

Restoring the Foundations of the Union

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We face the greatest ever threat to our cherished way of life as part of the United Kingdom. That is true in a constitutional sense, but also in relation to our basic ability to express ourselves as British citizens in this part of the Union.

Whilst the Union-subjugating Protocol assaults our constitutional status as part of the United Kingdom and fundamental right to equal constitutional citizenship, the 'process' breathed into life by the Belfast Agreement not only assists the incremental erosion of our constitutional status, but equally has the effect of seeking to turn our community into an underclass, with nationalism advancing with increasing supremacy as a political and cultural 'elite'.

If there is anyone that believes nationalism as an ideology seeks equality, they would be sadly mistaken. Indeed, they would be foolish, and even more so standing here in Portadown.

In 1641, here in Portadown, the Protestant people sought a fair and equitable peace. They were drowned in the River Bann. And there is nothing new under the sun.

In the 1990s, and still until this very day, the Church-going members of the Orange Order seek to peacefully walk at Drumcree. They- just like their brethren in many other locations- are denied from doing so by an unelected Parades Commission set up to appease the threat of nationalist violence.

Our right to express our culture and identity is subject to whether nationalists permit such an expression, or whether- via the tactical use of their threats of violence- they weaponise the unelected institutions, usually greened to their advantage, to- without any democratic legitimacy- interfere with our cultural expression.

And it is that ethos that brings us the Protocol. Let us leave no room for doubt: the Protocol is a result of nationalism's threats of violence. The Irish Government- who weaponised the threat of IRA bombs-, the political wing of the IRA in Sinn Fein, alongside Alliance and the SDLP, all talked up the threat of violence.

The SDLP MP Claire Hanna threatened "*civil disobedience....at a minimum*" if there was to be so much as a CCTV camera on the sovereign land border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Nationalist Professors- of law no less- threatened to "*remove*" any border. One suspects they were not suggesting they would do so with an academic paper.

Alliance MP and ardent nationalist Stephen Farry- who began his maiden Parliament speech in Irish- speaking about a land border said: “*civil disobedience would be the result of emotional and psychological impact of checks... even if you have checks away from the border, and have them ten miles inland, or you’re putting in place mobile patrols and a greater surveillance arrangement, all of that is a border*”.

A quick word on Mr Farry- your P45 is in the post. The next electoral opportunity which arises, the good unionist and loyalist people of North Down will see to it that you are removed from our Parliament.

All these people- so concerned about the threat to peace arising from any checks on the land border- were happy to call for the rigorous implementation of a Protocol which delivered a hard internal border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom: the unjust, unlawful and undemocratic Irish Sea Border.

Their purported commitment to a balanced equilibrium only lasts for so long as it suits nationalism’s agenda.

In similar terms, the commitment to cross community consent for key decisions was a fundamental principle. The cornerstone of peace and stability. Until of course it came to the point whereby nationalism could join with the Alliance party to form a majority to put their jackboot on the neck of the Union; the commitment to cross community consent all of a sudden became expendable.

It circles back to the core ethos which governs the ‘peace process’- referred to as the ‘spirit’ of the Belfast Agreement- which necessitates that *Unionism must give, and nationalism must get*.

Nationalism rejected a sovereign land border, so unionism had to be subjected to a Sea border.

Brexit and the nationalist opposition to it was always about denying the principle of consent- which we will come to later- itself. Northern Ireland was not to be allowed to be treated as an equal part of the United Kingdom and thus have the result of a UK wide referendum respected equally.

There is the common effort to misrepresent the principle of consent by seeking to equate the UK’s external relationships, with the internal status of NI as part of the UK, by claiming consent for Brexit itself is equal to consent for a change in NI’s constitutional status, and so if one requires consent, so must the other. Not so. The principle of consent directs itself solely to NI’s internal relationship in the Union, and has absolutely nothing to do with the UK’s external relationships.

It seems obvious to point out that for all nationalism and the elite establishment’s talk of respecting the Belfast Agreement, they in fact seek to weaponise only the parts that suits nationalism’s agenda whilst ignoring inconvenient facts such as Northern Ireland remaining a full and integral part of the United Kingdom.

For over 24 years the imbalance in the outworking of the Agreement has been plain to see for anyone who chooses to open their eyes. It has been the mid-wife to a process governed by what I call the 'principle of nationalist interpretation', meaning that every constructive ambiguity- and there are many in the Belfast Agreement- must be resolved in favour of nationalism, and consequently to the disadvantage of unionism.

Nationalism did not like the RUC, so the RUC had to be dismantled. Not just dismantled but criminalised, dehumanised, and stripped of all credibility. The true objective being de-legitimising the RUC, and in consequence legitimising the IRA.

If the RUC and state can be presented as bad, then the IRA can be presented as good, or at least their actions contextually justified. That is the real reason behind the well-funded and relentless nationalist efforts via skewed academic work, propaganda publications in documentaries and print, and guerrilla legacy warfare in the Courts.

The culture war is not merely a battlefield for control of the past, but it is ongoing in the present. The key battlegrounds are in the crucial opinion and policy forming institutions of our society, primarily media, academia and law- including the judiciary.

There has been a deliberate and orchestrated effort to 'green' all these institutions. They are, in some respects, more powerful in shaping long term policy and the trajectory of politics than the political arena itself.

It is for that reason that unionism and loyalism must develop an army of activists to engage in the ongoing cultural war. The fields of media, academia, law and public policy has for too long been left unattended, whilst nationalism has embarked on a long march through them.

That must change, and we must all collectively play our part in that fight. We must encourage and empower new voices- such as the relatively new speakers on this stage tonight alongside myself and Jim Allister QC- and create a perpetual conveyor belt of young dedicated activists to enter the key institutions of our society and advance the cause of unionism from within.

The Protocol presently remains in place solely due to an act of defiance by unelected civil servants, and an order by a High Court judge. No one should underestimate the constitutional and democratic implications.

If civil servants can take for themselves the power to defy democratically elected Ministers, and contentious issues within the political arena can be resolved by effectively transporting the ballot box to the High Court bench to be resolved by an electorate of one, then that has serious ramifications for peace, democracy and societal stability.

And so, the Irish Sea border clings to life solely on the basis of unelected civil servants and a dubious judicial order. There is no democratic legitimacy, and it is obvious that such an imposed arrangement- which subjugates the will of the unionist community

and the Union itself- is not a sound basis for the peace and stability that we all want to see.

The time may come- very soon- when civil servants who cherish the Union must adopt the moral code, first articulated by Martin Luther King that dictates that *“one has not only a legal, but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws”*.

Should the unjust subjugation of the Union continue at our Ports, then all staff who value the Union should refuse to implement the destruction of their own national identity.

In 1974, the unjust Sunningdale arrangements were brought down by ordinary men and women taking a stand and making the purported governance arrangements unworkable. Only a fool would believe that such a duty may not once again fall on those in key areas of employment upon which the Protocol implementation relies.

The Protocol has exposed that the Belfast Agreement offers no protection to the Union, or unionist community, rather it is a noose around our neck, and Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom.

This exposure of the fundamental imbalance can not be unseen.

It follows that even the complete removal of the Protocol could not be credibly seen as enough to restore power sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland. The Protocol has illuminated the structurally and fundamentally imbalanced nature of the Belfast Agreement, especially around the fact that the threat of IRA terrorism is still used for political leverage, and that the key guarantee- **the principle of consent**- is a deceit.

That key principle of consent- and the promise of adherence to it- was the bedrock of pro Agreement unionism's support for the 1998 deal.

It is a matter of the most compelling logic therefore, that not even pro Agreement unionism could credibly argue for continued support for the Agreement. Such a position would be wholly illogical given the key supposed guarantee for unionism has been shown to be a deceptive snare.

Law making powers and judicial sovereignty over Northern Ireland has been surrendered to a foreign power. The very foundation of the Union itself, the Acts of Union, has been mutilated.

The principle of consent does not protect the substance of the Union, but rather merely the symbolism. Put another way, *you can change everything but the last thing* in relation to Northern Ireland's constitutional status, the last thing being formal handing over of territorial sovereignty.

If, as the Protocol shows, you can hand law making powers and judicial sovereignty over to a foreign jurisdiction without triggering the principle of consent, then equally such powers could be handed to Dublin without our consent.

The laws that govern us could be made by Dublin, with the Irish Supreme Court reigning supreme, and the principle of consent would offer no protection so long as Northern Ireland symbolically remained part of the United Kingdom territorially.

A failure to confront such a fatal deception at the heart of power sharing, which is in any event designed to simply act as a transitional framework to ease us out of the Union and into an all-Ireland arrangement, would be an act of constitutional self-harm with historically destructive consequences for our place in the United Kingdom.

It is plain and obvious, beyond any reasonable dispute, that the principle of consent has been shown- via the Protocol- to be purely symbolic. It offers no protection or guarantee in relation to the substance of the Union.

Therefore, how can any self-respecting unionist close their eyes to this most obvious fatal flaw?

As such, no unionist could- or should- reenter the structural framework of the Belfast Agreement- which to be clear is a reference to the Northern Ireland Act 1998- without securing a fundamental change to section 1 of that Act, and thus a strengthening of the principle of consent.

The alternative is that unionism would continue to operate the structural framework of an Agreement supposed to be based on equal constitutional protections for both unionism and nationalism, when the core constitutional principle of consent which was that which was said to exist for unionism has been shown to be based on a fundamental deceit.

This issue can not be ignored, it will not go away. Political unionism should not, and in any event will not be permitted to, pretend it doesn't exist. It must be confronted head on. There is no middle path.

In addition, the Governance arrangements must be based upon the rule of law and a commitment to purely peaceful and democratic means, which must be not only verbally expressed but verifiable in substance.

After twenty-four years, the IRA- a proscribed terrorist organisation- remain in existence and in control of Sinn Fein. They do so with complete immunity: who could forget the immortal line from the PSNI recently confirming- and I quote- their so called Paramilitary Crime Task Force- set up after two IRA murders- "*does not investigate the IRA*". Placed under pressure, they sought to obscure this extraordinary admission by instead claiming that the Terrorism Investigation branch investigate the IRA. Untrue. Only yesterday I received written confirmation from the PSNI that in fact in the last five years the TIB hasn't carried out one single investigation into the IRA.

It is in this context that a pledge of office, or verbal claim to support the law and peaceful and democratic means, can no longer be taken at face value. The clear security assessment is that Sinn Fein continue to be directed and controlled by the IRA- whether the IRA is wholly committed to making daisies or terrorism is

irrelevant- they remain a proscribed terrorist organisation, and as such have no place in any democratic system of Government.

If Sinn Fein want to be in Government, then there must be an independent, clear and verifiable process of decontamination, which means ensuring the complete disbandment of the IRA in all its forms.

In the absence of this, there can not reasonably be any basis upon which unionism could enter into Government with Sinn Fein, let alone let them anywhere near the levers of the justice department, whilst they remain under the control of a proscribed terrorist organisation.

Sinn Fein's choice is clear- you can have the IRA or you can have a place in democratic political institutions. You can no longer have both.

Equally, the choice for the Government and the international actors is equally clear. You can have peace and stability, or you can have the Protocol... but you will never have both. An the demand is simple- restore Article 6 of the Acts of Union. There is no 'best of both worlds', there is no one foot in the UK and one foot in the EU. There is only the Union, and we will accept nothing less.

All of that is in the context that the peace agreement and political stability itself depends upon the adherence to clear constitutional protections for the Union.

This key protection for unionism is not in fact provided by the fundamentally deceptive and worthless nature of the principle of consent as articulated in section 1 of the 1998 Act. No self-respecting unionist could conceivably continue to operate the framework of institutions based on such a deceit and corrosion of our constitutional status.

We have had enough of this one-sided 'piece by peace' process. We have had enough of twenty-four years of being an underclass. When we say enough is enough- we mean it.

There is no longer majority unionist consent for power sharing, and nor will there ever be whilst the framework of such arrangements remains fundamentally structured in favour of nationalists.

It is time for a collective and united unionist stand in defence of that which our forefathers fought and died to maintain. **The time is not coming when we must stand, the time is here now.**

So in this famous old citadel of Portadown, stand with me my fellow Ulstermen and women and let them hear us in Dublin.

We will never surrender. We will never go quietly. We will never be part of a process designed to destroy our own country.

This Union is your Union

This Union is my Union

This Union was built upon the blood, sweat and tears of our forefathers

The Germans came over in 1941 and failed, the IRA spent thirty years murdering and maiming the unionist people of Ulster and failed. The EU and Irish Government jackboot will never subjugate our people.

And a message to our own Government- take a lesson from 1912- Parliament tried to impose upon the loyal sons and daughters of Ulster a Home Rule Bill...

Sir Edward Carson raised an Army!

Enough is Enough!