'Joined-up' government: an integrated response to communal violence in Northern Ireland?

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English

The growing recognition that social problems are multi-faceted and need to be tackled in a way that cuts across traditional departmental boundaries has heralded the advent of joined-up government. Yet this new emphasis does not appear to have permeated the provision of public services in Northern Ireland in their response to the increasingly pervasive social problem of communal violence perpetrated by paramilitaries against those suspected of committing crime within their own communities. This article examines the response of governmental and non-governmental agencies to this issue and questions whether victims of violence could benefit from an integrated approach. A deep suspicion and mistrust of the statutory authorities and the 'undeserving' character of victims currently militate against a joined-up approach.

Français

La prise de conscience croissante que les problèmes sociaux ont de multiples facettes et doivent être appréhendés sans tenir compte des limites départementales traditionnelles, a vu l'avènement d'un gouvernement intégré. Cependant, cette récente recommandation ne semble pas avoir avoir eu une incidence sur la prestation des services publics en Irlande du Nord dans sa réaction au problème social de plus en plus présent de la violence communautaire perpétrée par des paramilitaires contre ceux qui sont soupçonnés d'avoir commis des délits dans leurs propres communautés. Cet article examine la réponse à ce problème des agences gouvernementales et non gouvernementales et demande si les victimes de la violence pourraient profiter d'une approche intégrée. Une profonde méfiance à l'égard des pouvoirs publics ainsi que le caractère « indigne de soutien » des victimes compromettent actuellement une approche intégrée.

Español

El creciente reconocimiento que los problemas sociales están experimentando y necesitan abordarse de manera que corte a través de los linderos de departamentos tradicionales, ha anunciado el advenimiento de un gobierno unido. Sin embargo esta nueva énfasis no parece haber penetrado la provisión de los servicios públicos en Irlanda del norte en su respuesta al creciente problema social reinante de violencia comunal perpetrada por los paramilitares contra aquellos de quienes se sospecha que cometan crímenes en sus propias comunidades. Este artículo examina la respuesta de agencias gubernamentales y no gubernamentales en este asunto y se pregunta si las víctimas de violencia podrían beneficiarse de un acercamiento integrado. Una profunda desconfianza y sospecha de las autoridades estatutarias y el carácter de "no ser digno" de las víctimas actualmente militan contra un acercamiento unido.

Introduction

Despite the euphoria surrounding the Belfast Agreement, the political rhetoric that 'the guns are silent' and the fragile status of devolution in Northern Ireland, an insidious form of communal violence persists. Paramilitaries are actively engaged in administering 'justice' through 'punishment' beatings and shootings aimed at those accused of committing criminal activities within their communities. This is described as the informal criminal justice system and remains impervious to political, security and constitutional gains aimed at securing greater stability in Northern Ireland. This article considers ways in which both governmental and non-governmental agencies have responded to this ongoing violence and assesses whether victims of paramilitary violence could benefit from an integrated response. The article draws on evidence from other policy areas and empirical work carried out with statutory and voluntary organisations closely involved with the problem in Northern Ireland. It questions the corporate capacity for a joined-up response to tackling this problem in two ways: first, the specific features of devolution in Northern Ireland have militated against an integrated response; and second, by the absence of trust between the stakeholders upon which a joined-up approach is predicated.

'Joined-up' government

It has now become fashionable to promote an integrated response to complex social issues in public services such as health, education and employment. The idea gathered momentum through Tony Blair's national crusade against social exclusion in which inter-departmental action teams have been set up to coordinate policies which are shared by departments or fall between their boundaries – 'joined-up problems need joined-up solutions' (Blair, 1998). This has also been operationalised through area-based partnerships to tackle inequalities in areas of highest social need. Hence, Health Action Zones have been set up to develop health improvement programmes through a partnership comprising health authorities, local government, NHS trusts and new primary care groups. Education Action Zones have been established to tackle low levels of educational attainment, adopting similar collaborative arrangements (businesses, community organisations and parent representatives), and Employment Zones ('New Deal for Communities') set up in areas suffering from a high concentration of long-term unemployment.

Joining up, according to Bevir and Rhodes (2001), takes various forms such as area-based programmes linking central and local government, health authorities, the private sector and voluntary organisations, and group-focused programmes targeting policies aimed at client groups. The state under New Labour "is an enabling partner that joins and steers flexible networks ... the task is to build bridges between the organisations involved in designing policies and delivering services" (Bevir and Rhodes, 2001: 127). The philosophy behind such an approach is that resources are being wasted due to insufficient collaboration between agencies and a new emphasis is needed to "promote more holistic and preventative approaches to social policy problems" (Painter, 1999: 109). This approach is rooted in the government's agenda of 'renewal and reform' heralded in *Modernising government*, which promotes inclusiveness and integration in policy making and programmes (Cabinet Office, 1999a: 10).

Although the concept of 'joined-up' government has become synonymous with the Blair administration, its origins build on reforms over the past fifty years which have attempted to "combat the pathology of departmental government" (Kavanagh and Richards, 2001: 3). Hence, the Fulton Report on the civil service in 1968, the White Paper *The reorganisation of central government* in 1970, the establishment of the Central Policy Review Staff and the Policy Unit in Number 10 were all examples of attempts by Wilson, Heath and Callaghan to take a more strategic view of government policy in the face of strong Whitehall departmentalism. This continued with the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 and its management reform programme in the civil service (Rayner scrutinies, Financial Management Initiative, Next Steps Agencies), one aim of which was to tackle the silo-mentality that existed in central government. John Major approached the problem of departmentalism through White Papers such as *Continuity*

and change (Prime Minister, 1994), aimed at personnel reforms to break down traditional hierarchical structures. The perceived shortcomings of these earlier reforms, according to Kavanagh and Richards (2001), led to Blair's interest in the modernisation of government and policy making which built on their foundations. In order to modernise government it is seen as necessary to ensure that policies are forward-looking, inclusive, fair and delivered in a joined-up way, regardless of organisational structures.[1] The Labour government acknowledges that issues such as crime and social exclusion cannot be tackled on a departmental basis and is experimenting with different ways of organising work around cross-cutting issues. In a Cabinet Office report "the successful cross-cutting review of the criminal justice system in the comprehensive spending review" is cited as an exemplar out of which emerged "a common set of overarching aims and objectives for the various criminal justice departments and agencies" (Cabinet Office, 2000: 59).

The current crime reduction programme is also an example which relies on coordinated working across central and local government, drawing on their expertise in policy development, implementation and research to identify and deliver measures for reducing crime. Under this programme the government has launched an integrated approach to tackling violence against women (*Living without fear*, Cabinet Office, 1999b). It recognises that volunteers, community organisations, probation officers, police, social workers and others have been working to help and support women who experience violence. But government argues, "Help is still not comprehensive enough or easily accessible. In some cases women are sent to up to ten different places before they get the help they need. And often how they are treated is entirely a matter of where they live" (Cabinet Office, 1999b: 6). The government's goal therefore is to see effective partnerships operating throughout England and Wales to tackle this problem within five years.

A similar programme aimed at ensuring Better Government for Older People is ongoing in which integrated interagency strategies set out innovative ways of delivering services in a coordinated and user-friendly way. Evaluators

of this programme highlighted how relationships between the different tiers of state government are changing partly in response to the government's drive to modernise and join up governance and public services. "Multi-level and citizen-centred governance implies not only closer integration within and between the different tiers of the state, but also engagement with the informal community governance structures and processes within civil society" (Hayden and Benington, 2000: 27). This is a particularly important conclusion when considering how and why the informal criminal justice system operates within communities in Northern Ireland. Hayden and Benington (2000: 28) conclude that "new patterns of joined-up citizen-centred multi-level governance cannot be contained within traditional metaphors of organisational pyramids, but have to be pictured in terms of inter-organisational networks, complex three-dimensional webs, and cross-cutting lattices".

Allied to this idea of collaborative working are attempts to incorporate the output of the voluntary sector into public programmes. The government has acknowledged the contribution made by the sector to social, economic, environmental and cultural life and sought to establish partnership arrangements through a 'compact' which sets out their complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy (Voluntary Activity Unit, 1998; Morison, 2000). This is very much in line with the Labour government's efforts to find a 'third way' between state intervention and laissez-faire which emphasises partnerships between government and civil associations (Blair, 1998; Giddens, 1998; Tonkiss and Passey, 1999).

Joined-up government has, however, an intuitive political appeal. Who could disagree with a holistic approach to service delivery? Moreover, it could imply that joined-up government is an operational reality rather than, as critics would argue, part of the untested political agenda of New Labour. One critique suggests that "it is legitimate to speculate that joined-up government is a code for increasing the power of Number 10 over ministers" (Kavanagh and Richards, 2001: 13). In other words it has more to do with tackling competing power centres based on strong departments *within* government and reasserting the political will over a civil service

concerned with protecting their vested departmental interests. Kavanagh and Richards (2001: 17) conclude that "joined-up government relies on prime ministerial authority rather than a well-established institutional base and new cultural values".

What is perhaps surprising about this new emphasis on joined-up government is that so little of it appears to have permeated the thinking of public services in Northern Ireland. In a wide-ranging review of the structure, management and resourcing of the criminal justice system emanating from the 1998 Belfast Agreement, there is no more than a passing reference to working "cooperatively to reduce crime" (Criminal Justice Review Group, 2000: 35). Yet the problems of violent crime, particularly the ongoing role of paramilitaries in ceasefire circumstances, exercise several statutory and voluntary agencies. The informal criminal justice system operates whereby paramilitaries, largely immune from the law, exert often violent control over people living in their local areas. Such is the level of this activity that it has been described as "a flourishing culture of gangsterism" and a "Mafia state" in which paramilitaries "perpetrate mutilations, beatings, shootings, intimidation and exiling under the guise of maintaining law and order within their communities" (Salter, 1999: 383).

Joined-up responses in criminal justice

A joined-up approach in the field of criminal justice preceded the current focus on holistic government stimulated, in part, by Home Office circulars *Partnership in crime prevention* (1990), *Partnership in dealing with offenders in the community: A decision document* (1992) and *Interagency coordination to tackle domestic violence* (1995). Researchers in the area have observed that the integrated approach "has increasingly come to be seen as a panacea for recurring crises within criminal justice" (Crawford and Jones, 1995: 17). Its application, however, has not been without problems. In examining the relevance of an integrated approach to domestic violence, for example, Hague and Malos (1998) and Hague (1998) evaluated collaborative forums comprising local authorities

(housing and social services departments), the police, probation, local refuges and support services, along with other voluntary sector organisations. They concluded that such an approach can move beyond basic single agency service provision and result in coordination, preventative and educative work. They qualified their remarks, however, by adding that "we need to be aware of the way in which a supposed commitment to interagency co-ordination can allow governments and authorities to 'save face' by appearing to take on the issue of domestic violence while actually doing almost nothing" (Hague and Malos, 1998: 385).

On a similar theme, Mama's study (1989) of domestic violence against black women in Greater London, based on first-hand accounts of their experiences in dealing with statutory and voluntary agencies, painted a picture of individuals caught in a complex and often alienating web of state bureaucracies. While Mama highlighted the importance of integrated responses to the problem, she cautioned against such an approach multiplying the pain and suffering that abused women and their children experience. She found evidence that for black women this is what often happens. "The case material indicates that public services can quite easily become coercive rather than supportive, particularly with the linking up between the police state (police forces, immigration service) and the welfare state (housing, social services, healthcare)" (Mama, 1989: 135).

Phillips and Sampson (1998) reported research on an integrated approach to reduce repeat racial victimisation of Bengali and Somali residents on a local authority housing estate in east London. What emerged was a 'negative interaction' between victims and the statutory agencies in the study – in particular the housing department and the police. Victims were reluctant to report incidents to the authorities because their prior experience suggested that little if anything was done; the statutory bodies claimed they could do nothing until incidents were reported. The researchers concluded that "the project would have been more successful if it had been accepted that agencies with a history of difficult working relationships are unlikely to work productively in an interagency setting" (Phillips and Sampson, 1998: 141).

Crawford and Jones (1995) critique the work of Pearson et al (1992) who suggest two dominant perspectives in assessing integrated or joined-up approaches to crime – a 'benevolent' and 'conspiracy' approach. In the former Pearson et al suggest an unproblematic consensus within and between the local state and communities and therefore see the approach as 'a good thing'. In the latter, the coercive nature of the local state causes conflict in interagency relations and is therefore 'a bad thing'. Crawford and Jones claim this dichotomous assessment is over-simplistic in that "it fails to give due significance to the fact that competing perspectives are premised upon very different understandings of the complex structures, relationships, and interactive exchanges within and between state agencies, communities and the market" (Crawford and Jones, 1995: 19).

In the context of Northern Ireland, Garrett's (1999) study evaluated the response of state agencies through a joint working initiative between police and social workers to child abuse and domestic violence. He concluded that the role of the agencies and their operational practices could only be understood if the abnormality of the Northern Ireland state(let) was recognised. Because the political and moral legitimacy of the state has been routinely contested, he argued, "this has also inescapably impinged on, constrained, even determined, the nature and extent of interventions by the police and social workers" (Garrett, 1999: 32).

Studies in allied areas therefore appear to suggest three things. First, that an integrated or joined-up approach *can* offer the potential for an improved response to victims of violence, although there are circumstances which could exacerbate their plight. Second, the nature of the pre-existing relationships between the agencies (in particular the statutory bodies) and the client group is an important determinant of its likely success. Third, and as a direct consequence, effective interagency approaches to crime may be both context- and issue-specific. There is some evidence, for example, that because Northern Ireland is 'abnormal', the involvement of state bodies curtails their potential effectiveness in tackling social problems (Garrett, 1999). Hence research from Great Britain, it might be argued, is not directly comparable. The specific circumstances of Northern Ireland and the peculiar nature of paramilitary 'punishment' beatings and shootings therefore make the role of statutory and voluntary organisations worthy of investigation.

The research for this article was undertaken as part of a wider ESRC-funded project whose aim was to examine the operation of the informal criminal justice system in Northern Ireland and evaluate the response of government and non-governmental agencies to this phenomenon. The primary research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 40 victims of paramilitary-style attacks, 44 representatives from state, quasi-state and community organisations with direct contact/responsibility for victims, and 12 political party spokespersons; holding focus group interviews in four communities where there was evidence of a high level of paramilitary activity; and the construction of a database on the level and location of attacks (using GIS) on a Northern Ireland-wide basis to show patterns/clusters of activity. Access to agency respondents tended to be at second-tier level or those most directly involved in the case of community organisations. Given the sensitivities of the subject matter, interviewees would have been reluctant to provide access had the study been sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office for example, which has vested interests in the topic. A key issue for the researchers was to establish their bona fides within the constituency and to demonstrate objectivity in one's approach to the study. While the funding source clearly helped with the former, the polarisation of views in relation to community background made the latter much more difficult to achieve in practice (Knox, 2001a). What therefore is the current response among statutory and voluntary organisations to this type of criminal activity and could those subject to such attacks benefit from a joined-up response? Before addressing this question it is necessary to describe the nature and extent of the problem facing the various agencies in Northern Ireland.

The nature and extent of the problem

So-called 'punishment' attacks, beatings and shootings have been a feature of paramilitary

control over both communities in Northern Ireland throughout the 'troubles'. Paramilitary groups see themselves as community protectors; their actions are aimed ostensibly at maintaining 'law and order' through tackling petty crime such as car theft, joyriding, burglary and drug dealing. According to police statistics between 1973 and the end of 2001 there have been 2,563 paramilitary 'punishment' shootings (an average of 88 per year) of which 45% have been perpetrated by loyalists. From 1982 to the end of 2001 there have been 1,822 beatings (an average of 91 per year), 47% of which have been carried out by loyalists. Police admit that official figures are thought to underestimate the true extent of the problem by as much as 30–50% because victims are reluctant to report incidents for fear of paramilitary reprisal. There is no information available on charges brought against perpetrators. Offenders are charged with crimes such as common assault, grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm, hence it is impossible to ascertain successful police prosecutions.

The figures show there was a significant increase in beatings and concomitant decrease in shootings following the ceasefires of August and October 1994. This reflected moves by paramilitaries not to implicate their political representatives in claims that their ceasefires had broken down, particularly on the republican side with their public avowals of non-violent alternatives. Since 1996 beatings have decreased but still remain higher than pre-ceasefire levels, and shootings are escalating year-on-year. In short, the situation is getting worse. This is despite the introduction of non-violent restorative justice programmes in both loyalist and republican areas aimed at responding to the needs and harm experienced by victims, offenders and the community.

Perpetrators exact community 'justice' using pickaxe handles, hockey and hurley sticks, baseball bats, steel rods and hammers. Other forms of 'punishment' include dropping heavy concrete blocks on limbs and using power tools on bones. Surgeons in the fracture clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, for example, report that "following the cessation of violence there has been an *increase in the level of injuries* occurring in those undergoing paramilitary punishment" (our emphasis) (Nolan et al, 2000). Their study

of treating victims showed that those who had been shot with pistols, resulting in open injuries, suffered much less damage to soft tissue and bones than those who had been beaten. The reality is that it is 'better' to be shot than beaten. The nature of these incidents is best illustrated by the account of one victim:

> "I was accused by the paramilitaries of doing a burglary, which I didn't do. They didn't believe me. So they said they had a witness to identify me. They came back for me and took me to the Markets (an area in Belfast). They held me from eight o'clock until half eleven, continually beating me with sticks, punching me, kicking me, just laying into me, left, right and centre, asking questions, 'Did you do that burglary?', 'No I didn't do it'. They didn't believe me so they just laid into me and beat me bad. They said to me at the end of it that they were taking me outside and giving me two bullets, one in each ankle. So I cracked up. I was taken outside with a hood over my head. My arms were tied behind my back. They brought me down an alley, told me to spread-eagle on the ground. I heard them saying to each other 'There's something wrong' – the gun had jammed. So they told me to get up. They grabbed hold of me, brought me into a flat, got me to lean over a table and three or four of them beat me with sewer rods from behind. They lifted me because I couldn't walk, took me outside again, kicked and beat me before heading off. As they were going I shouted out 'You Provie bastards, I didn't do fuck all'. One of them came back and said 'Shut your mouth, you hooding wee bastard' and gave me another good kicking. After that, the ambulance came and took me away for treatment." (Interview with victim of 'punishment' attack, September 2000)

Although exponents of paramilitary 'justice' claim that following 'investigation' a tariff system is in place to match the severity of the 'crime', there appears to be little consistency in the way victims are treated. Paramilitary actions range from warnings, threats, curfew, beatings

or shootings to exiling and ultimately execution (Silke, 1998). This crude emulation of the formal criminal justice system ignores due process and shows contempt for the human rights of those who stand accused. Hence, there are cases of mistaken identity, attacks on children as young as 13 years old, and personal grudges over money, relationships with women, and control of drug territory, masquerading as paramilitaries protecting their communities.

Three principal reasons are advanced for the existence of the informal criminal justice system (Knox, 2002). First, particularly in republican areas, there is an absence of an adequate policing service. The PSNI (the Police Service of Northern Ireland, previously the RUC) has no legitimacy among republicans, and their communities would not normally involve the police in dealing with crimes in their areas. Republicans claim that the PSNI are prepared to tolerate at best, or encourage at worst, crime in their communities as a way of undermining the 'republican struggle'. Police are therefore willing to 'trade' dropping charges of joyriding, drug dealing, burglary and so on in return for low-level intelligence gathering on known republicans. In loyalist areas, objections to involving the police are more to do with keeping the PSNI out of communities where drug dealing, racketeering and illegal drinking dens and clubs are commonplace. Second, there is a rising level of 'anti-social behaviour' and petty crime, particularly in working-class areas. This is evidenced in crime and victimisation statistics, which show that those from an unskilled social class background are most vulnerable and feel their quality of life is particularly affected by fear of crime (Northern Ireland Office, 2000a). A Police Authority (PANI – now replaced by the Policing Board) report which monitored the performance of the RUC during 1998/99 found "many categories of crime are on the increase while police performance in tackling this has not always been as effective as anticipated" (PANI, 1999:9). The most recent recorded crime figures show an increasing trend during 2000/01 (RUC, 2001). In the absence, therefore, of a legitimate police force and/or because people are discouraged from seeking PSNI involvement, communities turn to paramilitaries to secure a prompt, visible and effective response to crime in their areas. Hence, local people living in fear of crime endorse paramilitary 'punishment' beatings and shootings. Third, the formal criminal justice system within these communities is perceived as slow, ineffectual, and soft on crime. In a society where violent conflict has been the norm for over thirty years, it isn't surprising that the time taken to process offenders, the necessary safeguards in the legal system, and the standard of proof required for conviction is seen as no match for summary justice meted out by paramilitaries.

'Punishing' mainly young people is therefore tacitly or explicitly supported by communities and in some cases endorsed by unlikely sources such as the aberrant clergyman Father Pat Buckley who said:

> I have never come across a case where the victim of a punishment squad was innocent. When I hear the names of those who have been beaten up I often recognise them as well-known criminals. I have no sympathy whatsoever for criminals and their families who squeal like pigs when they, the guilty, get a touch of the treatment they happily mete out to the innocent. (Buckley, 1995: 16)

It is against this background that we consider the possibilities for a joined-up response to the ongoing violent control exerted by paramilitaries whose political representatives have signed up to 'exclusively democratic and peaceful means' of resolving issues as part of the Belfast Agreement.

The community context for a joined-up response

Before considering how agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, have responded to this issue it is important to outline the circumstances within which these 'punishment' attacks take place and the nature of the relationship between paramilitary groups and the communities over which they exert social control. Cavanaugh (1997), in an ethnographic study undertaken in loyalist and republican communities in Belfast, posited the community, not as a passive entity, but integral to the analysis of

political violence in Northern Ireland. She suggested civil society in Northern Ireland was characterised by a strong sense of community, ethnic separatism, and a tradition of loyalism and republicanism in both its cultural and political forms. "With basic security needs left unfulfilled and fear of identity loss prevalent in both republican and loyalist communities, strong intra-communal infrastructures have evolved which protect and promote community cohesion" (Cavanaugh, 1997: 46). This strong communal cohesion, she argued, demands social order and control constructed through 'alternative legalities to that of the state'.

Paramilitaries claim to be responding to popular pressure and in turn engage in swift and violent 'punishments' carried out without regard for the human rights of the victim or due legal process. The system becomes self-perpetuating and reinforcing. It satisfies the response of communities for 'justice' and reinforces the dominant role of paramilitaries who wish to exert social control in their areas. This culture of violence also means that communities are afraid to speak out against such activities. When young people in these areas become involved in criminal behaviour they are more likely to encounter paramilitaries than the police. Some see this as a challenge and part of a subculture of bravado among their peer group. Rarely, however, can they match the weaponry or force of organised paramilitary 'punishment' gangs who administer the informal criminal justice system under the guise of community 'police'.

What is difficult to understand, however, is the acceptance by some of the victims of their 'deserving' fate at the hands of paramilitaries, indeed even their compliance with the informal system. This has led, for example, to 'punishment' attacks and shootings being carried out by mutual arrangement between paramilitaries and victims, or 'punishment' by appointment. All of this illustrates the complex dynamic relationship which exists between communities and paramilitary organisations. As recorded crime continues to rise in Northern Ireland,[2] communities have little option but to rely on paramilitaries for 'protection'. There is little confidence in either the police or criminal justice system within republican or loyalist communities, albeit for different reasons. The prospect of a radical shift in support for the

organs of the state is unlikely in the short term under changes resulting from the parallel reviews – Patten on policing (Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, 1999) and the Criminal Justice Review. Nationalists and republicans are critical of what they see as the dilution of Patten's recommendations into law. These discussions are inextricably linked to the wider political debate. In the meantime, communities are caught up in this cycle of crime and violence with only the paramilitaries to turn to, either by choice or force of circumstance. Those within communities who wish to see the stranglehold of paramilitaries loosen have few alternatives. To raise one's head above the parapet runs the risk of crossing the hard men of violence. This has become increasingly hazardous as paramilitaries in ceasefire circumstances, particularly in loyalist communities, diversify further into drugs, racketeering and extortion.

The response of governmental and non-governmental agencies

Minimisation and indifference

Two key responses were discernible across the range of statutory and non-statutory organisations to the problem of 'punishment' beatings and shootings by the paramilitaries. The first of these, most characteristic of statutory organisations, has been minimisation of, and indifference to, the problem, or what Conway describes as "reactive containment" (Conway, 1994: 99). Paramilitary 'punishment' beatings and shootings are but one component of what has become known in Northern Ireland as 'an acceptable level of violence'. This response is informed by a number of factors. Those subjected to beatings and shootings tend not to engender sympathy either from the police or, more often, the communities within which they reside as referred to above. In the case of the former, the PSNI claim that those attacked will usually have been involved in 'anti-social behaviour' (car theft, joyriding, burglary, drug-dealing and so on) and may have a criminal record, and are therefore reluctant to report the crime lest they are investigated. There is also fear of reprisal from paramilitaries should they cooperate with the police. As one senior police officer pointed out,

"We are unfortunately in a Catch 22 situation ... if they refuse to make a witness statement, then in fact the PSNI is at a loss in many regards, unless we have the forensic evidence or unless they're caught in the act" (interview with PSNI/RUC Chief Superintendent, December 2000). Communities on the other hand feel they have little option but to tacitly or explicitly support the actions of paramilitaries. They are unwilling and/or reluctant to go to the PSNI, feel threatened or terrorised by crimes perpetrated in their areas and respond accordingly. "People want instant justice. They are not prepared to wait on the rules of evidence, on long processes of the court – they feel 'We are the victims and we want something done about it now'. The paramilitaries respond to this" (community focus group respondent, November 2000). In sum, the PSNI feel limited in their response, communities demand protection from crime in their areas and those attacked are fearful of paramilitary reprisal. The police therefore acquiesce in the status quo.

This indifference is confirmed, and in some cases compounded, by the response of other statutory agencies. The Police Authority (PANI), for example, receives information from the PSNI on the number of 'punishment' beatings and shootings but cannot disaggregate data on detection rates from reported 'violence against the person' statistics. This is rather surprising given that the Authority meets with the Chief Constable on a monthly basis and paramilitary beatings, attacks and shootings "always feature very prominently in the monthly report" (interview with Police Authority member, January 2000). If, as the PANI suspects, the detection rate is 'relatively low' and this does not include other means of paramilitary control such as exiling individuals from an area or imposing curfews, then the scale of illegal activity is likely to be significantly higher than official statistics suggest. One way of minimising the problem from the statutory authorities' perspective is to deal only in recorded figures and, in so doing, ignore the full extent of the problem. A PANI representative put this more diplomatically:

"There may not be a specific reference to paramilitary assaults, partly because of the Authority's determination not to depart from its stand that these amount to criminal assaults, violence against the person. I think, at one level, whilst we do look at them under separate headings, at another level we don't want to give them a special legitimacy by singling them out. There's that kind of ... not double standards approach, but there's that kind of schizophrenic approach to them." (Interview with Police Authority member, January 2000)

The PSNI in turn is accused by republicans of demoralising communities by manipulating those involved in anti-social behaviour and thus undermining the 'republican struggle'. "It has employed anti-social elements as informers in return for immunity from prosecution. This has allowed anti-social activity to escalate" (McGuinness, 1999: 16).

The Northern Ireland Office's response is to see 'punishment' beatings and shootings more within a general framework of crime prevention and community safety which seeks to address the causes of anti-social behaviour. They do not commit resources directly to the problem and didn't think they had made any impact upon it (from an interview with a Northern Ireland Office official, February 2000). Their interest in the issue appeared to peak, perhaps predictably, when it became inextricably linked with the political agenda of the day.

Disjointed approach

The second key response by agencies could be described as a disjointed approach to the problem. There are several manifestations of this. At the inter-sectoral level, for example, there is no obvious collaboration between the statutory, voluntary, community and support sectors. The Probation Board is an executive non-departmental public body (a quango) within the Northern Ireland Office which also grant-aids three voluntary organisations in the criminal justice field: the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO), the Extern Organisation and Victim Support (NI),[3] all of whom have direct or indirect involvement with those who have been subjected to beatings and shootings. The Probation Board sees its con-

tribution being in the area of funding community development groups to work in schemes with "difficult young people … who are causing damage or sometimes an extreme nuisance … so that the community wouldn't feel obliged to take unacceptable action against them" (interview with senior Probation Board official, May 2000). NIACRO provides a crisis intervention service for individuals who are under paramilitary threat through an organisation known as BASE 2. This can range from checking the authenticity of the threat to trying to mediate for its removal and, in the last event if the person threatened is exiled, assisting them with the necessary arrangements. Extern provides programmes of intensive support for young people (Time Out and Youth Support) through referrals from the social services. Although these programmes are not aimed specifically at those subject to paramilitary threat, there are cases where this applies. Victim Support (NI) offers a listening service and practical advice on forms of help available to those who have been hurt by crime or their family members.

What is clear from the services provided by this range of organisations is that collaboration between these agencies, all of which are funded from the one source, is ad hoc, non-existent or personality dependent. Aside from Base 2, those subjected to paramilitary attacks are seen as part of a general client portfolio within which their specific needs are neither identified nor addressed. There is little or no understanding of the impact of the services they are providing on paramilitary beatings and shootings. Indeed in some cases there is an open admission that the effectiveness of their services is marginal to the needs of those that have been shot and beaten. One respondent suggested his organisation had "very little impact for two reasons ... first, we have been developing our responses over the past five years ... and second, we have been working in a climate whereby there has been a perception that regardless of how hard anyone argues against it, physical punishment works" (interview with senior official – voluntary organisation, June 2000). There is also evidence of disagreement between the provider agencies about giving financial support to organisations such as BASE 2 whose work was described by a government minister as "being seen to imple-

ment a social exclusion policy for paramilitaries" (cited from interview with NIACRO official, June 2000). Some statutories have also been unwilling to work with voluntary organisations which refuse to recognise the police.

The second manifestation of a disjointed approach is at the interagency level. Three of the most important agencies for those who have been beaten or shot by paramilitaries are the Social Security Agency, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Compensation Agency.[4] None of these agencies records separate data on applicants that present with injuries resulting from paramilitary attacks; all are dealt with under their existing client classification schemes. The Social Security Agency was, for example, "unaware of public criticism" that had been levelled at the amount of benefit to which a father of three who had lost both his legs in a shotgun paramilitary shooting was entitled. The same organisation was the subject of a recommendation from the Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner's Report that in dealing with victims, they should "be sensitive and understanding in their approach" (Bloomfield, 1998: 50). The Housing Executive "hadn't come across" situations where a member of a family was subjected to paramilitary intimidation and felt they had to move rather than break up the family. Both of these admissions point to either a denial of the problem and/or a failure to respond to those who had been attacked, shot or intimidated. The Compensation Agency, on the other hand, suggested these cases "need careful handling" because they are expensive to settle (interviews with officials in the respective agencies). The agency is required by legislation to compensate '*innocent victims of violent crime*' (our emphasis). In so doing, it must take into account 'the character and way of life' of applicants as evidenced by their criminal record. Those who were judged to have contributed by their own activities to the violence inflicted upon them could have their compensation claim rejected or reduced. This necessarily involves cooperating with the police, but the agency never sees the applicant. The agencies presented a picture of a disjointed and less than sympathetic approach to those subjected to this kind of attack. As one official suggested, "We don't assume with every other applicant that they're going to have a lengthy

criminal record but with a 'punishment' attack I think we maybe do have a predisposition to think 'There'll be a criminal record here'" (interview with Compensation Agency official, December 2000).

The third manifestation of a disjointed approach is the emergence and operation of victim support groups. The status of victims in general assumed greater importance with the early release of terrorist prisoners under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. As a consequence, victim support voluntary groups, some of whom offer services to those who had been subjected to paramilitary 'punishment' attacks and shootings, burgeoned. Not only has this resulted in overlap, duplication and confusion in terms of the services which are provided, but because the legitimacy of victim status has been challenged, there are organisations claiming to represent 'innocent victims' exclusively (Knox, 2001b). Hence support groups set up to deal with victims of 'state violence', such as families of the IRA members shot dead in Loughgall by the SAS in 1987, found themselves in conflict with 'deserving' victim groups. In these terms, the status of those who have been beaten and shot by paramilitaries is similarly ambiguous, with communities in some cases endorsing 'punishment'. The plethora of organisations offering some kind of victim support such as the WAVE Trauma Centre, Families Acting for Innocent Relatives, Victim Support, Institute of Counselling and Personal Development, Survivors of Trauma, Shankill Stress Centre, and the Family Trauma Centre therefore struggle to find a distinctive role. Their attempt to provide a range of services simply adds to the disjointed nature of provision. They compete to survive on short-term funding in an area where the long-term needs of the 'punished' are not being addressed.

Obstacles to a 'joined-up' response

A number of explanations are posited as to why Northern Ireland cannot easily respond in a joined-up way to communal violence. The Labour government, according to Bevir and Rhodes (2001: 126), promotes the "idea of networks of institutions and individuals acting in partnership held together by relations of trust". Networks

institutionalise Labour's ideals of partnership as a joined-up approach within an enabling state. This analysis is shared by Shearing (2000) in his suggestions for tackling the proliferation of illegal forms of policing associated with paramilitaries. He argued that the police could no longer claim a monopoly on crime control and a range of institutions now take responsibility within a policing network for the governance of security. In other words, "policing has been radically pluralized" and what is required is "a regulatory process with the capacity to ensure that the policing network operates within the law and in partnership with state institutions" (Shearing, 2000: 388). The Patten Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland (of which Shearing was a member) proposed a strategy to promote the value of a policing network with a wide variety of nodes "subject to effective regulation and democratic direction" (Shearing, 2000: 389; see also McGarry and O'Leary, 1999; Ellison and Smyth, 2000). The proposed strategy was to comprise two elements – the establishment of a Policing Board to direct and regulate policing across the Province and the creation of state funding arrangements that would support a wide range of legitimate policing nodes. While Patten held out the prospect of policing as a collective responsibility or a 'partnership for community safety', its implementation into law (2000 Police [Northern Ireland] Act) failed to deliver on its central principles. Hence, according to Hillyard and Tomlinson (2000), "the radical and progressive ideas of Patten have been effectively policed and the people of Northern Ireland are left with a traditional model of policing in which citizens have little say and even less influence to determine democratically the form and practice of policing in their areas" (Hillyard and Tomlinson, 2000: 415). Policing, in these circumstances, is unlikely to be seen as a partnership but rather a restatement of the tripartite hierarchy (Secretary of State, Policing Board and Chief Constable) very much in the traditional mould.

The idea of the police and the criminal justice system being the sole preserve of crime prevention and control is also addressed in the emerging literature on governance (Foucault, 1991; Stenson, 1993; Garland, 1996, 1997; O'Malley et al, 1997). Therein responsibility for tackling crime

involves cooperation and partnership arrangements across government and non-governmental organisations, communities and the private sector. As crime becomes "a taken for granted element of late modernity" according to Garland (1996: 446), then it should be treated in the same way as other risks such as ill-health and unemployment and dealt with accordingly through individuals securing their homes and property, improved environmental measures (street lighting and housing estate design) and greater insurance protection. Hence, the responsibility of the state for crime control is devolved downwards and a more "prudent citizen" is empowered to take ownership and "purchase the level of commodified security they deem appropriate to their specific needs" (O'Malley, 1996: 202). In applying notions of 'risk', 'trust' and 'governance' to the circumstances of Northern Ireland, O'Mahony et al (2000) argue that these imply a congruence in the goals of agencies, communities and individuals in relation to crime reduction. Such an 'active partnership', they suggest, is problematic in Northern Ireland for a number of reasons. It would have to involve collaboration between republicans and loyalists in working-class communities; the legitimacy of the state within partnerships could not be taken for granted; and the state could not take the lead responsibility in structures where there was a strong civil society. O'Mahony et al (2000: 127) conclude that "with these issues in mind, the challenges facing the new Northern Ireland in developing active partnerships between government institutions, communities and civil society are formidable". The problem in Northern Ireland is that active partnerships must be predicated on trust which is in short supply between the key stakeholders. The state and its organs (for example PSNI and the Northern Ireland Office) are integral to the conflict and its various manifestations such as communal violence. In fact there is a deep mistrust, particularly (but not exclusively) in republican areas of 'the British establishment', most recently evidenced by their unwillingness to endorse the Patten implementation plan on police reforms and sit on the newly formed Policing Board. Similarly, communities, particularly in loyalist areas, distrust paramilitaries even though, by default, they have sought their assistance in combating communi-

ty crime. The ongoing internecine disputes between loyalist paramilitaries only adds to the perception within communities that, in the absence of a political conflict, these groups are promoting their own self-interests.

The move from Direct Rule administration in Northern Ireland to devolution may, somewhat ironically, make a joined-up response more difficult. Under Direct Rule the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, a Westminster cabinet minister, had direction and control of all government departments for which he/she was accountable to Parliament. Working through the Northern Ireland Office, the Secretary of State, assisted by two ministers of state and two parliamentary under-secretaries, had overall responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland. To some extent this institutionalised joined-up government by dint of its political coherence and command structure. With the devolution of power in December 1999 to the Northern Ireland Assembly and its Executive Committee of Ministers, local politicians now have full legislative and executive authority over the functions of the Northern Ireland departments. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland remains responsible for Northern Ireland Office matters not devolved to the Assembly such as policing, security policy, prisons, criminal justice, international relations and taxation. The pressures of departmentalism where ministers feel compelled to represent their sectional interests are compounded by a executive coalition elected on the d'Hondt system with fundamental political differences likely to contribute to entrenched administrative and political fiefdoms. Hardly a recipe for joined-up government. The Democratic Unionist Party, for example, refuses to participate in the Executive and the First Minister banned Sinn Féin from attending North/South Ministerial Council meetings.

An interesting comparison here is devolution in Scotland. Parry (2001) reports that the Scottish Office, prior to devolution, had a strong central grip of its functional entities and in principle provided a joined-up corporate focus able to resist departmental pressures within the bureaucracy. Post-devolution this had the potential to unravel as Scottish ministers were appointed with departmental briefs. To preserve the corporate cohesion and not create ministries that

would become power bases, three powerful central units were established to resist monolithic departments serving their ministers. This has not happened in Northern Ireland. Moreover, Parry (2001: 40) argues that "the Scottish Executive has not entrenched a separation between its policy sphere and the areas reserved to the United Kingdom Government. Its main policy document *Social justice* mixed devolved and reserve policy instruments in pursuit of an anti-poverty strategy". He concludes that the Scottish Executive has chosen to emphasise the interdependence of devolved and reserved functions.

In tackling communal violence in Northern Ireland this interdependence and capacity for a corporate response is less likely to exist. Anti-Agreement Unionists have used the issue of 'punishment' beatings and shootings as an opportunity to discredit its outworking. In a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Ian Paisley (Democratic Unionist Party leader) argued "a misguided political agenda has brought about increased communal violence. I would, in fact, go further and describe the political agenda as one which is criminal-supporting. These beatings and shootings expose the failures of the Belfast Agreement" (Paisley, 2001: 357). Each of the ten Northern Ireland statutory committees has a scrutiny, policy development, consultation role in relation to its department and in the initiation of legislation. This is not conducive to tackling a cross-departmental policy issue such as communal violence, likely to involve not only devolved functional areas such as housing, social security and voluntary activity, but also excepted and reserved matters (policing, probation services, compensation, criminal justice). In short, the absence of trust, a necessary prerequisite for a network of institutions and individuals acting in a joined-up way, accentuated by systemic political and administrative obstacles resulting from devolution, produces a fragmented approach to tackling communal violence.

Conclusions

Having considered the response of governmental and non-governmental agencies, could those who have been subjected to paramilitary 'punishment' benefit from an integrated approach?

The empirical work suggests that agencies, in particular statutory bodies, currently either minimise the problem or remain indifferent to it. The net result is a disjointed response at both intersectoral and interagency levels complicated further by the plethora of new and established victim support groups. This finding is not dissimilar to work on domestic violence in Northern Ireland which concluded that "state institutions (the police and other professional help-providers) through their responses or attitudes, either minimise or rationalise the abuse" (McWilliams, 1997: 89). Several agencies that include social services, police, the probation service, medical services and education have recently collaborated in risk assessment and management of sex offenders in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office, 2000b). Research in allied areas such as domestic and racial violence in Great Britain suggests a joined-up approach could offer the potential for an improved response to those that have been beaten or shot by paramilitaries. However, the nature of pre-existing relationships between agencies and the client group was found to be an important determinant of success. Therein lies the problem. There is deep suspicion and mistrust of the statutory authorities, in particular the PSNI, whom some victims perceive as trying to recruit them. They also sense that government agencies see them as somehow deserving of the 'punishment' meted out. In the case of other bodies such as the Social Security Agency and Compensation Agency, victims detect an unwillingness or reluctance to expend public resources because of their 'character and way of life'. This suspicion of the statutories is compounded by the climate of fear within which those who have been 'punished' live. Cooperating with government agencies could be seen as one step away from collusion – paramilitary reprisal could be swift, brutal and perhaps fatal. Yet the 'service' provided to victims of paramilitary attacks is fragmented, patchy and in many cases accusing. They have become expendable pawns in pursuit of political gains at the macro level. It is not politically expedient to argue that the brutality they experience constitutes a clear breach of the Mitchell principles of 'democracy and non-violence' which inform the Belfast Agreement. Presenting as a heterogeneous group of largely young men from socially deprived ar-

eas means that statutory bodies can treat them with indifference and in some cases contempt. The need for a joined-up response is clearly necessary to tackle this problem; the resolve to do so is thus far lacking.

One useful policy learning exercise from Great Britain is the role which the Treasury has played in coordination through its control of public spending. Kavanagh and Richards (2001:12) reported that a systematic review of policies which cut across departments was undertaken in the 1997–98 Spending Review and money directed accordingly. They point out that the Treasury now allocates money for clients, for example Sure Start Programme for children under five, for a problem area, as in criminal justice, or for a general area, as in New Deal for the Communities. The Northern Ireland Executive's *Programme for government* (2001: section 1.14) also intends "to support programmes or projects which are of major importance to the Executive. This could include projects that will assist the development of activity across departments as well as supporting key projects that an individual department may not be able to support from its own resources". As a result, it has allocated Executive Programme Funds to five policy areas (social inclusion/community regeneration, service modernisation, new directions, infrastructure/capital renewal and children). They are all "consistent with the Executive's priorities as set out in the Programme for Government" and hence have a decidedly devolved remit. What is missing is the Scottish experience of imaginative thinking in tackling issues which straddle devolved and excepted/reserved powers such as communal violence in Northern Ireland. Until relations of trust develop which promote the idea of a network of institutions and individuals acting in partnership to tackle communal violence, and the boundaries of functional responsibilities become less significant, a joined-up response to this problem seems unlikely. As a consequence communal violence will continue unabated.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] The three aims in modernising government are to:

- ensure that policy making is more joined-up and strategic;
- make sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to people's lives;
- deliver public services that are high quality and efficient.

[2] A Home Office Report on international crime statistics showed Northern Ireland's percentage increase in recorded crime (28%) was second only to South Africa where it rose by 37% in 1998. Northern Ireland also experienced the largest rise of the 29 countries examined in the report in the area of recorded violent crime, with an increase of 21%, while England and Wales, and Ireland recorded decreases of 6% and 17% respectively (Barclay and Tavares, 2000).

[3] In 1998-99 NIACRO, Extern and Victim Support (NI) received £303,000, £447,000 and £667,000 respectively from the Criminal Justice Directorate of the Northern Ireland Office (Department of Finance & Personnel and HM Treasury, 1999).

[4] The Social Security Agency, the Compensation Agency and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are located within the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (formerly, the Department of Health and Social Services), the Northern Ireland Office, and the Department of Social Development (formerly the Department of the Environment) respectively.

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