"Draconian Crown Forces" and "Violent Dissidents": Frames of Police Illegitimacy by Anti-Good Friday Agreement Republicans

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Abstract

In this thesis I will answer the question how collective action frames expressed by Irish republicans who oppose the Good Friday Agreement and thus the current power-holders can help understand the through discourses constructed reality wherein the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) should be rejected. In order to do so I will first answer the question what legitimacy means, how it is cultivated and maintained, and why it is important for the police to be legitimate. I will argue that perceptions of legitimacy rely strongly on discourses that construct a reality that (de)legitimises the police force. In the second chapter I will look more specifically at which obstacles the PSNI faces and how it undermines its power to construct a reality in which they are accepted as legitimate by all layers of society. The issues they face result from 'policing in a liminal space', meaning the PSNI has to police both the past and the present. In the last chapter I will adapt the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse the collective action frames deployed by anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans (AGFARs). In the conclusion I will answer the main question by stating that the collective action frames expressed by AGFARs help understand their discourses as a constructed reality in which the past is continued in the present, and hence the police is still a colonial oppressive power. I argue that more factual evidence is necessary to either address that a minority population unjustifiably gets marginalised, or to build a counter-narrative against violent opposition groups that seem to be growing in support and activity.

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Abbreviations

32CSM	32 County Sovereignty Movement
AGFAR	Anti-Good Friday Agreement Republican
CIRA	Continuity Irish Republican Army
CNR	Catholic/nationalist/republican
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
NIRA	New Irish Republican Army
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PUL	Protestant/unionist/loyalist
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RNU	Republican Network for Unity
RSF	Republican Sinn Féin
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
VDR	Violent dissident republican

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Introduction

"No, I always have to be extra careful I don't do anything illegal, because the peelers occasionally raid my car or house", Peter[1] says when he takes a sip of his pint. Though a Wednesday night, the wee pub is crowded. Brown and white tiles form a giant chessboard on the floor, and the walls are covered with old black and white pictures of vaguely recognisable streets and houses, accompanied by pictures of the people who once used to live in these captured images of West Belfast. Students and tourists seem to be absent, giving away that the pub is not located in the city centre. People sitting at the bar sometimes yell the name of someone sitting on a table on the other side of the room, indicating that the people inside belong to the general crowd. Except for the woman handing out the glasses of Harp, Rockshore, and Guinness, the pub is only occupied by men, and it has been whispered to me that some of these men have "a past". The average age is presumably between fifty or sixty, but Peter and his friends are in their twenties.

"Why would they occasionally raid your house?" I asked.

"Because I'm from an opposition party", Peter answered in a way as if I had just asked why you shouldn't bungee jump without a rope. "They're just trying to intimidate us, but I won't be intimidated."

"I swear", said Rab who jumped in on the conversation, "I always knew you couldn't trust the PSNI[2], but I always thought you could trust the BBC to at least some degree." He continued, "this week a drug dealer in the neighbourhood was arrested, everybody knew him, he was total scum. But then the BBC and PSNI link him to our party! Like, literally you can ask anybody in this neighbourhood, and everybody will tell you that he had nothing to do with the IRSP![3]".

The context of Northern Ireland

It has been just over twenty years since the 1998 peace agreement, best known as the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), has been signed. It officially ended the thirty-year lasting conflict known as The Troubles. Like many conflicts it is often perceived to have taken place between opposing and negatively interdependent identities, such as Jews and Arabs, Hindus and Buddhists, or in this case Protestants and Catholics, and its overlapping identities of 'British'

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[1] The names throughout this thesis are pseudonyms to protect the individual's privacy.
[2] Police Service of Northern Ireland.
[3] Irish Republican Socialist Party

and 'Irish' (Muldoon et al. 2007, 90). Ever since the Northern Irish conflict ended, the people have continued identifying with groups based on national identity or religion (ibid., 101). Especially in socioeconomically deprived areas, which also suffered the most violence during the conflict, people kept living with 'their own', sometimes separated from other neighbourhoods by 'peace walls' in cities such as Belfast (Ellison et al. 2012, 554; Byrne and Gormley-Heenan 2014).

One of the best known and influential belligerents of the conflict was the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). In 1998, their aligned political party Sinn Féin signed the GFA, and the PIRA officially ended its military campaign in 2005 (Bowman-Grieve and Conway 2012, 72). However, the PIRA was and is not the only Irish republican paramilitary force, and Sinn Féin not the only republican[4] (political) party. Many disagreements between republicans have existed and indeed still do. This includes the fact that many republican parties did not agree with the signing of the GFA, and still reject the way in which the current peace process takes place.

The belligerents of the Northern Irish conflict did not only consist of violent Irish republican or British loyalist paramilitaries. A prominent role was being played by the British government, its army and its aligned Northern Irish police force: the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). During the conflict the RUC was accused of being biased, policing in favour of the pro-British Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) communities and being either too harsh against or neglecting of the pro-Irish Catholic/nationalist/republican (CNR) communities (though socioeconomic factors played a role too, and it would be false to say Protestants did not get policed) (Hearty 2018a, 129-130). The RUC and other state agents were responsible for many deaths during the conflict, the British army has killed more CNR civilians than Provisional IRA volunteers (White 2017, 46). The RUC was so illegitimate in the eyes of Irish republicans that for some republican groups they were a justified target for violence (Hearty 2018b, 27). One of the agreements within the peace deal was thus the reformation of the police service. The RUC was renamed to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and the goal was for the PSNI to be more inclusive and professional, with higher human rights standards and norms within police practice (Marijan and Guzina 2014, 52). However, since many Irish republican groups object the GFA, they also object the PSNI.

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[4] 'Republican' refers to Irish nationalists who actively seek to reunite Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic, sometimes (though not necessarily) with the use of violence.

The focus of this research

The conversation in the opening of this chapter occurred on an evening in early March this year and has been the inspiration for this research. I was already familiar with Irish republican groups and the way they accuse the PSNI of 'Crown Force harassment' (Irish Republican News 2020a), 'destruction of the freedom struggle'[5], and 'intimidation, psychological and physical abuse'[6]. However, the Irish republican groups blaming the PSNI for harassment and intimidation are also the ones held responsible for the killing of journalist Lyra McKee last year (BBC 2019a; Quinn and Carroll 2020), the recently prevented bomb attack that would occur on the day of Brexit (McDonald 2020a), or the bomb found under a police officer's car in Belfast last year (The Guardian 2019). More of these incidents have occurred, and it makes one sceptical of how unjust those police actions really are. The conversation on that night was surprising however, because although the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) does oppose the 1998 peace agreement, they also reject the use of violence. Either they were not telling me the complete truth about their activities, or the PSNI does indeed exercise their authority in an unjustifiable way. This paradox has been the inspiration for this research, and although I could not review whether these accusations against the PSNI were true, I could assess the narratives and stories that construct a reality of perceived and expressed mistreatments. This has led to the following research question:

how can the collective action frames expressed by anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans help understand the discourses delegitimising the Police Service of Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland from 1998 up to now?

To answer this question, I will use the ontological stance of a discursive approach. This entails that I will look at different stories, images or symbols that express or 'frame' a certain reality. Collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings, which inspire and legitimise social movement organisations (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). In other words, I will analyse the discourses of anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans (AGFARs) that oppose Northern Ireland's police force. I will do this by analysing their 'collective action frames', to have a better understanding of the constructed reality that is characterised by an antagonistic relationship between the PSNI and Irish republicans that oppose the status quo. By

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[5] Facebook post 'Republican Network for Unity', posted April 12, 2020.
[6] Facebook post 'Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach', posted May 19, 2020.

analysing these frames, I can explain how and why police legitimacy in Northern Ireland is undermined.

This question is relevant for several reasons. It is highly related to police legitimacy, which is a hot but also difficult topic within post-conflict literature (O'Neill 2005; Ellison et al. 2012; Marijan and Guzina 2014; Martin and Bradford 2019; Murphy 2019). This thesis provides an overview on what has been written about (police) legitimacy and emphasises a discursive approach to post-conflict police legitimacy. Also, an assessment of the achievements and obstacles for the reformation of the PSNI can provide an overview for further research. Additionally, since the recent death of George Floyd in the United States, police legitimacy and demands for police reforms have been global topics for discussion (Jackson et al. 2020). The assessment of theory and the identified gap for future research may be applicable outside or the realms of Northern Ireland. Lastly, in recent years violent Irish republican opposition parties have been growing in support, effectivity, and capacity to use violence (Taylor and Currie 2011, 173; Bowman-Grieve and Conway 2012, 73; Hearty 2019, 584). Understanding why and how discourses of opposition in Northern Ireland exist can benefit the continuation of the peace process.

Sub-questions and chapter layout

To answer the research question, I will answer four sub-questions throughout the chapters. Though the first two chapters will be mostly theoretical, overall, this thesis will integrate theory in evidence. In the first chapter I will answer the question:

A. *What is legitimacy and how can legitimacy be maintained and cultivated by police forces in post-conflict societies?*

If there is opposition to the PSNI, it means that the PSNI is seen as illegitimate. 'Legitimacy' is the returning buzzword in the literature on post-conflict policing, with no exception in the literature on the Police Service of Northern Ireland. It is thus important to know what legitimacy means and how it is maintained and cultivated, before assessing why the PSNI seems to be struggling with gaining legitimacy. I will explain that legitimacy for a large part depends on the perception of shared values, goals and ideas between the power-holder and its audience(s). Because legitimacy is a dialogic process, and it depends on a *perceived* reality, I argue that critical discourse analysis, especially with a focus on collective action frames, provides a useful lens to understand police legitimacy in Northern Ireland.

In the second chapter I will more specifically analyse the issues the PSNI faces in policing Northern Ireland's post conflict society. The question will thus be:

B. *What are the obstacles undermining the legitimacy for the Police Service of Northern Ireland?*

I answer this question by building on Murphy's (2019) conceptual framework of the PSNI 'policing in a liminal space'. This entails that the PSNI has to 'police the past', has an incomplete change program, and has to face particular challenges in the Northern Irish political context. Discourses and social practices are generated through an interplay between structures and agency (as will be explained in chapter one) (Demmers 2017, 129), so having a better understanding of the PSNI's operational context and social practices provides a better understanding of how and why certain discourses are generated.

In the third and last chapter I will have a closer look at anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans and their collective action frames. Multiple sub-questions will be answered in this chapter:

C. *What are the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames deployed by different AGFARs in contemporary Northern Ireland?*

D. *How are collective action frames expressed and deployed by different AGFAR groups in Northern Ireland?*

I will examine the way AGFARs are portrayed by the mainstream media and political parties, and how AGFARs counter-frame these images. Although AGFARs are no homogenous group, they do have some similarities in their collective action frames. Many AGFARs are focussed on delegitimising the current power-holders in order to legitimise their own presence. By answering these questions I will present how the collective action frames used by AGFARs generate a discourse that has a focus on the past and presents contemporary Northern Ireland as a continuation of the past, where AGFARs have continued to stay true to Irish republicanism and the PSNI remains to be an oppressive colonial force.

In the concluding chapter I will use the answers of the sub-questions I presented throughout the chapters to answer the main question – how the collective action frames of anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans help understand the discourses of opposition against the Police Service of Northern Ireland. A reality is created in which the past is continued in the present. I will argue that many reasons for the existence of these discourses exist, and that these form an obstacle for the continuing peace process. Although the reality constructed by

discourses does not need to be based on facts, I argue that more research needs to be done on evidence of the allegations made by AGFARs. This will either reveal that genuine political opposition and thus a minority group in society unjustifiably gets marginalised, or this may provide the now still insufficient counter-narrative that could halt the growth of support and capacities for violent Irish republicans. Both outcomes would be of great importance for the continuation of the peace process.

Methodology

The allegations of nonviolent republicans against the PSNI were the inspiration for this research. Unfortunately, after two weeks in Belfast the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to leave Northern Ireland, hindering more detailed research on these accusations towards the PSNI. Therefore, this thesis will for a large part rely on literature review. However, earlier ethnographic research in 2019 in Belfast does provide additional data such as interviews and a general understanding of the Northern Irish context. This additional data provided the opportunity to confirm existing literature, place it in context, and provide additional examples to the literature. Further, in the past few months I have analysed online discourses on social media, Irish republican forums and (republican) newspapers, making Critical Discourse Analysis also one of the methods for this research.

Literature review

Every research consists of a literature review in order to support the identification of specific research questions and developing conceptual frameworks. However, this thesis has a bigger focus on the written literature about (police) legitimacy and the PSNI in particular than was initially the prospective. Therefore, especially the first two analytical chapters are mostly an assessment of existing literature. In general, my own collected data has for a large part functioned to confirm already existing academic articles. Though the first two chapters thus have a big focus on theory, throughout the thesis theory and evidence will not be separated but integrated.

Critical Discourse Analysis

My main ontological lens focusses on discourses and the realities they create. These discourses are not just words or descriptions, for they carry meaning and provoke a reaction. The language of spoken or written discourses construct meaning and representation. They do not just describe things but do things, and therefore have social and political implications (Jabri 1996, 94-95 in Demmers 2017, 133). Discourses can legitimise rejection and even violence against a constructed 'other' or 'dissent' (Demmers 2017, 131). Discourses are not just texts in contexts, but can also be narratives, performances and images (Schröder and Schmidt 2001, 10-11). I especially rely on Critical Discourse Analysis, to see how 'discourse figures within processes

of change'. (Demmers 2017, 137). In order to do so, I have used the conceptual tool of 'frame analysis'. In the following I elaborate of the use of frame analysis and the sources of these frames.

Collective action frames

As stated in the introduction, collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings, which inspire and legitimise social movement organisations (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Benford and Snow (ibid.) provide an analytical framework on the forms and functions of these frames. They identify three primary functions. First, they construct a shared negotiated understanding of a problematic condition, which is termed 'diagnostic framing'. In this, they also create a collective identity of the "we", i.e. the ones suffering from injustice (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 291). The second task of collective action frames is the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem. This is what Benford and Snow (2000, 616) call 'prognostic framing'. The last core task of framing is 'motivational framing', which entails the constructing of a rationale for engaging in collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive (ibid., 617).

Benford and Snow (2000, 623) identify three sets of overlapping processes that they conceptualise as 'discursive processes', 'strategic processes', and 'contested processes'. Discursive processes refer to talk and conversations, but also written communications through which frames are articulated and amplified (ibid.). Strategic processes, also known as 'frame alignment processes', refer to framing processes that are developed and deployed to serve a specific purpose (e.g. to recruit or mobilise) (ibid., 624). These include frame bridging (linking two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames), frame amplification (the idealisation, embellishment, clarification of existing values or beliefs), frame extension (depicting an social movement organisation's interests and frames as extending beyond its primary interests to include issues and concerns that might be of importance to possible followers), and frame transformation (changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones) (ibid., 624-625). Lastly, contested processes consist of 'counter frames' by opponents, bystanders and the media, 'frame disputes' within movements and 'the dialectic between frames and events'.

In my analysis of discourses, I use Benford and Snow's analytical framework to identify the particular frames that are being deployed. The data collection in which I could identify these collective action frames has been based on qualitative research.

Qualitative research

Because the ontological stance of this research relies on understanding discourses and uncovering the meaning and significance of social phenomena or subjects of people given in a research setting, qualitative research has been the major focus of this research. It gives a more in-depth and specific understandings that might be missed in more general approaches such as quantitative research. As stated, I could only be in Belfast for two weeks. Luckily, I had conducted ethnographic research in Belfast in 2019 which still provided useful data. The qualitative methods in this research consist of ethnographic research, in-depth interviews and an assessment of texts on online platforms.

Ethnographic research

Ethnographic research emphasises the immersion of the researcher in the research setting (Ragin and Amoroso 2019, 110). Combining this and last year, I have spent over three months in Catholic/nationalist/republican (CNR) neighbourhoods in Belfast. I have attended local celebrations, discussions groups, community centres and have been informally visiting 'respondents', whom I eventually considered my friends. Besides getting to know people, observing activities and surroundings gave me a better understanding of living in Belfast, and the way certain things can be perceived. I have also taken photographs of murals and other symbols that express a certain message.

In-depth interviews

'In-depth interviewing emphasizes the building of relationships and exploration of ideas with the individuals being studied' (Ragin and Amoroso 2019, 111). I have interviewed 21 people in total. These were residents of CNR neighbourhoods (N=6), community workers (N=8), former Irish republican combatants (N=4) and political activists (N=3). These interviews were semi-structured, meaning the conversation could flow freely but the presence of a topic list would ensure that the interview remained relevant. For each interview I used a different topic list, and some people were interviewed multiple times in order to reflect on earlier findings. Besides these in-depth interviews I have had many informal conversations which also provided useful data.

Online platforms and republican parties

The last couple of months I have been collecting data through analysing texts in mainstream newspapers, but also in republican online platforms. I have been visiting the republican forum *republican.ie*, where not only discussions about events and news stories in Northern Ireland take place on a daily basis, but also international topics are discussed. I have been following republican (political) parties through their own websites and also on social media, where many seem to be more active. These parties include Republican Sinn Féin, Saoradh, Republican Network for Unity, Éirígí, Irish Republican Socialist Party, 32 County Sovereignty Movement and Sinn Féin.

Ethics

Some ethical dilemmas have to be considered. The first question that comes to mind is: who am I to just go somewhere and investigate the problems and struggles others have so I can write my thesis? In order to try and overcome this I have always been completely honest about the purpose of my presence and have always reflected and asked if people agreed with me writing observations or quotes down. The topics I ask about might bring to the surface negative experiences or traumas from the past, the police, or other forms of violence and may cause stress for the participants. Careful and sensible methods have thus always been the modus operandi whilst in the field. In the long run, I hope that any research in Northern Ireland may help foster the lives of the people.

In order to conduct ethical research, I have reflected on the three ethical principles outlined by Boeije (2010, 45). The first is of these is informed consent. This entails that it is the researcher's obligation to outline fully the nature of the data collection and the purpose of the gathered data to the people being studied. In short, I made sure those being researched knew that I was doing research and why I was doing research, and I would only do this if they gave me their consent. The second principle is that of privacy. I made sure that individuals decided to whom they gave information about themselves and that I would not disclose such information to others. The last principle I have reflected on is that of confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality concerns data and agreement on how that data should be handled and presented in order to ensure the respondent's privacy.

Limitations

There have been a couple of limitations whilst conducting this research. First, a lot of my data comes from written texts on websites such as forums and social media platforms. I have used these texts to understand what kind of framing practices occur and placed them within their contexts. However, this is my interpretation of these texts and messages, and I could not review with the authors of these messages if they agreed with my interpretation of their texts. This is similarly the case for certain symbols like murals. For interviews I have reflected with the respondents if they agree with my interpretations, but not all of them have replied. Another issue has been the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has resulted in me leaving my research location and having to change my research topic last minute. Quickly changing the topic and context may have negatively affected my capability of doing research. Finally, since I as a researcher have actively functioned as a 'research tool', I should reflect on the limitations of my personal thoughts and behaviours, and how these played a role in the gathering of data, and the way I interpret that data. As stated in the introduction, the basis of this research was that one of my own assumptions was challenged: was the police really that unjust? Although trying to be as open as possible for different interpretations, one should be aware of its (implicit) assumptions and understandings. This may limit the quality of the research.

Chapter 1: Legitimacy's Reliance on Perceptions

Before assessing the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and its relationship with anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans, it is important to examine what has been written about post-conflict policing and examine the related buzzword 'legitimacy'. This chapter will conceptualise the meaning of legitimacy, explain how it can be achieved and why it is important. I will argue that it is related to discourses that construct a reality which (de)legitimises one's power-position. Lastly I will describe some identified problems related to police legitimacy in post-conflict societies, before moving to the next chapter specifying the issues for the PSNI.

Defining legitimacy

Before assessing legitimacy issues in post-conflict policing, a definition is necessary. Many writings on legitimacy are based on the work of Weber, who argued that legitimacy is the ability to issue commands that will be obeyed not only because of the solely possession or ability to deploy power, but because people will obey voluntarily (Tyler 2004, 87). In the words of Jackson et al. (2012, 1051), legitimacy is 'the right to rule and the recognition by the ruled of that right'. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 124) similarly describe legitimacy as being related to whether a power-holder is justified in claiming the right to hold power over other citizens, and hence to issue decisions and rules applying to the citizens. Thus, legitimacy consists of a recognition of power – insinuating a felt obligation to authority and a corresponding duty to obey – and a justification of power – which entails there is a sense of a shared moral purpose between the power-holder and its audience(s) in achieving social order (Jackson et al. 2012, 1054). Legitimacy is needed by social institutions to develop, operate and reproduce themselves effectively (ibid., 1051). Considering the state as 'the ruler', the necessity of legitimacy applies to all its institutions. However, for the police it is particularly important to be perceived as legitimate as a condition for the justification of state power.

Two remarks follow from this definition of legitimacy. First, even though obedience or obligation may follow from legitimacy, obligation to obey does not necessarily mean the authorities are perceived as being legitimate by its audience. Compliance can follow for other reasons such as fear, a sense of powerlessness, or pragmatic acquiescence, which can be mistaken for legitimacy (Jackson et al. 2012, 1054; Tankebe 2013, 106). Secondly, the definition implies that there is an interaction between a power-holder and an audience (or

audiences), indicating that legitimacy can be described as a dialogic process: 'those in power (or seeking power) in a given context make a claim to be the legitimate ruler(s); then members of the audience respond to this claim; the power-holder might adjust the nature of the claim in light of the audience's response; and this process repeats itself' (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 129). Legitimacy is thus not a singular transaction or claim, but a constant discussion between claims of power-holders and responses of the audience.

Cultivation and maintenance of legitimacy

To have a better understanding of what legitimacy entails, it is important to look how it is achieved and maintained. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 132) provide a rich theoretical analysis on what creates and sustains legitimacy. Since legitimacy is perceived as a dialogic process, legitimacy consists of both 'audience legitimacy' and 'power-holder' legitimacy. Audience legitimacy refers to the perspectives of the audience and can be reached through 'consent', 'legality', and shared beliefs and values. Where there is consent, citizens agree 'in advance to treat the appropriately enacted laws and the appropriately formulated orders of that state as superseding and replacing one's own judgment' (ibid., 135). Hence, actions expressive of consent reproduce and reinforce the legitimacy of a given set of social arrangements (ibid., 136).

The second component of audience legitimacy is legality or lawfulness (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 141; Tankebe 2013, 107). Simply put, if the police do not follow the law, a cynicism prevails questioning the righteousness of the police and the law itself. It can damage people's sense of obligation to obey and citizens become more likely to violate the law (Jackson et al 2012, 1062-63). However, it is important to note that laws always operate within a social context, and that 'law' and 'order' are two different things. Too strict enforcement of the law may strain with community values, having a negative effect on social order (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 139). Thus, the police must operate within the law to be seen as legitimate, but law enforcement and maintenance of social order are two different police tasks, and these should always be considered within their social context.

This brings us to the next and arguably most important point of audience legitimacy, namely that power-holders must always operate within the shared beliefs and values of a society (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 141). Shared ideas and values generate normative expectations of policing in liberal democracies, and the fulfilment of these expectations funds the maintenance and reproduction of legitimacy (Tankebe 2013, 111). In order to comply to these shared values,

any given exercise of power must be derived from a valid source of legitimate authority within that society, the power should be exercised in a manner that is justified in the context of that society, and the exercise of power must provide an interest not just for the power-holder but for general society (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 142). Tankebe (2013, 111) identifies three of these normative expectations that follow from shared ideas and values. First, there is the expectation of *distributive* fairness of justice. This means that the outcomes people receive based on certain acts or violations are equal between all citizens and that that specific outcome is in itself fair. This also entails the expectation that all layers of society equally enjoy the benefits of the police force and no community is over- or under-policed.

The second expectation within the shared values and ideas is *procedural* fairness of justice, e.g. fairness of the processes employed to reach specific outcomes or decisions (Tankebe 2013, 111). Opinions about procedural fairness are based on the quality of decision making – police honesty, provision of opportunities for representation, opportunities for error correction, behaviour legal authorities – and quality of treatment – which refers to the perception of being treated by the police with respect, dignity and courtesy.

Two important cautions made by David Smith (2007) about procedural justice need to be considered (in Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 145-46). First, the causes or explanations for legitimacy may differ between the individual and collective level. Consequently, 'the explanations for secular change in police legitimacy in a society from one epoch to another may be different from the explanations for intra-individual change in legitimacy beliefs' (Smith 2017, 32 in Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 146). In other words, there is not 'one' accepted narrative on police legitimacy, and individuals may disagree with the collective acceptance of procedural justice. Secondly, 'prior beliefs in police legitimacy (or illegitimacy) are the powerful factor, whereas particular experiences of the police are shaped by those beliefs, or interpreted and perceived to fit with them' (Smith in Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 146). For example, Hearty (2017, 236) describes how autobiographical experiences with PSNI officers are placed within a collective memory of Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) abuses, even if that person is too young to have experienced the RUC, to explain how the police force has (not) changed. In conclusion, procedural fairness is in all societies a key component to legitimacy, but procedural justice is not always objectively evaluated and can depend on personal understandings and collective memories, i.e. different understandings of reality.

Lastly, an expectation of shared values is that of effectiveness (Tankebe 2013, 112; Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 147; Tyler 2004, 85). Besides the previous expectations of fair decisions and treatments, power-holders need to demonstrate that they can fulfil their expected

roles. There is a difference between the use of incentives to encourage cooperation and obedience, and the establishment of power that is both normatively justified and justifiable as being viewed as serving the best interests of society. Simply put, effectiveness refers to the ability to satisfy the ends that legitimise the power-holder's position in the first place (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 147). As Tankebe (2013, 112) argues: 'when citizens demand that the police demonstrate effectiveness in tackling crime and disorder in their local areas, it means that they are not simply making crude instrumental demands; on the contrary, they are expecting the police to fulfil a normative condition for their legitimacy'.

Besides the audience, the perspective of the power-holder is also of importance. Power-holder legitimacy can be described as power-holders believing their own legitimacy by ensuring that 'the positions they occupy, the powers they wield and the manner in which such powers are exercised on a day-to-day basis are formally and legally correct' (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 151). This is according to Bottoms and Tankebe not a sufficient, but a necessary condition. Just as audience legitimacy, power-holders must cultivate their self-legitimacy through the shared beliefs between them and the audience. Self-legitimacy is important for several reasons (ibid., 152). First, power-holders cannot be expected to do their daily work with reference to current public opinion, for some aspects of work are necessarily secret (e.g. some police investigations). In other words, the audience cannot legitimise everything for the power-holder. Second, for the stability and effectiveness of authority, power-holder legitimacy might be an important element. For example, if a police officer feels his work is unjust or illegitimate, he is unlikely to work effectively. Third, power-holders cannot claim their legitimacy upon others if they cannot cultivate it for themselves. And lastly, since legitimacy is seen as a dialogic process, power-holders must too react on the audience's response to certain claims of legitimacy, which forces them to adjust their understandings and stances.

In short, legitimacy is reached and cultivated through the dialogic process between audience and power-holder-legitimacy, maintaining a perceived obligation (recognition of power) and perceptions of shared moral values (justification of power). Jackson et al. (2012, 1062) use a psychological lens to explain how this leads to compliance, borrowing the concepts of 'identification' and 'internalisation'. Values express the identity of society, so part of the condition of the legitimate power is that those who lay claim to it act in ways that protect and promote this identity (Tankebe 2013, 110). Identification can reflect an emotional connection based upon perceived shared values and purposes ('moral alignment'), and a common definition of social roles and expectations, so besides creating an emotional connection with the power-holder, '*moral identification* with the police […] leads to the *internalization* of the value that is

morally just to obey the law' (Jackson et al. 2012, 1056). Identification and internalisation can thus be two important social psychological mechanisms following compliance out of legitimacy (Jackson et al. 2012, 1062; Pehrson et al. 2017, 14).

When legitimacy is lacking, and hence a sense of a shared group membership, people may place themselves outside of the authorities' group (Jackson et al. 2012, 1053). In the case of the police, which represents the state, people may distance themselves from the state and its laws. However, Pehrson et al. (2017, 2) propose two other pathways when there is a perceived unfairness. First, people may exclude authority from the group, hence undermining legitimacy rather than disidentifying themselves. Second, power-holders like police officers may violate the normatively accepted constraints on which their recognition of power-holder rests. This 'bounded authority' (ibid., 5) means that certain functions have expectations, both empowering as limiting what a police officer can do. By trespassing the acceptable boundaries, it will directly undermine legitimacy. In short, what I would like to emphasise is that when the authority seems to be serving interests other than the ingroup that it is supposed to serve and if incumbents such as police officers act outside the bounds of the authority that is expected within their roles it may lead to disidentification with the relevant group (ibid., 17).

In conclusion, legitimacy depends on audience legitimacy and authority legitimacy, and this can lead to compliance through the processes of identification and internalisation. If police legitimacy is lacking, people may distance themselves from the state, or exclude authority to the state. All the identified necessities to cultivate legitimacy will provide an understanding on how and why legitimacy for the PSNI can be lacking, but I especially consider the shared beliefs and values – and hence the perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, and effectiveness – of audience legitimacy important to understand the issues for the PSNI and its troubling relationship with anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans. Because it focusses on the *perception,* a discursive approach to understand the constructed reality is important. This will become more evident when reflecting on some additional critiques and thoughts.

Important critiques and additional thoughts

Building on the dialogic model of legitimacy, Martin and Bradford (2019) expand this model by applying it to police legitimacy. They identify three core dimensions that have not yet gained enough attention within the dialogic model. First, a meaningful distinction can be made between micro- and meso-level legitimacy. This provides a better account for the form and frequency of legitimacy claims made by individual officers and collective actors such as

police organisations. On the micro-level, Martin and Bradford (2019, 5) question Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012, 154) hypothesis that front-line police officers or prison officers around the world put a lot of energy in explicitly legitimising their presence and actions. To Martin and Bradford, the idea that officers amount to an explicit claim to normative justifiability and thus enter a legitimacy dialogue seems unlikely. According to them, on the micro-level claims of legitimacy are implicit. It seems more likely that the police draw on their own sense of legitimacy to enable action rather than demonstrating that they are acting in morally justifiably ways (Martin and Bradford 2019, 6). Because of this, Martin and Bradford question the notion of a 'dialogue' in this situation (ibid., 7). Here the importance or existence of power-holder legitimacy is evident (Martin and Bradford 2019, 7; Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 151). As stated, where a dialogue is lacking or difficult it is necessary for the authority to legitimise their own presence.

The dialogic process of moral justifications of power are according to Martin and Bradford more evident on the meso-level, for it is here that the imagined status, function and stability of the police as an institution becomes most visible (2019, 7). The symbolic and coercive power wielded by the police is most visible on the meso-level, and discourses on crime, justice, security, terrorism and so on expose and involve the 'corporate police voice'. This is the collective voice that frames an organisational behaviour that articulates justifications of the police's function and status. An empirical observation of the dialogic process resolving legitimacy is the change of the RUC to the PSNI, wherein the 'legitimation process' (Mulcahy in Martin and Bradford 2019, 8) can be described as consisting of three phases: reform, representation and public response. In each stage the pursuit of the normalisation and naturalisation of a particular set of social relations is central. Public images such as the name and other images were changed for example, whilst being in a debate with the public on how this should happen.

The distinction between micro- and meso-level legitimacy is a useful insight in the analysis of police legitimacy. To a certain extend it reflects Smith's (2007) notion that perceptions of procedural justice differ on a collective level and individual level. Although I do agree with the importance of this distinction, and indeed agree that at the micro-level 'front-line officers' are likely to act implicitly upon their perceived legitimacy, I would argue that a dialogue is still evident. For example, stop and search action of the PSNI could be filmed or photographed and put on a Facebook page such as "Ruc psni harassment of republicans exposed". Another recent example is the death of George Floyd, in which the police officers implicitly acted upon their perceived legitimacy, but a major 'dialogue' has stemmed from it.

Hence, even if a police action does not promote dialogue, their actions are always (implicitly) accepted or rejected. The distinction is still useful, and many experiences, narratives and discourses in this study will have their roots in micro-level legitimacy. However, it will become clear that micro- and meso-level legitimacy are highly entangled. The distinction shows the flux between implicit and explicit claims and understandings of legitimacy.

Another point of critique Martin and Bradford have on Bottoms and Tankebe's dialogic model is that they put too much emphasis on the public being the most prominent audience (2019, 9). They argue that legitimacy is discussed among a wide range of governing authorities in responding to problems of order and security. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 122-23) point out that there might be multiple audiences (such as 'criminals' and 'the public'), but they fail to incorporate the fact that there can also be different power-holders. Police legitimacy is not only a dialogic process between the police and the public, but also politicians, oversight bodies, the media and other powerful actors and elites. Even more, Martin and Bradford (2019, 9) argue that: 'organizations cannot exercise authority, or indeed wield naked power, without the support and assistance of other power-holders'. Hence, a distinction between two levels of support for authorities can be made: from peers or superiors of the authority, and from the peers subject to it (ibid., 10). For example, with the emergence of the PSNI, the police oversight body – the Northern Irish Policing Board – played an important role in legitimising the PSNI through the language of objectivity, legality and accountability, increasing support for the PSNI. Another pivotal point in PSNI legitimacy was when mainstream republican party Sinn Féin officially accepted the police force in 2007, greatly increasing the support of Catholics/nationalists/republicans (CNRs) (Hearty 2017, 1). Thus, this additional thought is very important within the Northern Irish context, for its divided society and politics suggests many different power-holders and authorities on which PSNI legitimacy depends.

Lastly, Martin and Bradford (2019, 12) question how far the claims for legitimacy made by the police are the central focus or start of the following dialogue, because public assessments are often based on perceptions and understandings which extend far beyond the behaviour of police officers and organisations. Multiple studies have indicated that judgements of police legitimacy are drawn from a wide range of attitudes, orientations and experiences. For example, different neighbourhoods in Belfast with different networks, histories, local authorities and individual and collective memories can have different social processes of which police legitimacy is a by-product, which bear little relations with actual police activity (Martin and Bradford 2019, 12; Roche 2008; Bradford et al. 2019, 1022; Topping and Bradford 2020, 99).

Therefore, in this thesis local discourse is considered just as important as factual acts by the police.

A discursive approach to police legitimacy

As stated, I adopt a lens of critical discourse analysis to analyse perceptions of police legitimacy in Northern Ireland (Demmers 2017, 127-130). So far is has become clear that legitimacy depends on a sense of a shared identity between the power-holder (PSNI) and its audience (Northern Ireland's society), which is cultivated through a dialogue that most importantly creates a *perception* that the audience and power-holder have the same beliefs and values. I emphasise the word 'perception', meaning that the PSNI does not necessarily need to have the same goals or ideas as society, and the PSNI does not necessarily need to be effective, as long as it is perceived that they do have the same goals and are effective. In other words, it is not an objective and factual reality, but a constructed reality that matters. And this reality can be constructed through discourses.

I shall illustrate how the interplay between structures and agency can lead to discourses of police legitimacy. Building on Giddens' (1984) notion of the duality of structure, one can understand that people do not solely act upon their own (rational) choices and self interests (agency), but are also not completely limited in their freedom of choices by wider societal institutions and social norms and relations (structures). Instead, agency and structures (re)produce our social worlds. Structures define 'rules of life', and the people (re)produce these rules through social practices. These social practices create normative assumptions of codes of conduct which legitimise certain actions whilst censoring others (Jabri 1996, 83 in Demmers 2017, 129). Related to policing for example, the state can be seen as the wider structure that has a monopoly on the use of physical force. People reproduce these rules with social practices aligned to normative assumptions of code of conduct. They could for example call the police when a nonstate agent is caught using physical force. The normative assumption of the state having a monopoly on physical force is with this action reproduced. What this example illustrates, is that through normative understandings of codes of conduct or symbolic values, power is exercised. A reality is created wherein the use of force by state agents is normal and accepted. What makes one powerful, is thus the ability to define reality through discourses, which can be texts, language, performances or symbols. The police would thus be powerful if they have the power to define a reality through discourses that satisfies the perceptions of the power-holder and audience, making them a legitimate police force.

However, power is just like legitimacy not exclusively held top-down, but constituted and transformed at all levels of society, and can be seen as a dialogue. What this entails is that people can act and express differently, and therefore create different discourses. In this case of the PSNI, it seems that it does not have all the power to define a reality where it satisfies all the needs to cultivate legitimacy. Martin and Bradford identified the distinction between micro- and meso-level legitimacy. Micro-level legitimacy could be seen as the implicit social practice that reproduces the structure of authority. However, I have illustrated this can also be challenged. Similarly, Martin and Bradford mention how claims to legitimacy depends on multiple power-holders, and also that understandings of reality might be constructed outside of the police's influence. In other words, different discourses may be (re)produced undermining the legitimacy of the police. In this research I will specifically look at the collective action frames – certain ideas and beliefs that promote mobilisation and change – that undermine the PSNI's legitimacy, expressed by anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans. This will be done more specifically in chapter three. What I have argued here is that legitimacy depends on *perceptions*, and therefore a discursive approach provides the ontological lens to study police legitimacy.

The importance of legitimacy

Thus far I have explained that legitimacy is best understood as a dialogic process in which the power-holder and those subject to them recognise and justify one's authority, and how this eventually leads to compliance. I shall now turn to why legitimacy is important, because even though legitimacy can lead to compliance, it is not a necessity for compliance. Why not use fear or violence to claim the power position? The situation in which people obey and recognise those in power but do not consider this legitimate can be termed 'dull compulsion' (Tankebe 2013, 106; Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 148). Examples could be of prisoners, people living in dictatorial regimes, or arguably Irish republicans who disagree with the GFA but do operate within the law. Compared to dull compulsion true legitimacy will be more effective, making citizens more willing to provide the police with a good flow of information and other forms of compliance (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 148; Jackson et al. 2012, 1063). The value-based factors that motivate compliance through legitimacy are lacking in dull compulsion, and they emphasise the importance 'of a broader range of normative motivations than is encompassed with the concept of legitimacy as traditionally defined (felt obligation and trust)' (Jackson et al. 2012, 1064). Therefore, legitimacy improves compliance,

provides a better flow of intelligence and local social order, and a greater willingness on the part of the public to empower criminal justice agencies (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 155). Legitimacy leads to immediate decision acceptance, and eventually to long-term decision acceptance (ibid., 122). One could for example argue that the recent protests in the United States following the death of George Floyd are the result of short-term compliance through dull compulsion instead of genuine legitimacy (Jackson et al. 2020). Ironically, it is legitimacy that leads to effectiveness, but effectiveness that is necessary for legitimacy (Tyler 2004, 85).

Besides these claims that legitimacy is important within a social system because it is more effective than dull compulsion, Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 155) argue that that there is more to legitimacy than effective compliance. According to Bottoms and Tankebe, liberal democracies carry expectations such as the protection of human rights, and legitimacy fulfils that expectation. Legitimacy does not simply depend on the moral standards of a given society, because if this was true, in theory it could be argued that the genocide of a minority group could be legitimate if it would reflect the general values and beliefs of that society. As they argue (ibid., 157), 'functional concepts' – nouns that in themselves embody an understanding of the purposes or functions expected to be fulfilled by a person or thing – provide an explanation for the importance of legitimacy and legitimate treatment by authorities. Just like a watch is expected to tell you the time and a scale is expected to measure your weight, a government of a liberal democracy is expected to equally protect the human rights of all its citizens (Tankebe 2013, 111). This functional concept thus provides an objective basis for moral judgements, preventing a society simply inventing any kind of political system it wishes and still be moral and legitimate (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 158). Hence, legitimacy carries a moral recognition and is expected from liberal democracies.

Besides leading to effective compliance and fulfilling moral expectations of liberal democracies, legitimacy is also important because its dialogic nature may change (state) institutions, enabling a positive progression (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 160). If there is a disagreement between power-holders and a given group of citizens about grounds for legitimacy claims and the audience to accept the power-holder as a legitimate authority it will likely lead to tensions. A result is hence a dialogic process, which can bring a momentous change in how a criminal justice agency operates or is constituted. An example of this would be the change of the Northern Irish police force. Because the previous RUC lacked legitimacy and trust, one of the deals of the GFA was a reform of the illegitimate police force, changing the RUC to the PSNI, with a focus on being an inclusive police force keeping up with human rights standards and norms becoming entrenched in police practice (Marijan and Guzina 2014,

52; Ellison et al. 2012, 553; Murphy 2015, 118). A more recent example is the death of George Floyd, leading to nationwide protests in the United States demanding the defunding of the police. According to a recent survey forty percent of American respondents agreed that the police should be defunded (though their definitions for 'defunding' differed) (Jackson et al. 2020, 3). In short, legitimacy does more than make people comply with the police and the law. It is also important to change (state) institutions through a dialogue which make it fit the expectations of the public.

Police reform and legitimacy in post-conflict societies

In post-conflict situations, it remains a problem to reform a legitimate and effective police force (Wozniak 2018, 2). Though theoretical models for police reformations in post-conflict contexts have been improved over the years – for example, by adapting a more contextual perspective emphasising the importance of local knowledge and understandings – issues within post-conflict police reformations remain.

In his assessment of police reforms in post-conflict societies, O'Neill (2005) summarises what we know so far. First, police reform takes a long time, involves transforming power relations in a society and requires more than technical tinkering with police doctrine or practice. Since police reform is very political, and power distributions and relationships change, it is logical that resistance follows from people who feel they are left behind. Because of this, police reform is not just a 'technical fix', exclusively focussed on the operational side. Everything will be interpreted by the local population, and everything can expect a reaction. Furthermore, there will always be a time gap between dismantling a regime and its social control mechanisms and the introduction of new reformed institutions, creating a power vacuum that can be filled with vigilantes or paramilitaries (Wozniak 2018, 6; Brooks 2019, 205). These non-state actors can not only be dangerous and violent but also directly discredit the recognition of the state's power-holder position and question its effectiveness, and hence affect its legitimacy. Thus, an obstacle or necessity for post-conflict police reform is timing (Wozniak 2018, 7).

Second, changing the culture or ethos of an institution is never easy. For most post-conflict police organisations, this entails moving from oppression and social control to a model of prevention and investigation. Because they likely still lack trust from the population, there is no room for error. Related to the difficulty of cultural change, Wozniak (2018, 4-6) argues that gaining the proper recruitment for the new police force in a post-conflict society is a reoccurring

obstacle. First, the police are not a random sample of its population, so it is more difficult to have the population identify with the police force if the police force does not represent that population. The example of the PSNI illustrates that even when a fifty-fifty recruitment for Catholics and Protestants is its goal, only a little above thirty percent of Catholics are now in the Northern Irish police force (compared to eight percent during the conflict) (Hearty 2017, 185). The PSNI's C3 intelligence branch is still 79 percent Protestant (Murphy 2019, 199). Numerous reasons exist for these recruitment difficulties. For example, recall Smith's notion (Bottoms and Tankebe 2012, 146) that explanations for legitimacy differ between individual and collective levels, meaning that a police reform on macro-level does not necessarily change the way its interpreted on micro-level, meaning a continuing distrust from CNR neighbourhoods prevents Catholics from joining the force. Furthermore, an issue besides recruitment is maintaining police loyalty and retention (Wozniak 2018, 4-6). This is due to the lack of serious commitment to providing proper levels of funding and other material necessities. As mentioned by Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 151), legitimacy entails that people identify with the power-holder. Since the police hold a unique position in regard to the state and play an important role in state building it is important how individual members of the police identify themselves, because developing a national identity is a fundamental necessity of the larger state reconstruction project (Wozniak 2018, 4). A lack of public representation and loyalty is therefore disastrous. The lack of funding also has a direct negative effect on police capacity (ibdi., 6), negatively impacting their effectiveness and hence their legitimacy (Tyler 2004).

A third lesson identified by O'Neill is that a human rights perspective must be implemented in the police without the officers feeling they are becoming less effective and incapable of stopping crime. Hence, the advantages of legitimacy over dull compulsion must be made clear, which in practice can be difficult. Fourth, police reform must be carried out simultaneously with broader judicial reform, which entails modernising laws, training judges, humanising prisons et cetera. Many trainings have been developed for the implementation of human rights in policing. However, most people already know what the police are and are not allowed to do, and training alone will not be enough to implement actual change in the new police force. Fifth, besides human rights training and public awareness campaigns, reform efforts must pay attention to building integrity, professionalism, and discipline in a police force. These changes directly relate to distributive and procedural justice.

Sixth, local history, traditions and culture must be acknowledged in all police reforms. This reflects the necessity of operating according to the local beliefs and values for the cultivation of legitimacy. The police also need to understand that they have often been part of

the problem, so memories of the past will make people suspicious of the police, even though they would want to eventually rely on the police for protection and the prevention of crime. Again, because police reform is such a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary effort it requires a lot of money. This is also a major challenge, as described by Wozniak. And lastly, internal and external bodies responsible for oversight of the police must be independent, objective, transparent and effective. They must also have the power and resources to do their job. This will guarantee the distributive and procedural fairness and the effectiveness of the police.

A conclusion Jackson et al. (2012, 1062) make based on their assessment of police legitimacy is that a key pathway to legitimacy concerns the everyday practices of policing. Improving the quality of mundane officer/citizen encounters might have a positive effect on legitimacy, for it stimulates recognition and moral alignment. A similar statement is made by Marijan and Guzina (2014, 52), arguing that police reform in Northern Ireland has focussed (too) much on ensuring legitimacy through democratic representations and through professionalism in the public services, but not enough through informal 'street-level' responsiveness generating 'everyday legitimacy'. Though most scholars agree with this statement, this can be very difficult in post-conflict societies that do not have one community but multiple societies split among ethnic, cultural, or religious lines of conflict (ibid., 54; Bradford et al. 2019, 1023-24). This generates questions such as: who is the community? How do officers perceive (ethnic) subgroups within the community? And, how do (ethnic) subgroups view the police? Building on Maarten van Craen, 'everyday legitimacy' can be reached by not only the procedural justice model, but also through social capital – well-functioning, bridging and cooperative networks and communities increase trust of citizens in the police – and performance theory – which tells us that accountability does matter and that the more police respond to the needs of the community the more trustworthy they become (Marijan and Guzina 2014, 54).

In conclusion, this chapter has defined legitimacy, explained how it is cultivated, and presented why it is important. I have argued how police legitimacy is very much related to discourses that construct a certain reality. In this reality it is perceived that the power-holder shares the values and beliefs of the audience. Legitimacy leads to identification and cooperation, fulfils the expectations of a liberal democracy and offers a dialogue that may lead to progressive changes. Some of the obstacles for police legitimacy in post-conflict societies have been identified and accompanied with lessons on post-conflict policing. To understand how discourses of opposition can come into existence, it is first important in which context they

prevail. The next chapter will be about the difficulties for the PSNI in a post-GFA context, to have an understanding in which context police legitimacy is undermined.

Chapter 2: The Police Service of Liminal Ireland: Obstacles for the PSNI

In the previous chapter legitimacy has been conceptualised, and its importance for police forces has been explained. In this chapter the focus will be more specific on the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the difficulties is faces within a post-conflict context. I will build on Murphy's (2019) notion of 'policing in a liminal space'.

Obstacles of policing in a liminal space

As explained in the introduction, one of the arrangements of the Good Friday Agreement was the reformation of the police service. The change of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) was more than a change of name, but also an effort to create a more inclusive, fair and effective police force. Although progression has been made, many issues for the PSNI and its legitimacy still remain. According to Murphy (2019, 194) the biggest issue for the PSNI is that it is policing in a liminal space: it is policing in a context neither still in conflict nor fully beyond its reach. Peace should not be understood as a static endpoint, but as a process (McDowell et al. 2017, 194). Though the peace process has made some significant progression in Northern Ireland, such as fairer employment, security sector reform and the provision of services, Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society where peace is fragile and an inflammatory context still exists (ibid.). Murphy (2019, 206) identifies three interrelated issues for the PSNI on policing in a liminal space: first, there is the challenge of 'policing the past'. Second, an issue of an incomplete change programme for the police itself remains, especially with the absence of cultural change at an organisational level. Third, particular challenges of the current Northern Ireland political landscape exist, such as the suspension of devolved institutions, austerity and Brexit. In the following paragraphs I will assess these three challenges described by Murphy and expand on her concepts by adding other empirically described issues for the PSNI that fit within her framework.

Policing the past

Post-conflict societies often face the dilemma of demanding truth and justice, while also wanting to 'move on', reconcile and invest in the future instead of the past (Yepes 2009;

Olsen et al. 2010; Duffy 2010; Little 2017; Alvarez Berastegi 2016). One of the objectives for the PSNI was the investigation of unsolved crimes (Murphy 2019, 202). However, not only has the investigation lacked results, it has also resulted in a wide backlash from the community and politicians. Unionist politicians criticised truth commissions for focussing too much on loyalist violence, and families criticised truth commissions for not going far enough to uncover who killed their loved ones (ibid.). Chief Constable George Hamilton has openly expressed his frustrations of politicians who could come to no agreement on 'dealing with the past' and the difficulties this entailed for policing moving forward. The failing agreements have resulted in a lack of police funding for dealing with the past, which puts police legitimacy in the eyes of CNRs at risk. I argue that these issues reflect obstacles of consociationalism and its related 'memory wars'.

Consociationalism

Besides a reformation of the RUC, The Good Friday Agreement approved creating a consociational Assembly and Executive, creating North-South institutions cooperating with the Republic of Ireland, creating West-East institutions cooperating with the United Kingdom, and finally, any decision as to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would not rest with the Assembly but with the electorate (Hollmann 2018, 41). The 108 members of the Assembly must designate themselves as 'unionist', 'nationalist' or 'other'. In other words, the agreement entailed the approval of ethnic power sharing in Northern Ireland. Critics of this model point to the fact that many of the political parties competing for power direct much of their effort into the articulation of the interests of the ethno-national group they claim to represent (McGlynn et al. 2014, 274). McGlynn et al. (ibid.) argue that 'these dynamics are still the key factor in shaping electoral and ideological competition at all levels, limiting the ability of political parties to de-ethnicise politics and produce genuine cross-community rapprochement'. According to Hollmann consociationalism has in fact exacerbated tensions, by institutionalising ethnic identity, empowering ethnic tribute parties, and institutional neglect of the "other" (2018, 40). This was recognised by some residents I spoke in Belfast:

> […] they [paramilitaries] need the division to be relevant and exist. The politicians also profit from it, because the large majority of people would vote for either Sinn Fein or DUP [Democratic Unionist Party], simply because it's not them. That makes it difficult for genuine parties that want to do something better. (Interview 2019).

This reflection from Northern Irish citizens was expressed to me multiple times. During a meeting on the prospects of a united Ireland, a former loyalist combatant who was now a youth worker expressed his concerns about young men in deprived Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) areas who voted DUP because they were afraid of what would happen if Sinn Féin got in power, even though the DUP would not serve their interests. In short, consociationalism has generated politics only focussed on divisions, hindering cross-community progression. Even worse, it may have exacerbated tensions. O'Neill (2005) warns that police reform takes a long time because of shifting power relations, but this might even indicate some sort of political stalemate. This reflects how the policing of the past remains difficult and why necessities such as funding are hard to obtain, which undermine the police's effectiveness and hence their legitimacy. It also undermines reconciliation with the past, maintaining the sense that the police and state operate outside of the law.

Related to the political division is the remaining segregation of the population, not only divided between ethno-religious lines but also between socioeconomic grounds. Based on personal experiences I quickly noticed how Belfast, particularly in some areas, could sometimes better be described as a cluster of villages rather than one city. In seemed that in each area, especially in socioeconomic deprived areas, people heavily relied on each other and also seemed to know most of their neighbours, while after passing a certain border (sometimes literally a wall) their knowledge of the city or area stopped. Because of this, many neighbourhoods in Belfast seemed to have a strong personal identity and character. As explained in the previous chapter, legitimacy entails identification with the authorities, through perceiving to have the same aims and means. Research has indicated that local contexts highly influence the way people perceive the PSNI (Bradford et al. 2019; Ellison et al. 2012; Topping and Schubotz 2018). Since each community is not "just" Catholic or Protestant, but has different network ties, diversities and community identities, each community can have a different level of trust in the PSNI (Bradford et al. 2019, 1022). This means differences not only occur between CNR and PUL neighbourhoods but also between neighbourhoods with the same predominant religion (ibid., 1024). Bradford et al. (2019, 1036-37) found that individuals who live in areas of greater ethno-religious diversity will be more likely to trust the PSNI because they are more likely to have contact with outgroup members, thus enhancing (subjective) social cohesion. They also confirm that trust is higher in less deprived neighbourhoods (2019, 1037), just like that people who perceive more disorder around them also tend to express less trust in the police. Hence, policing the past entails policing a highly divided society, which makes it difficult to create a sense of a shared group membership since there are many different communities. What

is difficult about these contextual variations is that national survey data gives an ambiguous picture on how people perceive the PSNI, for data can differ extremely between certain areas (Ellsion et al. 2012, 553).

Besides varying identities between neighbourhoods that differently identify with the authorities, there are some indications that people in distinctive neighbourhoods get treated differently. Youth from CNR less well-off backgrounds are significantly more likely to perceive stop and searches as a form of unnecessary harassment than their PUL counterparts (Topping and Schubotz 2018). Topping and Bradford (2020) argue that stop and search practices are not just about dealing with crime (which they turn out to be very ineffective for), but its use is partly driven by an 'organisational impetus to bridge into, and discipline, unruly, recalcitrant populations' (ibid., 100). It is directed at the 'usual suspect' minority whilst leaving the majority, who generally support these practices, untouched. It reflects the implicit performances of perceived legitimacy on micro-level. Though perhaps not directly starting a dialogue, evidence does suggest that these direct encounters with the police do negatively influence their legitimacy (Topping and Bradford 2020, 102; Pehrson et al. 2017, 2; Jackson et al. 2012, 1053). The dull compulsion it constitutes in certain areas of Belfast will make policing only more difficult in the long run.

Memory wars

Another obstacle of policing the past can be the concept of 'memory wars' (McGrattan 2014). McGrattan (2014, 390) explains that prosecutions in countries coming out of conflict can be difficult because of limited budgets and a simultaneous feeling of wanting to move on. The prosecutions that do occur can never fully heal the wounds of the past, and trauma can be even worse in ethnically divided post-conflict societies. Even worse, in ethnically divided societies, wilful blindness, forced amnesia or denial may be more than just coping strategies. McGrattan states that they may also be the product of the communal identification with narratives of the past. This is what McGrattan refers to as 'memory wars', which are part and parcel of the way the past is (re)framed and the method of how the past is used to project goals in the future. The pursuit of justice is not only about truth recovery of violations of the past, but the pursuit of justice becomes intertwined with debates about how that past and those acts are explained and understood in the present. This could be described as what Benford and Snow (2000, 624) conceptualise as frame alignment processes, which refer to the deliberative, utilitarian, and goal

directed development and deployment of frames to achieve a specific purpose. This was reflected to me by a resident who grew up in West Belfast:

> What in fact you have here. Is this… we have what people call a meta-conflict. And the easiest way to put it is… it's a conflict about what the conflict was about. So that means that everything.. – you know when you say prosecute that soldier, don't prosecute that soldier, have an inquiry, don't have an inquiry… All these things suddenly get caught up. And they all conflict again. So they don't get articulated as justice issues that get articulated as political rivalry issues (Interview 2019).

This example illustrates how memory wars are interrelated with consociationalism issues, for they do not serve the purpose of a common goal but exacerbate existing tensions. McGrattan (2014, 391) supports this by arguing that these memory wars are actually an expression of deeper societal issues that are concerned with how people articulate their identities. An often-occurring theme in memory wars, and likewise in Northern Ireland, is the paradigm of 'terrorism versus conflict' (Alvarez Berastegi 2017, 543). McGrattan (2014, 390) warns that the danger of these conflicts is that victims of previous violence are 're-silenced, re-marginalized, and displaced from political discourse'. A similar argument is made by Hearty (2016, 335) as he illustrates how the SPAD Act[7] has created a 'hierarchy of victimhood', only benefiting a selective group of victims by satisfying demands for justice and punishment directed at a selectively particularist group of perpetrators. Hearty argues that the act 'although couched in glib political rhetoric about victims', is in practice a divisive provision that only works to the advantage of certain victims whilst silencing others. Hence, memory wars create an unequal treatment of society where some are heard and some are silenced, negatively affecting procedural and distributive justice.

McDowell et al. (2017, 200) illustrate how studies of ethno-nationalist conflicts emphasise the importance of de-territorialising contested spaces to create shared spaces that should advance the peace process. However, they describe how these issues can cause conflict, for symbolic battles remain regarding how the past, present and future understandings of identity and conflict are negotiated. In Northern Ireland, contestations around naming of public parks or the flying of national flags on government buildings tend to be provocative instead of soothing. For example, in 2012 the decision was made to fly the British Union Jack only on

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[7] Civil Service (Special Advisers) Act (Northern Ireland) 2013. The act bans anyone from the political 'special adviser' function for a political party if (s)he has been sentenced for more than five years in the past.

nationally designated dates on the Belfast City Hall, instead of everyday which had been the status quo for 106 years. This change led to tensions and disorder, with protests lasting for three months. Pennington and Lynch (2015) examined how the reactions of the PSNI to this public disorder carefully had to contemplate the public narratives and historic conceptions of community divisions in Northern Ireland. Although a police response to social disorder and terrorism are two different things, these can sometimes be difficult to distinguish. In Northern Ireland's context, protest is often closely linked to political violence (Pennington and Lynch 2015, 544). This is not always due to the motives and actions of the protestors, but the way they are framed by the media, politicians and radical fringe elements within and without the crowd. Because of this, 'the point at which protest becomes a counterterrorism issue often times depends on its framing' (Pennington and Lynch 2015, 544). An extra dimension of complexity is that even if the police legitimately condemn illegal violent protest, in the Northern Irish context this can work inflammatory, serving to antagonize sectarian tensions that can ultimately fuel the activities of violent extremists (ibid., 545). Also, the police have to be careful in the way they respond because certain terrorist organisations may provoke an (over-)reaction with the purpose of furthering their cause by strategic manipulation. They hope the 'over-policing' (Hearty 2017, 195) will justify their own behaviour as retaliatory through identifying the unjust actions of the State or State agencies (Pennington and Lynch 2015, 545-46). It is at this nexus of protest, violence and politics that the complexities inherent in balancing community and counterterrorism policing emerges (ibid.). Pennington and Lynch conclude that remaining issues for the PSNI consist of having to constantly differ between tactical day to day policing and the implications of command strategies bound by fixed conceptions of Northern Ireland society. The fine line between strategic planning and operational realities in Belfast is complex because of difficulties related to the legacy of Troubles policing, local political realities, community endorsement of policing, and maintaining the rule of law in a society in the middle of a peace process (ibid., 557). These issues also reflect Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012, 139) consideration that the police must operate within the law to be seen as legitimate, but law enforcement and maintenance of social order are two different police tasks and the appropriate tactic should always critically be reflected on. This example thus demonstrates the many dimensions and pitfalls of policing in the present and the past.

In conclusion, the first indication that the PSNI operates within a liminal space is because it has to police both the present and the past. Wounds from the past, memory wars, divided societies, and politicians that feed into identity politics create a situation difficult for progression, where police legitimacy is not self-evident and every choice or expression can

have serious consequences. O'Neill (2005) argues that local history, traditions and culture must be acknowledged in all police reforms, but this is clearly extremely difficult, perhaps more so in societies divided along ethno-nationalist lines.

Change of police force

Policing in a liminal space not only refers to its surrounding context, but also to the force itself. O'Neill (2005) argues changing the culture and ethos of the police in post-conflict societies is necessary, but difficult. One of the issues Murphy (2019, 203-204) identifies is that cultural change within the PSNI lags behind structural change. Murphy states that the PSNI has put a lot of energy in 'selling' the change process, which includes the change of its name and some demographic shifts. However, there have been insufficient attempts to build an organisational identity that captures the whole range of officers and police staff. The unclear PSNI identity makes it difficult to build organisational resilience, because building an identity creates organisational confidence that would allow the PSNI to define its position, role and relationship not only within communities in the Northern Irish context, but also the local policing community or the wider international policing network. Building such an identity does require such organisation to critically reflect on its past and place itself in the current environment. There is some evidence that suggests that internal unofficial networks within the PSNI delineate along traditional political lines, and that old disagreements and struggles within the organisation are still being played out in public and private spheres.

One obvious aspect of lacking cultural change is the difficulty or Catholic recruitment for the police force (Murphy 2019, 200; Hearty 2017, 186). Already touched upon in the previous chapter, the PSNI's goal of a more equal distribution of Protestants and Catholics has only partly succeeded (Hearty 2017, 186; Murphy 2019, 200). Besides, even though there are more Catholics in the force, critics point out that has not changed much. Catholics were always among the police force, what was lacking was an Irish nationalist representation (Hearty 2017, 187). The Catholics in the new reform do not come from the same neighbourhoods where most nationalists and republicans live. They come from the same areas as the Catholics in the RUC came from, which are the wealthier areas in general (Hearty 2017, 187-188). Another issue is the unbalanced nature of the police staff, whose retention and recruitment were never subject to the same scrutiny as officers, and therefore remains predominantly of a Protestant background (Murphy 2019, 201). Though not being police officers, these people still have a significant impact on the organisational culture and strategic development.

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In line with the argument that the PSNI lags behind cultural change, is the way that the police reform has sought legitimacy through democratic representation, through professionalism in public service, and legitimacy through 'street-level' responsiveness to citizen concerns. Whereas the first two aspects are achievable through quotas and more technical approaches, the 'street-level' legitimacy or 'everyday' legitimacy have been more difficult to reach (Marijan and Guzina 2014, 55). According to Marijan and Guzina, (2014, 52), the challenge for the PSNI is the continuing distrust between communities, and a way to overcome these issues should be through the overlooked importance of building trust and confidence in more informal ways. It seems that within the reform an opportunity has been missed. Local networks and organisations have close links within communities, and the civil society and voluntary network plays a prominent role in security, anti-social behaviour and other things (ibid., 59). The original plan within the peace process was not only a reformation of the police force but also a broader transformation of security governance in Northern Ireland. The original report recognised the role of civil society and voluntary sector. However, this holistic approach to policing has been lost in the technical aspects of the police reforms. An example was given to me by workers in a community centre in a CNR neighbourhood in Belfast. They told me that for problems everybody would go to their community centre, because everybody knew each other and they would be able to fix this. They would however, never go to the police. Hence, the plans of the police reform considered O'Neill's points that local knowledge and understandings of justice should be implemented, but in practice this has not succeeded.

Lastly, the new police force still seems to be lacking in effectiveness, which is one of the necessities to justify once's power-holder position. Based on their case study in Belfast Ellison et al. (2012, 555) suggest that instead of the general understanding that expressive concerns about disorder and anti-social behaviour are the most important determinants in affecting the trust in the police, instrumental concerns about crime and illegal activity are actually more influential predictors. However, they suggest that this distinction is artificial in the end and it would perhaps be more accurate to see them as representing a set of interactive processes rather than fixed standpoints. Still, it must be acknowledged that the PSNI does suffer some shortcomings (Hearty 2017, 198). Many examples exist of PSNI failings (for example the delay in responding to an elderly man being fatally attacked in front of a PSNI station equipped with extensive surveillance equipment). Many of these incidents have occurred, creating both a discourse of over-policing in CNR neighbourhoods as well as 'under-policing' (Hearty 2017, 195-198). Exacerbating these shortcomings might have been that the narratives of change after

the Good Friday Agreement might have been too hopeful, in which negative memories of the RUC combined with idealistic notions of the new police force created unrealistic high expectations of what a police force really (can) do (Ellison et al. 2012, 568; Hearty 2017, 194).

In short, one of the reasons the PSNI is policing in a liminal space is because it itself is still going through a liminal phase. Its lack of representation of all of society, combined with a sense of ineffectiveness undermine its legitimacy. This has resulted for some to look for alternative forms of justice, which is one of the external issues within the Northern Irish context, and the third element of policing in a liminal space.

External issues within the Northern Irish context

The last issue of policing in a liminal space Murphy identifies is related to particular challenges of the current Northern Irish political landscape, and refers to the wider environmental context outside of the meso-level organisational change legacy (Murphy 2019, 201). Long-term budget plans and programmes for government are absent and the capacity to effectively plan is inhibited. Also, the Policing Board, which has the function of holding the Chief Constable to account, is not properly constituted and does not have the legal authority to oversee policing. Other macro environmental issues include Brexit, with still no visible progress on replacing critical EU policing frameworks, and tensions related to the Irish border. The way this seemingly resolved issue becoming a hot topic again represents how the police have to police the past and the present. All these issues are more complex in a society not at war but also not yet in complete peace (ibid., 201-202).

Perceptions of an ineffective police force may result in people looking for alternative justice systems (Ellison et al. 2012, 72). However, the rise of alternative justice systems is not uncommon in post-conflict societies, especially if the legitimacy of the state and its effectiveness were integral to the conflict (Brooks 2019, 208). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the time gap between dismantling a regime and its social control mechanisms and the introduction of new institutions almost never goes smoothly, creating a power vacuum that can be filled with vigilantes and paramilitaries (Wozniak 2018, 6; Brooks 2019, 205). Northern Ireland is no exception, and the rise of alternative justice systems through paramilitaries is evident. These alternative forms of justice are often swift and violent, demonstrating the effectiveness of the paramilitaries in relation to the PSNI (Brooks 2019, 213). For paramilitaries this is useful to gain control over territory, but also to express their opposition to the GFA by hindering the normalisation of the post-GFA society.

All these issues within Northern Ireland obstruct the 'golden standard' for police oversight (Topping 2016, 150). This golden standard is necessary to objectively assess police accountability, an important factor for police and state legitimacy. All the issues of policing in the Northern Irish liminal space are what Topping (ibid.) refers to as 'mediating realities'. These include a continuing terrorist threat, social and religious segregation, ritual public disorder, 'alternative' policing provision coalescing to challenge the outward projection of policing in the country as 'mission successful', and Northern Ireland's 'criminal netherworld'. Topping argues that accountability for both institutional and operational 'police action' in Northern Ireland has become a 'site' of contest (ibid., 151). Official accounts of policing are therefore just one of the many versions of reality. If there is no general understanding or dialogue on the police's actions and their power position, it is hard for them to be perceived as legitimate by the public. O'Neill's lessons that police reform needs internal and external bodies responsible for oversight of the police that must be independent, objective, transparent and effective is therefore not realised. Effectiveness, and procedural- and distributive- justice can therefore not be guaranteed.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have demonstrated how the PSNI faces many issues on effectively operating and gaining legitimacy, by building on Murphy's framework on policing in a liminal space. This has given an insight into why the PSNI may be rejected by citizens of communities. Even more, because the PSNI represent the Northern Irish state, it is a logical prey for those who effectively seek to challenge the current Northern Irish state. The next chapter will be more detailed about such Irish republican anti-Good Friday Agreement groups, often labelled as 'dissident republicans'. It will not only demonstrate how the PSNI can be seen as a victim of a post-conflict context carrying the weight of the past, but it also demonstrates why these 'dissident republicans' should not be dismissed, pointing to some evidence that the PSNI may be a genuine police force for only some sections of society.

Chapter 3: Anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans and the Good Friday Agreement's police force

The threat in Northern Ireland has never gone away. End games in terrorism, by definition, are messy. We had in my time, Continuity IRA, Real IRA, Óglaigh na hÉireann, all determined to destroy what had been achieved. They failed for two reasons – the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the community. The community would not want to go back and was absolutely determined to stay moving forward with us and with our other colleagues, to make sure Northern Ireland remained a safer place.

 – Sir Hugh Orde, former PSNI chief constable. (BBC 2019)

The quote above illustrates how opposition groups of the Good Friday Agreement are seen and portrayed by the media. Mainstream media and politicians refer to these anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans (AGFARs) as 'dissident' republicans (Whiting 2012, 484; Hoey 2019, 74). As the quote indicates, these 'dissidents' are violent groups who want to destroy all the progression that has been made, and do this against the will of the community. However, the PSNI and the community have worked together to maintain a safe place in Northern Ireland.

In this chapter I will first examine what and who AGFARs are. Although I reject the notion that they can be described as one homogenous group, there are some similarities in their collective action frames. I will use a lens of framing theory to assess which problems AGFARs identify, how they counter mainstream discourses by describing themselves (or their tactics) as the solution to these problems, and eventually seek to motivate people to support them, which for a large part is done by delegitimising the current power-holders. In the second part of this chapter I will use the lens of critical discourse analysis to more specifically explain that the language used by both power-holders and AGFARs creates not only narratives of 'us' versus 'them' and 'conformists' versus 'dissidents', but also a different understanding of the reality of contemporary Northern Ireland, that can be seen as a continuation or a rupture of the past and its imperialist forces. The PSNI is an important symbolic entity that captures either a continuation or a rupture from the past.

Anti-Good Friday Agreement Republicans

To put bluntly, AGFARs are groups that want a united Ireland without British involvement, and therefore oppose Sinn Féin's decision to sign the GFA (Taylor and Currie 2011, 169). As

indicated, AGFARs are in mainstream discourses labelled as 'dissidents', which are seen as violent groups that want to disturb the peace process against the will of the community. Three prominent ways dissident republicans are portrayed within mainstream discourses are evident (Whiting 2012, 486-487). First, dissidents are seen as being obsessed with violence. They are described as having no political end goal or object and are simply 'anti-peace' instead of 'pro-peace' (ibid.). Hence, they want as the opening quote of this chapter states: 'destroy what had been achieved'. This results in the second way dissidents are portrayed in mainstream discourses: as traitors. They are the traitors of peace, and traitors of 'just' violence that was previously used by the now ruling party's aligned Provisional IRA. Because of this, they are also described as traitors of 'republicanism' (Whiting 2012, 487). Lastly, dissidents are portrayed as evil, inhumane and backward (ibid., 488). Whiting asserts how the related dichotomies of these discourses – 'pro-peace' versus 'anti-peace', 'just' versus 'unjust' and 'good' versus 'evil' – make it easy to make a distinction between 'us' and 'them' (ibid., 485). This is clearly demonstrated in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, reflecting how the community (i.e. 'we', the majority) do not want these dissident republicans. Hence, AGFARs are portrayed as a homogenous entity under the banner 'dissidents', their goals are reduced to opposition of peace instead of deeper social and political discontent, and it portrays Provisionals and thus Sinn Féin as the 'real' republicans (Whiting 2012, 488).

It is of no surprise that these narratives of dissident republicans are interpretations that are not shared by everyone, and do not fully represent reality. First, it is important to note that 'dissidents' are no homogenous group, and that not all AGFARs are violent (Hoey 2019, 74; Hearty 2018a, 133). Hoey (2019) makes a distinction between 'dissidents' and 'dissenters' to mark the difference. *Dissidents* are groups that support or even maintain the tactic of republican violence. These include the Continuity, Real, or New IRAs and their supporting groups: 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM), Republican Sinn Féin (RSF)[8] and Saoradh. The other category, *dissenters*, are those republican groups that reject violence but also oppose Sinn Féin and the GFA. These include the Republican Network for Unity (RNU), Éirígí and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) (Hoey 2019, 74-75, 79). In the following I will use the term AGFARs to refer to all Irish republican groups that oppose the GFA and the mainstream Irish republican party Sinn Féin, though one should keep in mind that this is not a homogenous group, and not all AGFARs are violent.

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[8] Note that 'Republican Sinn Féin' and 'Sinn Féin' are thus different competing parties. Republican Sinn Féin split from Sinn Féin in 1986.

Disagreements between republican movements have always existed, but Sinn Féin's change in its trajectory (Hearty 2018a, 130), or even ideology (Hoey 2019, 74) has sparked the rise of many AGFARs in the past twenty years (ibid., 76). Different republican movements can have opposing opinions about the fundamental ideologies (i.e. principles) and operative ideologies (i.e. tactics) of Irish republicanism (Hearty 2017, 89). A possible explanation for these tactics to be such a hot topic is that social movements often make decisions based on identity. This means that the tactics employed can express a statement, rather than that they weigh out the most beneficial outcome (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 293). Mainstream republican tactics and ideologies have been changing. 'Republicanism' used to be a 'fit for all' ideology, making it a centripetal force for all those different republicans that did feel the same connection inspired by the 1916 Easter Rising rebel Patrick Pearse, and the international socialism of his 1916 Proclamation co-signatory James Connolly (Hearty 2017, 90; Hoey 2019, 76). Since 1998 however, republicanism has suffered more centrifugal forces and many AGFARs have arisen (Hoey 2019, 76). Hearty describes how Sinn Féin has in its own view only changed its tactics from violent conflict to constitutional politics to achieve the same ideological goal of a united Ireland. This ideological model can be called 'progressive republicanism' (Hearty 2017, 102). However, for many republicans this change of tactics felt like too much of a compromise and an abandonment of republican ideology (Hearty 2017, 114). This is the opposing 'constitutional nationalist model', which sees the political settlement as flawed, leading to a reformist working of the state. They fear this will eventually lead to complete assimilation within the UK (ibid., 102). Hoey (2019, 74) does mention how even Sinn Féin's ideology has slightly changed, whereas it first consisted only of ending British rule in Northern Ireland it now is described as pursuing human rights. In short, AGFARs differ in republican ideology and its related tactics. The legitimacy of Sinn Féin, the post-GFA state and hence the PSNI is thus undermined because it does not fit the shared values and beliefs of all Irish republicans. However, these AGFARs are 'left behind' in the mainstream discourse and peace process (Hearty 2018a, 130). They carry the negative image of being 'dissidents' and their collective action frames and discourses are unheard by the majority of society. But what exactly are their unheard frames and discourses?

AGFAR collective action frames

Collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings, which inspire and legitimise social movement organisations (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Collective action frames have three core functions. First, they construct a shared negotiated understanding of a

problematic condition, which is labelled 'diagnostic framing'. Second, they articulate a proposed solution, i.e. 'prognostic framing'. And lastly, they function as 'motivational frames' (Benford and Snow 2000, 616-17).

Diagnostic and prognostic framing

The collective action frames of AGFARs thus construct an understanding of a problematic condition. Although AGFARs are a heterogenous group, they do have some similarities. As mentioned, they all oppose Sinn Féin. This is because Sinn Féin has agreed with a settlement that does not provide national self-determination and 'post-GFA disillusionment to make sufficient advantages whilst ceding further ideological ground for short-term political gain at Stormont'[9] (Hearty 2019, 583). The problematic condition is hence that the goal of a untied Ireland is still not achieved, and the mainstream Irish republican party is not representative of the republican ideology and people. Because Northern Ireland is still part of the UK, CNRs are accordingly still being oppressed. Hence, AGFAR frames share that remaining oppression and other issues in the post-GFA state firmly rest on the shoulders of the enemy other (Bowman-Grieve and Conway 2012, 78). The narrative of 'British occupation' is still evident in almost any statement made by opposition parties (Morrison 2016, 9). Articles, online posts, or republican forums refer to the PSNI with terms such as 'draconian Crown forces' or 'forces of the illegal occupation'. Saoradh's Easter Statement of this year explicitly blames the British government (Young 2020a):

> Responsibility for the ongoing conflict rests firmly on the shoulders of the British Government. While British occupation persists, particularly throughout those who implement its policies via Stormont, the Irish people are denied their right to national self-determination and sovereignty. Faced with this reality we remain committed to bringing the British Government's undemocratic rule of the occupied part of our country to an end.

By blaming the enemy for continuing oppressions, societal problems or abandonment of the Irish people in Northern Ireland, AGFARs legitimise their own presence. They also counter the mainstream discourse about 'dissident' republicans being obsessed with violence. They are not obsessed with violence, but they have a legitimate reason for resistance against the 'illegal occupation', and when violence is used it is described as a form of self-defence (Whiting 2012, 497). For example, when journalist Lyra McKee was accidentally shot in 2019,

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[9] Stormont refers to the government of Northern Ireland, situated in the Stormont Estate east of Belfast.

the New IRA issued a statement saying that after the 'incursion on the Creggan[10] by heavily armed British crown forces which provoked rioting, the IRA deployed our volunteers to engage. […] Lyra McKee was tragically killed while standing beside enemy forces' (Young 2019).

In the eyes of AGFARs Sinn Féin betrayed true Irish republicanism, and hence the term 'dissident' is rejected (Bowman-Grieve and Conway 2012, 79). AGFARs legitimise their presence by framing themselves as the true heirs to the forefathers of Irish republicanism, countering the mainstream notion that AGFARs are traitors (Whiting 2012, 497). Hearty (2019, 585) names four tenets that traditionally reflect the self-legitimacy of physical force republicanism: 'the use of force is legitimate, the Republic is not an object to be negotiated for, acceptance of an outcome falling short of the Republic is a betrayal and a small group can define and defend the national honor'. Although not all AGFARs agree with violence and thus the first statement, they do agree with the last three statements and share the tendency to stick with traditional thoughts with little to no room for compromise. In short, Sinn Féin does not share the same values and ideas, and also lacks effectiveness in their perceived goal of a united Ireland, making them an illegitimate power-holder.

By identifying the problem, and legitimising their own presence, AGFARs fulfil the second function of collective action frames what can be called prognostic framing. In other words, the solution to the perceived problem would be to support their group and their tactics. Though I have described some action frames that are to a certain extend shared among AGFARs, the solutions and tactics they propose can vary greatly between AGFAR groups. For example, 'dissidents' aim to achieve their goal with the help of violence, and 'dissenters' seek other means to defend the republican spirit and unite the North with the Republic. Different solutions for policing are for example also evident, whereas violent dissidents take policing in their own hands through violent, swift and visible justice (Brooks 2018, 213), other nonviolent dissenters may support 'an unarmed all-Ireland police service subject to democratic control of the people'.[11] Many more differences exist, but pointing out all these differences would be beyond the scope of this thesis. What AGFARs do seem to share is the way they construct a rational for engaging in collective action.

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[10] Creggan is a housing estate in Derry.
[11] IRSP homepage, under the banner 'policing'. https://irsp.ie/#ac_2491_collapse3

Motivational framing: delegitimising the authorities

Now that the issue and solution are clear, AGFARs need to motivate followers in supporting them and participating in collective action. Once more, there are some similarities in the ways AGFARs motivate support. So far I have mostly focussed on what power-holders must do to maintain their legitimacy and power position. Interestingly however, perhaps because AGFARs are not in a power position, their narratives actively seek to create distrust towards Sinn Féin, the PSNI, and capitalist establishments in all of Ireland in order to gain legitimacy (Morrison 2016, 19). Whiting (2012, 492) argues this sometimes even goes at the expense of expressing their own objectives and principles. Because of this, the 'diagnostic' and 'motivational' frames are very closely related, if not the same. However, I argue that the next frames I present can be seen as expansion or elaboration of the initial identified problem of the remaining UK presence in Northern Ireland and Sinn Féin as an incompetent party to represent Irish republican values and beliefs.

Lies and collaborations of Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin is delegitimised by being portrayed as traitors of republicanism, collaborating with the mainstream media and PSNI in order to oppress or silence opposing parties. Earlier this year media reports stated that Sinn Féin was warned by the PSNI that they were being threatened by dissidents (McDonald 2020; BBC 2020). When I asked members of opposition parties what they thought of these accusations, it became clear that no one would openly give their opinion, because if you would say something you automatically become suspicious. However, no one I spoke to suspected these accusations to be true. This is also highly reflected on the republican forum *republican.ie*, where many reactions were among the lines of: 'Lot of bull, could be a joint venture to turn people against anti GFA Republican, FFs even if this was true they hardly said they where going to attack their Families, smells like BS'[12]. Only Saoradh, the main suspect, gave a statement (Saoradh 2020):

> For over two decades now the use of phantom threats by Sinn Féin to distract and deflect from policy changes, the abandonment of ideological principle and political mistakes and miscalculations has become a tried and tested tactic. Likewise, they have often been used in the run up to elections in order to garner sympathy, galvanise their membership and/or distract from

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[12] Posted on *republican.ie on* February 11, 2020, under forum topic "Dissident republicans 'planning attack' against Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill and Gerry Kelly."

> unfulfilled promises from previous campaigns. The past few days have seen the phantom threat utilised yet again. […] These threats are non-existent and totally bogus. It is quite clear to anyone with an ounce of sense that they have been collectively manufactured by the MI5-directed PSNI and Sinn Féin. Ordinary people, and more importantly the Republican base, see these public announcements by Gerry Kelly and Michelle O'Neill for what they are – pure fabrications, devious deflections and bogus allegations directed against Republicans generally and the IRA specifically.

Hence, Sinn Féin is being accused of collaborating with the PSNI in fabricating lies to discredit any opposition. Similar things have been stated to me by nonviolent dissenters:

> Sinn Féin tried to criminalise this organisation and tried to criminalise us. They called us criminals. They called us everything under the sun because they were scared of us. They were scared of us gaining support. (Interview 2020).

In short, Sinn Féin should not be trusted because they fabricate lies in order to silence any opposition, often in cooperation with the PSNI or the British government. Besides attacking the legitimacy of Sinn Féin, AGFARs counter any accusations that have been made against them.

Dissatisfaction post-GFA state

> *[…] yet again we all witnessed an incompetent Stormont government not fit for purpose being out played by the Brits empty promises once again. Within the six counties we still have the highest levels of child poverty and the longest cancer waiting lists and that figure has remained stagnant over the last number of years. The projections by leading health economists suggest that the full effects of the coronavirus pandemic will not be felt for two years and it has been suggested that hundreds of thousands of people could develop chronic health conditions and that rising unemployment and other financial concerns may cause mental health problems.*
>
> *We will be at the forefront in challenging and holding to account the governments in Stormount and Leinster house and we will stand with the working class communities who ultimately will suffer.[13]*

As the quote in RNU's Easter Statement indicates, the current political parties and government fail to address the issues of Northern Ireland. Besides, they are still the puppets of the UK. All

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[13] Republican Network for Unity Facebook post, posted 12 April, 2020.

AGFARs express their concerns about the post-GFA state. This was illustrated to me by a member of an opposition party:

> You can ask anybody in that street [CNR neighbourhood], anybody, has Sinn Féin made any positive difference in your life? They'll say no. Simply because of, you know, poverty, job crisis, suicide crisis, employment crisis. These areas aren't doing very well (Interview 2020).

This quote counters the mainstream frame that AGFARs want to return to 'the darkest days', for AGFARs claim there has not been any positive progression at all (Whiting 2012, 497). Especially in disadvantaged socio-economic areas, cultural and structural violence continue to impact the lives and experiences of its inhabitants (Walsh and Schubotz 2019, 4). This means that even though real tangible violence has mostly disappeared in Northern Ireland, the GFA has not resolved unequal, unjust and unrepresentative social structures that create contexts wherein people are below their potential realisations (Demmers 2017, 59; Walsh and Schubotz 2019, 14). Cultural violence refers to the way ideological, political, religious and language cards are being played by political elites to reinforce and instrumentalise existing divisions in Northern Ireland (ibid.). This reflects the issue of consociationalism described in chapter two, which makes the Northern Irish government limited in solving societal problems. Hence, the authorities are blamed for the remaining issues, especially related to cultural and structural violence (see image next page).
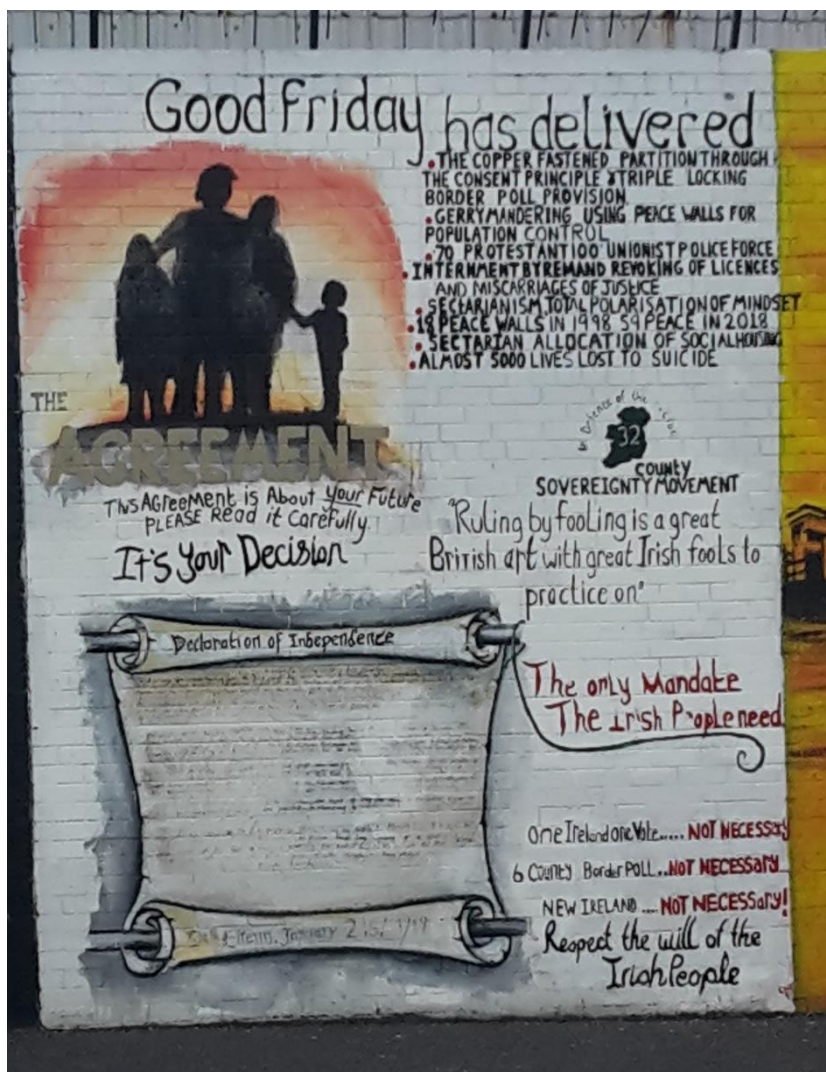
14 *Anti-GFA mural by 32CSM. It criticises the "triple lock", meaning Irish unity can only be achieved if the British secretary of state, the majority of Northern Ireland and the majority of the Republic agree. It criticises the still existing majority of Protestants in the PSNI, interment of political prisoners, sectarianism throughout the state, the growth of peace walls, problems in social housing and the high rates of suicide. Lastly, it shows a picture of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence with the text: "The Only Mandate The Irish People Need".*

Truly left-wing

Dissatisfaction with the GFA and Sinn Féin's policies and failure to make a positive change in certain areas is also expressed by opposing capitalism and embracing a left-wing socialist identity. Morrison (2016, 26) argues that AGFAR criticisms of capitalism are often ignored, but that they provide an opportunity to expand their appeal beyond traditional republican communities and into left-wing anti-capitalist communities. Being left-wing or progressive does correspond with Irish historical philosophy of equality in Ireland (O'Malley 2008, 3). Sinn Féin has made itself fit 'the rules of the game' by supporting more progressive politics (Whiting 2016, 547). This, however, is countered by AGFARs through pointing at issues of left-wing

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[14] Photo taken by author, West Belfast, March 1, 2020.

priority and how the current powers fail to address them. So, apart from betraying the dream of self-determination, Sinn Féin also betrays the class issue. Éirígí points to the increase of food banks[15] and the housing crisis: 'On both sides of the border hundreds of thousands of people are directly affected by overcrowding, extortionate rents, substandard accommodation, insecure tenure and homelessness. This crisis has occurred not by accident, but as a direct result of the housing policies of successive governments'[16]. As a member of the IRSP told me:

> Sinn Féin were never a left-wing organisation. They were always quite right, up until ten fifteen years ago. We were always the left-wing organisation and we were actually the first organisation that went into electoral politics. We wrote the handbook…(Interview 2020).

Hence, Sinn Féin is portrayed as the same capitalist hegemonic oppressor as the British government.

Frame development and innovation

Now that the collective action frames of AGFAR groups are identified, I shall present how these frames are developed and innovated. In the method section I have described the way frames can be developed and innovated through discursive processes, strategic processes and contested processes (Benford and Snow 2000, 623). Quickly summarised, discursive processes refer to talk and conversations, but also written communications through which frames are articulated and amplified (ibid.). Strategic processes, refer to framing processes that are developed with a specific purpose (e.g. to recruit or mobilise) (ibid., 624). These include frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (ibid., 624-625). Lastly, contested processes consist of 'counter frames' by opponents, bystanders and the media, 'frame disputes' within movements and 'the dialectic between frames and events'.

The discursive processes have been quite evident already, with very specific words that extremely emphasise an perpetrator 'other' and a victim of oppression. Besides using harsh words against the other, AGFARs use what Bowman-Grieve and Conway (2012, 79) refer to as 'euphemistic language'. This entails that not only a harsh language is used to attack actions of the other, but also a more subtle language to legitimise and soften their own actions. This is best exemplified by an interview with a former PIRA member:

> Gijs: […] So the IRA changed its policies in '94, they kind of stepped away from violence…
>
> P: No, no, no. The IRA didn't use violence. The IRA was involved in armed struggle.

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[15] These statements were made by Éirígí representatives on *republican.ie.* The title of this topic is: "Food Banks Illustrate The True Impact Of Stormont's Failed Policies", posted January 7, 2015.

[16] Title of topic on *republican.ie*: "Public Housing For All", posted February 2, 2018.

Gijs: Armed struggle. What's the difference?

P: The difference is that the British will say we used violence as a way of delegitimising the armed struggle the IRA was involved in. How things are described is very important. So, anyone of us who was involved with the IRA certainly acknowledge that we were in the IRA and we were involved in armed struggle. That's why we ended up in prison. But the British will use negative language to describe the IRA in the struggle. (Interview 2019).

Even though this interview was with a Provisional, and thus a supporter of Sinn Féin, it most clearly illustrates the way discursive processes are used to develop and innovate the frames, for this tactic is used by all AGFARs. Besides, many current AGFARs split from Sinn Féin on different points in history, and whilst Sinn Féin has mostly changed their narratives, they continued the use words of such as 'armed struggle' and 'oppression' (Hearty 2018b).

When movements or belligerents disagree with the way a conflict is ended, they can 'spoil' the normalisation of the post-conflict state (Hearty 2019, 582). This could be considered a strategic process for the development and innovation of collective action frames. The most obvious spoiler would be the continuation of violence. However, spoiler tactics can also be nonviolent. Bowman-Grieve and Conway (2012, 72) note how online platforms provide an 'always on' space for discussion, consumption, and production of Irish Republicanism. It can play a 'potentially educative role in terms of introducing 'newbies' to VDR (violent dissident republican) ideology and potentially interesting them in 'real world' activity while also acting as a 'maintenance' space for the already committed' (ibid.). In the past couple of months I have regularly visited the forum *republican.ie*, where indeed most members would disapprove of Sinn Féin's policies and alternative republican ideals are expressed. Besides online activity, many AGFARs have their own newspapers, such as *Saorise* (RSF), *Sovereign Nation* (32CSM), or the more general *Irish Republican News* (Whiting 2012, 493). In short, spoiling ideologies are importantly distributed online and through alternative media platforms. Frame alignment processes take place within these spaces, where notions of republicanism and AGFAR activity can be idealised, defined, and generated. Also, the forum republican.ie has a special section on international news, with a specific focus on news from Palestine, Basque Country, Scotland and Native Americans. This reflects processes of frame extension.

The processes of frame bridging or frame extension are often used, and one example of legitimising AGFAR presence is done through 'borrowing legitimacy' (Arar 2017). This entails that republicans in Northern Ireland do not only express international solidarity as a form of altruism but also as a tactical choice that adds an extra dimension to nation-building. Whereas

nationalists often use a certain event in the past to make contemporary claims to the nation that are used to delimit ethnic boundaries and tie a specific ethnic group to a specific territory, these expressions of solidarity add a dimension in not only reaching backwards but also sideways through 'the use of horizontal nation-building strategies that maintain the ethnic boundary and reinforce local nation-building narratives' (Arar 2017, 857). This is illustrated in the following statement from "Saoradh POW Department" on Facebook (posted on April 4, 2020):

> The Saoradh POW department has just been contacted by Republican Prisoners in Roe 4, Maghaberry gaol, and informed that screws [prison officers] have been caught deliberately spitting on doors during night checks. This is clearly a provocative response to demands from prisoners that screws be kept off the Republican wing as they are the only source of potential infection. Prisoners have demanded the retention of footage which shows the screws carrying this out, however this has been greeted with obstinacy by the gaol administration. These actions are aptly reflective of the same endeavours being carried out by the zionist oppressors who have been spitting on the property of Palestinians in occupied Palestine.

Though Arar talks about political elites who are explicitly 'nation-building', I argue that it can be used by anyone for different reasons. For example, with the recent protests following the death of George Floyd in the US, some posts on social media demand justice for similar events in Northern Ireland:

> While one cop.is charged with the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota in the USA I remember Gerard McMahon who died from his injuries after being beaten and gassed by members of the PSNI in Belfast city centre on Thursday 8th September 2016. Yet not one of those present that night were suspended from duty or charged with anything at all.[17]

A person close to McMahon had told me that he was killed 'because he was a Catholic'. However, whether this was the reason remains unclear, also because the investigation seems to suffer many delays (Black 2019). In short, comparisons with nations and events outside of Northern Ireland can be made to legitimate one's opposition to the PSNI or Northern Irish state, and to demand inquiries to be conducted. Besides, failing inquiries or bodies responsible for oversight of the police remain ineffective and lack transparency. This is one of the lessons proposed by O'Neill about police reformation in post-conflict societies (chapter one).

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[17] Facebook post "Mise Éire Irish Folk and Rebel Band" May 31, 2020

Nonviolent spoiling can also be done through symbolic acts. For example, all Irish republicans claim to be the true heirs of the 'original' republican ideology, through remembrances and ceremonies of fallen republicans, both from the 1916 Easter Risings and the Hunger Strikers of 1981 (Morrison 2016, 10-12). Also, historically Irish political prisoners have gained a high level of support, trust, and status. Currently dissidents and dissenters actively campaign for republican prisoners who are still under British occupation for their political status in order to rebuild this historical support (see image) (ibid., 13). Explicit focus on nonviolent actions can also serve to counter the notion that they do have a political goal or endpoint, such as national sovereignty. But they also present themselves as goal-oriented in more practical ways, such as through the distribution of COVID-19 aid throughout Belfast, including within PUL communities (IRSP 2020).

[18]*RNU mural expressing solidarity with Palestine, and campaigning for the re-examination of the trial against "The Craigavon Two", which according to them are republicans falsely accused for the murder of PSNI officer Stephen Carroll in 2009.*

In line with the commemorations of fallen comrades, ritualistic militarised displays at AGFAR funerals also convey a message. These displays are rational and performative at the same time by carrying propagandistic and strategic benefits to AGFAR groups (Hearty 2019, 581-582). They have the propagandistic advantage of demonstrating that militant republicanism is not dead, but 'resurgent and personified by the masses of people joining masked and armed republicans in tribute to the dead' (Hearty 2019, 592). Even nonviolent AGFARs stick to the

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[18] Photo taken by author, West Belfast, March 1, 2020.

'traditional script' including masked men firing weapons above the comrade's coffin (IRSP 2015). This conveys the message that the struggle is not over, in contrast to Sinn Féin's demilitarised funerals which express the transformation from war to peace (Hearty 2019, 587). The discourse constructed through the funerals is also one where the dead, and to a certain extend their AGFAR comrades, fought on behalf of the people with the support of the people at great personal cost, which not only entailed being persecuted by the state but also betrayed and condemned by 'former comrades' (Hearty 2019, 591). These funerals reflect Schröder and Schmidt's (2001, 9) notion that 'violence needs to be imagined in order to be carried out'. Through narratives, performances and inscriptions violent imaginaries can be represented, creating an imaginary of internal solidarity and outside hostility (ibid., 10-11). Narratives, performances and inscriptions that spoil the normalisation of the post-GFA can be found in even the smallest symbolic actions or expressions. Remembering one night having drinks with a group of anti-GFA republicans, they proudly played a Youtube video of a song made by someone they knew. The chorus went:

> *And they're still a rich man's police force,*
> *They serve a rich man's state.*
> *They'll baton charge their workers, in the orders of the great.*
> *They'll use their fathers' weapons to move against the free,*
> *Oh they'll always be the RUC to me.*

- Ciaran Murphy – They'll always be the RUC to me

To summarise, AGFARs vary greatly, but they do share similar collective action frames. They all feel like the Irish republican goal has not yet been reached, and that Sinn Féin has betrayed true Irish republican ideologies. In order to legitimise their presence, AGFARs mostly focus on discrediting the current power-holders. Many ways are possible in which they convey their messages through discursive practices that legitimate the rejection of 'the other'. In this case, 'the other' has mostly been Sinn Féin, the mainstream Irish republican party. However, a way to discredit, or 'spoil', the normalisation of this power-holder would be to avoid any normalisation of the post-GFA state. This includes spoiling the normalisation of the post-GFA police force (Hearty 2019, 585).

Discourses of change and continuation of the police force

As previously mentioned, an interpretation of republican ideology and remaining socio-economic deprivation are some of the reasons the Norther Irish state is seen as illegitimate by AGFARs. Since policing is often seen as the protection of the dominant state and its interests, it is rather logical that the police are rejected as well (Hearty 2018a, 130-131). Rejecting the police (or force others to reject the police) could thus be seen as an active spoiler tactic to oppose the normalisation of the post-GFA state. For example, some groups threaten CNRs who engage with the PSNI, as happened after the killing of Lyra McKee (see image) (Moore 2019). However, some instances have indicated that segments of society get policed differently and opposition or mistrust of the PSNI (and thus the Northern Irish state) could be the consequence of (perceived) mistreatment.

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As stated, discourses are created through the interplay of social practices that can create wider structures that can again create social practices. So far I have looked at the main messages of AGFARs in their collective action frames. In this section, in which I will analyse their negative rapport with the PSNI, I will demonstrate that a discourse is created that constantly focusses on the past, which can be either interpreted in a way that sees Northern Ireland as having changed and progressed, or as still suffering the same imperialism and oppression as it did before.

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19 Picture taken by Margaret McLaughlin, in Moore, Aoife. 2019. "Pro-IRA graffiti at Lyra McKee murder scene warns 'informers will be shot.'" *The Irish News,* May 2, 2019.

I have mentioned that (non-violently) attacking the PSNI is a suitable spoiler tactic for AGFARs. This can be done in a rather direct way of threatening Catholics who want to join the PSNI (Hearty 2017, 208; Marijan and Guzina 2014, 61). However, it is more common to delegitimise the police force using memories of the past. Since in Northern Ireland the past is strongly intertwined with the present, memory plays an important role in (de)legitimising the post-GFA state and its police force. 'Memory wars' (McGrattan 2014, 390) or 'memory politics' (Hearty 2017, 5) refer to explicitly 'forgetting' or 'remembering' memories in order to construct, maintain and challenge political motivated discourses. As explained in chapter two, this seems to happen in all levels of society creating one of the PSNI's obstacles of 'policing the past'. In the case of competing Irish republican groups, memories are used in such a way to either represent a continuity or rupture of the past (Hearty 2017, 5). For example, whereas Sinn Féin uses memory to describe a continuity of their ideology and goal of a united Ireland but a change in tactics, dissidents would argue that Sinn Féin has ruptured from republican ideology. When it comes to policing, Sinn Féin would claim that the PSNI has ruptured from the RUC, whereas AGFARs would state that the PSNI is a continuation of the RUC.

One way of asserting that political policing has remained the same is by referring to the 'PSNI/RUC', which is done in almost any statement by AGFARS. It indicates that people are still being harassed for no legitimate reason (Hearty 2018a, 135). Still, Northern Ireland is not the same as twenty years ago, and a change in context is that the PSNI is less militaristic and more normalised, narrowing down the narrative from widespread 'suspect community harassment' during The Troubles to the harassment of republican activists (Hearty 2018b, 36). Another adaption to a changing wider political context is to make claims from a human rights perspective, pointing out concerns for 'the policing you don't see' (ibid.). An example is this statement from Republican Sinn Féin (2019):

> On the 19 of December in Lurgan, Crown Force Police raided the home of a member of Sinn Féin Poblachtach [RSF], he was subsequently arrested under the Terrorism Act. Since this was reported our comrade who is also a serving member of the Ard Chomhairle [high council] has been released without charge. His young son was in the home at the time and had to witness the horrifying ordeal. This comes as no surprise to Irish Republicans as traditionally the parliamentary police force the RUC/PSNI step up their harassment and intimidation in the lead up to Christmas.

The example illustrates how a continuation of harassment takes place – but against Irish republicans and not the general public – and how human rights are violated. The focus on

specific words or elements in the story, such as the young son having to witness 'the horrifying ordeal' just before Christmas, indicate that narratives of continuing violations of human rights by the PSNI are rational and strategic tactics to demonise the police force. Remember that legitimacy also functions as an expectation for human rights in liberal democracies. By arguing that human rights are violated, the legitimacy of the Northern Irish state is likewise undermined. Still, some evidence does suggest that people are treated unfairly and unequal by the police in Northern Ireland.

Policing between different neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland can vary greatly, and a lot of policing is not seen by the majority. This is not necessarily or only different between CNR and PUL communities, but also varies within CNR and PUL communities (Roche 2008, 47; Bradford et al. 2019, 1023; Ellison et al. 2012, 553; Walsh and Schubotz 2019, 14). There is some evidence that CNR communities might be over-policed. Already touched upon in chapter two, Topping and Bradford (2020, 102) have pointed out that stop and search practices by the PSNI are extremely high compared to the rest of the UK, whilst its effect is minimal to useless. Mostly young males in socio-economic deprived areas are targeted, which negatively affects the PSNI's trust and legitimacy. This is especially the case in CNR communities, where personal memories are contextualised in collective memories of police harassments (Hearty 2017, 229). This is expressed in AGFAR discourses (Saoirse 2020):

> Meanwhile, harassment of our members continues north and south of Britain's Border. In particular members in Derry, Lurgan, Tyrone and Belfast are stopped and searched on a daily basis for no reason by the British colonial police. Republicans will not be deterred by intimidation and harassment and we are determined to continue to oppose British rule in Ireland.

In chapter two I have explained how this over-policing can have a negative impact on the perception of the police. What I illustrate here is that AGFARs use this essence to place it in the collective memory of RUC violations and thus describe a continuation of the past.

Besides over-policing in certain areas, the PSNI might be over-policing legitimate political opposition. Similar to the mainstream discourse about 'dissidents', the PSNI seems to approach opposition to the GFA as a homogenous group advocating for violence and disorder (Hearty 2018a, 133). The result is that legitimate political opposition gets policed, which Hearty refers to as 'political policing' (ibid, 131). The negative label of 'dissident' has legitimised police action against these groups for the rest of society. Those who disagree with society thus become 'police property', meaning they are heavily inspected and sanctioned for the protection

of the post-GFA society (ibid., 135). In the Northern Irish context those overlooked by the changes in the post-GFA state 'championing neoliberalism over addressing socio-economic exclusion can find themselves politically policed if and when they express their dissatisfaction with this' (Hearty 2018a, 135). As explained earlier in this thesis, discourses create notions of 'us' and 'them' and 'conformity' and 'dissent'. In the eyes of the majority, AGFARs are 'them' and 'dissent'. The last term is even the literal term used in mainstream discourses to refer to AGFARs. This means AGFARs inhabit a marginalised position, and can thus be over-policed even though they operate within the law.

Besides the narratives of over-policing, the discourse of under-policing exists in certain areas and communities. This is clearly illustrated in a statement by the Republican Network for Unity (n.d.):

> Republican Network for Unity highlight that PSNI saturation in nationalist communities is undeniable however the crime rate ironically remains high. We highlight that instead of crime prevention their efforts are put into stop and searches and the daily harassment of those who do not conform to their idea of a society, which is clearly unjust while Britain remains in Ireland.

The statement does not only address a perception of over-policing but also under-policing by not being able to prevent crime. I have mentioned in chapter two how the change in the police force remains one of the issues for the PSNI. One of the obstacles in its change process is becoming more effective. A community worker in Belfast explained to me how a sense of under-policing may prevail:

> We have worked for a long time trying people to engage with the PSNI. But they don't see a sense of satisfaction. So there is… you know for example the police may be more interested in getting the guy doing with a million pounds of cocaine or bringing in heroin. But the people who live in communities they want the guy who's selling a hundred pounds of stuff being dealt with. And even if they do, they see situations now where people are being arrested and the same day they're back out in the streets. They are on bail or they are not even on bail, and they don't see that as improvement. That's why we get the situation where we have people turning to these groups to try and get what they feel is not yet resolved. And they [paramilitaries] will manipulate that you know, like: "we will deal with these, we will do what the police won't" (interview 2019).

Hence, perceptions of both over- and under-policing still exist, and may rise because of lacking effectiveness by the PSNI, or because of differing priorities of the community and the police.

Logically, this feeds into the discourse of 'continuity' or 'change', for AGFARs highlighting how harassment is the same and ineffectiveness as well.

Besides the effectiveness of the PSNI being a stubborn point to change, so too is its cultural image. As mentioned in chapter two, there is still no fifty-fifty distribution of Catholics and Protestants in the force, and the Catholics that do have applied are not explicitly Irish nationalists or republicans (Hearty 2017, 187-188). Hence, AGFARs express a continuation of the RUC. On the other hand, pro-GFA republicans such as Sinn Féin will express how the PSNI has no links to the Orange Order anymore, something which the RUC strongly had. This discourse thus indicates that the PSNI has ruptured from the RUC (ibid., 190).

In short, opposition to the GFA, Sinn Féin and the British state is expressed through narratives, performances and inscriptions creating a discourse emphasising a continuation of the unjustifiable past, in which the PSNI functions as a symbol to represent that continuation. The difficulty of the statements of AGFARs about police harassments is that they often use such excessive words that they are clearly expressed to delegitimise the PSNI, therefore making the statements in themselves highly questionable. However, there are also quite some indications that AGFARs do get mistreated without a proper reason. Evidence either confirming or countering accusations is scarce. During my stay in Belfast I would often hear stories about republicans being harassed. A member of 32CSM told me:

> From an early age I was constantly harassed by a crowd of sectarian peelers from Oldpark Barracks who have all subsequently moved on to higher positions within the RUC/PSNI. I remember one time in 2005 when I was 15, I was passing the barracks when a crowd of peelers came out of the gates taunting me, I responded by standing my ground in front of them and not moving. They began screaming that I should move on "or else". Obviously being a stubborn teenager, I told them to fuck off, they then dragged me by the scruff of my neck into the gates of the barracks where they proceeded to choke, punch and kick me on the ground. After the beating and a few threats from them I was thrown outside onto the road and received boot right between my legs. By this time residents living near the barracks had come out of their homes to see what was going on and voice their anger at what was happening to me, the peelers got agitated and decided to call out an armoured jeep to arrest me, I was taken to Antrim road barracks where I spent my first night in police cell. […] A few weeks later I got a letter from the ombudsman office which told me that they had done an investigation and found that out of 170 plus CCTV cameras in Oldpark barracks, none of them recorded on the night, the only thing the ombudsman had was the statements of British state forces to say I was arrested for disorderly behaviour, obstruction, resisting arrest and assault on police. I was taken to court a month later and received a 12 month custodial sentence suspended for 2 years. This told me that neither the

British police force, the police ombudsman office or the British judicial system would ever be held accountable when it comes to working class Republican people.

Unfortunately, it has been impossible to assess whether these extreme stories are true or not. There are many similar stories, there is even a Facebook page called "Ruc psni harassment of republicans exposed". Here too, real tangible evidence is lacking. A case that illustrates the multiple interpretations that a story can have is that of Colin Duffy (Irish Republican News 2020; Saoradh 2020). He had accordingly been arrested for breaching his bail whilst awaiting trial. In discourses in republican newspapers or forums, this accusation was not only false, but also happened on the birthday of his recently deceased son. This had, according to them, been done on purpose in order to harass Duffy for being a political opponent. Once again, whether these allegations are true is a question I am not able to answer.

There has been some evidence however that AGFARs have been mistreated. One example is that of IRSP member McElkerney (Young 2020). Earlier this year he was arrested and three policemen accused him of hitting them with his car. However, camera recordings on a nearby house later revealed that their story was false. The political policing narrative becomes evident in McElkerney's defence: 'these officers told blatant lies about me, in what was a deliberate attempt to punish me for my membership of the IRSP and my political activism […]' (Jackson 2020). Although by using the lens of discourse analysis the factual truth might be less important than the through discourses produced reality, I argue that the lack of factual evidence or research generates a great gap of knowledge on the topic of AGFARs and police legitimacy in Northern Ireland. Either (nonviolent) AGFARs' human rights are violated and they are unreasonably marginalised by the police and wider society, or the lack of counter evidence is the reason for growing support for violent dissident groups that have become more effective and dangerous in their attacks, and have improved their utilisation of their public relations and propaganda activities (Taylor and Currie 2011, 173). I argue that both these possible realities, the continued marginalisation of a section of society or the growing support of (violent) opposition because of a lacking counter-narratives, form a great obstacle for the continuation of the peace process, and therefore needs more research.

The pitfall of the continuity discourse

In this last paragraph I will briefly reflect on the most likely future for AGFARs. Whilst AGFARs do have ways to convey their frames that should mobilise opposition to the status quo, and there does seem to be a growing support for AGFAR groups, they remain minority

groups within the political and republican arenas. The discourse that focusses on a continuation of the past results according to Hoey (2019, 76) in remaining a twentieth century lens lacking nuance for the current context in which political, economic and identity structures are different. They lack agency from a doctrinal unwillingness to compromise political ideologies and strategies, which have always led to marginalisation. This has for example led to the ironic situation that Éirígí, RSF, RNU and the IRSP where on the same campaign as Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson. They oppose the EU because their ideology of complete Irish national sovereignty and self-determination, even though 85 percent of the remain votes came from CNR areas (ibid., 82-83). AGFARs fail to seek political representation in either the assembly or national parliaments, and the lack of activity in the electoral space marginalises them from a political public sphere dominated by the larger political parties and mainstream media. Their left-wing analysis of the highlight congested ideological space makes it difficult for them to differentiate themselves. Because of this they have failed to develop a critical mass of activists that can influence the public sphere (Hoey 2019, 84-85). Sinn Féin's success comes from acknowledging traditional republican goals within modern democratic principles of justice, equality, and peace (Whiting 2016, 547). Sinn Féin adapted to the 'rules of the game' through removing unpopular connections, changing party strategy, organisational structure (centralisation and intra-party authority), professionalism and support of more progressive politics (gay rights, gender equality) (ibid.). The IRSP for example seems to have difficulties losing its negative ties with the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) (Hoey 2019, 79). The INLA has been involved in numerous crimes ranging from drug dealing to running a brothel which the IRSP still explicitly had to distance itself from (Fitzmaurice 2018). Also, the IRSP has accused the PSNI of falsely linking a drug dealer to the INLA in order to give them a bad name[20]. Apparently though, the IRSP still needs to defend itself against accusations against the INLA, and thus has not overcome its negative links with the past. In short, AGFARs express a discourse of continuation: of the RUC, British imperialism, an ongoing conflict, and a continuation of their republican ideology. However, their stubborn connection with the past and unwillingness to compromise seems to paralyse them from any political support in contemporary Northern Ireland.

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[20] Posted on Facebook by "IRSP Lower Falls" on March 11, 2020.

Conclusion and Discussion

The inspiration of this thesis has been the negative portrayal of the PSNI by Irish republicans who object the GFA. Especially stories of harassment by those who are lawful and nonviolent in their political opposition triggered my curiosity. To help understand these discourses that cultivate an objection of the PSNI, I have analysed the collective action frames deployed by AGFARs. Before this analysis however, I have examined what police legitimacy exactly entails and what obstacles the PSNI faces in gaining legitimacy. Throughout the chapters, I have answered four sub-questions in order to construct a holistic answer to the main research question.

In the first chapter I have answered the question: *what is legitimacy and how can legitimacy be maintained and cultivated by police forces in post-conflict societies?* A review of academic literature has shown that legitimacy is the recognition of power and a justification of that power. This is achieved through a dialogue between one or more audiences and the power-holder in which all groups may identify with each other. For audiences, consent and lawfulness are important, but more importantly there needs to be a perception that the audience and power-holder share the same values and ideas. This means for the police that they must be perceived to satisfy the expectations of effectiveness, procedural justice and distributive justice. Because it entails a *perception,* narratives that construct a reality that legitimise the power-holder are most important. However, some have more power to define reality than others. In order to be as effective and legitimate as possible for police forces in post-conflict societies, I have ended the chapter with O'Neill's framework on what we know about effective police reformations in post-conflict societies.

To have a better understanding of the context where anti-PSNI discourses occur, chapter two has focussed on the specific obstacles for the PSNI and the way these obstacles can undermine their legitimacy. In other words: *what are the obstacles undermining the legitimacy for the Police Service of Northern Ireland?* I have answered this question by using and expanding Murphy's analytical framework that illustrates the PSNI policing in a liminal space. First, there is the issue of policing the past. Consociationalism has created a society in a political deadlock, where progression for the whole of society suffers and politicians exacerbate the existing tensions and divisions. The second issue of policing in a liminal space relates to the difficulties the PSNI faces in reforming themselves. This refers to their identity, effectiveness, culture, and 'street-level' legitimacy. Lastly, external issues within the Northern Irish context challenge the 'golden standard' for the PSNI to operate, for example undermining an

independent oversight body assessing police accountability. This is one of the necessities identified by O'Neill that seems to be lacking. In short, policing in a liminal space constructs a lot of obstacles for the police to effectively operate, be legitimate, and have the power to define a reality that legitimises its power-position. O'Neill's lessons on police reform have not fully been employed in Northern Ireland.

After having explained what legitimacy is and why the PSNI is having difficulties defying a reality in which it fulfils the expectations of its audience, I took a closer look at the collective action frames deployed by AGFARs. I answered two questions in this chapter: *what are the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames deployed by different AGFARs in contemporary Northern Ireland?*, and; *how are collective action frames expressed and deployed by different AGFAR groups in Northern Ireland?* AGFAR groups vary greatly, so besides legitimising their presence and supporting their own tactics, prognostic frames are very different. However, they do have in common that they all reject the current power-holders and the status quo of Northern Ireland, and they all seek to gain support by (non)violently attacking the current power-holders. They do this by spoiling the normalisation process of the post-GFA state. Examples of discursive processes are the words used to demonise the other and soften their own actions. Frame bridging and frame extension can be done through 'borrowing legitimacy', or building on international understandings of how a liberal democracy should operate and denying that Northern Ireland fits those norms. Symbols of opposition are found everywhere, such as in daily talk, in songs, or in murals. Other narratives, performances and images spoiling the post-GFA state can be the campaigning for republican prisoners, remembering and commemorating the 1916 Easter Rising or the 1981 Hunger Strikers, and performances of militaristic funerals.

By having answered all these questions I will return to the main question of this research:

how can the analysis of collective action frames expressed by anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans help understand the discourses delegitimising the Police Service of Northern Ireland in Northern Ireland from 1998 up to now?

The answer would be that the collective action frames employed by AGFARs create a discourse that understands the present as a continuation of the past. Not only policing takes place within a liminal space, everything in Northern Ireland takes place with one eye on the present and on the past. AGFARs' focus on the past creates discourses deflecting a continuation of the past,

which legitimises the presence of AGFARs. They all claim to represent the true Irish republican spirit, especially with a reference to the Proclamation of Ireland from 1916, whilst mainstream and most powerful republican party Sinn Féin is described as having abandoned republican ideology, the Irish cause and thus the Irish people. This eye on the past also describes a continuation of biased, sectarian and colonial police force. These action frames could be deployed with a very strategic purpose. The police carries a great symbolic value of the post-GFA state, and it is thus logical that its legitimacy is undermined by those who reject the GFA. However, there are also indications that republican groups and areas unfairly get over-policed, outside of the eyes of the majority of the population. This can breed opposition amongst those victim to over-policing, but also cultivates support for republican groups that seek to undermine police legitimacy in the first place.

Although discourses construct a past in which the actual facts might be less important, I argue that more qualitative research needs to be done to some of the accusations against the police, especially by republican groups that form opposition through lawful means. Many questions are still unanswered: was McMahon really killed because he was a Catholic? Did the police purposely arrest Duffy on the birthday of his diseased son? And did the PSNI really falsely link a drug dealer to the IRSP? Answering these questions will either reveal that genuine political opposition and a minority group in society unjustifiably get marginalised. This would be illegitimate in a liberal democracy 'at peace', and the forced dull compulsion that follows for these minority groups will create a society where peace is unstable in the long run. On the other hand, answering the questions about the allegations against the PSNI may provide the now still insufficient counter-narrative that could halt the growth of support and capacities for violent Irish republicans. The improved knowledge for both these outcomes would be of great importance for a better continuation of the peace process.

Limitations

One of the most evident limitations of this research has been that I could not check if all my interpretations of collective action frames corresponded with the individuals who expressed them. Another limitation is that although I had conducted a number of interviews, these happened when I was researching a different topic. Only a small amount of data from these interviews was therefore useful. Lastly, I have mostly been looking for collective action frames and discourses online. This limited the variety of data that I could find, giving a less holistic picture.

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