

The Changing World Order and the Republican Ideal in Ireland

LIAM O'DOWD

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Introduction

The republican ideal of governance in Ireland and elsewhere now faces major challenges. The growth of transnational governance, as represented in the European Union and the proliferation of transnational institutions, corporations and social movements, is posing fundamental challenges to democratic accountability and popular sovereignty. In Ireland, over the last 30 years, the Northern Ireland conflict and the ongoing debate between 'republicans' and their opponents have served to pre-empt a more fundamental debate on whether the republican ideal can or should survive in the new world order and within Ireland in particular. The fate of the republican ideal is not solely a matter for particular political parties, movements or groups but has far reaching implications for what it will mean to be a citizen in both parts of Ireland in the twenty-first century.

A 'barebones' definition of the republican ideal is 'government by the people for the people'. It invokes the Enlightenment principles of popular sovereignty and self-determination and subscribes to majoritarianism and representative democracy within fixed territorial boundaries. Its roots in popular sovereignty mean that it is either secular or theistic in that it rejects appeals to religious authority as a means of informing the practical day-to-day governance of the state. It advocates, therefore, the separation of powers and the autonomy of civil society *vis-à-vis* the state.

The basic reference points of republicanism, therefore, are the 'people', the 'territory' within which they reside, a written constitution and a system of laws under which all are to be treated equally. A republic has come to presuppose representative democracy periodically accountable to the people but which ensures that elected representatives remain subject to the same constitution and laws as the people generally. By definition, therefore, republicanism is opposed to arbitrary rule as represented by monarchies, autocracies or parliamentary dictatorships. The core ideal, if

not always the reality, is equal citizenship, for all those residing in a particular territory.

Of course, like other political ideals, the republican ideal is never realised fully in practice. The universalisation of citizenship rights to whole populations was achieved through a series of partly successful popular struggles such as those over the franchise, the rights of workers and welfare recipients. Even in contemporary democratic republics much of the population, women, children, gays, non-nationals, the working class and the poor remain unequal in terms of their substantive citizenship rights.

Moreover, republicanism as an ideal does not constitute a comprehensive 'stand alone' philosophy. As Tom Paine recognised as early as 1792, in his response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, republicanism is an ideal or principle of government, rather than a fully fledged form of government or a complete political ideology. Today the label republican can be applied to a wide variety of states including the 'first republics' of the US and France, 'old' post-colonial states in Latin America, newer post-colonial states in Africa and Asia and emergent states in Europe. The label is claimed by political movements as diverse as the Republican Party in the US, Sinn Féin in Ireland, anti-monarchists in Britain and supporters of the Islamic Republic in Iran. It has been associated historically with a variety of different ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, liberalism and even popular forms of Catholicism and Islam.

The republican ideal has been too often confused with these ideologies although they have clearly shaped its practical expression in specific historical contexts. A further difficulty is that the appropriation of the label republican by those states and political movements which are anti-democratic in orientation, has drained the term of its original and particular meaning.

Whatever its forerunners in ancient Greece and Rome, or in the Italian states of the Renaissance, the modern republican ideal owes much to the historical rupture marked by the American and French revolutions and to tracts such as Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*. 'Pure republicanism' envisaged a world of secular, democratic states, treating each other as equals, with a sharp distinction between the private and the public spheres and between foreign and domestic affairs. Claims to self-determination, involved, in principle at least, a willingness to recognise and respect rights of others to self-determination. Indeed, one of the more positive legacies of Irish republicanism, since the 1790s, is that, apart from short-lived opportunist alliances, its adherents have sided with those who supported the demise of monarchy and the fragmentation of the great European empires.

When addressing the prospects of the republican ideal in Ireland, it is

necessary to deal simultaneously with both the specifics of the Irish context and the wider global trends which are altering our conventional understandings of self-determination, sovereignty and democracy. Too often discussions of Irish republicanism concentrate on the former, while the impact of the new world order is ignored.

Globalisation, identity and insularity

One of the consequences of globalisation is the increasing unsustainability of a sharp distinction between internal, i.e. domestic, affairs and international or foreign affairs. For member states of the European Union (EU), this distinction seems even more problematical given its promulgation of shared sovereignty, co-decision making and the regulatory role of EU institutions. The consequences for the republican ideal, the national state, popular sovereignty, self-determination and democracy are far reaching.

The difficulties of adequately addressing these questions in Ireland are exacerbated by an insular dimension to Irish political thinking. In particular, republicanism and nationalism are frequently considered as if they are only to be found in Ireland. The debates raging over Irish nationalism, and the peculiar strain of British nationalism that is today's Ulster unionism, have encouraged a 'cult of uniqueness' which underlines the insularity of both. Similarly, the prolonged intellectual navel gazing about Irish identity and culture sometimes gives the impression that it is the unique destiny of Irish people to be wrestling perpetually with their culture and political identity. One is almost left wondering if any people, besides the Irish, have such preoccupying cultures or identities¹.

In this insular mode of thinking, change is typically cast in the role of the 'king over the water' who has the potential to bring salvation or redemption, or to be the conduit of imminent or insidious threat to a preferred status quo. Thus, in the ideological battles over the Irish 'national question', salvation, or threat, is associated with 'external' agencies in Brussels, Westminster or Washington. More wide-ranging interpretations of Irish social change frequently imply the need for Ireland to 'catch up' with modernising, 'external' trends, or alternatively to resist them.

Of course, the 'internal' versus 'external' distinction is quite ahistorical. It posits a view of a self-contained tradition, identity and national sovereignty that never existed in reality. The other side of the coin is equally ahistorical, i.e. those commentaries which imply that the novelty of contemporary globalisation has rendered a distinct Irish state and society redundant. This ignores the extent to which economies, people, and ideas have traversed national and cultural borders in the past without eliminating them. Moreover, it fails to recognise that the extent of border

crossing has varied between historical periods. For example, people and goods moved more freely across international borders in the late nineteenth century than they did for much of the twentieth century, especially between the 1920s and the 1970s.

Three challenges

The following discussion addresses some of the current challenges posed to the republican ideal in Ireland in the context of the blurring of the distinction between internal and external affairs in the contemporary world order. Three distinct, if interrelated, challenges are examined in turn. The first arises from a legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict that has served to identify republicanism as uniquely Irish and uniquely prone to political violence. To many observers, the conflict has made republicanism synonymous with communal nationalism and a matter for a number of working class and rural areas within Northern Ireland rather than for the country as a whole. The second challenge has its origins in the problem of territorial boundaries, i.e. what are the appropriate territorial parameters for democratic politics? This is a problem shared by many political ideologies and has long been widespread throughout Europe. The third challenge arises from the growth of transnational governance. While this growth provides a solution of sorts to the 'boundary problem', it promotes functional governance at the expense of its territorial counterpart in ways that threaten to undermine representative democracy and popular sovereignty.

The legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict and the republican ideal of governance

At one level, the Northern conflict has frozen thinking about republican governance by forcing it into the straitjacket of the debate between constitutionalists and physical force republicans. Constitutionalists have come to largely identify themselves as nationalists rather than as republicans. The mainstream parties in the South have largely expunged the latter term from their political vocabulary, despite the republican constitution of the state and the official name of the largest political party, Fianna Fáil, the Republican party. Republicanism has become largely associated with Sinn Féin, the IRA, and a number of smaller groupings.

Partly in response to the Northern conflict, much effort has been expended by historians, journalists and other intellectuals in downgrading the role of republicanism in Irish history, or alternatively, in stressing the discontinuity between contemporary republicans and their precursors in Irish history. These accounts underline the historical failures of Irish republicanism, its fissiparous nature, its elitist and militarist tendencies and its theological or mystical preoccupations with the abstraction of the

'Republic'.

While much of the criticism has been directed towards dissident republicans, it has been directed also at those who have seen themselves as constitutional republicans. For much of the history of the Irish state, the democratic, constitutional politics of Fianna Fáil and smaller republican parties are also seen to have failed – in ending partition, establishing a secular constitution, reviving the Irish language, creating equal citizenship, and establishing a viable economy.

Since 1970, however, Northern Ireland has provided the context for a revitalised republican movement. Heavily influenced by republican failure since 1921, Northern republicans have sought to re-frame this experience in a more positive light – as a story of popular resistance which resonates with the circumstances of a marginalised minority in Northern Ireland. They have been able to sustain a military and political campaign, international networks and a level of popular electoral support beyond anything previously achieved by dissenting Irish republicans. Nevertheless, Sinn Féin has remained a minority political presence in the North and on the island.

Meanwhile, despite the establishment of a formal republic in the South by 1949, constitutional parties have tended to minimise their republican heritage to the point of being ashamed of it, partly because of the association with political violence in the North. Just as the Northern Ireland conflict is a reminder of the coercive origins of failed British state-building in Ireland, so also it is an embarrassing reminder of one of the greatest historical failures of Irish republicanism. The integration of the Irish state into the EU has also served to marginalise republican preoccupations with national sovereignty and democratic accountability. Little wonder then, that republicanism has dropped out of the vocabulary of the mainstream political parties.

One of the consequences of the Northern Ireland conflict has been to further enhance the confusion between republicanism, nationalism and Catholicism. Despite the key role of non-conformists, Protestants and free-thinkers in the founding of Irish republicanism, since the middle of the nineteenth century most of those who have claimed to be republicans happened to see themselves, and to be seen by others, as nationalists and Catholics – most recently in Northern Ireland since 1970. Of course, broad-based or successful political movements are seldom carriers of 'pure' ideals or ideologies. They are typically an amalgam of frequently contradictory ideologies and beliefs which influence the extent to which the republican ideal can be realised in any particular context.

Those who see twentieth-century Irish republican movements as irredeemably tainted by failure, militarism and disdain for democratic politics seldom question whether the republican ideal of governance is also

redundant and irrelevant in contemporary Ireland. The challenge is different for those who see themselves as republicans or who envisage themselves as allies of republicans. The question for them is what priority can, or should, be given to the republican ideal of governance in pragmatic political alliances, especially with nationalists. Attempts to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict have resurrected a broader alliance between republicans and nationalists in a so-called 'pan-nationalist front' – this, despite the distinction between republicans and nationalists at political party level in the North. This alliance is reminiscent of the loose coalition of forces between republicans, nationalists and others in the very different circumstances of 1916 to 1921. But the tensions remain.

Nationalism prioritises the 'nation' and questions of national identity and it aims to make nation and state congruent. Republicanism prioritises the 'people', the state, citizenship and a particular ideal of government. Republicanism is even more territorially focused than nationalism in that qualifications for citizenship arise from residency within a bounded territorial state. Nationalism, on the other hand, recognises and engages nations that are scattered across several state boundaries.

Nationalism has proved extremely malleable and adaptable to the changing international system as is evidenced by proliferating nationalisms in Europe. By comparison, the foundational principles of republicanism seem to be at much greater risk from the intensification of transnational governance. For example, Irish nationalism has adapted successfully to the onset of free trade, the EU and the growth of transnational networks. The Irish nation is being redefined more broadly and flexibly to include its components in North America, Britain, Northern Ireland and elsewhere – and the links between its dispersed components are being strengthened by return immigration, the Americanisation of the Irish economy, the communications revolution and by concerted attempts to advance the Northern Ireland peace process. On the other hand, the republican ideal of 'government for the people by the people' within fixed territorial boundaries is threatened by non-accountable shared decision-making within the European Union or by the global strategies of huge business corporations and appeals to the primacy of the 'market' – or of the global economy – over society.

In the new world order, discussions of the republican ideal of governance can no longer be confined to national states. States are now part, not just of an inter-state system, but of a global (and European) order characterised by a considerable measure of supranational governance. The fate of the republican ideal in Ireland therefore will not be determined merely by the legacy of Irish history as conventionally understood but also by Ireland's role within the new world order. On this wider front, it is clear that one of the weaknesses of the republican ideal is the extent to which it

can be adopted by quite opposed political movements, some of which are explicitly anti-democratic. On the other hand, the frequency with which political movements and states associate themselves with the republican ideal is also a clue to its strength and to the enduring appeal of its core components, popular sovereignty and accountable democracy. These concerns are not solely matters for Irish republicanism but are of pressing relevance in the new world order of which Ireland is a part. They raise critical issues about the location, nature and changing significance of the territorial boundaries within which the republican ideal might survive and prosper.

The boundary problem

Since the advent of modern republicanism over two centuries ago, a key problem has persisted, i.e. how, and where, to fix, or maintain, state borders that are most conducive to the establishment of popular sovereignty and accountable democracy. Posed as such it is a problem which has been shared by a great variety of nationalist, socialist, liberal and conservative movements. The boundary problem for all democrats, republicans included, rests on a paradox of origins. Few if any states are constituted democratically – instead their boundaries are set by violence, coercion, invasion, or dynastic settlements without reference to the populations affected. For democratic governance to flourish, people must forget the non-democratic origins of the territorial unit in which democracy is established.² In the new world order of globalisation and European integration this problem has become more, rather than less, acute. Even long-established, taken-for-granted borders are being challenged by the rise of movements for secession or greater regional autonomy. Simultaneously, it is becoming clear that national sovereignty no longer means what it did even three decades ago.

Political borders continue to proliferate under conditions of globalisation. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Europe. The prolonged fragmentation of the multinational empires and states has continued throughout the twentieth century. The collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia are only the latest in a long process which has seen the successive demise of the Ottoman, German, British, French and other lesser empires. Border change has seldom rested on democratic plebiscite, it has been a violent phenomenon associated with wars, invasions, dynastic claims or with the machinations of powerful elites. As Benedict Anderson³ observes the violence of building and maintaining the great empires has been even greater than that employed by their opponents. For example, whatever the current identification of Irish republicanism with violence, it is an incontrovertible fact that more Irish people have died fighting for the imperial British state than have died fighting for Irish

independence.

Most political ideologies have had to deal with the boundary problem, frequently settling for *ad hoc* solutions. Socialists have found it difficult to marry a universalistic programme with the reality of having to build socialism in specific states. Liberal democracy, an ideology shared by many republicans and nationalists, requires territorially-bounded states for the rule of law and representative government to work. But the principle of self-determination provides no rules for where borders should be drawn. Nor does it provide guidelines on why there should be a multiplicity of states or for belonging to one state rather than another.⁴ The American political scientist, Robert Dahl observes that 'the majority principle depends on prior assumptions about the unit: that the unit in which it is to operate is itself legitimate and that the matters on which it is employed properly fall within the jurisdiction of the unit'.⁵ Majority voting presupposes agreement on political boundaries and power assignments, as it affects the sovereignty of states.⁶

Nationalism has proved to be the dominant territorial ideology of the twentieth century partly because it can express the fluidity and volatility, as well as the fixity, of borders. Its chameleon qualities allow it both to challenge and maintain existing borders. Nationalists have always recognised that 'nations' do not coincide with existing borders – a fact that helps to legitimise border change but also enables state nationalists to support the status quo by turning state citizens into a nation. The question for nationalists is who belongs to the 'nation'; for republicans, it is who are the people?⁷

For republicans, in particular, the boundary question is: how are 'the people' to be defined and within which territorial boundaries. In other words, what are the optimal territorial units within which representative democracy, equal citizenship and majority rule might apply? In practice, of course, no historical republic emerged from a *tabula rasa*. Like others, republicans have had to live with a legacy of state-building and the balance of power within the inter-state system which owed less to the 'the rule of the people' than to war, invasion, colonisation, and other forms of coercion.

Defining citizens of a territorially delimited republic inevitably meant exclusion as well as inclusion, raising the difficult question of what principles might be used in this process. Nationalists sought to construct criteria of 'belonging' and 'not belonging' for groups of people concentrated in place with a shared sense of their own past and their own historical destiny and with common characteristics of language, religion or culture. Such nation-building requires much intellectual effort, institution-building and the designation of an 'Other'. It is unsurprising that nation-building has proved to be a welcome resource for many

historical forms of republicanism. Appeals to nationhood, however, frequently conceal, rather than offset, the arbitrariness of the territorial borders of states, and fail to provide guidelines for adjudicating competing claims for self-determination within one territory.

Compared to nationalism, however, republicanism puts greater faith in the rights and duties of citizenship creating a cohesiveness, regardless of culture, national origins, language or religion. Yet, such an abstract and rational ideology, however compelling as an ideal in the late eighteenth century, was insufficient to constitute a comprehensive ideology subsequently. The relationship of the state to civil society began to change fundamentally over the next two centuries. States became ever more involved in, and constitutive of, civil societies. States and state borders came to be of greater significance, therefore, than ever before in the regulation of the everyday life. Over time, the goals of state governance have expanded in response to political struggles and demands. They now involve defending and protecting citizens, developing the rule of law to regulate markets, defining human rights and limiting state power. States also have sought to be carriers of identity and providers of channels of political participation as well as redistributors of wealth through systems of social welfare. In effect, the expansion of the state's role made the problem of where to draw borders more rather than less significant because of the expanded scope of citizenship.

The response of contemporary republicanism has been to widen the notion of citizenship to include economic and cultural rights as well as political rights narrowly defined. This is an attempt to resolve contemporary boundary problems by accommodating the multiple or plural nature of identity within an overarching ideology of political citizenship. The boundary problem remains, however, i.e. where to draw borders around citizens in order to maximise the value of their citizenship while minimising the consequences for the rights of those excluded.

Despite the impression given by some of its more vociferous critics, the 'boundary problem' is not a unique preoccupation of Irish republicanism or even of republicanism in general. On the contrary, the problem of state borders has pervaded twentieth-century European history and its dominant political ideologies. As the source of the modern state system, Europe has proved to be a particularly fertile producer of state borders and the paradoxes associated with them. One of the characteristics of Europe as a continent of old settlement, is the newness of its state borders. According to one estimate, more than 60 per cent were created in the twentieth century and Central and Eastern European countries have generated over 8,000 miles of new political borders since 1989.⁸ In geographical terms, of the 48 sovereign states in existence in Europe in 1993, 36 came into being in this century compared to 12 in the three previous centuries

combined although this account underestimates the extent of border change in that they do not allow for adjustments to the borders of existing states. On one count only ten European states (of which by far the largest is Spain) had the same boundaries in 1989 as they had 100 years earlier.⁹

The delineation of state borders territorially remains, therefore, a key issue for politics in Ireland and Europe generally although its political significance may vary between long-established states and those of more recent provenance.¹⁰ However, the growth of transnational governance and accelerated forms of globalisation are now altering the functions and significance of territorial borders as such. In other words, it is changing the nature of the boundary question within the inter-state system. With the growth of transnational governance the key question becomes what can it mean to be a self-determining, territorially bounded citizenry in a world where the functional principle of governance is challenging the primacy of the territorial principle. Here again political republicanism is less adaptable, at least in theory, than a cultural nationalism which is more compatible with fuzzier borders and the increasing importance of transnational communities.

Transnational governance: where or what is the republic?

Since 1945, and particularly since the 1970s, transnational governance has developed dramatically as part of substantial increases in flows of trade, transnational investment, financial commodities, information, knowledge, tourism and pollution across state borders.¹¹ The engine behind the growth of transnational governance has been global capitalism although a host of functions, other than the economic, have been transnationalised also – for example, human rights as in the case of the UN and the Council of Europe, military alliances as in NATO, immigration control, workers rights, and citizenship entitlements in the case of the EU.

As ever larger transnational corporations, mainly of US, Japanese and European origins, develop global strategies, they wield enormous economic, cultural and political influence in the domestic affairs of national states. For example, it makes little sense to see multinational companies or EU institutions as 'external' to the Irish economy. The specialised remit of transnational institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – more recently the World Trade Organisation (WTO) – is to regulate a global economy which transcends the territorial borders of states. Functional borders seem to proliferate even faster than territorial borders in Europe, overlapping or cross-cutting the latter in ever more complex ways. Thus in the EU alone, the borders of 'euroland' are not those of the Single Market (which itself now even includes a non-EU state, Norway), or those of the Schengen zone. [Schengen abolished

border controls.] The geographical borders of NATO, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are different again, even if there is considerable overlap.

New forms of transnational governance have been termed 'neo-medieval' because of their overlapping and increasingly complex form. There appears to be a parcelling out, or 'unbundling', of functions previously represented by state borders and carried out (at least aspirationally) by the national state. Malcolm Anderson, for example, describes the outcome as an emergent 'mixture of old, new, and hybrid forms – territorial, transterritorial and functional forms of association and authority coexisting and interacting'.¹²

At the root of the new world order is the ideology of economic neo-liberalism and 'free trade' which seeks to 'construct' global markets and macro-regional trade blocs like the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The market is an engine of 'competitive' pressures that discipline and constrain the actions of elected governments, forcing them to compete for, and facilitate, transnational investment and trade. This transnational market discipline increasingly constrains the redistributive role of the state, the role least directly affected by the growth of transnational governance. However, the latter's indirect effect is growing as the taxation options of states become more constrained and the 'non-market' sector (e.g. health, education, welfare, defence and security) becomes more open to 'market forces' and privatised provision. As national economies are constituted as increasingly differentiated units in a global market place, the citizenship rights associated with political republicanism are increasingly subordinated to 'market rights' for consumers and producers alike.

Clearly the implications for the republican ideal of governance are far reaching. This new world order would appear to greatly modify conceptions of national sovereignty, self-determination and the accountability of government to the people of specific territorial states. Despite the popular challenges mounted by transnational social movements, national and transnational governance is increasingly a matter for technocrats, professionals and interest groups with little direct accountability to an electorate. Although transnational regulations and norms proliferate, there is no systematic or consistent way of implementing them. The sources of transnational regulations are typically separated from the agencies charged with implementing them. EU institutions, for example, generate hundreds of regulations but implementation is largely a matter for the member states.

While the UN may elaborate human rights norms and principles of non-interventionism, the extent to which these norms are enforced still rests to a large degree on the arbitrariness of power and coercion, whether it be

that of a Saddam or a Milosevic, a Yeltsin or a Clinton. Thus, the US and its allies can intervene in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo but not in Chechnya or Algeria, or Afghanistan. Transnational governance is not republican, therefore, in that it scarcely operates on constitutional or legally enforceable principles. Neither is it a war of all against all.

Stated in somewhat stark and overgeneralised terms, therefore, republican citizenship, popular sovereignty, accountable democracy are limited by incorporation into a world system dominated by huge corporations and the military and strategic interests of the US. The central public good under this dispensation is not the discovery and implementation of the general will of classical republicanism but rather the effective functioning of capitalist market relationships. Governments have become just one actor among many within the system of transnational governance.

Issues for Ireland, North and South

The challenges posed to the republican ideal in Ireland seem to be particularly far-reaching. As a small state and an integral part of the EU which represents the densest complex of transnational governance on the globe, the Republic's economy is one of the most open in the world. It is heavily export-dependent and its spectacular economic growth rests on the attraction of transnational corporations. In Northern Ireland similar conditions apply, although the UK government compensates for the relatively lower levels of transnational investment by a massive subvention from central government.

One of the consequences for Ireland, North and South, is that the ideal of popular sovereignty, republican citizenship and accountable government is being threatened by a 'permanent' form of governance dominated by officials and specialist agendas associated with capital accumulation and Ireland's role in the EU. Elected governments and representatives effect little more than a coordinating or mediating role between a variety of interest groups, aimed at managing economic development and Ireland's role within the wider framework of the EU and global governance more generally.

One telling example of this form of governance is the successive partnership agreements, designed to promote economic growth by helping the Republic compete for transnational investment and markets. The growth of 'partnership governance' has been incremental. A report in the *Irish Times* (5 January 1991) was entitled 'Fifth Estate of social partners seen as a threat to the Dáil', citing the then backbencher Charlie McCreevy and others, warning against the dilution of the powers of elected representatives. After several years of the Celtic Tiger economy, such reservations are seldom heard as representatives of business, trade unions, the unemployed and the voluntary sector reach agreements with government

representatives on a wide-ranging agenda involving taxation, social redistribution and wages. Perceived economic success seems to have greatly restricted debate on democratic accountability or representativeness. Increasingly marginalised, the elected representatives in the Dáil are reduced to exploring with varying degrees of enthusiasm the 'corruption of the democratic process' by illicit relationships between officials, business interests and elected representatives. The investigative tribunals established provide media spectacles and 'market opportunities' for the legal profession, but appear to be costly and inefficient in promoting public accountability and imposing sanctions on law-breakers.

The form of governance represented by national partnership agreements is partly replicated at the level of localised partnerships, and also in the participation of Irish officials, interest groups and elected representatives at EU level. This form of government is increasingly deliberative – a process of negotiation and discussion between interest groups in multiple arenas, local, national and transnational. Here the influence of the EU as a form of transnational governance is increasingly pervasive. Largely the preserve of élites, and suffering from lack of popular identification and democratic accountability, EU institutions provide a framework for regulation, coordination and deliberation largely governed by the principle of market competitiveness. The EU is not so much an embryonic super-state, as a new form of transnational political system or polity that is increasingly conditioning governance in the member states.

Elected governments in Ireland and elsewhere are primarily concerned therefore with attempting to influence the key actors which shape Irish domestic affairs – such as multinational investors, other EU governments and institutions. The strategic decisions left to elected governments of EU member states, such as those over taxation, security, environmental questions and military alliances are increasingly constrained and channelled by participation in the various functional arenas of transnational governance. Some areas, such as monetary, agricultural and fisheries policies, are more a matter for European than national governance.

A considerable body of research demonstrates that states still vary considerably in terms of welfare spending, their tax regimes and their pursuit of neo-liberal or social democratic policies. This variability is affected by the specific history and political economy of the states concerned. Transnational governance in the form of European integration and globalisation is differentiating rather than homogenising – the distinctiveness of states is underpinned by the niches and roles they establish for themselves in global divisions of labour and global markets. There is even some evidence that smaller, relatively homogeneous states have proved more flexible and adept at benefiting from European integration than their

larger counterparts.

Flexibility and discretion, however, are not to be confused with 'government of the people by the people'. Clearly, we have moved a long way from the republican ideal of governance to a relative lack of democratic accountability as understood in the conception of popular sovereignty. For example, how accountable are multinational corporations, the European Commission, the European Central Bank, professional organisations, committees of officials and experts, even national governments, to an electorate of the 'Irish people' (or even EU peoples)? How meaningful are elections now, within any given territorial unit? Decreasing electoral turn-outs, and lack of real choice between government and opposition parties, imply one answer to this question.

One answer to these criticisms is that they pose the wrong questions. The implication is that the republican ideal is simply outdated in the context of structural factors which are encouraging functional forms of transnational governance, diminishing political accountability, representativeness and popular legitimacy. Parallel arguments assert the 'final' victory of neo-liberalism and capitalism. To paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, 'there is no other alternative', and thus we arrive at Fukuyama's 'end of history'.

Another response is to argue that 'representative democracy' is being, or should be, replaced by participatory or 'inclusive' democracy. Participatory democracy is about deliberation, negotiation, consensus formation, at local, national and transnational levels. For the most part, it presupposes no fixed territorial unit or 'people', rather it involves interest groups and experts appropriate to the issue to be decided. Participatory democracy is about argumentation, dialogue, and learning about other's point of view, allowing for goals and interests to be changed in the process of deliberation. Legitimacy in this model comes not from majoritarian decisions, but from a transparent, open, and fair process of deliberation, which produces a result that allows for further deliberation in the future.

Interestingly, the new institutions proposed in the Good Friday Agreement are premised on notions of participatory democracy or partnership. They allow for a multiplicity of institutional arenas, fora and geographical frameworks, within which dialogue and deliberation can occur. In this, they reflect the influence of EU models of governance which is also evoked in partnership governance in the Republic. The Good Friday Agreement was explicitly designed to solve the 'old' boundary problem deriving from the competing majoritarianisms associated with the Irish national question. It is premised on recognition of cultural and national identities, and functional interests which are to be accommodated with a complex and interlocking set of institutional arenas, with different, if overlapping, territorial remits. In this way, the significance of borders is

reduced and the 'people' become redefined according to the issue or government function involved. National or religious identity remains a resource here, for mobilising across a number of issues but it becomes harder to maintain a consistent definition or understanding of the overall national or communal interest. The overall goals of maintaining the Union or creating a united Irish republic are to be made subordinate to complex processes of deliberation and argumentation, on a range of issues pursued within clearly understood and agreed procedures.

The benign scenario of participatory democracy depends, however, as in the case of social partnership agreements in the South, on the nature and extent of inclusion. Two major difficulties arise – firstly, there is a real prospect that 'inclusion' or 'participation' is confined to élites whose involvement in the processes of deliberation cause them to become distanced from their respective constituencies, be they party or organisation members, voters or workers. Secondly, there is a danger that those with decisive power do not bind themselves to the rules of participation and deliberation. In Northern Ireland, for example, the role of the Assembly is extremely circumscribed, as the powers of policing, taxation and suspension are retained by a British government which continues to operate on the basis of majoritarianism and the primacy of the territorial principle. Similarly, the Republic's partnership agreements, however much they might help economic competitiveness, are subject to the often arbitrary power of global market forces.

Conclusion

Transnational governance is here to stay, as is the interlocking of domestic and transnational affairs. At the turn of the twenty-first century, therefore, Irish republicanism finds itself in an altered context, radically different from that which shaped its origins and most of its development. The new context is marked by the strengthening of the functional principle of governance, at the expense of the territorial principle associated with traditional republican ideals. Uncritical proponents of the new dispensation have little difficulty in contrasting its successes with the perennial failures of Irish republicanism. Whereas republicanism (in its constitutional, military and 'verbal' manifestations) can be associated with decades of economic stagnation and emigration, contemporary forms of governance seem to be associated with unprecedented economic success. Republican separatism, isolationism, even neutrality, seem to many to be outdated as Ireland becomes, once again an integral part of a large economic and political entity (the EU) which is in some ways a successor polity to those of imperial Europe.

New forms of governance also hold out the prospect of resolving, or at least of moderating, the Irish boundary problem – one of the major

obstacles in the path of Irish republicanism. The Good Friday Agreement, clearly inspired by EU institutional models, promises to replace the politics of zero-sum territorial claims with the politics of trans-border, functional governance and associated forms of participatory and deliberative democracy. This in turn promises to marginalise the negative effects of the Northern Ireland conflict on Irish politics generally.

Is there any role for the republican ideal of governance in the emerging political and economic dispensation in Ireland? Much political commentary seems to implicitly accept that the price of success in meeting the challenges faced by Irish republicanism, is the very demise of the republican ideal of governance itself. Enthusiastic supporters of the new order can point to the way in which the new forms of governance have helped offset the failures of historic Irish republicanism over Northern Ireland and the Irish economy.

But, such assessments are based on a double fallacy. The first is that the problems of Northern Ireland, of delineating territorial borders and advancing economic development have been the sole responsibility of Irish republicans. In fact, the militant opponents of Irish republicanism in Britain and Ireland, are equally, if not more, responsible for the failures or delays in addressing these issues. And their responsibilities for military violence and slaughter in twentieth-century wars, would seem much greater – in part because they have wielded far more power and influence than their republican opponents. The second fallacy is that the republican ideal need be replaced entirely by the new forms of deliberative or participatory democracy. In fact, there is scope for both to interact to mutual advantage.

The continued relevance of an updated republican ideal should be considered with respect to the three interacting logics inscribed in the new transnational forms of governance: the logic of profit and capitalist competitiveness, the logic of power and coercion, and the logic of participation, deliberation and argumentation. Eighteenth-century republicanism did not see the logic of profit and competitiveness as a concern of popular sovereignty – it was assigned to civil society that had autonomy from the state. This position is now difficult to sustain, given the extent to which economic and corporate actors influence, and are influenced by, the state and by transnational bodies like the EU. In terms of governance, the key issues here are those of regulation and deregulation of the market. These issues are increasingly a matter for expert committees and officials working closely with market interests at transnational level. Their accountability is to some poorly specified ideal of 'economic competitiveness', rather than to the 'people' or their elected representatives. Moreover, the institutional source of regulations (e.g. the EU or the WTO) are seldom charged with implementing them.

At best, therefore, economic governance is subject not to representative democracy, but to processes of deliberative, or participatory, democracy, operating, for example, in the hundreds of committees which link national administrations to EU institutions. There is scope even here, however, for strengthening the scrutiny powers of national parliaments, and republicans might expose the arbitrary power of the huge global corporations. This means interrogating the consequences of 'economic competitiveness' and its implications for equality of citizenship, both within and beyond the borders of the EU. A critical republicanism must also address the implications of the new boundaries between a more tightly integrated EU and the poorer states to the South and East, where the vast majority of the world's population lives.

The logic of arbitrary power and coercion in the new forms of governance might also be exposed and challenged by a critical republican perspective on the relationship between transnational norms of human rights and the degree to which they are ignored or implemented within national states. Similarly, the new and highly selective doctrines of interventionism, as practised in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, raise the spectre of neo-imperialism and have implications for Irish government policy on neutrality and the prospects of a militarised European Union. The latest 'remote-controlled' wars in the Gulf and eastern Europe are in part driven by media-induced nationalist frenzies which are as transient as they are profoundly anti-democratic. There is considerable scope here, for countering these tendencies with a politics based on humanitarian and republican principles.

Finally, the logic of a democracy predicated on participation, deliberation and argument might also be usefully examined in the light of republican ideals of governance. Those who deliberate and argue may find themselves in talking shops, remote from the actual exercise of real power and strategic choice. This is a fate which threatens not just the various institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement, but also all elected parliaments in the EU and elsewhere. Participatory democracy usefully offers inclusion and recognition and therefore appeals to those who prioritise national or ethnic identity. However, it does not necessarily facilitate equal citizenship. Here republicans might address the limits and the outcomes of participatory and deliberative bodies, including so-called 'partnership' government.

The republican ideal of governance does not constitute a fully fledged alternative to emerging forms of transnational governance. As in the past, it is not a 'stand-alone' ideology, but it retains a democratic potential especially when linked to progressive socialist and liberal politics. There is a strong case for preserving and renewing a republican dimension to governance in the face of the three logics identified above. It provides a

necessary critique of the arbitrariness of power, whether it be of the 'market competitiveness', multinational corporations, or strong states seeking to reshape the new world order (including Ireland), to advance their particular interests. It also has the potential to alert citizens to new forms of the 'boundary problem', and to the complex consequences of the incorporation of Ireland into the new networks of transnational governance.

Notes

¹ Of course, a more cynical view might be that such cultural and identity preoccupations have proved to be quite a useful tool in the armoury of an ever more confident middle-class intelligentsia riding on the back of the Celtic Tiger. It is also quite remunerative in the new global order, as Irish identity has been marketed successfully on a global scale, in the form of music, dance, books, pubs, films, or in terms of the Tourist Boards' hard sell of the beauties of the Irish landscape or the friendliness of the people. It might be suggested that a neat trick has been accomplished – Irish people's preoccupation with their own uniqueness has been commodified successfully in the context of the global culture, entertainment, and leisure industries. Indeed, it might also be asked why a low-intensity conflict, directly affecting a mere 1.6 million people in Northern Ireland, in a small area of little strategic importance, has attained such prominence in international affairs in comparison to far more devastating conflicts elsewhere.

² Connolly, W. 'Tocqueville, Territory and Violence', *Theory, Culture and Society* 11, 1994, pp. 19-40.

³ Anderson, B. 'The New World Disorder' *New Left Review* 193, 1992

⁴ Anderson, M. *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Oxford: Polity Press 1996), p.8

⁵ Dahl, R. *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1989).

⁶ Eriksen, E.O. 'The Question of Deliberative Supranationalism in the EU', *Arena Working Papers*, WP99/4, 1999, p.5

⁷ One of the ironies of Northern Ireland is that one of the more popular loyalist slogans is, 'we are the people', i.e. the Ulster (Protestant) people. While this excluded a large section of the actual people, it was conceived in quasi-republican terms as a 'voting people' (or majority) committed to maintaining the Union. David Ervine of the PUP adverted to this slogan in a recent lecture at Queen's University and said he now thought an appropriate slogan might be 'we are a people'. Of course, this has implications for how the 'Irish people' might be defined.

⁸ Foucher, M. 'The Geopolitics of European Frontiers', in M.Anderson and E.Bort (eds) *The Frontiers of Europe* (London: Pinter 1998), p. 235.

⁹ Davies, N. *Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996); Wallace, W. *The Dynamics of European Integration* (London: Pinter 1992), p.14.

¹⁰ Anderson, J. (ed.) *The Modern State* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf).

¹¹ According to one count, in 1909 there were 37 Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) and 176 International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). By 1996, the numbers were 260 and 5,472 respectively. Between 1946 and 1975, the number of inter-governmental treaties more than doubled from 6,351 to 14,061, while the number of treaties embracing IGOs increased from 623 to 2,303 (Held, D. et al *Global Transformations* (Oxford: Polity Press 1999), p.53). While the numerical growth is significant, two qualifications are necessary. Firstly, there has been a growth in the number of states, and secondly, some transnational institutions, such as those of the EU, have been far more significant than others, as the source of regulations shaping the domestic affairs of states.

¹² Anderson, M. *op.cit.*, p.149.

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**The Republic,
The Ireland Institute,
27 Pearse Street,
Dublin 2,
Ireland**