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SCOTCH-IRISH PERCEPTIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND OUTCOMES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This paper is part of a study of the levels of understanding that the Scotch-Irish (Ulster-Americans) and the people of Ulster (Northern Ireland) have about each other. One area of misunderstanding is that of the recent (and current) conflict in Northern Ireland. Thus, as part of the larger project, the author made an analysis of Scotch-Irish perceptions of this conflict (Alexander 2004); the present paper is a revision and an update of this analysis.

In this study, the author used a powerful research tool known as the Analytic Hierarchy Process (developed by T. L. Saaty), which enables one to break down a complex problem into simple parts for analysis and then to synthesize the results (Saaty 1980, 1981; Saaty and Alexander 1981, 1989; Saaty and Vargas). She has, since the 1970s, used this technique, among others, to carry out several studies of the Northern Ireland conflict (Alexander, 1976, 1983; Alexander and Saaty 1977a, 1977b). The present work takes into account changes since the signing of the Belfast Agreement (Good Friday Agreement) in 1998.

Briefly, the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) allows one to create a hierarchical structure to show the relationships among the elements of a problem. In particular, when using the AHP to analyze a conflict problem, one places the goal (a possible solution) at the apex. At the next level come the participants or parties to the conflict. The third level contains the objectives or desires of each of these parties. Finally, one lists the possible outcomes to the conflict at the lowest level. A comparison and weighting process at each stage enables an analyst to assess the probability that a given outcome will occur.

A random sample drawn from the Scotch-Irish community was asked to make the judgments needed to carry out the weighting process. This meant that each respondent, in essence, was able to give his or her opinion about the probability that a given outcome would occur. The results were then aggregated. It is important to note that the responses referred to simple pairwise comparisons and that a respondent could not predict what the conclusion from his or her responses would be.

There was another part to this study. Respondents were asked to rate the possible political outcomes according to their own personal preferences, quite independently of any work that they had carried out using the AHP. Thus, a respondent was asked to complete two questionnaires: one from which could be derived what he thought actually would happen and one in which he indicated what he wanted to happen.

We examine each set of results and assess their significance. We are also able to see the differences between them and to attempt to understand the reasons for these differences. We find that there are significant differences, and that the use of the AHP provides a much deeper understanding of the underlying nature of the issues involved.

THE RESPONDENTS

The questionnaires were sent to a random sample of Members of the Scotch-Irish Society of the USA, a group strongly committed to its Scotch-Irish heritage and identity. The sample was chosen in turn from three alphabetized lists: the governing Council of the Society, the Life Members of the Society, and the general membership of the Society. After each selection, the remaining lists were modified by removing any who had already been chosen.

The sample was weighted to give the first two lists a higher representation than the general membership. The objective was to obtain a sample that might be expected to have a strong interest in what happened in Northern Ireland.

The following should be noted. (a) The membership of the Scotch-Irish Society of the USA is drawn from across the United States. No specific attempt was made to draw from each state, but the use of alphabetized lists helps to ensure appropriate representation from each area. (b) The dates of original settlement of the families vary. No attempt was made to draw from each period but, again, the alphabetized lists may be expected to provide appropriate representation. (c) The Society does not inquire about the religious affiliation of applicants for membership, and has no information about this. There was no attempt to obtain such data in the study. Thus, there is no information about the religious affiliation of the individuals in the sample. (d) The list of general questions was designed to obtain information about the length of time since the original settlement of the family, the region of residence of the respondent, the age and gender of the respondent, and their sources of information about current and recent events in Northern Ireland. As noted above, it is reasonable to assume that these reflected the composition of the Society.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, while the sample reflected the composition of the (broadly based) membership of the Scotch-Irish Society, it should not be regarded as typical of the entire Scotch-Irish population of the United States, many of whom have little interest in their ethnicity and even less interest in Northern Ireland.

The two questionnaires were sent to the sample of 107 Members of the Scotch-Irish Society. The recipients were asked to complete both sets of questions, if possible, but were urged to complete at least the one page set of general questions. The author realized that completion of the longer AHP questionnaire, with the need to make a number of judgments, might be too time-consuming for some and also that some recipients might decide that they had insufficient knowledge of the overall situation.

This turned out to be the case. There were thirty-nine returns (36.4%). Twenty-four respondents (22.4%) completed both questionnaires, while fifteen (14.0%) completed the set of general questions only. This would have been a good rate of return for a questionnaire sent to a general population, but was low in light of the special population selected. However, the author is very grateful to those who gave of their time and thought to this project.

THE METHOD: THE ANALYTIC HIERARCHY PROCESS (AHP)

A hierarchical structure provides a powerful method of partitioning the elements of a complex system into different sets known as the levels of the hierarchy: the elements at each level interact with both the elements in the levels above and in the level below. This process, which enables us to analyze a problem, is known as the Analytic Hierarchy Process or AHP. The AHP has been used to analyze many problems in government, in business, in international relations, and in personal decision-making (Saaty 1980, 1982; Saaty and Vargas). Here, we use it to look at the structure of a conflict.

The first level of the hierarchy is the ultimate goal, to find a resolution of the conflict. At the second level, we have the participants in the conflict. Each of these participants has objectives to be satisfied (as far as possible) by the resultant outcome: these objectives constitute the third level of the hierarchy. The fourth and final level contains the possible outcomes of the conflict.

The participants may be weighted according to their power to influence the final outcome. To do this, one asks the question: given two participants, which will have the greater influence on the outcome? How much greater? The objectives of each participant may be weighted according to their importance to the participant. The question now is: which of two objectives will a participant pursue more? How much more? The outcomes may be weighted according to how well each would satisfy a given objective, in the view of the participant whose objective is being considered. Which of two outcomes would be more effective in satisfying this objective? How much more?

The weights for each of the outcomes may now be obtained by composite weighting through the hierarchy. We follow a path from the decision at the apex to each outcome, multiplying the weights along each segment of the path to give a weight at the end. We repeat this for all possible paths, and aggregate the weights for each outcome. The result is a set of weights for the outcomes.

There are two possible ways to view this process. One is to consider a flow of power down from the initial source: this flow splits according to the power of the participants. Each then splits its power among its objectives; this gives rise to the first multiplication of weights. The flow to each objective is further divided to take account of the way in which each outcome satisfies the objective. Each outcome receives a contribution from each objective and these are added so that one obtains a final weight for each outcome. The initial power has now been transferred to the outcomes at the base of the hierarchy. An alternative, but related, view is to regard the weights as probabilities of independent events. Thus, the outcome at the base with the highest weight may be regarded as the most probable outcome, given the relative power of the participants, and their desires.

The fundamental question is: how does one obtain the weights? For each pair, we choose an integer from 1 to 9 to represent our feelings about the elements under consideration. The meaning of these numbers follows.

RATIO SCALE

Intensity of importance	Definition	Clarification
1	Equal importance	Two elements contribute equally to the objective.
3	Moderate importance of one over another	Experience and judgment favor one element over another.
5	Strong importance	Experience and judgment strongly favor one element over another.
7	Very strong importance	The dominance of one element over another has been clearly demonstrated in practice.
9	Extreme importance	The dominance of one element over another is of the highest possible order.
2, 4, 6, 8	Intermediate values between two judgments	A compromise is sometimes necessary.

Figure 1

The choice of these elements enables one to develop the matrix of paired comparisons and hence the relative weights of the elements under consideration. The reader is referred to Saaty's work for explanations and details of the calculations.

NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT HIERARCHY

The Northern Ireland conflict may be structured as a hierarchy as follows:
Level 1:the problem (to find the best outcome);
Level 2:the participants in the conflict, weighted according to their relative power to influence the final outcome;
Level 3: the objectives of each participant, weighted according to their relative importance to the participant;
Level 4: the possible outcomes (the basic political structures, weighted according to how well each would satisfy each objective, in the view of the relevant participant.
Thus, the final weights at Level 4 are the total weights attached to each political structure.

The Participants in the Conflict: The first step is to identify the participants to the conflict, those individuals or groups who may have an influence on the outcome. The groupings are those of earlier studies (Alexander, 1976, 1983; Alexander and Saaty, 1977a, 1977b). As may be seen, there was a conscious effort to use basic political science descriptors and to avoid terms that used religious denominations.

The British Government (BRITAIN), which controls Northern Ireland.

The Protestant (Unionist) majority community (ALLEGIANTS), which wants Northern Ireland to remain separate from the Republic of Ireland and which would find a substantial measure of minority participation acceptable. (This group does not include those who support violence.)

The Loyalist groups (DEFENSE), who are prepared to use force to resist the creation of a United Ireland.

The Roman Catholic (Nationalist) minority community (MODERATES), which includes both those who would prefer to join Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland and those who would be content to have Northern

Ireland remain separate, provided that a structure which provides for substantial minority participation is established. (This group does not include those who support violence.)
The Irish Republican Army (IRA) (which includes not only the Provisional and Official subgroups and their supporters, but also the so-called splinter groups), which considers violence to be an acceptable means of creating a United Ireland.
The Government of the Republic of Ireland (DUBLIN), which seeks to act on an equal footing with the British Government in determining what should happen in Northern Ireland.

The events of recent years have created a new dynamic in this conflict. In 1998, the Belfast Agreement (usually referred to as the Good Friday Agreement) was signed and later ratified by simultaneous elections in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This provided for what appeared at that time to be some measure of autonomy for Northern Ireland, with structures that ensured participation by all non-violent groups, and with guarantees that Northern Ireland would remain within the United Kingdom unless a majority of its citizens decided otherwise.

Since then, some parts of the Agreement have worked well. An Assembly was elected and the members selected Ministers (Cabinet Secretaries) from all the main parties. However, a stumbling block was the refusal of the IRA to carry out more than token acts of disarmament. The Unionist parties objected to serving in government with Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, while disarmament was not taking place. However, some acts of disarmament have now taken place. Recent elections have led to the Democratic Unionists, led by Ian Paisley, emerging as the largest party on the Unionist side, while Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, now primarily represents the Nationalist side. There is now a further attempt to implement a version of the Good Friday Agreement

The Objectives of Each Participant: The descriptions of the participants above, together with a considerable body of writing on the subject, suggest how the lists of objectives should be framed.

Objectives of BRITAIN: The British Government wants to maintain its overall sphere of influence while, at the same time, it wants to see Ulster removed as a major distraction. It would like to remove the terrorist threat posed by the IRA while it seeks a solution that would be acceptable to world opinion in general and to Irish Nationalist supporters worldwide in particular. Such a solution would require a substantial measure of power sharing among the various groups in Northern Ireland.

Objectives of ALLEGIANTS: The ALLEGIANTS do not want the Republic of Ireland to have any control over them or any say in the way in which they govern themselves: they want to remain separate from the Republic. They are prepared to accept cross-border bodies, provided that these entities are answerable both to the Irish Government and to any locally elected Assembly. They do not want Irish irredentists in government. (Irish irredentists are those who consider it unnatural for any part of the island to be separate from another part, regardless of the expressed desires of the inhabitants.) They are determined to maintain the British connection in some form. They seek to maintain their economic wellbeing and to achieve an increased sense of security.

Objectives of DEFENSE: The objectives of DEFENSE are similar to those of the ALLEGIANTS, although their relative importance may be different. They are less concerned with the actual form of government, provided that there is no control by the Irish Government and that the British connection is maintained. They consider it vital that the IRA should be disarmed. Some consider it essential that Northern Ireland should become a separate state and should not be under the control of either Britain or the Republic of Ireland.

Objectives of MODERATES: The MODERATES (primarily Catholic) want to take part in government and seek structures that ensure minority participation. They desire at least an “Irish dimension” to political structures. Many, but not all, want a United Ireland where Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would become one state. Many want the British to withdraw from Northern Ireland. Like the ALLEGIANTS, they seek continued economic wellbeing and an increased sense of security.

Objectives of IRA: The IRA is committed to the creation of a United Ireland, and to driving out the British from Northern Ireland. They work both through their political wing Sinn Fein and through violence or the threat of violence. Because of adverse international publicity about their failure to make other than token gestures of disarmament, they are also concerned with burnishing their image.

Objectives of DUBLIN: The Government of the Republic of Ireland is concerned to maintain stability in its own territory. It has the long-term objective of creating a United Ireland, but is content to have an interim solution like a Northern Ireland Assembly in which the Irish Government has significant input into the affairs of Northern Ireland. As with any government in power, it is also concerned with re-election and tends to act accordingly.

Possible Political Outcomes: The current political structure in Northern Ireland is that set up by the Belfast Agreement (Good Friday Agreement) of 1998, i.e., an elected Assembly with built-in guarantees of participation by all major groups in the ruling Executive. Cross-border bodies are, in theory, responsible to the elected Assembly in Belfast and the Dail (parliament) in Dublin. (In practice, these cross-border bodies seem to be under the control of London and Dublin.) The British Government is ultimately in control of Northern Ireland, with considerable input from the Irish Government.

Some of the citizens of Northern Ireland would like to be ruled directly by the British Government with a fully integrated Parliament, on the same basis as other regions of the United Kingdom (with the exception of Scotland and Wales, both of which have a considerable measure of autonomy. Others want Northern Ireland to be joined with the Republic of Ireland in a single state. A further option, for which there is a measure of support, is for Northern Ireland to become a separate state, independent of both Britain and the Republic of Ireland. This could be, for example, a state within the (British) Commonwealth or it could be a state within the European Union.

Thus, the possible Political Outcomes are:
(a) the Good Friday Agreement: AGREEMENT
(b) an Integrated Parliament: INT-PARLIAMENT
(c) a separate independent state: INDEPENDENCE
(d) union of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: UNITED-IRELAND
The definition of the hierarchy is complete.

SUMMARY OF TERMS USED IN STUDY

PARTICIPANTS
(a) The British Government: **BRITAIN**
(b) The (mainly Protestant) Unionists (loyal to Britain) who reject violence: **ALLEGIANTS**
(c) The (Protestant) paramilitaries, who do not want a United Ireland: **DEFENSE**
(d) The (Catholic) moderates who reject violence: **MODERATES**
(e) The IRA (including Sinn Fein) who support violence to achieve a United Ireland: **IRA**
(f) The Government of Ireland: **DUBLIN**

OBJECTIVES OF BRITAIN
(a) Maintain sphere of influence: **SPHERE**
(b) Find solution acceptable to world opinion: **ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION**
(c) Crush IRA: **NO IRA**
(d) Divest themselves of the Ulster problem: **DIVEST**

OBJECTIVES OF ALLEGIANTS
(a) No link with the Republic of Ireland: **NO DUBLIN**
(b) No Irish irredentists in government: **NO IRREDENTISTS**
(c) Maintain British connection: **BRITISH CONNECTION**
(d) Maintain economic wellbeing: **ECONOMIC**
(e) Develop increased sense of security: **SECURITY**

OBJECTIVES OF DEFENSE
(a) No link with the Republic of Ireland: **NO DUBLIN**
(b) Set up a separate autonomous state: **AUTONOMY**
(c) Maintain British connection: **BRITISH CONNECTION**
(d) Crush IRA: **NO IRA**

OBJECTIVES OF MODERATES
(a) Power sharing in government: **POWERSHARING**
(b) Develop an Irish dimension in government: **IRISH DIMENSION**
(c) Force British withdrawal: **BRITISH OUT**
(d) Maintain economic wellbeing: **ECONOMIC**
(e) Develop increased sense of security: **SECURITY**

OBJECTIVES OF IRA
(a) Force British withdrawal: **BRITISH OUT**
(b) Unite Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: **UNITED IRELAND**
(c) Create acceptable image on world stage: **GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS**

OBJECTIVES OF DUBLIN
(a) Maintain stability on island: **STABILITY**
(b) Unite Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: **UNITED IRELAND**

BASIC POLITICAL OUTCOMES
(a) The Good Friday Agreement: **AGREEMENT**
(b) Further integration of Northern Ireland into British Parliament: **INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT**
(c) Autonomous state, independent of both British and Irish Governments: **INDEPENDENCE**
(d) Union of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: **UNITED IRELAND**

The Northern Ireland Analytic Hierarchy is shown in Figure 2. This may be found at the end of the paper.

THE STUDY

As already noted, the objective of the project was to obtain two sets of results from the participants in the study:
(1) The first set consisted of an ordering of their preferences for the possible outcomes of the conflict that were presented to them. This was obtained by asking the respondents to rank the outcomes in the order of their preference. These results were obtained on the *short form*. The results were then aggregated.
(2) The second set involved the use of the Analytic Hierarchy Process, in which the respondents proceeded through a set of questions in which they made judgments about such attributes as relative power to affect the outcome, etc. These results were obtained on the *long form*. This led to an assessment of what they thought would be likely to happen and to a weighted ordering of the outcomes.

The Short Form: the General Questions: Those who responded to the short form were asked a number of questions about date of family arrival in the American colonies or the United States, state of residence, age group, gender, their sources of information about the politics of Northern Ireland, etc. Considerations of space preclude a listing of the questions here. They were then asked to rank the possible outcomes in order of preference, quite independently of any judgments that they make in looking at the Analytic Hierarchy.

First preferences: The numbers selecting each outcome as their first preference were scaled to add to one. As may be seen, the Good Friday Agreement was the first choice of the greatest number of respondents, while a United Ireland received the smallest number of votes.

NO PREFERENCE	**0.079**
AGREEMENT	**0.474**
INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT	**0.158**
INDEPENDENCE	**0.158**
UNITED IRELAND	**0.132**

Scaled and Scored preferences: We now take second and third choices into account. The first choice was given three points, the second choice two points, and the third choice one point. The scores were then scaled to add to one. We now see a very marked preference for the Agreement, decreasing steadily through Integrated Parliament and Independence to a low for a United Ireland.

AGREEMENT	**0.378**
INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT	**0.276**
INDEPENDENCE	**0.211**
UNITED IRELAND	**0.135**

The Long Form: The AHP Questionnaire: Members of the sample received an explanation of the Analytic Hierarchy Process and the nature of the comparisons entailed. They were sent a layout of the Northern Ireland conflict hierarchy, together with an explanation of the terms used. They were also given the following statement:

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS IN THE COMPARISONS THAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO MAKE. THIS IS NOT A TEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONFLICT AND YOU DO NOT NEED TO STUDY THE PROBLEM. THE CONCERN HERE IS TO OBTAIN A SNAPSHOT OF YOUR OPINIONS AT THIS TIME, GIVEN THE INFLUENCES TO WHICH WE ARE ALL EXPOSED.

Their task was to complete a series of comparison grids so that the appropriate weightings at each level could be obtained. For example, they were asked to complete Grid 1, which compared the relative power of the participants in the conflict. (Respondents unfamiliar with the AHP often find it easier to complete a grid of this nature than to develop a comparison matrix.)

POWER OF PARTICIPANTS: Please indicate your judgment by circling the number on the appropriate side of the grid.

Which of the participants has more power to affect the outcome? How much more?

BRITAIN	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	ALLEGIANTS
BRITAIN	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DEFENSE
BRITAIN	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	MODERATES
BRITAIN	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	IRA
BRITAIN	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DUBLIN
ALLEGIANTS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DEFENSE
ALLEGIANTS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	MODERATES
ALLEGIANTS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	IRA
ALLEGIANTS	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DUBLIN
DEFENSE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	MODERATES
DEFENSE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	IRA
DEFENSE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DUBLIN
MODERATES	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	IRA
MODERATES	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DUBLIN
IRA	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DUBLIN

GRID 1

The analyst was thus able to create a comparison matrix for each respondent and to obtain the relative power that he or she attached to each participant. **This is demonstrated in Figure 3.**

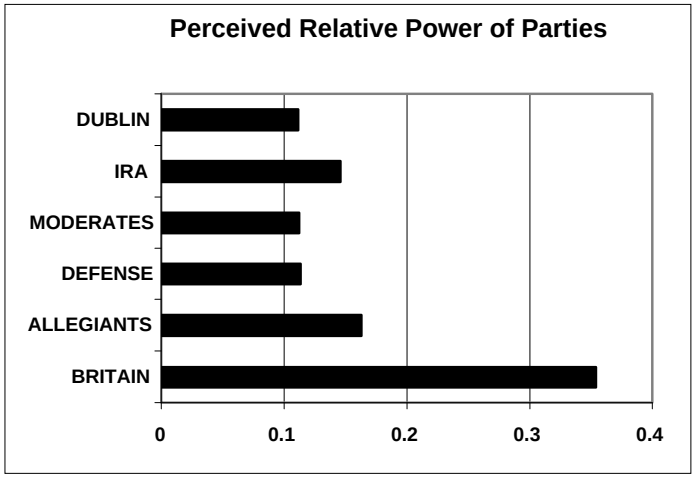

Figure 3

IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVES: The next stage was to assess the relative importance that each participant assigned to its objectives. For this, six comparison grids were necessary: one for each participant in the conflict. For reasons of space, we show here only Grid 2, which rates the relative importance to BRITAIN of each of its objectives.

OBJECTIVES OF BRITAIN: Which of the objectives is more important to BRITAIN? How much more?

SPHERE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	ACC-SOL
SPHERE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	NO-IRA
SPHERE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DIVEST
ACC-SOL	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	NO-IRA
ACC-SOL	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DIVEST
NO-IRA	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	DIVEST

GRID 2

The respondents completed similar grids for the remaining five participants. The importance of the objectives, to the party in question was thus established. **We show the charts that display the results of these ratings in Figure 4 through Figure 9 at the end of the paper.**

This brought the respondents to the next level of the hierarchy. Here they had to assess the degree to which each of the given outcomes would satisfy a given objective, in the view of the given participant. Since there were twenty-three objectives in all, twenty-three comparison grids were needed. We show here Grid 3, which rates the relative levels of satisfaction of the objective SECURITY in the view of the ALLEGIANTS.

SATISFACTION OF OBJECTIVES: Which of the outcomes would be more likely to satisfy the objective SECURITY in the view of ALLEGIANTS? How much more?

AGREEMENT	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	INT-PARL
AGREEMENT	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	INDEPENDENCE
AGREEMENT	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	UNITED-IRE
INT-PARL	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	INDEPENDENCE
INT-PARL	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	UNITED-IRE
INDEPENDENCE	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	UNITED-IRE

GRID 3

The work of the respondents was now over: they had completed thirty comparison grids.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A weighted ordering of the outcomes for each respondent could now be obtained. Before aggregation, these were first tabulated with the individual information from the short general questionnaire so that it would be possible to extract any differences related to age, gender, time of first settlement, etc. There did not appear to be any significant differences.

However, it was notable that the respondents saw what was most likely to happen as very different from their own personal preferences. (One respondent, who has for many years been strongly committed to the cause of independence for Northern Ireland, came to the conclusion that the most likely outcome was a United Ireland.) It must again be emphasized that respondents made judgments using only the pairwise comparison grids and that they did not know where the synthesis of their judgments would lead. This major strength of the AHP provided excellent insights post-analysis and is a further demonstration of the power of this method.

Before complete aggregation of the results, it is useful to see the intermediate stage where the relative preference of the outcomes for each of the participants is shown. **These preferences are shown in Figures 10 through 15 at the end of the paper.**

As may be seen, the preferred outcome for BRITAIN is AGREEMENT, that for the ALLEGIANTS is INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT, that for DEFENSE is INDEPENDENCE, while the MODERATES, IRA, and DUBLIN all prefer a UNITED IRELAND.

The next step was total aggregation of the results. **The global average is shown in Figure 16**.

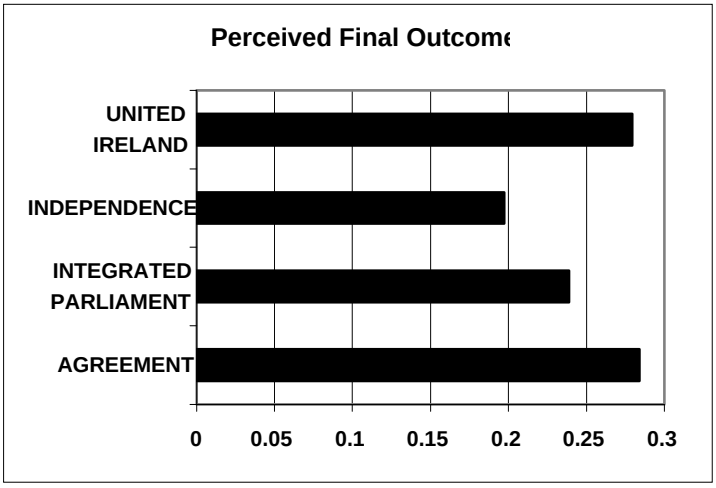

Figure 16

AGREEMENT	**0.284**
INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT	**0.239**
INDEPENDENCE	**0.198**
UNITED IRELAND	**0.279**

Thus the respondents overall thought that the most likely outcome was the AGREEMENT, followed very closely by a UNITED IRELAND. This was very different from the preference ordering that they had given initially, where the AGREEMENT was preferred but a UNITED IRELAND came in last. Recall that these preferences were:

AGREEMENT	**0.378**
INTEGRATED PARLIAMENT	**0.276**
INDEPENDENCE	**0.211**
UNITED IRELAND	**0.135**

These differences may be seen clearly in Figure 17.

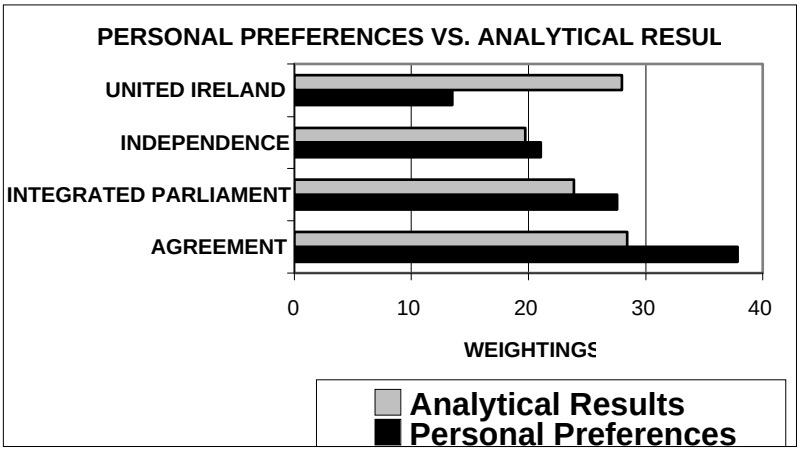

Figure 17

Why were the results so different? One may speculate about possible reasons, but a study of the results at intermediate levels of the hierarchy is instructive. As one may see, both from the structure of the AHP and from everyday reasoning, the driving factor is the relative power of the participants to the conflict. As we showed in Figure 3, the average here was as follows:

PARTICIPANT	POWER
BRITAIN	**0.354**
ALLEGIANTS	**0.163**
DEFENSE	**0.113**
MODERATES	**0.112**
IRA	**0.146**
DUBLIN	**0.112**

Thus, the respondents saw those who preferred a United Ireland (MODERATES, IRA, DUBLIN) as having 37% of the power to influence the outcome and, while this was not the preferred outcome for BRITAIN (with 35.4% of the power), it was still a satisfactory outcome for BRITAIN. In contrast, ALLEGIANTS and DEFENSE, for whom a United Ireland was anathema, were seen as having only 27.6% of the power to influence the outcome. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the probability of a UNITED IRELAND outcome should be seen as so close to that of the AGREEMENT.

What is the real significance of these findings? Here we have a Scotch-Irish group, strongly committed to its ethnic identity and with some level of concern about the situation in Northern Ireland (although it is certainly not an overwhelming concern). They understand and sympathize with the desire of their kinsmen not to be absorbed into an all-Ireland state. Nevertheless, they see the forces arrayed against the Ulster majority as being so powerful that the probability that a United Ireland will occur is almost as great as the probability of successful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

How firm is this conclusion? A question that has arisen in many conflict studies where the AHP is used is the stability of the perceived outcome. What possible factors could change the outcome? In two studies of the Northern Ireland conflict, carried out in 1977, Alexander and Saaty examined this question (Alexander and Saaty 1977a, 1977b).

At that time, their analysis had shown that the most likely outcome would be some form of legislative independence for Northern Ireland, followed closely by a local Assembly. This suggested that a strong local Assembly, with a considerable measure of autonomy, would provide a workable solution. Since this outcome might well satisfy the

MODERATES, but would certainly not satisfy the IRA and would probably not satisfy DUBLIN, it was reasonable to ask if a change in the relative power of these two participants relative to the remaining participants would affect the outcome and, if so, how much of a change would be necessary. By using what is known as the **backward process** through the hierarchy and varying the power of the participants, they were able to find **thresholds of power** to indicate by how much the power of both the IRA and DUBLIN would have to be increased relative to the other participants to change the outcome. It now appears that these increases in power may have been achieved, at least in the eyes of the respondents in this study.

What would be an appropriate follow-up to this study? First, a larger group of respondents should be sought from a similar population; there were thirty-nine responses in all, but only twenty-four of these completed both parts of the study. Thus, there are statistical caveats in place. Further, it should be possible to choose a population more representative of the Scotch-Irish in general and to carry out the study with this more general population. Members of such a sample might be less interested in the subject and there could be a much lower rate of return of questionnaires. However, this could provide a useful comparison with the results of the present study.

It would be too strong to claim that the results of the study serve in any way as a predictor of the future. At all stages, we are dealing with perceptions of individuals about a complex conflict. Nevertheless, these perceptions are of value in giving a picture of how a strongly self-identifying group looks at the situation and how it sees the probable future.

NOTE. Space constraints preclude a detailed description of the underlying situation and of the complexity of the issues involved. It was also not possible to include many of the more significant charts and tables. The reader who is interested in the details of the Northern Ireland problem or of the analysis should consult Alexander 2004.

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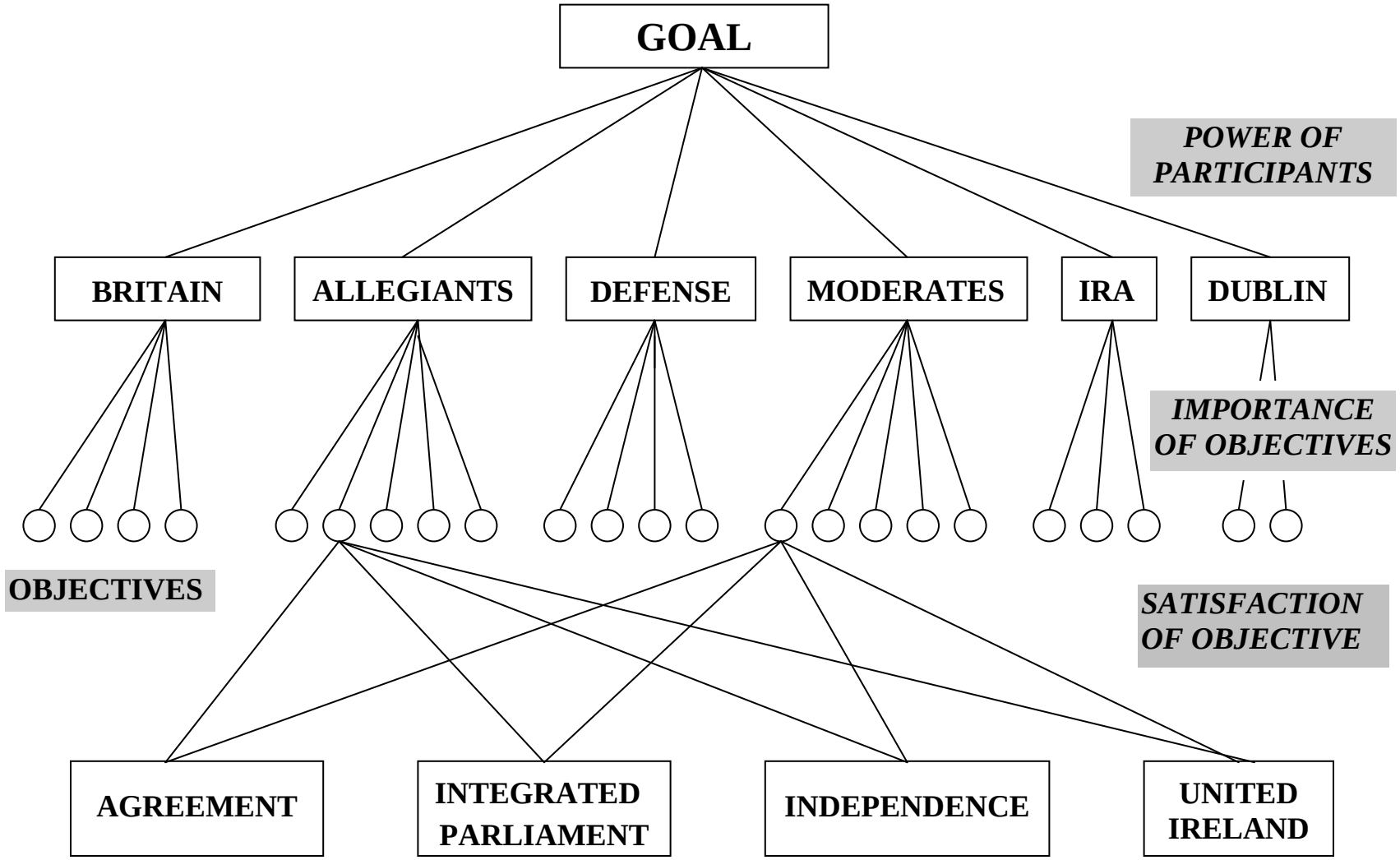


Figure 2: NORTHERN IRELAND HIERARCHY

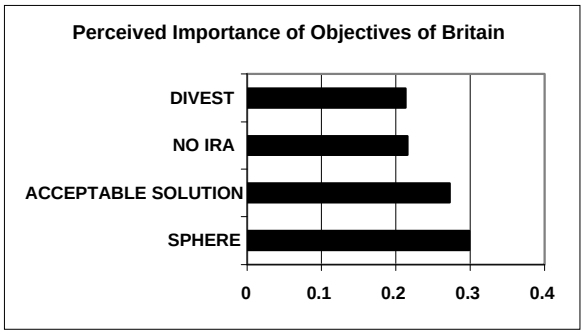
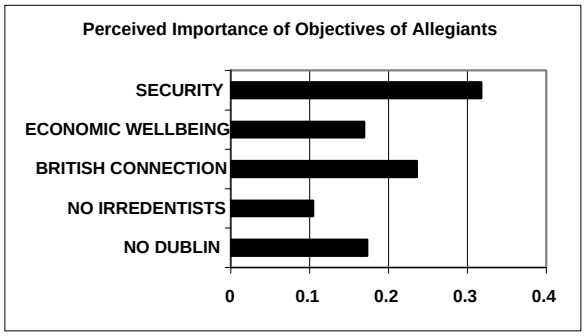


Figure 4



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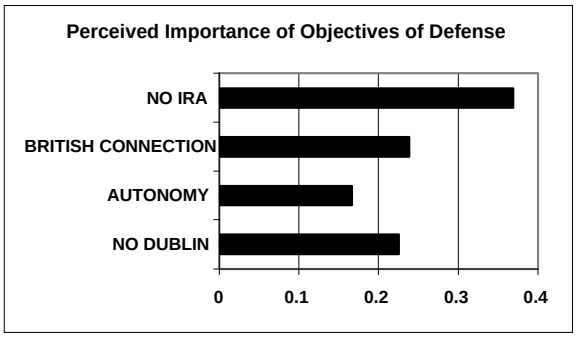

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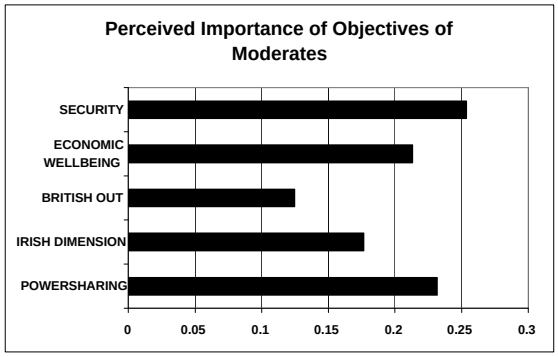

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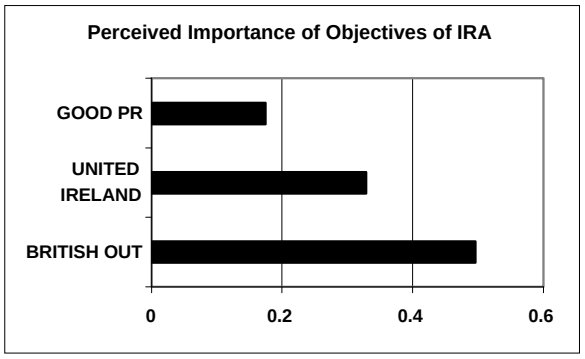

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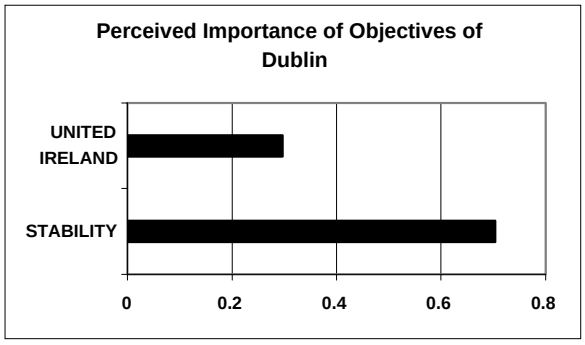

Figure 9

Perceived Importance of Objectives for Each Party

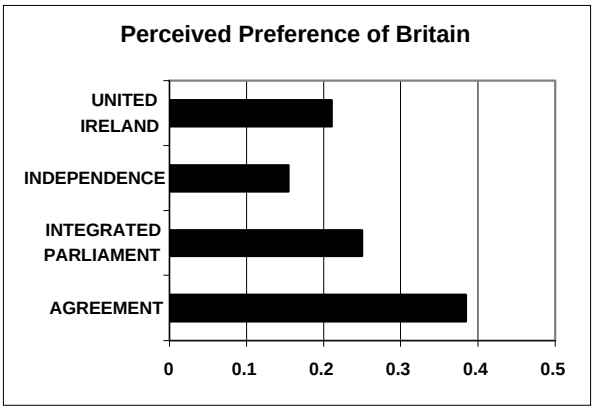

Figure 10

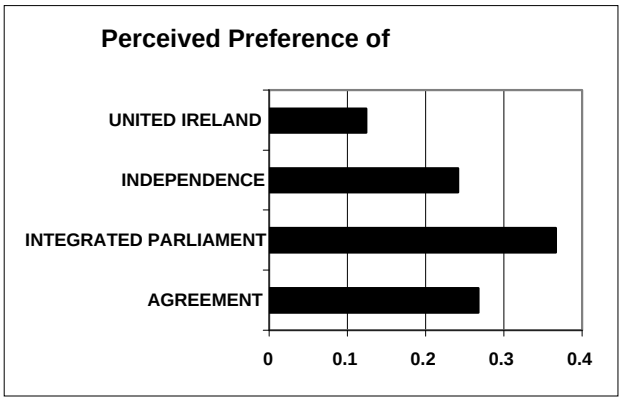

Figure 11

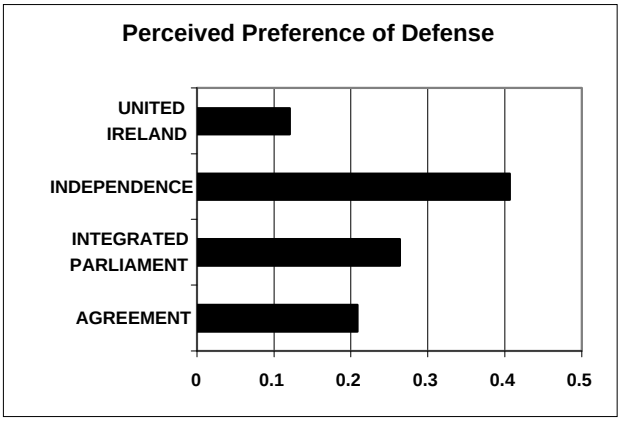

Figure 12

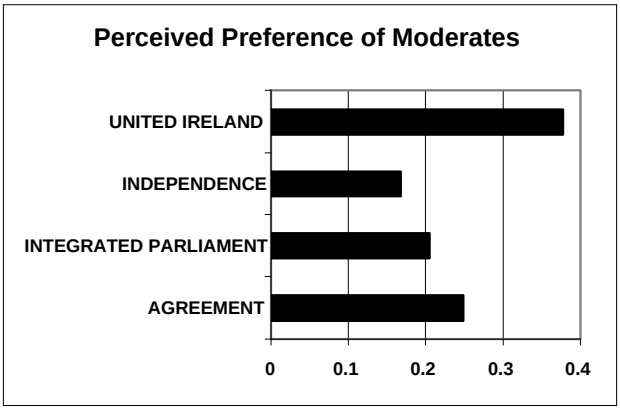

Figure 13

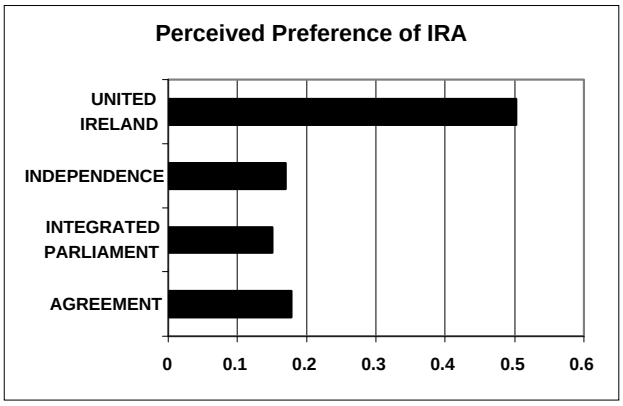

Figure 14

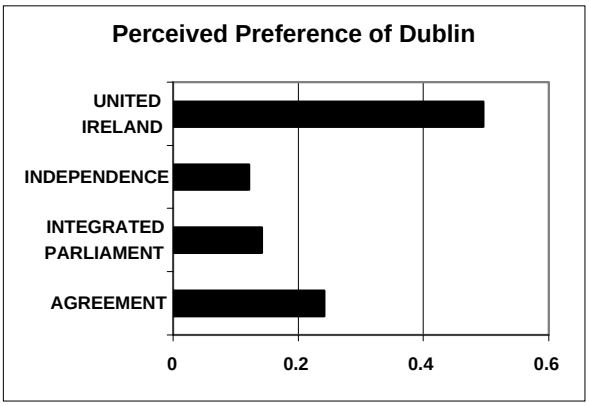

Figure 15

Perceived Preferences of Each Party in Relation to Possible Outcomes