

# 7

## Comparing the Four Case Studies

*The instinctive reaction of most Ministers when confronted with an issue is not to think in terms of analysing a complex problem to seek out the optimum solution but instead to see it in political terms.*  
—Clive Ponting<sup>1</sup>

The case studies set out in the previous four chapters have examined some of the processes of reasoning, patterns of understanding, political pressures, and organizational factors that helped to shape British policies for managing political violence in Northern Ireland between 1968 and 1973; the interests and principles that underpinned them; how policymakers tried to resolve value conflicts, dilemmas, and uncertainties; and why policies evolved as they did. Tables 7.1–7.4 summarize the conclusions according to the models of analysis outlined in chapter 1.

### The Rational Model

The rational model seeks to explain British policies as the outcomes of systematic decision-making processes, directing attention to the changing nature and intensity of the violence and to political developments inside Northern Ireland. It identifies ministers' objectives, options, and calculations. This model clearly fails to provide a full and credible explanation of the policies Britain adopted in any of the four cases.

In the first case (chapter 3), as ministers have since openly admitted, they intervened in Northern Ireland “knowing nothing about the place. . . . It wasn't so much deciding what policy to have as being able to excuse

**Table 7.1 Reform, October 1968–October 1969***Rational Model*

Nature of disorder and disaffection	Protest marches and counterdemonstrations leading to intercommunal rioting; attacks on public facilities; collapse of policing.
Deaths 1969	14
Bombs planted 1969	10
State of political leadership	Fragmentation of Unionist Party; forced resignation of O'Neill.
	Emergence of assertive Nationalist leaders outside party system.
Policy objectives	End disorder; create an effective police force supported by Catholics; avoid further entanglement.
Options considered	Reinforce Stormont; reform police and local government; direct rule; withdrawal.

*Cognitive Process Model*

Uncertainties	Future development of Northern Ireland's party political system and culture.
Cause of violence	Discrimination against Catholics; poverty and unemployment; Unionists' response to peaceful protest.
Motives of protesters	Secure equal rights for Catholics.
Political dynamic	Unionist fragmentation a necessary part of modernization.
Own role	Bringing an outdated political system up to British standards.

*Political Model*

UK Parliament	Labour backbenchers hostile to Unionists, pressing for reform; conservatives supporting government; end of precedent of nonintervention.
UK media and public opinion	Support for civil rights campaign and condemnation of Unionist misrule.
International factors	Dublin presses for British withdrawal and concessions to nationalism.
Pressure balance	For civil rights; against Unionists.
Key ministers	Callaghan, Wilson: both hostile to Unionists; Wilson interventionist and in favor of a united Ireland.

*Organizational Model*

Locus of decision	Callaghan and Wilson.
Structure	Home Office lead; separation of Northern Ireland Civil Service from Whitehall; separation of Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) from police forces in Britain.
Routine	Noninvolvement.
Doctrine	Home Office; nonintervention; MoD; minimal intervention; Army; if intervening, primacy over RUC.

**Table 7.2 Coercion, April 1970–August 1971***Rational Model*

Nature of disorder and disaffection	Intercommunal rioting; republican no-go areas; rioting against army; Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing and shooting campaign; Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) bombs and sectarian assassinations; Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) campaign of civil disobedience.
Deaths 1970	25 in 12 months.
1971 pre-internment	34 in 7 months.
Bombs planted 1970	170
1971 total	1,515
State of political leadership	Unionist Party increasingly restive; Paisley elected to Westminster; Chichester-Clark replaced by Faulkner; formation of Alliance and SDLP.
Policy objectives	Sustain a cooperative administration at Stormont; defeat the IRA; avoid a loyalist backlash.
Options considered	Reinforce Stormont; constitutional reform; direct rule; repartition; independence.

*Cognitive Process Model*

Uncertainties	Severity of pressures on Faulkner; Nationalist reaction to internment; ability of security services to catch enough key IRA activists.
Cause of violence	IRA-led insurgency; risk of mass loyalist reaction.
Insurgents' motives	Overthrow the state.
Political dynamic	Moderate Unionist leaders under threat from hard-liners; IRA to be defeated before constitutional reform can be pursued.
Own role	Conditional support for devolved administration.

*Political Model*

UK Parliament	Conservative government sympathetic to army; backbenchers and activists pressing for tougher security measures; Labour compliant.
UK media and public opinion	Antirepublican; demands for tougher security measures; Troops Out movement.
International factors	Arms trial and IRA cross-border activity reduce Dublin's credibility.
Pressure balance	Antirepublican; pro-army.
Key ministers	Maudling, Carrington, Heath: all hands-off.

*Organizational Model*

Locus of decision	Ostensibly Stormont, but with UK veto on all important issues.
Structure	Stepped return of control over security to local commanders; increasing influence of Ministry of Defence in Whitehall; tensions between army and Stormont/Royal Ulster Constabulary.
Routine	Military security approach to policing republican areas; plans for internment drawn up in advance.
Doctrine	Home Office yielding on nonintervention; Cabinet Office exploring radical alternatives; army applying counterinsurgency doctrine; Foreign and Commonwealth Office concern for Anglo-Irish and international relations.

**Table 7.3 Direct Rule, September 1971–March 1972***Rational Model*

Nature of disorder and disaffection	Nationalist mass protests against internment; Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) boycott of regional administration; intensification of Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaigns and extension to England; emergence of Ulster Defence Association (UDA); loyalist bombings and assassinations.
Deaths	
1971 after internment	140 in 5 months.
1972 before direct rule	80 in 3 months.
Bombs planted 1971	1,515
State of political leadership	Faulkner losing grassroots support to both flanks; formation of Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Vanguard; defections to Alliance; greater coherence within SDLP; divisions within Provisional IRA.
Policy objectives	Secure Dublin's cooperation; open dialogue with SDLP; defeat IRA; break up Unionist monolith; avoid loyalist backlash.
Options considered	Comprehensive review of all options, including withdrawal; then focusing on alternatives for constitutional reform.

*Cognitive Process Model*

Uncertainties	Unionist reaction; whether sufficient to win over Nationalist Ireland; whether Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) would cooperate.
Cause of violence	IRA insurgency with mass Catholic support because of discrimination and exclusion from power.
Protesters' motives	SDLP, to secure a fair deal for the minority; IRA, to overthrow the state and force British withdrawal.
Political dynamic	Unionists incapable of leading progressive change; SDLP amenable to negotiated settlement; IRA leadership divided.
Own role	Neutral intermediary, steering both sides into a fair settlement in line with British standards.

*Political Model*

UK Parliament	Conservative backbenchers concerned at Maudling's inaction and sympathetic to army; Labour critical of internment; Wilson's fifteen-point plan ends bipartisan consensus.
UK media and public opinion	Strongly critical of internment, interrogation procedures, and Bloody Sunday; anti-Unionist.
International factors	Dublin criticizes Heath and endorses Wilson's proposals; international condemnation over Bloody Sunday.
Pressure balance	Cumulative pressure to act; anti-Unionist.
Key ministers	Heath in lead, with Carrington and Maudling.

*Organizational Model*

Locus of decision	Heath pushing his preferred solution through cabinet.
Structure	Cabinet-led policy review; Whitehall distances itself from NICS; Northern Ireland planning teams in Home Office, Ministry of Defence (MoD), and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO); UK Representative undermines Stormont.
Routine	Plans for direct rule in place since 1969.
Doctrine	Home Office advocates direct rule; MoD counterinsurgency doctrine requires integration of military and civil administration; FCO supports Nationalist position.

**Table 7.4 Power Sharing, April 1972–December 1973**

<i>Rational Model</i>	
Nature of disorder and disaffection	Intensification of Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaign; Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) boycott ends; Vanguard mass rallies; loyalist bombings, assassinations, and strikes; sectarian gun battles; rioting.
Deaths	
1972 after direct rule	387 in 9 months.
1973	252
Bombs planted 1972	1,853
1973	1,520
State of political leadership	Faulkner's authority slipping as he tries to sell Heath's policies; majority of Unionist Assembly members oppose power sharing; tensions within SDLP; Provisional IRA settling into long war.
Policy objectives	To July 1972: drain popular support from IRA; from July 1972: defeat PIRA. Secure Dublin's cooperation; negotiate agreed settlement; promote moderate parties and marginalize hard-liners; avoid loyalist backlash.
Options considered	Devolved coalition government with Irish dimension; full integration; continuing direct rule.
<i>Cognitive Process Model</i>	
Uncertainties	Faulkner's reaction and leadership of Unionist Party; power of loyalist protest; bottom lines of IRA and SDLP.
Cause of violence	IRA insurgency with mass Catholic support because of discrimination and exclusion from power.
Insurgents' motives	Prevent an agreement and force British withdrawal.
Political dynamic	Victory of progressive parties inevitable with UK support.
Own role	Neutral intermediary imposing just settlement.
<i>Political Model</i>	
UK Parliament	Bipartisan consensus restored but requiring continuous maintenance; Wilson blocks increase in Northern Ireland MPs.
UK media and public opinion	Support for Whitelaw and his initiative; urgency.
International factors	Dublin works with Labour and SDLP; Britain and Ireland join European Economic Community (EEC); closer high-level relationships with Dublin.
Pressure balance	For power sharing with an Irish dimension.
Key ministers	Heath supported by Whitelaw and Carrington.
<i>Organizational Model</i>	
Locus of decision	Cabinet directed by Heath.
Structure	Northern Ireland Office (NIO) created to coordinate security policies and operations, political development, and civil administration; creation of Intelligence Director.
Routine	NIO drawing on other departments; army pressure to return to military procedures; Foreign and Commonwealth Office experience in colonial withdrawals.
Doctrine	NIO establishing its own in line with Heath's directive.

it.”<sup>2</sup> For public consumption they articulated a series of objectives associated with the principles of fairness and the process of modernization, but their motivation was primarily political and organizational: to reduce the power of the Unionist Party and the Stormont administration, to dampen criticism of themselves, and to minimize the scale and extent of the army’s reluctant intervention.

In the second case (chapter 4), although British officials had made contingency plans for internment, the crucial decision to permit Stormont to introduce it was again made hastily, in reaction to a crisis—the impending collapse of Faulkner’s government. UK ministers were not convinced that internment would help defeat the Irish Republican Army (IRA). They did not even expect it to prolong Faulkner’s survival for more than a few months. But they were not ready to introduce direct rule immediately and reasoned that it would be better to implement internment before rather than after direct rule. This would enable them to avoid criticism from the Unionists and their Conservative supporters for not permitting it but also to blame Faulkner if it failed. As unwilling conscripts, British ministers and officials put little effort into ensuring that the policy succeeded or mitigating its worst features.

On the surface, the imposition of direct rule (chapter 5) in the third case meets some of the rational model’s criteria. Heath initiated a comprehensive policy review that, at one stage, identified no less than sixteen possible options. As a result of this review, ministers decided to work toward a voluntary coalition if the Northern Ireland parties could be induced to agree. But this was not the policy that they followed. The events of January and February 1972—in particular Bloody Sunday and its aftermath—created political pressures that overturned their previous calculations. Heath’s priorities changed dramatically. He discarded the conclusions of the review in order to win back the cooperation of Nationalist Ireland, which insisted that it would not even negotiate possible solutions until the Stormont regime was abolished. Contrary to the expectations of the rational model, Heath had not thought through the steps that might lead from direct rule to the political settlement that he wanted, the obstacles to progress, or how they might be overcome. Meanwhile, his cabinet colleagues and senior officials remained deeply skeptical about the prospects for power sharing. But once Heath decided to impose direct rule, he closed his ears to Faulkner’s last-minute proposals, refused to negotiate with the Unionist leader, and dealt with the differences among his colleagues not by rational argument but by appealing to their collective ego.

In the fourth case (chapter 6), the policy that emerged after Sunningdale was clearly not the product of a single rational decision-maker but the out-

come of a lengthy process of negotiations with Northern Ireland's "moderate" political parties, the Labour opposition, and the Irish government. The outcome was not the first preference of any of the participants but a compromise that they all, with varying degrees of reluctance, could accept. Those responsible for the violence and disorder were deliberately excluded from the negotiating process.

### The Cognitive Process Model

The case studies identify a number of important ways that British policymakers conceptualized and simplified the problem as they struggled with its uncertainties and complexities. They held unwarranted optimism about policies they favored and denied or downplayed both the capabilities of their opponents and the legitimacy of their views. They entertained politically expedient explanations of the causes of the violence and adopted familiar templates for solutions, which they referred to approvingly as British norms, British standards, and normal politics. They demonized those who did not accept these norms as extremists, hard-liners, bigots, and terrorists, and idealized those who agreed with them as reasonable, moderate, and men of goodwill. Finally, they reframed the role of the British state variously as sovereign authority and neutral intermediary to suit the case they were making and the political context.

#### *Managing Uncertainties*

In each of the four cases the British undertook some research to reduce the risks and uncertainties of policy change but still took huge leaps into the unknown. They handled this in part, as mentioned above, by being overly optimistic. It required considerable suspension of disbelief to conclude that the disbandment of the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) and disarming of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) would enable the army to disengage more rapidly, that internment would hasten the defeat of the IRA; that Unionists would quickly acquiesce in direct rule, and that a sustainable coalition government, comprising elected representatives with incompatible constitutional aspirations, could be created at all, never mind within two years.

In the first case, Callaghan acted on the belief—although he apparently did not really believe—that there was little probability of mass disorder again and that policing reforms could be implemented in time to allow the army to be withdrawn within six months. In the second case, Heath chose to accept Faulkner's assurances that internment would accelerate the destruction of the IRA despite clear and accurate warnings to the contrary

from army commanders, the Irish government, and Nationalist elected representatives. In the third case, Heath persuaded himself that a progressive political realignment was already taking place that, under direct rule, the British government could encourage and accelerate. He pressed the cabinet into agreeing to impose direct rule without any clear idea as to how this would enable them to achieve their objectives and despite the strong reservations of other ministers and officials. In the fourth case, Heath pinned his faith to the development of normal politics, conducted by moderate leaders, despite the evidence of recent history and contemporary surveys of public opinion.

In each instance, key ministers and their advisers harbored private reservations about the prospects for the strategies they promoted in public. They were particularly skeptical about the workability of power sharing, and their doubts persisted long after it had become official policy.

### *Causes of Disorder*

In 1969, Labour ministers relied heavily on information provided by the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) and the British national media. These sources directed their attention toward Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) demands and the failures of policing at the expense of less visible but equally important developments, notably tensions within the Unionist Party. Callaghan gratefully adopted the legitimate grievances hypothesis, which attributed the unrest to Stormont's failure to respond positively to complaints about discrimination in the local government franchise, employment, and the allocation of public housing. To these he added the unusually high levels of unemployment and deprivation in parts of Derry. The optimistic corollary was that once Catholics' social and economic grievances had been resolved, the protests would stop.

When the disorder continued to intensify despite the reforms, the incoming Conservative administration developed a new explanation, which it overlaid onto the legitimate grievances hypothesis: that the IRA had exploited the original grievances and transformed the protests into a violent assault on the authority of the state. So it was appropriate to apply a coercive remedy, in the form of the military security approach to policing. Without any palatable alternative, ministers discounted an increasing body of evidence—including advice from their own officials on the ground—that this approach was exacerbating the problem.

In response to domestic and international protests over the internment operation, ministers again revised their diagnosis. After his two meetings with Lynch in September 1971, Heath adopted the explanation advanced by Nationalist Ireland that the violence was rooted in the minority's ex-

clusion from decision-making, reinforced by the one-sided application of the military security approach. Since the Unionist government could not survive without such an approach and had already made clear that it would not admit Nationalist representatives into the Stormont cabinet, this created a strong argument for direct rule.

Three months into direct rule, ministers again changed their diagnosis. Whatever its origins, the Provisional IRA campaign had assumed a life of its own and robust security policies would be needed to end it. The political initiative could proceed with a view to draining popular support for the Provisionals, but security measures would also have to be strengthened; in future, they would be directed more discriminatingly at active insurgents, applying selective rather than brute force.

Two characteristics of ministers' changing patterns of understanding are worth noting. First, they were readily discarded in response to events and changes in the political pressure balance at Westminster. Second, they discounted the extent to which British policies had become their own cause. The military security approach that paved the way for internment resulted from the predictable failure of the Hunt reforms to produce a police service capable of delivering effective civil policing in republican districts. The consequences of the incompetent implementation of internment contributed to the decision to impose direct rule. This then enabled Faulkner's Unionist opponents to capitalize on the anxieties of the protestant community, leading to the rejection of the white paper proposals and ultimately to the failure of the power-sharing experiment.

### *British Standards*

In 1969 British policymakers' understandings of Northern Ireland were rooted in a conception of political life based on their own experiences. Labour and Conservative ministers alike assumed that the main problem with the government of Northern Ireland was that it was not British enough. They believed that most Catholics were predisposed to give allegiance to the regime, if only it would behave evenhandedly. The idea that a segment of the population identified with another nation-state was alien to them. They viewed the conflict as an anachronism that persisted because of discrimination and backwardness, and were seemingly oblivious to centuries of conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Britain and Ireland, the continuing inheritance of discrimination against Irish people in Britain, and the gerrymandering that plagued the political system in Britain at least into the 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

Hunt's recommendations for the future of policing in Northern Ireland assumed that the RUC should be brought into line with mainland

forces. Neither ministers nor senior officials showed any appreciation for why things had been done differently in Ireland, or of the possibility of using other models to organize policing, such as the Republic's. Callaghan's proposal for a community relations commission was derived from English experience in the field of race relations; neither side in Northern Ireland had asked for any such body, and one of the first acts of the power-sharing executive in 1974 was to abolish it.

That said, Conservative ministers did not apply their template to the army's policing role, where it might actually have been useful, even to the limited extent of requiring soldiers to respect citizens' basic human rights. The military practices that paved the way for internment owed more to overseas colonial practices—at times and in places where human rights were not an issue and the armed forces were not exposed to critical media scrutiny—than to patterns of civilian policing in Britain. It is highly unlikely that heavily armed paratroops would have been used to maintain public order in a parallel context in London. To fill the policing gap, the army adopted more comprehensively oppressive measures than Stormont and the RUC had ever used. The British army and intelligence services, accountable to British ministers, were responsible for the Falls curfew, the ill treatment of internees, and the civilian deaths on Bloody Sunday. It was ironic that ministers of a devolved administration in Ireland were dismissed from office for having failed to live up to British standards.

Colonial models were also applied in considering the possibility of withdrawal. During the previous twenty years the British political establishment had overseen the evacuation of British administrators and armed forces from most of the nation's colonies and dependencies: India and Pakistan, the Middle East, Cyprus, and east Africa.<sup>4</sup> Nationalists and others depicted Northern Ireland as England's first colony and withdrawal as long overdue. As we saw in chapter 1, there is a valid case to be argued for applying the colonial paradigm as one of a number of models that contribute to understanding the preconditions for the conflict. Lessons from Britain's experience with former colonies suggested that the solution should be a duly planned and phased withdrawal; the white paper package opened up a pathway for moving in this direction, if and when it became expedient to do so.

The tendency to look to British models extended to the scale and status of the Stormont government. Callaghan questioned why such a small population needed its own parliament, with lawmaking powers and a paramilitary security force, when a county council with none of those things would be the norm for a region of comparable size and population in En-

gland. Heath and Maudling used the same comparison to argue their case for stripping Stormont of its security powers and status. They neglected both their Irish history and their contemporary geography. In the European Economic Community (EEC) context, Heath was happy to respect Luxemburg (for example) as a fully autonomous nation-state, with an area of 998 square miles (compared with Northern Ireland's 5,456) and a population of some 340,000 (compared with 1.6 million).

UK ministers convinced themselves that politics in Northern Ireland should conform to the British left-right model, even though, in a global context, Britain's system was rather exceptional. Meanwhile, the minority whose interests they claimed to be advancing looked not to Britain but to Ireland for their norms, where party politics were based only to a limited extent on class divisions. Heath overrode objections from at least one of his ministers that the institutional arrangements needed to permit power sharing were fundamentally inconsistent with the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy.

If British party leaders were serious about developing a new politics in Northern Ireland patterned on the British model, they might have at least tried to persuade their own parties to fight elections there. Both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party were associated with parties in the region, with which they could have developed UK-wide partnerships. Labour could have affiliated with the NILP, but despite Callaghan's efforts chose not to. The Conservatives could have worked with and through the Unionist Party but chose to reject it as too sectarian because of its links to the Orange Order. Heath toyed with the idea of building up a separate Conservative Party machine in the region but did not follow through.<sup>5</sup>

### *"Reasonable People"*

Linked to the concept of British standards was that of reasonable people, meaning those political activists, commentators, and voters in Northern Ireland who sought to comply with the norms of the British political establishment. Hunt expressed the opinion that his proposals would "be widely accepted by reasonable men and women in Northern Ireland."<sup>6</sup> This suggests a failure to appreciate that Nationalists rejected the RUC not just because it had implemented ministerial decisions that effectively discriminated against their community but because it represented, served, and sought to defend a state the very existence of which they opposed. Whether the RUC included the USC or not, armed or unarmed, this fundamental objection remained. Correspondingly, many Unionists supported the RUC uncritically, seeing it as their one reliable line of defense against republican subversion.

In the second case, Heath regarded Faulkner as the last available Unionist leader who—narrowly and lacking anyone better—fell within his definition of reasonableness, albeit tainted by his membership in the Orange Order. It was thus worth taking the risk of internment to prevent his government from collapsing. After internment, however, the British premier seems to have been influenced by Lynch's depiction of Faulkner as intransigent, sectarian, and irrationally obsessed with the military defeat of the IRA. The British came to believe that without increasingly tough (and hence counterproductive) coercive measures, Faulkner's government would fall. He would then be replaced by an extremist who would refuse to cooperate with them. Thus, it was preferable to impose direct rule on Faulkner, who would at least react responsibly.

A central goal of Heath's strategy in the third and fourth case studies was to depoliticize the Northern Ireland administration by removing big contentious issues, such as partition and internment, from the agenda. Once this had been done, he argued that the moderate leaders of the two sides would cooperate in tackling social and economic issues. The extremists would then either convert to reasonableness or become irrelevant. From this perspective, "extremists" such as Ian Paisley and "terrorists" such as Martin McGuinness were merely the dangerous legacy of a primitive past standing in the way of a sensible, just, and durable settlement.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for Heath, large swaths of the population and their political representatives fell outside this Anglo-centric definition of reasonableness. Heath acceded to the demands of Alliance and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) that Craig and Paisley should be excluded from the Sunningdale conference. Far from receding into the shadows, they drew strength from their exclusion and denounced Faulkner as a traitor, bent on collaborating with the British in offering still more concessions to their republican enemies. Nor did popular support for the IRA melt away because soldiers adopted a lower profile on the streets. Republicans continued to see the British army as an occupying force, and interpreted British concessions as harbingers of the victory that their doctrine assured them was historically inevitable.

### *Britain's Role*

Wilson's government depicted itself as the champion of progress, dragging Northern Ireland into the modern age. Callaghan declared it was his mission to induce Unionists to implement the reforms necessary for the army to withdraw as quickly as possible without risking further disorder. This was not the only possible choice of role. Stormont argued and Home Office doctrine decreed that the British government should provide whatever

police or army reinforcements were necessary to restore order, and not to interfere in devolved policy areas. Nationalists, on the other hand, argued that Britain should dismantle its puppet regime and withdraw.

When they came to power, the Conservatives at first accepted the Home Office's doctrine on relations between the two jurisdictions. While publicly they continued to depict themselves as champions of reform, they increasingly acted as a detached sovereign government sustaining the devolved administration. By delegating authority to Stormont and army commanders, they relieved themselves of a considerable burden.

After internment, the British dropped the doctrine of minimal intervention and re-created themselves as neutral intermediaries working for an equitable political settlement. Where previously he had portrayed himself as supporting the devolved government against republican terrorism, Heath then described nationalism and unionism as equally legitimate—if primitive—worldviews requiring institutional reconciliation. The British state would no longer defend the union and respect the right of the electorate in Northern Ireland to determine its own constitutional status.

Heath acknowledged the practical limits to Britain's sovereign and military power by accepting the case for an Irish dimension to the governance of Northern Ireland. He did not, however, fully appreciate that the British state was not just an intermediary but an active participant in the problem. Its security forces were deployed in Northern Ireland, and an essential element in the conflict—the clash over sovereignty—could be resolved only at the level of the two national governments.

### The Political Model

The case studies reveal that major policy transformations occurred only after a significant shift in the balance of political pressure, when the conflict generated criticisms so intense and sustained as to cause ministers pain and anxiety. Three of the factors contained in the political model emerge from the case studies as especially influential: the personal contributions of key ministers, the balance of pressure in the Commons, and—in the last two cases—the influence of the Irish government.

### *Key Ministers*

All the most influential ministers directly concerned with policy in Northern Ireland over the four cases personally favored a united Ireland as the best long-term outcome. None saw power sharing as more than an interim solution. Wilson was the most interventionist and the most committed to

unification. He personally drafted the Downing Street Declaration, which stripped the Unionist government of control over security and committed London to a reform program irrespective of Stormont's views. He continued to shape government policy as leader of the opposition after internment, making common cause with Nationalist Ireland in calling for a new political initiative in consultation with Dublin. When this was not quickly forthcoming, he goaded Heath into action by producing his own fifteen-point plan, which foreshadowed the transfer of security powers, the inclusion of Nationalist elected representatives in the Stormont cabinet, and the Irish dimension. After direct rule, he continued to denounce any delays in carrying the initiative forward, ensured that Northern Ireland's representation at Westminster was not increased, and effectively closed off the option of legislative integration.

Yet even as prime minister, Wilson did not act decisively until events with political consequences forced him to do so. He worked within the level of support that he could command in the cabinet and in the Commons. Callaghan constrained him. Both men accepted the legitimacy of NICRA's initial demands, wanted to weaken the Unionist Party, and favored a united Ireland in the long run, but they disagreed over how deeply to intervene and how hard to press the Unionist government. Callaghan shared his officials' concerns about the implications of forcing through reforms against Unionist opposition. He wanted to build up the NILP, whereas Wilson favored the SDLP. When Wilson dismissed Callaghan from the Northern Ireland portfolio in November 1971, he freed himself to propagate proposals for reunification that Callaghan considered unworkable and dangerous.

When the Conservatives came to power in 1970, Heath considered that Wilson had made matters worse by undermining Stormont's authority. So he left it to Chichester-Clark and later Faulkner to oversee the implementation of the strategy that the two governments had agreed upon. This meant that political and security policies were made by Unionist politicians and army commanders, who each had their own distinctive priorities. It created the political context for the military security approach, and for introducing internment without due diligence.

Heath reacted to the national and international furor over the internment operation by losing confidence in Faulkner. Jack Lynch—like him, the head of a national government seeking admission to the EEC—came to look like a more reliable source of advice and a more useful ally. From September 1971 Heath personally set the parameters and forced the pace for policymaking. He required Maudling to take successively bigger steps, pressing Faulkner into including minority elected representatives in the re-

gional administration (September 1971), voluntary coalition (November), the transfer of security powers and mandatory coalition (January 1972), and finally direct rule (February). He relentlessly imposed his vision for power sharing on a skeptical cabinet and forced it through to implementation, resisting every attempt by Whitelaw and others to allow the Unionist establishment more time to adjust to his overthrow of their political universe.

Heath could steamroll the skeptics in part because he refused to accept the underlying reality of a political system based on differences over national allegiance rather than economic and social issues. Whether this was a strength is a matter of judgment. But eyewitnesses agree that he never developed relationships of mutual respect and understanding with the leading players in Northern Ireland as Whitelaw had done. Convinced of his own superior logic and confident in the authority of his office, he forced Faulkner to swallow proposals for the Council of Ireland that predictably resulted in his downfall.

Maudling is commonly depicted as intellectually gifted but detached and lethargic. He allowed Chichester-Clark and later Faulkner to claw back much of the power over security policy and operations that Wilson had deliberately stripped from Stormont. He declared that he wanted to engage Northern Ireland's Nationalist politicians in negotiations, yet like Heath and unlike Whitelaw, he failed to establish a meaningful personal relationship with any of them.

After direct rule Whitelaw was by far the most influential of Heath's ministers. He used his ample personality and diplomatic skills to good effect in overcoming huge obstacles to accommodation. He earned Faulkner's respect, built good working relationships with SDLP leaders, and defied the expectations of his officials by getting the leaders of at least three of the main parties to agree on the formation of a power-sharing executive.

### *The Balance of Pressure*

By 1968 the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster<sup>8</sup> (CDU) had been pressing for over three years for the Labour government to intervene in Northern Ireland, but it was only when the disorder on the streets prompted the national media to give sustained and sympathetic coverage to NICRA's demands that it began to make headway. It successfully killed off the Commons precedent of nonintervention, ensured that Callaghan acted quickly to reform the police in the summer of 1969, and called ministers to account for the delivery of reform.

After February 1971, Conservative ministers were subjected to very different pressures. Amid demands from his backbenchers for Maudling's

resignation, Heath agreed to give Faulkner a greater say in determining security policies. By August ministers were again required to do something visibly tough; internment was the least unattractive of the various coercive measures that their critics demanded.

Labour did not object to internment until the balance of media opinion judged that it had failed. The bipartisan consensus to which both Callaghan and Maudling had attached such importance then collapsed. Maudling found himself trapped between Labour's demands for constitutional reform and Faulkner's insistence that he could not share power with Nationalists. The publication of Wilson's fifteen-point plan in November generated new urgency but also made it harder to convene talks between the Northern Irish party leaders. The dramatic events of January and February 1972 created an alarming new context for the cabinet's deliberations. They finally convinced ministers that a radical initiative was imperative and required bipartisan support. The criticisms to which they had been subjected rattled ministers and left them determined to show Faulkner who was in charge. Imposing direct rule achieved Heath's goal of restoring the bipartisan consensus. Thereafter he was careful to proceed in close consultation with Wilson, and the 1973 white paper incorporated most of Wilson's proposals from November 1971.

Comparing the effects of political pressures at Westminster across the four case studies, we can conclude that organized factions of backbenchers enjoyed significant influence over government policy when the following conditions were satisfied: that the stands they took were reinforced by strong media and public concern, that they enjoyed substantial support in their party at large, and that the prime minister was personally willing to take their proposals seriously. Even then it took time and strategic maneuvering to achieve results. For their part, ministers were prepared to go to great lengths to maintain bipartisan consensus, recognizing that any policy that the opposition actively resisted was unlikely to succeed. Divisions between government and opposition tended to undermine public support, could be exploited by factions in Northern Ireland for their own advantage, and impaired the army's morale. Moreover, if a policy introduced by a government today could be reversed by another party in government tomorrow, its prospects were appreciably diminished.

That said, the influence of Unionist MPs was weaker than might have been expected, not only because they were so few but also because they were divided among themselves and had neglected to build up networks of allies as the CDU had done. They were ambivalent about the future of Stormont. As Westminster MPs, they stood to gain in stature and authority to the extent that the subordinate parliament was diminished.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Irish Government*

The events of August 1969 stimulated a return to traditional republican sentiments in Dublin. London did not fear Irish military power and recognized the political pressures that prompted the taoiseach to take an assertive nationalist public stance. But the Irish played on three British concerns: that their words and deeds might stimulate further disorder, that Irish diplomats might embarrass the United Kingdom or undermine British interests internationally, and that Lynch was vulnerable to defeat by hard-line republicans within his own party, which would make Britain's problem worse. Labour ministers saw these concerns as favoring a policy of reform rather than merely reinforcing the RUC.

In the second case, the incoming Conservative administration accepted their officials' advice to avoid words and actions that might encourage republican sentiment in Dublin. As the violence continued, however, Conservative ministers came to share Stormont's view that the Irish government was part of the problem rather than the solution. From June 1970 to September 1972, evidence of Irish ministers' republican sympathies tended to reduce their credibility in the eyes of Conservative ministers. At the same time, the British army was learning from bitter daily experience how valuable it would be to have wholehearted cooperation from the Irish in the security arena. After internment, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) convinced Heath that such cooperation was essential to defeating the IRA, and that it was worth paying a price for it. After his two meetings with Lynch in September 1971, Heath's view of the problem changed. He concluded that for any solution to be durable, the Irish government must support it. It was around this time that he commissioned the policy review that paved the way for the 1973 white paper. Although it was not immediately obvious to the wider world, Lynch's strategy of private and patient diplomacy had enabled him to assert the interests of Nationalist Ireland in a way that Britain could act on. Lynch successfully regulated the flow of security cooperation to retain London's confidence without provoking more criticism than he could handle from his own side, while keeping the British hungry for more.

Reinforcing Lynch's wooing of Heath, the government machine in Dublin sought to shape British policy through the British ambassador, the British Labour Party, and international opinion. It scored an important goal in November 1971, when Wilson engaged directly with all main Irish political party leaders to develop his fifteen-point plan. Dublin's influence was again evident in January 1972; when Heath showed signs of backsliding from his commitment to take a political initiative, Lynch threatened to publish proposals of his own. The British premier thus faced the prospect of a critical alliance between the Westminster opposition and a national

government without whose cooperation he could achieve neither his military nor his political objectives. Bloody Sunday interrupted the process. For a few weeks Lynch could not be seen to collaborate. Yet even during this period Lynch secured his party's support for a strategy that implicitly accepted the reality of partition.

In the new context of direct rule, Lynch delivered incrementally on his promise of a tougher attitude toward the IRA, although still falling short of the fulsome cooperation the British would have liked. Having helped to create and finance the SDLP, he induced its leaders to enter into White-law's talks process, dropping their earlier precondition that internment must end first. Lynch and Heath had another groundbreaking meeting in November 1972, when they discussed how the white paper would flesh out the concept of the Irish dimension. Lynch was determined that the Council of Ireland should be serious and meaningful. Again, he was not immediately successful, but as a result of this conversation Heath initiated work that culminated in the substantial gains made by Nationalist Ireland at Sunningdale. Irish strategy did not change significantly after Lynch's election defeat in March 1973. FitzGerald continued to try to maximize the role and functions of the Council of Ireland as the central component in a process that could eventually result in unification.

Over the four cases, there was a broad shift in the allegiance of the British state from Belfast to Dublin. Although Callaghan in 1969 wanted to weaken the Unionist Party, he did not consider that the Irish government had any positive role to play in Northern Ireland other than reforming its own affairs to make the prospect of unification less unattractive to unionism. By 1973, Heath had abolished the Belfast administration and was working in partnership with Dublin to pressure the Unionists into taking a step that many on both sides saw as leading toward unification.

### The Organizational Model

At a high level of generality, the development of British policies toward Northern Ireland over the four cases can be seen as part of a broad thrust toward the centralization and bureaucratization of the state apparatus. The reforms in local government initiated by Terence O'Neill paralleled changes already under way in England that effectively transferred power from local to national elites and from political parties' constituency associations to government departments. The Local Government Act 1972 transformed local government in England, wiping out historical administrative districts. The dissolution of the Unionist government can be understood in organizational terms as part of that process.

### *Home Office*

In 1968 the Home Office had unchallenged lead responsibility for relationships with Northern Ireland. It had a strong tradition of nonintervention and saw its primary function as representing Stormont's interests in Whitehall. There were no senior staff devoted to the issue and officials depended on their counterparts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) for information and advice. This organizational context favored the option of reinforcing the RUC without imposing any political conditions and of withdrawing the troops as soon as order was restored. But when the army went in, the soldiers' presence on the streets shifted the locus of decision-making from the organizational to the political arena, from Home Office bureaucrats to the prime minister.

The Downing Street Declaration of August 1969 heralded a new form of relationship between the national and regional levels of administration. It stripped Stormont of its political autonomy and control over security. Henceforth the Unionist government would be much reduced, a client regime under constant supervision. Nevertheless, the doctrine of nonintervention lived on in ministers' determination to avoid direct rule, in their desire to pull the army out as soon as they could, and in their not immediately legislating to transfer responsibility for security formally to Westminster.

The doctrine lived on also in the Conservatives' deliberately and quietly transferring authority back to Stormont after they came to power in June 1970, both reducing and concealing the level of political oversight that they exercised from London. But because Northern Irish issues were now liable to be raised at Westminster, the Home Office had to stay ready to brief ministers and prepare for possible interventions at short notice. Officials had to have draft legislation ready for rapid introduction in response to an emergency, such as the collapse of the devolved government. After 1969, the Home Office maintained a staff of around twenty, who monitored developments in Northern Ireland and their political implications, coordinated policy activity with the MoD and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), liaised with the UK Representative (UKREP) and army commanders, and kept contingency plans for direct rule updated.

The doctrine was further dissolved in stages from February 1971, when the first British soldiers were killed. Following the crisis over Chichester-Clark's resignation, the Home Office established a high-level interdepartmental strategy group, which met from time to time and identified a range of long-term options, including direct rule and unification. When Heath decided to take action in September 1971, this group and

its preparatory work were available as a foundation for future policymaking. The department then created a small full-time staff team to support the group; its tasks included drawing up legislation and detailed plans for direct rule.

Unlike their predecessors in the Home Office, working only occasionally on Northern Ireland alongside a host of other miscellaneous issues, the members of this team did not see their role as representing or supporting the Unionist government but as potentially transforming the Northern Ireland constitution. Ministers now looked to them rather than Stormont to take the lead in political development planning. One of their first recommendations was that direct rule should be considered not just as a last resort to prevent Stormont from falling into the hands of extremists but as a deliberate tactic to break the political impasse. This was a paradigm shift in official doctrine.

They also identified a range of options for transferring responsibility for security policy and operations back to Westminster. Their work heavily influenced ministers' discussions from November 1971, generating powerful momentum toward direct rule. Heath's dramatic initiative in February 1972 was already backed up by the necessary legislation, detailed plans, and a core group of staff, all lying conveniently at hand.

### *Northern Ireland Office*

With direct rule, the Home Office's key officials and responsibilities passed to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). The problem now had the full attention of a dedicated and influential cabinet minister and a team of supporting ministers and senior civil servants. Its staff included experts in defense and diplomacy with extensive experience in the subtle arts of, first, tackling colonial insurgencies and, second, negotiating withdrawal from troublesome colonies. It had a full presence in Belfast and no longer depended on the NICS for information and advice. Its role included ensuring that all the administration's activities in Northern Ireland—specifically security operations and political development—were properly integrated and coherent.

The creation of the NIO was a watershed. It demonstrated Heath's determination to stick with the problem until it was resolved, and transferred the primary burden of finding a solution from the political arena (a cabinet committee) to a dedicated bureaucratic organization. It opened up new opportunities for integration across the different strands of public service delivery and improved use of intelligence. Above all, it expanded the brainpower available to address the problem and interact with Northern Ireland's competing political players.

### *Ministry of Defence*

As the troops moved onto the streets in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1969, the MoD took its place beside the Home Office at the Whitehall policymaking table. Its senior officials and commanders were not tied to the doctrine of nonintervention, and as each day passed, their presence tended to contradict it. But they had their own reasons for minimizing the army's involvement. It was not consistent with the army's sense of its own mission, it drew resources away from essential commitments to NATO and elsewhere, and there was an increasing risk of confrontations with loyalists that would require a larger and longer intervention.

While the MoD at first wanted to avoid direct rule, it did not support Stormont's contention that the army should simply support the civil authority. Commanders did not want to take directions from RUC officers or their political masters at Stormont. The Downing Street Declaration reflected the ministry's position rather than the Home Office's in distinguishing between security operations, for which the GOC would be accountable to Westminster, and normal police duties, for which the chief constable would be accountable to Stormont. The Hunt reforms were intended to clarify and strengthen this distinction. In disbanding the USC and disarming the police, they gave the army a monopoly on the legitimate use of armed force. They were presented as civilianizing the police along British lines, but in practice, they effectively militarized the maintenance of order in republican communities.

Under the Conservatives, power flowed from Whitehall to army commanders on the ground. Defense ministers generally took the view that it was not for them to second-guess operational decisions. So the army followed its habitual routines without much political oversight. These fueled the resistance of republican communities, contributing to the escalation of violence, which in turn led to the decision to intern. They also produced internment's worst excesses.

When internment failed to deliver the results Faulkner had predicted, commanders quickly took the opportunity to lobby ministers for the transfer of security responsibility back to Westminster. Whatever the substance of any new political initiative, the MoD argued that control over all areas of government activity should be centralized in line with longstanding counterinsurgency doctrine. Direct rule was the only obvious means to that end. Moreover, it would get Unionist politicians off their backs and provide the strategic political direction that had been lacking. The secretary of state would construct a unified administration in which all agencies of government—the RUC, civil service departments, the army, and intelligence

services—would work toward the common objective of ending the violence and facilitating a political settlement.

Four months into direct rule, Operation Motorman marked the start of a new phase in the army's campaign, from indiscriminate counterinsurgency measures directed against entire republican communities to selective counterterrorism measures targeting the Provisional IRA. Required by Whitelaw to account closely for the political implications of their actions, commanders adapted their routine tactics and procedures to meet the challenge of tackling terrorism assertively without alienating entire communities. They concentrated on infiltration, intelligence gathering, and the harassment of individual IRA volunteers, seeking to collect evidence that could be used either to detain them without trial or preferably secure convictions in court.

### *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

The events of 1969 also brought the FCO into the policymaking process. The department's principal interests lay in ensuring that the problem did not impair Britain's international relations, particularly its relationship with the Republic, and British ambassadors fed Dublin's views into the Whitehall policy machine.

The FCO's contribution is perhaps most remarkable, however, for what it did not do: press the Irish government hard to crack down on the IRA. This was apparently because British diplomats took the view that it would be counterproductive to hector or bully Irish ministers. This reflected a concern about creating turbulence within Fianna Fáil, the assumption being that Lynch was preferable to anyone who might replace him. Avoiding public confrontations between ministers, British and Irish diplomats preferred to work together behind the scenes.

The FCO expanded its role and the capacity it brought to bear on the issue during the summer of 1971. The additional personnel included Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) agents with backgrounds in decolonization. It did not take them long to conclude that direct rule was an essential next step. This expansion in the FCO's involvement coincided with Heath's first meetings with Lynch, and the department went on to contribute a substantial proportion of the senior personnel who set up the NIO and helped steer Whitelaw's political negotiations.

### *UKREP*

By March 1971, UKREP had established itself as an authoritative source of advice to UK ministers on the performance of the Stormont government and on Catholic opinion. Its actions and advice contributed to Stor-

mont's decline. When Chichester-Clark asked for troop reinforcements in 1971, UKREP advised them to offer only a cosmetic increment; they did, and Chichester-Clark resigned. Fuller reinforcements were provided shortly afterward in response to representations from Faulkner, again in an attempt to shore up a Unionist leader whose authority was crumbling precisely because of his willingness to collaborate and compromise. UKREP advised Maudling that the fragmentation of the Unionist Party might result in strengthening more moderate parties such as Alliance. Five months before Maudling announced it in the Commons as government policy, UKREP had invited him to consider the option of guaranteeing Catholic elected representatives an active role in the Stormont executive. It seems improbable that the Nationalist leaders UKREP spoke to were unaware that his thoughts were moving in this direction, or that this knowledge would not have influenced their actions as they built up the SDLP into a party that could fight and win elections. If they rejected Faulkner's offer of committee chairs at Stormont, they would eventually get full seats on the executive as of right. Why settle for less—or talk to Faulkner at all?

After internment, British ministers increasingly depended on UKREP for advice as Faulkner's credibility declined. From September 1971, they commissioned him to harvest ideas for a political initiative from “men of goodwill”; extremists were ignored, however much popular support they might have. Based on his conversations with SDLP leaders and liberal Unionists—including Ken Bloomfield from Faulkner's office—UKREP came up with the idea of direct rule as a break with the past that would open up new possibilities in the search for a settlement.

### Learning and Adaptation

The rational model expects decision-makers to adjust their assessments of available options appropriately and without delay in response to new information. In a sequence of decisions, a process of learning occurs, characterized by increases in intellectual breadth and sophistication.

The cognitive process model expects learning to be constrained as new information is squeezed into established patterns of understanding and calculation without logically necessary adjustments being made. Existing assumptions and beliefs persevere despite evidence that objectively discredits them. Lessons are systematically biased by such characteristics of human inference as the tendency to give disproportionate weight to recent events personally experienced, to avoid policies that have recently failed, and to talk up the prospects for policies that are politically expedient.

The political model predicts that electoral, party, and diplomatic pressures are required to drive changes in policy, but might also delay and distort them. It focuses on shifts in the balance for and against current policies. Adaptation occurs when the coalition protecting current policy loses sufficient power to the coalition demanding change.

Finally, the organizational model expects change normally to take the form of incremental structural, doctrinal, and procedural responses to events in the problem field and its political context. The cumulative effect of these responses may be great, especially if they take place in rapid succession. Occasionally, in reaction to a critical performance failure—such as Bloody Sunday—radical change may occur very quickly. In such cases, an unsuccessful program may be replaced by a new one, but this will often be assembled from elements in an existing repertoire. If no such elements are available, the power relationships between the responsible units may be altered, the problem may be transferred from one unit to another, or a new unit may be created specifically to deal with it.

The four case studies show that all three models of learning and adaptation have some explanatory value. Critical assumptions that the British had made about the nature and causes of the conflict and the capacity of the Northern Ireland government to absorb Protestant reactions to reform were adjusted during 1970 in response to events in the problem field and improved information. But there was resistance to using this new information, and it was partially assimilated into old paradigms without the lateral and upward expansions in understanding that, logically, it required. Ministers acknowledged the strength of Protestant fears and recognized the dangers created by the army's presence in republican areas but repeatedly failed to incorporate these perceptions into a new pattern of understanding grounded in the pivotal importance of national, historical, and territorial issues as preconditions for the violence.

As the IRA stepped up its attacks, British policymakers adopted a new but arguably even more inadequate explanatory model based on the hypothesis of deliberate insurgency. They thus missed an opportunity to tease out the subtle linkages that had evolved among deprivation, perceptions of discrimination, the activities of the army, and IRA tactics. Again, when they dropped the insurgency model in favor of the divided society hypothesis, they neglected evidence of major obstacles to accommodation that political scientists had already described in published articles.

In the first case, there was little scope for UK ministers to learn from previous experience because they had none. The Unionists and the RUC did, but their advice was discounted as biased. Policy was made on the hoof as Callaghan and Wilson tried to keep a step ahead of their critics in the CDU.

With the reform package in 1969 new information channels were opened up through UKREP and the personal contacts with influential members of the minority made by UK commanders, officials, and ministers. These created new opportunities for learning. However, the change of administration in June 1970 interrupted the process. The incoming ministers lacked even the limited experience of their predecessors. By distancing himself from the issue, Maudling discarded many of the learning opportunities that Labour's interventions had created.

The army, left largely to its own devices, naturally focused on military matters. Standard operating procedures were refined; new patrol groupings, tactics, and equipment were introduced. Even in this narrow field, difficulties in coordination with the RUC concealed important lessons. Radical changes were needed but not made in the organization of intelligence, in public relations, and in deployment patterns. However, the army learned two important lessons that it used to influence policy in favor of direct rule: that it could not hope to restore order without constitutional reform and cross-border cooperation, and that the continuing existence of the Unionist government at Stormont was an obstacle to both.

In the third case there was an attempt at the highest level to review policy systematically in line with the rational model. Carrington and Heath lifted their sights from the immediate military goal of defeating the IRA to the longer-term objective of achieving a lasting peace. There was also lateral expansion in the belated recognition of the potent threat presented by the Nationalist population's intense hostility toward Stormont. But these advances in intellectual sophistication were ultimately less crucial to introducing direct rule than the political pressures applied by the Irish government and the Labour opposition in the wake of Bloody Sunday, along with the bureaucratic interests of the MoD and the army.

In the fourth case, the pace of learning accelerated rapidly. For the first time, London had a full team of ministers and senior officials devoted to the issue, located partly in Belfast and controlling all the levers of power in the region. It took the NIO some time to settle down, but this concentration of people, authority, and resources created the potential for faster and deeper learning. One of the first lessons Whitelaw learned was that he could not stop the insurgency by conciliation alone; the solution would have to lie in firm and discriminating action against terrorism combined with generosity toward the nonviolent elected representatives of the Nationalist community.

In all four cases, the stimulus for change lay in dramatic, highly visible, and widely criticized failures of performance, which created discomfort for the governing party and embarrassment for key ministers. Research was

commissioned and analyses conducted, but the real momentum for change came from accumulations of political pressure.

## Summary

The Northern Ireland government responded coercively to illegal but non-violent civil rights protests in 1968, whereas the British government, when faced with a more serious problem of terrorist violence in 1972, offered a far-reaching package of concessions. When the disorder first morphed into violent insurgency in 1971, London permitted the incompetent implementation of coercive measures that inflamed Nationalist opinion, yet when the violence deteriorated further, it offered more concessions, including the opportunity for power sharing. The nature and levels of disorder helped shape policy outcomes, but they did so through the intermediation of, first, political pressures generated by the parties to the conflict and their advocates; second, the organizational responses that they stimulated from street level to the highest levels of decision; and third, their interpretation through policymakers' understandings, misunderstandings, hopes, and calculations.

The rational model is clearly inadequate to explain any of the four policies or the process of policy evolution. The cognitive process model provides a richer explanation. Once policymakers' patterns of understanding are known—in this case, successively, the legitimate grievances, insurgency, and divided society hypotheses—policy becomes more amenable to evaluation. These patterns of understanding, however, were subject to political pressures. The hypotheses that ministers adopted were, in every case, urged on them by other players in the political game: the CDU, Unionist ministers, the Labour opposition, the Dublin government, army commanders, and diplomats. They tapped political sources for feedback on their performance and to assess the various options available, and they allowed political pressures to resolve value conflicts and uncertainties in their own calculations. Policies were also determined by organizational factors, notably the locus of decision, along with the agency selected to deal with the problem, its doctrines, and its standard operating procedures. By leaving it to the army to solve the problem during 1971, ministers effectively decided that policy would be coercive; later, by assigning it to diplomats, they decided that the outcome would be a negotiated agreement.

In light of the case study findings, it makes sense to deploy all four models of analysis rather than relying predominantly on any one of them. There may be tensions among their respective assumptions and lines of argument, but there is value in drawing on the essential elements of each to construct an integrated model that explains the reality better than any