

Peace Threats

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The murder of two soldiers and a police officer by Republican dissidents has caused enormous reverberations in Northern Ireland. Just when we thought we had put the past behind us this happens. But the response shows how far we have travelled. People made it clear they did not want to return to the past. Importantly Sinn Fein made it clear that these killings were wrong and that the police should be supported in finding the perpetrators. The politicians stood together. If the dissidents' calculation was that their actions would embarrass Sinn Fein and wreck the Executive they were wrong. Peace, stability and the rule of law emerged stronger.

And, nevertheless, fragility remains. The transformation of Northern Irish society remains incomplete. Marginalised young people in certain estates anxious for excitement may have learnt from all the publicity of the last two weeks that they can be somebody through violence. But away from the margins the impression is often of peace by dissociation and when people have to associate there is often an impression of a graceless and reluctant sharing. We want to avoid the hard graft of making new relationships and creating a shared future. There is a long way to go.



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