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AN EXAMINATION OF CONFLICTS ARISING FROM THE COEXISTENCE OF SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

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Abstract: This paper examines the inherent tensions between the principles of sovereignty and self-determination, exploring their historical and contemporary implications. It analyses the longstanding case of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland as an example of how these concepts interact, leading to conflict and eventual resolution, after many decades. By evaluating historical context, legal frameworks, and the eventual Good Friday Agreement, this study provides insight into how these principles can be reconciled to prevent future conflicts. This research highlights the necessity of international diplomacy, historical awareness, and the necessary adaptability and pragmatism of political frameworks in addressing sovereignty-related disputes. Furthermore, it discusses how similar tensions are manifested in other geopolitical contexts, making this study relevant beyond the Irish example. By drawing comparisons with other self-determination movements worldwide, this paper aims to provide a broader understanding of the delicate balance required to maintain peace and stability within sovereign states. The examination of past and present political negotiations highlights that resolving conflicts related to sovereignty and self-determination requires compromise, understanding, grievance recognition, patience, and innovative policy solutions. Additionally, the role and motivation of external actors, including international organisations and foreign governments, in either exacerbating or mitigating tensions, is assessed to provide a more comprehensive view of global conflict resolution strategies.

Keywords: Sovereignty, self-determination, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Eire, conflict, Good Friday Agreement, national identity, reconciliation, conflict, peace.

SUVERENLİK VƏ ÖZ MÜQƏDDƏRATINI TƏYİNƏTMƏNİN BİRGƏ MÖVCUDLUĞUNDAN YARANAN MÜNAQİŞƏLƏRİN TƏHLİLİ

Neyl Vatson

Xülasə: Bu məqalə suverenlik və öz müqəddəratını təyinetmə prinsipləri arasındakı daxili gərginlikləri araşdırır və onların tarixi və müasir nəticələrini tədqiq edir. İrlandiya Respublikası və Şimali İrlandiya arasındakı uzunmüddətli münaqişəyə əsaslanaraq, bu anlayışların necə qarşılıqlı əlaqədə olduğunu və on illərlə davam edən problemin sonra necə həll olunduğunu təhlil edir. Tarixi kontekst, hüquqi çərçivələr və nəhayət, Yaxşı Cümə Sazişini nəzərdən keçirməklə, bu tədqiqat gələcək münaqişələrin qarşısını almaq üçün bu prinsiplərin necə uzlaşdırıla biləcəyinə dair anlayış təqdim edir.

Bu araşdırma göstərir ki, beynəlxalq diplomatiya, tarixi məlumatlılıq və siyasi çərçivələrin lazımı uyğunlaşma və pragmatizmi suverenliklə bağlı mübahisələrin həllində əsas əhəmiyyət daşıyır. Bundan əlavə, oxşar gərginliklərin digər geosiyasi kontekstlərdə necə özünü göstərdiyini müzakirə edərək, bu tədqiqatın İrlandiya nümunəsindən kənar da aktuallığını vurğulayır. Dünyadakı digər öz müqəddəratını təyinetmə hərəkətləri ilə müqayisələr apararaq, bu məqalə suveren dövlətlər daxilində sülh və sabitliyi qorumaq üçün tələb olunan incə tarazlığı daha geniş şəkildə başa düşməyə kömək etməyi hədəfləyir.

Keçmiş və indiki siyasi danışıqların təhlili göstərir ki, suverenlik və öz müqəddəratını təyinetmə ilə bağlı münaqişələrin həlli kompromis, qarşılıqlı anlayış, şikayətlərin tanınması, səbir və innovativ siyasət həlləri tələb edir. Bundan əlavə, beynəlxalq təşkilatlar və xarici hökumətlər də daxil olmaqla,

xarici aktorların bu gərginlikləri ya gücləndirmək, ya da yumşaltmaq motivasiyası və rolu qiymətləndirilərək, qlobal münaqişələrin həlli strategiyalarına daha əhatəli baxış təqdim edilir.

Açar sözlər: Suverenlik, öz müqəddəratını təyinetmə, Şimali İrlandiya, İrlandiya, Eire, münaqişə, Yaxşı Cümə Sazişi, milli kimlik, barışıq, sülh.

АНАЛИЗ КОНФЛИКТОВ, ВОЗНИКАЮЩИХ ИЗ-ЗА СОСУЩЕСТВОВАНИЯ СУВЕРЕНИТЕТА И САМООПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ

Нил Ватсон

Резюме. В данной статье рассматриваются внутренние противоречия между принципами суверенитета и самоопределения, а также их исторические и современные последствия. Анализируется давний конфликт между Республикой Ирландия и Северной Ирландией, обусловленный затянувшимся противостоянием. Изучение исторического контекста, правовых рамок и Белфастского соглашения (Соглашение Страстной пятницы) может помочь в примирении различных принципов, связанных с урегулированием конфликта, а также для предотвращения будущих конфликтов. Исследование подчеркивает важность международной дипломатии, исторической осведомленности, а также гибкости и прагматизма политических механизмов при разрешении споров, связанных с суверенитетом. Кроме того, в статье рассматривается, как аналогичные противоречия проявляются в других геополитических контекстах, что делает исследование актуальным не только для ирландского вопроса. Путем сравнения с другими движениями за самоопределение в мире, автор стремится дать более широкое представление о тонком балансе, необходимом для поддержания мира и стабильности в суверенных государствах. Анализ прошлых и современных политических переговоров показывает, что разрешение конфликтов, связанных с суверенитетом и самоопределением, требует компромисса, взаимопонимания, признания претензий, терпения и инновационных политических решений. Дополнительно оценивается роль и мотивация внешних акторов, включая международные организации и иностранные правительства, которые могут либо усугублять, либо смягчать напряженность, предоставляя более комплексный взгляд на стратегии урегулирования мировых конфликтов.

Ключевые слова: суверенитет, самоопределение, Северная Ирландия, Ирландия, Эйре, конфликт, Соглашение Страстной пятницы, национальная идентичность, примирение, мир

Discussion: Contemporary Implications and Future Perspectives. The ongoing impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland presents a new set of challenges concerning the balance between sovereignty and self-determination. The United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union has led to increased political tensions regarding border controls, economic stability, and national identity in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Protocol, known as the 'Irish Backstop', designed to prevent a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Eire), has been met with significant resistance from Unionist communities who view it as a threat to their ties with the UK. This demonstrates that, even after formal peace agreements, the issues of governance and self-determination continue to evolve, requiring constant political renegotiation and compromise.

Moreover, the case of Northern Ireland serves as a framework for understanding similar disputes across the world. Examples include the Catalan independence movement in Spain, calls for Basque independence from Spain and France and Scottish demands for another independence referendum, which reflect similar conflicts between the principles of sovereignty and self-determination. These cases illustrate how historical grievances, economic considerations, and cultural identity shape modern self-determination struggles. The lessons learned from the Northern Ireland peace process, including an emphasis on power-sharing, international mediation, and gradual psychological reconciliation, provide valuable insights into managing such disputes in other regions.

Introduction The coexistence of sovereignty and self-determination has been a source of political tension and conflict throughout history. The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle enshrined in international law, enabling groups to define their own political status (United Nations Charter, 1945, Article 1, Paragraph 2). Conversely, sovereignty emphasises the inviolability

of existing state borders (Treaty of Westphalia, 1648). The friction between these two concepts has resulted in numerous conflicts, including the case of Northern Ireland, where cultural, religious, and political divisions led to prolonged violence [6, 2002, p. 78].

Theoretical Framework Sovereignty, as defined by the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), establishes the absolute authority of a state over its territory [5, p. 32]. On the other hand, self-determination is a principle stated in the United Nations Charter (Article 1, Paragraph 2) and reaffirmed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [6, p. 102]. The challenge arises when groups within a sovereign state demand self-determination, instability or conflict [4, p. 56].

Historical Context: Ireland and Northern Ireland The conflict in the island of Ireland dates back to the 17th century, when British and Scottish settlers were relocated to Northern Ireland by the British government, which ruled Ireland for centuries (The British Library, 2022, p. 12).

Colonial Influence and Partition British colonial policies significantly shaped the division of Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act 1920 formally separated Northern Ireland from the rest of the island, creating a self-governing entity within the UK. The Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) led to the establishment of the Irish Free State a year later, whilst Northern Ireland opted to remain under British rule. These developments reinforced sectarian divisions and led to further political unrest [5, p. 67]. Tensions grew between the Catholic Irish nationalists, who sought the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, and the Protestant Unionists, who favoured remaining part of the United Kingdom [7, p. 8].

The Troubles (1969–98) The late 20th century saw the escalation of hostilities, known as ‘The Troubles’. This was characterised by violent confrontations between the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the British Army, and Loyalist paramilitary groups. Over 3,500 people lost their lives due to bombings, assassinations, and civil unrest (O’Leary, 2019, p. 98). Key incidents included:

- The assassination of Lord Mountbatten (1979) [6, 2002, p. 156]. The Hyde Park and Regent's Park bombings (1982) (BBC History, 2020, p. 17). The Brighton Bomb – an attempt to assassinate the UK Government, including Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1984) (13,1993 p.567) The 1996 Manchester Bombing [4, p. 72].

International Influence and Political Developments The conflict extended beyond Ireland and the UK, with support for the Irish Republicans coming from various global actors, including the Irish diaspora in the United States, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Libya under Muammar Gaddafi (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, p. 214). Meanwhile, the British government sought to maintain order through military deployment and political strategies [8, p. 112].

The Good Friday Agreement (1998) The Good Friday Agreement marked the end of The Troubles and established a framework for peace. Key provisions included:

- Power-sharing between Unionists and Nationalists [5, p. 140]. Disarmament of paramilitary groups (BBC History, 2020, p. 30). Cross-border cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland [4, p. 88].
- A legal mechanism for the potential future unification of Ireland at an unspecified date [6, p. 198].

Post-Agreement Developments Despite the success of the Good Friday Agreement, political tensions remain. The devolution of power to the Northern Ireland Assembly has faced challenges, with periods of suspension due to political disagreements. The role of paramilitary organisations continues to be a point of concern [9, p. 43].

Contemporary Status and Future Perspectives Today, the status of Northern Ireland remains a contentious issue, particularly in light of Brexit and its implications for the Irish border. The 2016 Brexit referendum reignited debates about sovereignty and self-determination, as Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU, whilst the UK as a whole voted to leave. Key challenges include:

- The implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol and its impact on trade and political stability [10, p. 120].
- The possibility of a future referendum on Irish unification, as specified under the Good Friday Agreement [6, p. 230].

• The continued influence of nationalist and unionist political movements in shaping the future of the region [11, p. 75].

Discussion: Sovereignty vs. Self-Determination in Ireland The case of Northern Ireland illustrates the complexities of reconciling sovereignty with self-determination. Key questions remain:

- Should the Republic of Ireland’s larger population dictate Northern Ireland’s fate? [4, p. 110].
- Do Northern Irish Protestants have a right to their own distinct identity and governance? [5, p. 156].

Conclusion The case of Northern Ireland underscores the ongoing challenges of managing self-determination within sovereign states. The Good Friday Agreement serves as an example of how diplomacy and mutual recognition can mitigate longstanding conflict. However, the struggle for national identity and political autonomy remains relevant in many regions worldwide. The lessons drawn from the Irish conflict emphasise the importance of patient negotiation, external mediation, and the establishment of mutually-agreed institutions that promote reconciliation.

The contemporary political landscape, particularly with the challenges posed by Brexit, demonstrates that peace agreements require continuous adaptation to reflect evolving circumstances. Moving forward, it is essential for both local and international actors to remain committed towards preserving stability and dialogue in Northern Ireland, not seeking to capitalise on this for their own purposes. Future conflicts must seek to learn from such historical precedents to foster peaceful resolution, recognising that sovereignty and self-determination are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent concepts, requiring careful negotiation and compromise.

The balance between maintaining territorial integrity and acknowledging the right to self-determination remains a significant challenge for many nations. The Northern Ireland case illustrates how protracted conflict can give way to diplomatic solutions through sustained effort and goodwill. Moreover, the role of cultural identity in self-determination movements must not be underestimated, as historical grievances and national consciousness plays a crucial role in shaping political outcomes. Therefore, future peacebuilding efforts should prioritise inclusivity, power-sharing mechanisms, and international cooperation to ensure lasting stability in contested regions.

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