official Republicanism (*The lost revolution: the story of the Official IRA and the Workers’ Party*), which remains authoritative on the subject. Ironically, for a book that bills itself as examining the propensity of Irish republicanism to fracture, the question of what precisely drove the various ‘splits’ is remarkably under-played. Thus, the actual sequence of events surrounding the 1969–70 splintering that created the Provisionals – the most momentous republican divide of the last half-century – receives relatively short shrift. Conversely, the decision to include, in later chapters, discussion of developments within loyalism and the wider peace process, serves only to distract the reader.

In fact, it might be said that Sanders’s book is poorly titled. It gives little in the way of a glance ‘inside the I.R.A.’ (readers in search of such insights continue to be better served by the work of say, Ed Moloney or Richard English), while the sub-title ‘dissident republicans and the war for legitimacy’ is not an accurate reflection of the subject matter contained therein. Those wishing to know about the groups commonly referred to as ‘dissident republicans’ have to wait until page 200 before they are discussed in detail. Even then, Sanders seems unsure how best to explain the dissidents. At one point, when discussing the Real I.R.A. and Continuity I.R.A., he states that ‘The seemingly easily permeable borders between the dissident republican organisations emphasises the apolitical nature of these groups, with members simply transferring their allegiance to the organisation most likely to provide them with an outlet for their desire for violence’ (p. 202). But just a few pages later, he describes the two organisations as ‘ideologically motivated’, in contrast to their loyalist counterparts (p. 220). Moreover, the author appears to have neglected recent historiography on this subject.

Overall, the impression left is of a book that is unfortunately less than the sum of its parts; in trying to cover too much ground the author seems to lose sight of his stated purpose. The deficiencies noted might have been significantly mitigated by an in-depth, synoptic conclusion that brought the reader back to the original research agenda and offered reflections on the key findings and the argument(s) being advanced. The absence of such a chapter meant that one was left wondering as to the meaning of a work which, in its present form, seemed not to go far enough beyond the existing literature to truly succeed.

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