

CONFRONTING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: A NORTHERN IRELAND CASE STUDY

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Introduction

British post-war defence policy has been dominated by the progressive abandonment of Empire. Dockrill (1988) notes that this has required the British Army to refine and develop the military and policing skills associated with colonial disengagement. Since 1945 the British have developed experience, flexibility and skill in handling insurgency.

There are numerous dimensions to modern insurgency covering economic political and military dimensions, indeed modern insurgency implies some mix of political, social and military agendas. British experience, particularly during the Malaysian campaign of the 1960s, highlighted the need to coordinate both the military and civil response to isolate the insurgents from their support. A major feature of counter insurgency since the war has been the degree to which the security forces have employed local forces, and developed local manpower resources. These resources are important not simply for their intelligence value, but also provide a legitimate means by which sections of the indigenous population can express support for counter insurgency measures. Such locally recruited forces also relieve manpower pressure on the military. Involvement in counter insurgency may interfere with normal or conventional training. The British Army is faced with the seemingly endless task of policing Northern Ireland, and the resulting strain on army manpower has been partially relieved by the increase of manpower within the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), and the establishment and gradual refinement of locally recruited military support.

This paper describes the social and political background to the conflict in Northern Ireland, and traces the development of the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) through its predecessor the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), a locally recruited military force consisting of both full and part-time soldiers. The paper explores the belief structures of actors within what is now the Royal Irish Regiment; it sets these attitudes and beliefs within the political and social context of Northern Ireland; and it shows how many of these attitudes run counter to the Regiment's declared aim of broadening its acceptability to the minority catholic community. The paper highlights the particular problems faced by the organisation in achieving acceptability throughout the community – a prerequisite to the achievement of the organisation's mission; it develops a typology of behaviour

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within the organisation; and it points to a number of possible strategies for the organisation as it tries to resolve the dilemma of mission and acceptability.

The findings form part of a continuing research project studying the occupational culture of members of the Northern Ireland security forces. The fundamental point of a study of occupational culture is that the analysis of an occupation proceeds from the recognition that work communities are not simply random aggregates of individual workers. It starts from the position that the interpretation and meanings that individuals give to organisations are critically dependent upon the social and cultural context within which these organisations have developed. This paper suggests that the Royal Irish Regiment, although a part of the United Kingdom's wider military organisation, is in reality locked into the structure of Northern Irish society. The Regiment is unique in the British Army in possessing both full and part-time soldiers. It has one overseas battalion, whilst the remainder of the Regiment is dedicated to service in Northern Ireland. Members of the Regiment live in the community and yet are fully operational throughout the year in counter-terrorist operations in the Province. Members of the Regiment therefore require some conception of society and the forces that give it shape, in order for them to orientate their work. The ideas, both implicit and explicit, that these soldiers hold about society help to formulate their views of what their job is all about. This is particularly critical in the context of a Regiment which has developed in a society dominated by major social division concerning the legitimacy of the State and the position occupied within it by the two main religious traditions.

Northern Irish Society

Northern Ireland is a society divided along religious and political lines. Protestant and catholic segregation has a long history in Northern Irish society and is central to an understanding of its' organisational and social structure. Wright (1973) suggests that the distinctions of protestant and catholic have a significance attached to them which is rare in western societies. The labels protestant and catholic are broad indicators, and may understate political and social complexities within each category. The distinction is, however, an important shorthand for describing patterns of cultural and political allegiance which constitute social division in the Province, and reinforce the mutual ignorance and hostility between the catholic, predominantly Irish nationalist, minority and the protestant majority which supports the union of Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom. This fundamental political and religious division is manifested in high levels of politically inspired violence.

Membership of either the protestant or catholic community ascribes a basic status within society. Society is characterised by a unity of personal relationships where 'community' dominates the structure of these relationships. To this extent we can talk of Northern Ireland as displaying many aspects of *Gemeinschaft* society (Tonnie's 1971), where the traditional nature of the society is characterised by particularistic and ascribed relations. Within Northern Ireland relationships are personalised, individuals

relating to each other not simply in terms of immediate transactions but rather in terms of the totality of their experiences of each other. *Gemeinschaft* society suggests that social life and work activity are patterned along lines of personal relationships. It is such personal relationships that are mediated by religious allegiance ascribed at birth. This suggests that action is a symbolic derivation conducted according to a limited range of consensual norms which are shared and understood by the actors.

The type of society here described affects our view of organisations. *Gesellschaft* societies can expect clear distinctions to exist between the spheres of work and family and education, which operate as distinct realms of separate activity. Within Northern Ireland the traditional nature of the community structure suggests that social and work activities are patterned along the strict identities provided by religion. Recruitment to these activities is perceived on the basis of initial religious identity. Thus the protestant community, like its catholic counterpart, holds and maintains a range of institutional labels which act as community identifiers locating the individual within the protestant or catholic community.

It is possible to talk about this as an 'ideology' appearing as it does to contain systematic assertions about Northern Ireland which contain evaluations about the distribution of power in society. Such community ideologies derive in part, from accumulated historical contingencies and create in society a 'crisis of authority'. This occurs because it is only within the protestant community that adherence to the structure of law and order is implicit in the community's value structure. This adherence to Unionist values features both as the basis of social order and as a meaning system which confirms the community and, in the present case, of the Regiment's position within it.

Research Findings

The last twenty years has seen a continuing terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland, led principally by the Provisional wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA derives its support from sections within the minority catholic population, and has sought to remove the British presence from Northern Ireland. Government security policy in Northern Ireland places primary responsibility for the defeat of this terrorist campaign in the hands of the police. The Regiment therefore acts mainly in support of the RUC. Government security policy recognises that the actions of the police and military against terrorism require the support of both the catholic and protestant communities. Strenuous efforts have therefore been made to render both police and military organisations more acceptable to all sections of Northern Irish society. The Royal Irish Regiment derives its origins from the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). The UDR was established in April 1970. The establishment of the Regiment was one of the principal recommendations of the Hunt Commission's report in 1969 into policing in the Province. It was proposed that a new, mainly part-time military force should be established which would be locally recruited. The Commission thought that a new military force would attract broad cross

community support, and would provide a legitimate vehicle for public action in the face of the developing terrorist campaign.

Research on social attitudes in Northern Ireland has demonstrated that the UDR did not command universal support. The 1989 Northern Ireland Social Attitude Survey (NISAS) painted a depressing picture for the Regiment. The survey shows that after twenty operational years there existed marked hostility to the Regiment among the catholic community, and among the protestant population the Regiment was considered the least impartial of all the security forces. Thus the NISAS found only 20% of the catholic population and only 60% of the protestant population believe that the Regiment acts impartially.

The survey reported here explored the religious composition and friendship patterns of soldiers, as well as their attitudes to the issues of religious and political prejudice in society, and to the major issues of law and order. In this paper the views of the Regiments' soldiers are compared, where appropriate, to those of the Northern Ireland population as a whole, using data derived from the 1989 NISAS. The views of part-time soldiers often differ significantly from those of their full-time colleagues. Views may also differ according to rank. The data are therefore displayed, where appropriate, to highlight these differences.

Religion and friendship

In Northern Ireland social identity is about religion, friendship patterns and neighbourhood. These are the factors which represent the shared ideas which serve to structure social action and which form the symbolic frameworks around which people structure their lives. These factors interplay to form a culturally and politically divided society. Table 1 compares the religious composition of soldiers in the Regiment with that of the population of Northern Ireland as a whole.

Table 1: % Religious Composition of the Regiment Compared with the NI population

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Part-time Soldiers</i>	<i>Full-time Soldiers</i>	<i>NI Population¹</i>
<i>Catholic</i>	7	3	36
<i>Protestant</i>	77	76	49
<i>Christian non-specific</i>	4	8	2
<i>None</i>	10	11	
<i>Refused to say</i>	2	2	12

Source: ¹ NISAS

The table demonstrates that at 5% of the Regiment's membership, catholics, who represent 36% of the population, are significantly under-represented.

To understand the political and social attitudes of the Regiment, we need to know something about the patterns of social contact that may influence their attitudes. The NISAS found that within both communities in the Province there exists antipathy toward cross community contact; within the general population there are high levels of shared religious identity between respondents, neighbours and friends. The NISAS confirmed the Northern Ireland population as a religiously segregated set of communities. The data on the Regiment confirms this pattern. Reported friendship patterns among the soldiers show little apparent contact across the community divide. Friendships are for the most part drawn from those of the same religion.

Table 2: Rank and Source of Friendships

<i>Friends of same Religion</i>	<i>Officers</i>		<i>Senior Ranks</i>		<i>Junior Ranks</i>	
	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>
<i>Most or All</i>	67	33	65	68	74	77
<i>Half</i>	—	—	22	19	15	13
<i>Less than half</i>	33	50	4	11	7	3
<i>None</i>	—	—	—	—	1	—
<i>Do not know</i>	—	17	9	2	3	7

Table 2 shows that it is only among officers that any significant friendships develop among those of a different religion. There is a general recognition that friendship patterns are opinion forming and reinforcing agents. The research found that over 60% of all respondents recognised that friendships were chosen or maintained on the basis of the sharing of opinions. These soldiers, therefore, drawn almost exclusively from within the protestant community, will have little knowledge or understanding of the catholic community.

The Regiment is subject to the political imperative to broaden its recruitment base to make it more reflective of society at large. This research shows, however, that the major source of recruitment, particularly for part-time soldiers, is the neighbourhood in which they live. This raises a particular problem for the Regiment since the segregation of communities in Northern Ireland may result in the existing religious composition of the Regiment replicating itself through the recruitment process.

Security Issues

Concern at the perceived lack of impartiality of the security forces has been at the heart of political debate in the Province for some years. It is clear from the NISAS that both the police and the military lack the confidence of a large section of the catholic community. Members of the Regiment were therefore asked how they perceived the ability of the security forces to treat the public fairly.

Table 3: Rank and Attitudes toward Impartiality

<i>% Believing that Catholics and Protestants are treated FAIRLY by:</i>	<i>Officers</i>		<i>Senior Ranks</i>		<i>Junior Ranks</i>	
	<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>	
	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>	<i>F/T</i>	<i>P/T</i>
<i>The Police</i>	50	71	48	82	43	53
<i>The Army</i>	50	57	51	74	43	42
<i>The Regiment</i>	50	57	57	87	43	57

Table 3 shows the remarkably low confidence that soldiers have in the impartiality of these organisations. Few soldiers believe that the security forces are impartial in their approach to the catholic population. Full-time members of the Regiment appear to have even less confidence in the impartiality of these institutions compared with their part-time colleagues. Thus less than 50% of full-time soldiers believe that the Regiment itself treats both communities fairly. There is a notable difference in the influence of rank upon attitude; although there is little distinction between the views of full-time officers and those of other full-time soldiers on the issue of impartiality, the Table highlights significant distinctions, according to rank, in the attitudes of part-time soldiers. Senior part-time ranks appear far more committed to the impartial treatment of the public than other part-time soldiers.

The research also suggests that the Regiment may have a moderating influence upon attitude. Thus the older the soldier, the more support there is for the concept of impartiality by the security forces. Moreover the longer the soldier serves in the Regiment, the stronger becomes the belief in the ability both of the Regiment and other branches of the security forces to treat the public with a high degree of impartiality.

Community attitudes

The study examined the perceptions that are held by soldiers, of religious and political discrimination and prejudice in Northern Ireland. It is clear from Table 4 that soldiers recognise that there is considerable prejudice in Northern Ireland.

Table 4: Age of Soldiers and their view of the current state of discrimination

Age (years)	- 30 %		30-39 %		40-49 %	
	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T
Prejudice against Catholics is:						
<i>Better</i>	59	50	68	56	67	29
<i>Same</i>	29	29	23	32	22	50
<i>Worse</i>	12	21	9	12	11	21
Prejudice against Protestants is:						
<i>Better</i>	23	20	13	17	-	7
<i>Same</i>	30	44	46	43	33	64
<i>Worse</i>	44	36	41	40	67	29

Table 4 suggests that soldiers believe that discrimination against the catholic community is in decline. The table also shows that there is a general belief, held particularly strongly amongst the part-time soldiers, that there is increasing discrimination against the protestant community. Beliefs concerning religious prejudice in society are deeply embedded in the attitudes of respondents. Soldiers were therefore asked whether they believe that religion will always make a difference to peoples' perceptions of each other in Northern Ireland.

Table 5: Religion of Soldiers and belief that religion will always remain a key factor in way people view each other in Northern Ireland

	Catholic %		Protestant %		No Religion %	
	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T	P/T	F/T
<i>Remain important</i>	63	86	81	86	83	92
<i>Not remain important</i>	13	-	12	11	17	4
<i>Don't know</i>	24	14	7	3	-	4

Table 5 shows that soldiers hold a consistently strong belief in the significance of religion as a factor in society. Members of the Regiment appear a more optimistic grouping than the population at large on this issue. Table 5 shows that almost 80% of soldiers believe that religion will continue to make a difference to community relationships. These responses are slightly lower than those for the Northern Ireland population as a whole, which show that 83% of the Catholic and 88% of the protestant population believe that religion will remain the dominant factor in relationships.

Table 6: Rank of Soldiers and desire for increasing Cross-border Co-operation

	<i>Officers</i>		<i>Senior Ranks</i>		<i>Junior Ranks</i>	
	<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>	
	<i>PT</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>FT</i>
<i>Agree</i>	57	83	57	56	40	43
<i>Disagree</i>	43	17	39	40	44	49
<i>Do not know</i>	–	–	4	4	16	8

Allied to these findings, soldiers were asked whether they believe that there should be increased cooperation in all spheres of life with people in the Republic of Ireland. Table 6 shows that enthusiasm for cross border cooperation is directly related to the rank of the soldier.

Officers and senior ranks are far more enthusiastic about the possibilities of cross-border cooperation than junior ranks; 70% of officers support the proposition, compared to 40% of the junior ranks.

Social Issues

The survey explored attitudes to a number of social issues which are of concern in the Province. These include the issue of capital punishment, the sentencing policy of the courts, and the existing system of segregated education. There is a major divergence between the views of the Regiment and those of the population at large on the vexed issue of capital punishment. The NISAS demonstrates, perhaps surprisingly, that the views of the Northern Ireland population are more liberal on the issue of capital punishment than those of the rest of the UK. Thus only 59% of the NI population support the use of capital punishment in contrast to 74% of the rest of the UK. However, in Northern Ireland views on the death penalty differ dramatically according to religion with only 31% of the catholic population supporting its use compared to 77% of protestants. The research shows that there is overwhelming support among soldiers for the return of capital punishment, with over 90% agreeing that it is the most appropriate form of punishment for some crimes. This support does not vary according to age or length of service, or rank, and catholic members of the Regiment are far more supportive of the death penalty than the catholic population at large with over 80% supporting the proposition.

Catholic members of the Regiment also differ dramatically from the catholic population at large in their views concerning the sentencing policy of the courts. Over 90% of catholic members of the Regiment believe that existing sentencing policy is too lenient. This stands in contrast to only 66% of the Northern Ireland catholic population as a whole. Support for stronger sentencing by the courts is overwhelming, and differs little by age or rank or length of service.

Discussion

The research confirms an overwhelmingly protestant Regiment. Its organisational culture, and its soldiers' views on a range of social and political attitudes generally reflect Northern Irish protestant opinion. There are, however, a number of significant areas where the views of soldiers differ from the views of the protestant population, and where the Regiment appears to act as a moderating or tempering influence upon opinion. Younger soldiers and those with less than 3 years' service appear to be far more conservative in their views than their older colleagues, or those who have longer service in the Regiment. There are also a number of social issues on which the part-time soldiers appear more liberal in their response than their full-time colleagues. Officers also have more cross-community contact and appear more committed to the idea of security force impartiality than other ranks.

The research suggests that there may be a series of conflicts within the Regiment between tradition and modernity. There are many in the Regiment who hold a strongly dichotomous view of society, which explains behaviour by reference back to past events. They are strongly British, and view society as structured along religious lines of national identity. In marked contrast is a numerically smaller, more elusive group. This group seeks to minimize the scale and threat of inter-community conflict and is more receptive to the idea of increased cross-community contact. Officers and some more senior ranks, particularly within the part-time element of the Regiment, may form part of this group where attitudes and values appear less extreme.

It is also clear from the research that the small number of catholic members of the Regiment possess a range of attitudes that stand in marked contrast to the wider catholic community. Membership of the Regiment therefore appears a much more difficult process for the catholic recruit, who when joining the Regiment has to detach himself more fully from his own community than does the protestant recruit. The occupational culture of the Regiment may ensure that catholic recruitment is limited to those who are prepared to subscribe to a set of values often apparently irreconcilable with those of the catholic community at large. The part-time catholic recruit also often faces the additional problem of living and working within a community, elements of which may directly oppose his part-time membership.

The research confirms the Regiments' membership as a religiously and socially isolate group. It conforms in general to the picture of Northern Ireland provided by national research data which shows residential segregation as a major factor in attitudinal formation. This may provide serious questions for the recruiting agenda for the Regiment. The Regiment is subject to the imperative to broaden its recruitment base to make it more reflective of society at large. The research has shown that the major source of recruitment, particularly for part-time soldiers, is the neighbourhood in which they live, and their friendships. The research also shows neighbourhood and friendships to be religiously homogeneous. The consequence of this is that the Regiment is in danger of recruiting 'much of the same, from the same', with the same religious

composition and attitudes replicating themselves through the recruitment process. The evidence of this research shows that the attitudes of soldiers are to some degree, tempered by length of service, and the distinctions between full and part-time service. Such a socializing process however, offers no direct challenge to the distorted nature of the Regiment's recruitment.

The Regiment is confronted with the social and political imperative of broadening its acceptability to the society at large and the catholic community in particular. Ryder (1991) argues that having failed in its task of obtaining cross-community support the organisation should be disbanded. The Government, as part of its general defence review, responded to this problem through the amalgamation of the UDR with the Royal Irish Rangers, to forge a new occupational culture, new values, symbols and beliefs, dressed in the newly formed 'Royal Irish Regiment'. The Royal Irish Rangers recruited throughout Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and was the inheritor of a broad all-Ireland recruitment tradition. It had also a wider infantry role, not confined to internal security. The amalgamation therefore provides increased catholic membership for the Regiment, whilst offering a broader recruitment base to its full-time membership.

The RIR is therefore subject to the traumatic process of organisational change. Mintzberg (1987) has shown that in studies of organisational change there exist a number of constraining conditions caused by the technological, bureaucratic and social momentum existing within organisations. Adaptation of the new Regiment to these changes in its environment are both constrained and conditioned by these forces. This research also suggests that contexts can be interpreted differently among actors; thus change within the Regiment is a power process in which dimensions such as culture and ideology become central.

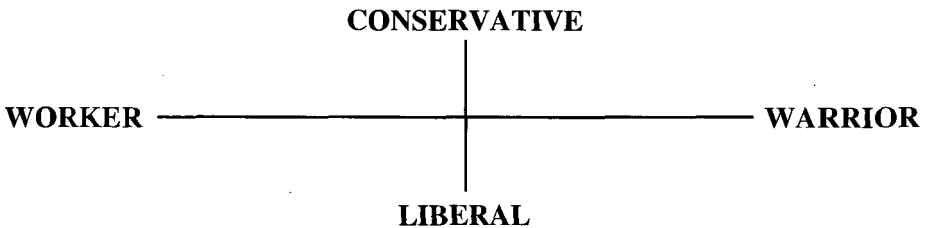
Strategic reorientation of the Regiment is largely the result of legitimation processes in which the ability of certain actors to create and sustain power enough to enforce their interpretations of the organisation and its environment, determines the direction and strategy of the Regiment. Thus a variety of differing interests inhibit change, and coalitions form around specific interests. The ability of actors or groups of actors to change dominant rationalities is primarily determined by their ability to make their interpretation of what the organisation *should* be, legitimate with significant others, thereby creating support or acquiescence of other powerful actors in the organisation. This explains why the generation and manipulation of symbols, rituals, language and beliefs, are a vital process of organisational change.

The survey findings when allied to the concurrent research activity of participant observation, and taped interviews, make it possible to construct a typology of members of the Regiment. It is through the use of a typology that connections can be made between social action and differing meaning systems. Through these type constructs it is possible to pose questions about the nature of the organisation and its future.

The categories that are developed are of course ideal types and necessarily abstractions from reality, but they are empirically derived from the range of characteristics

revealed by this research. It is also a typology that possesses both qualitative and quantitative foundations. However, membership of the protestant community imposes a strong range of internalised rules and sanctions against their breach. Thus variations of behaviour are, of necessity, often merely slight shifts of emphasis rather than dramatic clashes of attitude and behaviour. It is unlikely, of course, that any soldier fits exactly one or other of the types outlined. It may in fact be more appropriate to view these types as a continuum where soldiers may approximate to one or more of the types outlined.

Figure 1



The type constructs of this research relate back to Webers (1964) classic sociology. Weber distinguishes between *zweckrational* and *wertrational* categories of social action. The *wertrational* is identified as an orientation based upon traditional sets of absolute values about the nature of society and the role of institutions within it. Much literature in the field of socialization provides a ready explanation for the development of traditional values. In the context of the Regiment this we may be referred to as the WARRIOR type. This type subscribes to a set of values that place heavy reliance upon group solidarity and the pursuit of public esteem which may be associated with the military task. This type places a high value upon informal group cohesion, loyalty and a sense of comradeship. The Warrior type holds a sense of fraternity which may be associated with a particular company or platoon. It implies, on certain issues, a rejection of civilian values and norms. The Warriors in this study may therefore place a high value on friendships derived and sustained through their military commitment. They would have a high level of satisfaction from the military task itself. It may also be expected that commitment of the Warrior to the organisation is primarily based upon a sense of public duty, and a conscious commitment to the military contribution to the solution of social and political problems.

The *zweckrational* category of social action identified by Weber implies a purely rational calculative orientation; it is a rejection of traditionalism, and is often associated with the modern instrumentality thesis of Goldthorpe (1968). This may be referred to as the WORKER type. This type stands in marked contrast to the Warrior in possessing a primary instrumental orientation to the work – soldiering is seen simply as a job, offering a particular set of terms and conditions of employment and a particular

authority structure. The job of soldiering is not seen as possessing any particular moral connotations; thus the Worker underplays the importance of loyalty, morale and 'esprit de corps' – aspects of the military culture which may be valued highly by the Warrior. In the context of this study, Workers may place a high value on the financial returns to soldiering. There may be less concern with the political context of soldiering in an internal security situation, and more recognition of the part that the Regiment plays in the general employment context in Northern Ireland. The organisation may offer financial security. It may offer the opportunity to acquire new skills and training. It may also offer a measure of job security in an economically uncertain environment. The Regiment provides, for a number of soldiers, a career structure and status and an element of financial security. This is central to the full-time soldier, but may also provide a vital compensation for the lack of opportunity or status offered in the full-time job of the part-time soldier. Thus there may be particular concern with self-advancement, and the satisfaction of a variety of personal needs.

Any typology needs to be sensitive to the differing perceptions of social identity and minority relationships that are held within an essentially protestant monolith. A number of writers have attempted to distinguish between differing branches of this monolith. These analyses are nearly always on the basis of the differing perceptions of catholicism which are central to most divisions of protestant life. The most helpful distinction is Wright's (1973) distinction between conservative and liberal Unionists, which in varying ways has been picked up by McKitterick (1980) and Nelson (1984). In the present context the Warrior/Worker typology may be intersected with a Conservative/Liberal dichotomy. (See Figure 1.)

The mutually contradictory groupings within Northern Ireland society result in many of the actors within the protestant community displaying a high degree of loyalty to the power structure and disavowing any consideration of the minority view. Thus the CONSERVATIVE sees membership of the Regiment primarily in terms of a dichotomous vision of society, and the need to defend 'protestant' values against the minority community. Membership of the Regiment is seen as an ostensible expression of this defence. It is a meaning system that explains behaviour by reference back to past events and a protestant 'folk memory'. The Conservative is concerned with the preservation and maintenance of particular sets of values and a way of life. It is by implication a rejection of a range of values which are associated with a complex social structure. The Conservative subscribes to an authoritarian power structure, which may offer stability in the context of a turbulent society.

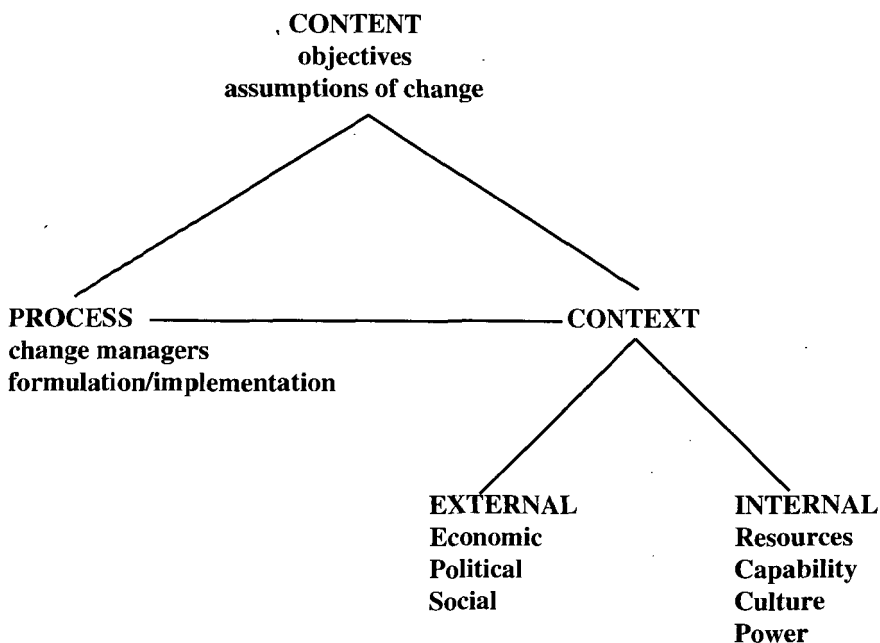
The LIBERAL may stand in marked contrast to the Conservative. The Liberal may seek to diminish and erode social boundaries, and develop levels of social contact between the two communities. The Liberals may see themselves as dissenting from what they perceive as a triumphalist protestant occupational culture. The Liberal is more receptive to the ideas of cross community contact, less isolate, less dogmatic in views on social and political issues. The Liberal may therefore view the Regiment in

calculative, instrumental terms. This may be either within the Regiment, or as a support for activity in the wider community.

The typology may assist understanding of the processes associated with change within the Regiment, which can be illustrated by the model outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2

A MODEL OF CHANGE IN THE REGIMENT



Content

The objective of the change process may be summarized as making the Regiment more acceptable to the community at large, and to the minority catholic population in particular. This would produce the additional advantage of achieving the Government’s aim of reducing military costs through the amalgamation of the UDR with the Royal Irish Rangers. This process should achieve a longer term aim of relieving general UK troops from their constant role in Northern Ireland by provision of a more acceptable, more professional, locally recruited force.

Process

The Regiment is assisted in this change process by a number of factors. Senior officer posting into the Regiment ensures that senior power holders in the Regiment are not subject to the constraining influences of a conservative occupational culture. Also, the Regiments’ Officer Corps, both full and part-time, conform much more readily to the

Liberal Warrior and Liberal Worker types outlined in the typology. This is a group more receptive to change, more anxious to identify cross-community contact, and who view the Regiment as playing a role in supporting the wider political arena, rather than identified with any specific political agenda. This is a group empowered both formally and informally to identify the objectives and direction of the organisation and its role within the community at large.

A study of the senior-non commissioned officers (SNCOs), suggests they conform closely with a model of Conservative Warrior behaviour. An older grouping than the rest of our respondents, the SNCOs are located firmly within the traditional orthodoxies of the Protestant community. The research suggests that on almost any scale the SNCOs reflect a high degree of certainty and absoluteness of conviction concerning the nature of society and its institutions. There is, moreover, evidence to suggest that the SNCOs active within the Regiment have similar patterns of activity within other protestant organisations. It may be that the nature of this activism by SNCOs throughout the community may serve to legitimate authority within the organisation. These SNCOs by virtue of their status and involvement in the wider community and their advocacy of Conservative Warrior beliefs are in a powerful gatekeeping position in respect of their capacity to control the debate and sets of values inherent in the organisation.

Context

The amalgamation leaves unresolved the problem of limited catholic recruitment to the part-time element of the Regiment. It also fails to address the tasks that the role of internal security requires the organisation to perform. Such tasks may appear hostile to the catholic community and reinforce that community's views concerning the Regiment. These operational tasks may undermine any long term strategy of improving relations with the catholic community.

Change may also raise hostility from within the majority Protestant community. This community which has traditionally seen the UDR as 'its' Regiment, may view change with concern. The move from an 'Ulster' Regiment to an 'Irish' Regiment may create anxiety among a community which has a traditional hostility toward anything implying an *all-Ireland context*. Such change may play directly upon those fears implicit in the attitudes of Conservative Warriors identified within the typology.

Internally, the organisation confronts the challenge of Conservative SNCOs. The Regiment's focus upon training, new career structures, and wider operational responsibilities goes some way toward challenging these orthodoxies. The establishment of a new Regiment implies new rituals, customs and bonding processes which may serve to undermine the traditions and values that are associated with parts of the previous organisation. We can, however, only speculate at this stage of the research about the relative influence of these groupings, as the new Regiment moves forward to tackle the political imperative that it has been set.

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