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WHY IS THERE NO RADICAL RIGHT PARTY IN IRELAND?

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Abstract

The rise of the radical or extreme right parties in Europe - parties usually noted for strong, sometimes racist anti-immigrant ideologies - has attracted a great deal of attention in political science. Ireland, despite having some conditions favourable to the growth of such a party has no Radical Right party. This paper argues that that this is because the 'space' usually occupied by such parties - for young, poor people disaffected by economic change - is taken up by Sinn Féin, which though it has similarities to radical right parties, differs markedly in its attitudes to immigrants. It goes on to explain the special circumstances that prevent nationalist parties in Ireland from presenting overtly anti-immigrant platforms. The focus on anti-immigration and liberal economic policies for such parties may mean that other parties with strong resemblances are excluded from studies they might usefully be included in.

Introduction

The last three decades has seen some increase in support for nationalist, populist and often xenophobic parties in Europe. Though these parties are generally small and only rarely achieve policy influence through a position in government, political scientists have devoted a good deal of attention to what is termed the Extreme or Radical Right (RR). The fact that in the 1990s and this decade there have been some high profile Radical Right ‘successes’ in Western Europe has fuelled such an interest. Jean Marie Le Pen’s getting to the second round in the 2002 French Presidential election, Lijst Pim Fortuyn’s fleeting success in the Netherlands in the same year and Jörg Haider’s Freedom Party’s performance in Austria in 1999 are some such successes, but other European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Norway have also seen some RR party success. Though the vast body of literature on such parties suggests certain factors that may lead to RR party success (see Kitschelt (2007) for a review of the main points of debate) there is not complete agreement as to what causes the success of such parties in one country rather than another.

One country where Radical Right parties have failed to make any impact is Ireland. This may be surprising, depending on what one accepts as valid explanations for the rise of RR parties. In this article I will argue that Ireland is a place which has conditions amenable to the growth of a RR party – rapidly rising immigration, allegations of job displacement, increased inequality, a weak and weakening left-right divide, an electoral system that enables small newcomers and high levels of candidate-based voting. Despite these features, the only generally accepted radical-right group, the Immigration Control Platform, has failed to register any notable support.¹

Though some (Fanning and Mutwarasibo 2007; Garner 2007) have argued that an anti-immigrant populism adopted by the mainstream parties can explain the absence of a success for anti-immigrant parties, this explanation is unconvincing insofar as most of the mainstream parties are actively pro-immigration, none has made the issue party political and the issue has failed to feature in recent Irish elections. I argue that the reason such a party has failed to make progress in Ireland is because Irish nationalism an ongoing ‘struggle’. Historically it is based on a philosophy of equality between groups within Ireland (though nationalists often failed to adhere to their declared philosophy) and those who might

¹ Though the ICP claims not to be a party, this is more a reflection of its inability to garner votes than efforts to compete as a political party. It had fielded candidates in at least two constituencies in each of the last two elections.

otherwise be likely to support a Radical Right party tend to vote for the most nationalist non-mainstream party, Sinn Féin, which is in fact a left-wing party. Using data from an Irish election study I will show that anti-immigrant and other intolerant views predict increased likelihood to support Sinn Féin. This strategy is used by Ignazi (2006) to categorise 'Extreme Right parties'. Sinn Féin, in line with historical nationalist discourse is very supportive of minorities' rights. To espouse an anti-immigrant platform would be dissonant to its nationalist mythology. The argument is not that Sinn Féin is an anti-immigrant party in disguise rather that its anti-establishment position and its radical nationalism might be attractive to the type of voter who in another country, with a different nationalist past, might support a radical right-wing party. While this explanation is particularistic to Ireland, it can add to our understanding of populist nationalist parties generally. The use of case studies and in particular, anomalies, such as Ireland presents, is increasingly recognised as useful to theory development (Rogowski 2004). As Sinn Féin is regarded as an economic left-wing party it will lead us to question what is meant by Right in terms of the Radical Right and the argument is put that this term might be dropped altogether from the definition of this party family. If Sinn Féin is similar to RR parties in all areas except xenophobia, then one might also question whether the selection rule for the dependent variable used in most cross-national studies is accurate. If it is not, then the invalidity of the measurement of the dependent variable might account for the failure of many studies to agree on the conditions for success of such parties. In other words, if one is only selecting some of the parties one claims to be explaining variation in, the causal explanation will be biased by this selection rule. Taxonomy is important.

What are Radical Right parties?

Despite or perhaps because of the great interest in these types of parties, there is not always agreement as to what to call radical right parties not to mind what they actually stand for. Mudde (1996) counted 26 different definitions and many more distinguishing features for such parties. Since then many more have emerged as each new scholar applies a new one. In his most recent work Mudde (2007) offers a 'maximum definition' which focuses on three core ideological features. This approach is useful, as it is based on relatively stable ideology rather than party policy which will be time and country specific (Mair and Mudde 1998).

First, Nativism, which is derived from nationalism, indicates the native culture must be protected and that power must be returned to the native people. It is related to

ethnopluralism which cultures are 'equal but different' and must be protected. Mudde (2007: 19) defines nativism as 'an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements are fundamentally threatening'. Nativism might then exclude liberal nationalism, but include 'aggressive, exclusive, chauvinistic and historically selective' nationalism (Hainsworth 1992: 10).

A second core feature, Mudde identifies, is Authoritarianism. If authoritarianism is a tendency to 'be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authority figures of the ingroup' (Adorno et al. 1969: 228), this can be interpreted in many ways. It might refer to an insistence on a type of behaviour acceptable to the group; certain types of unconventional social behaviour, for instance, drug taking or homosexuality, may be punished severely. It might also lead to deference to the state's authority (if the state is congruent with the national group identified). It could also refer to the organisation of the party, which might have 'charismatic leaders and tight party organisation [which] allow these parties to respond quickly and without much internal debate...to exploit new political opportunities' (Betz 1998: 9).

The third feature is Populism, which usually pits a 'a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others'' (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007: 3). Populist parties tend to see themselves as outsiders to their country's political system, and argue that they represent the opinion of the 'man on the street' as opposed to a liberal elite, which may be linked to an 'outgroup', and which dominates politics and policy making with what might be seen as significant failures in policy leading to societal breakdown and increasing corruption. This might lead to anti-statism and thus contradict some interpretations of authoritarianism. However, the idea that there is an exclusive 'ingroup' which is virtuous and should be protected runs through these coherent core ideological features.

As interesting is what is missing from the core-ideology of Populist Radical Right parties. There is little to suggest the term 'Right' adds anything. A number of writers have argued that these parties are economically right-wing or free market (Kitschelt 2007; Swank and Betz 1995). Yet increasingly support comes from those who are losers of neo-liberal economics and economic modernisation and the policies of these parties are often protectionist, anti-globalisation and supportive of an extensive welfare state (see in particular Mudde 2007: ch. 5). One study has found attitudes to economic equality are the least useful explanation for RR country-level support (Norris 2005: 184).

If it is not economic right that is referred to, it is unclear in what way or why the term right is employed. Many writer simply take the nomenclature 'Right' as a given, and argue

over the adjective used to qualify this (Given 2005: 18-21; Norris 2005: 44-46). Ignazi (2006: 17-18) suggests the term is appropriate in part because of the association of some of the RR parties with fascism and in part because of their anti-communism. It is Right, because it is against the Left. Mudde, following Bobbio (1996), takes the term to denote an acceptance of a natural order of inequalities. It is not clear that this is related to the core ideological features that he outlined, rather this would seem to be closer to economic orientation for which left and right is most commonly used. Indeed it is the case that there are left nationalists, left populists and leftist authoritarian parties. One might expect a party that respected a 'natural order' would oppose state intervention against immigration. Mair (2007: 220) has suggested that left-right as a shorthand device, if becoming opaque, is no longer useful. For the purpose of denoting this party family a more useful label could be populist-nationalist (Mény and Surel 2002: 4). If one were to remove the connection with the right the party type may be opened to other parties not currently considered.

Conditions for RR party success in Ireland

Most writers in the field attempt to discern what conditions are necessary or sufficient for RR party success or identify those factors that correlate with RR party success. Kitschelt (2007) and Rydgren (2004) have identified from the literature a number of conditions that might make a country amenable to RR success.

1. A post industrial society exposed to rapid industrial change of the labour force (including the marginalisation of low-skilled workers) and attractive to immigrants from less economically advanced countries, and have encompassing welfare state.
2. High levels of immigration and popular intolerance of immigration (Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002)
3. Increased importance of the cultural cleavage.
4. Convergence in the political space and dealignment of the party attachments.
5. Openness of the party system to new entrants – a proportional electoral system
6. Partyocracy – where the parties are closely interlinked with the state. Partocratic behaviour, such as clientelism, patronage and corruption may cause a sense of 'crisis of democracy' (Veugelers and Magnan 2005).

The first condition identified here is the post industrial society. On these ground Kitschelt excluded Ireland (Kitschelt and McGann 1995: 257-8). And more recently Kitschelt (2007: 1193) claims the socio-economic condition and weakness of the welfare state should exclude

Ireland from any analysis. While Ireland may never have been an industrial country, it certainly has the characteristics of a post-industrial one. High levels of immigration have led to debates on job displacement as new forms of work predominate that alienate traditional working class roles. There was a six percent decline in manufacturing employment between 2002 and 2006, while the far less stable construction and services sectors expanded. In terms of social welfare, though Ireland's public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP is among the lowest in Europe (for 2003 it stood at 16 percent compared to an EU-15 average of 24 percent (OECD 2007: 193)), this is a poor indicator of Ireland's social welfare provisions as Irish GDP is much higher than GNP due to levels of foreign direct investment. As a percentage of GNP it would be more like other western European countries. Indeed the annual growth in public expenditure between 1996 and 2003 was over 13 percent, and government transfers to the bottom three deciles, at 31 percent, is above the OECD average (OECD 2005: Table EQ2.2).

For the second condition, the demographic structure of Ireland has changed radically in the last decade. Where almost 95 percent of the population was born in Ireland (north and south) in 1996 by 2006 this had fallen to 86 percent (Central Statistics Office 2003: 24). In 2002 almost 93 percent of people living in Ireland claimed Irish nationality by 2006 this fell to just below 89 percent. The number of non-Irish nationals increased by 87 percent to 420,000 in four years between 2002 and 2006 (Central Statistics Office 2007: 24-5). The most recent census also shows that in many parts of Dublin over a quarter of the population are immigrants. This is especially the case in the large working class estates in the west of the city such as Tallaght, Clondalkin and Blanchardstown (*Irish Times* 8th August, 2007). Some organisations have suggested that the census undercounts the immigrant population significantly. For instance the Irish Congress of Trade Unions considers the estimate of 11,000 Chinese people in the census well short of other estimates of 100,000 (Wall 2007). The estimate of 60,000 Poles does not tally with the number of PPS (social security) numbers issued. Between May 2004 and March 2006 110,342 numbers were issued to Polish citizens, which would indicate that more than this immigrated to Ireland in that time as spouses and children may not have applied for PPS numbers (NESC 2006: 136). The scale and the rapidity of the increase of numbers of immigrants living in many parts of the country and especially working class areas of the cities compares with the levels of immigration in other parts of Europe where RR parties have grown such as Austria and Belgium (Ignazi 2006: 118, 135).

Irish unemployment hovered at about five percent in the last decade as the Irish economy boomed. The economic boom raised Irish living standards generally and though inequality has grown, Ireland's national morale is among the highest in Europe. Recent research also found that Irish community and social integration remains strong (Fahey, Russell, and Whelan 2007). Others have offered a much gloomier view of the 'Celtic Tiger', claiming that social deprivation and exclusion is widespread and that communities are severely damaged by the Irish economic model (Kirby, Jacobson, and Ó Broin 2006). As one of the most globalised economies in the world is it more exposed to the risks of globalisation. What has been claimed by a large trade union and a former leader of the Labour party is that the high levels of immigration, with no enhanced job security and social protection have caused Irish workers to suffer in 'a race to the bottom' (Brennock 2006). In the run up to the election there was some if limited debate on the topic: in the context of the laying off of Irish staff in Irish Ferries and closure of some manufacturing plants the Labour party leader reiterated his concerns of job displacement (*Irish Times* 8th March 2007) and the prime minister expressed concern about the sustainability of the rates of immigration (*Irish Times* 24th April 2007).

Nor are Irish people more tolerant than those in other countries with significant RRP. An opinion poll in 2006 showed that 63 percent of Irish people polled felt that the presence of foreign workers threatens pay and working conditions for Irish people. 70 percent did not want any more immigrants to enter Ireland, and over 40 percent wanted to see some immigrants sent home (Brennock 2006). A special Eurobarometer (2007: 44) report found that 62 percent of Irish people felt 'people of different ethnic origin...enrich the national culture'. This was below the EU average and below France, the Netherlands and Denmark. Only Austria with a 46 percent positive response was much lower than Ireland of western European countries.

Despite the high levels of immigration there has not been any special concern about the protection of Irish culture, and none that immigrants are the threat to that culture. Only Sinn Féin has focussed on the issue of the native Irish language and culture, seeking extra (usually British) state support for these and for native Irish sports, and criticised that 'the key targets of public investment have been museums, profile theatres and so-called 'high art' companies (opera, etc)' (Sinn Féin 2001: 7).

The fourth condition relates to the availability of policy space for new entrants to exploit, and whether party attachments have been sufficiently weakened that new parties can expect voters to switch. Kitchelt (1995: 11-25) argued that when the right and left converge,

this allows RRP to emerge. There could be a perception of there being no real choice - 'when democratic politics has lost its capacity to mobilize people around distinct political projects..., the conditions are ripe for political demagogues to articulate popular frustration' (Mouffe 2005: 70). Estimates of Irish parties' policy positions show that all parties, with the exception of the Green party, moved to the centre between 1997 and 2002 (Benoit and Laver 2003). Indeed the left-right gap is lower than any other country in the Lubbers' study (Norris 2005: 194). In addition, an alternative van der Brug et al (2005) thesis which holds that the gap between left and right is not so important as the position of the major right wing party, also indicates that Ireland has sufficient space for a RR party. On this measure Ireland is again the extreme case with the largest free electoral space (Norris 2005: 194). Dealignment of the Irish party system has occurred over time and Irish party identification is so low that short term factors are increasingly important in deciding elections (Marsh 2006).

A fifth condition concerns the permissiveness of the electoral institutions to emerging (usually small) parties. Ireland's PR-STV electoral system is suited to new party emergence. Empirically new parties have been able to achieve Dáil (parliamentary) representation with relatively low support. So, in 2002, with less than four percent of the vote each, two parties got eight and six seats in the 166 seat chamber. In 2007 the Green party formed part of the government even though it polled less than five percent. Additionally, because the electoral system requires voters to choose candidates, and many voters make choices based on candidate (Marsh 2007), the system is ideal for charismatic politicians and single-issue independents to succeed.

If partocracy, a sixth condition, is characterised by patronage, clientelism and corruption as Kitchelt (1995: 161) suggests, Ireland would seem to be an exemplary case. Collins (2004: 601) claims 'corruption and clientelism are...well established as focal points for comment on Irish politics'. Though Ireland has comparatively low levels of perceived corruption, a large number of tribunals in recent years have given the impression that Irish politics has become more corrupt (Murphy 2005). In addition the main party, Fianna Fáil has governed for 18 of the last twenty years and has increased state funding for parties.

Here and in the other ways mentioned above Ireland is unexceptional in a western European context and would seem to provide the right conditions for the existence of RR party, yet it failed to become a political issue or be exploited by parties. Marsh (2007) reports that only two percent of voters mentioned immigration as an issue for them when deciding how to vote.

Explanations for the absence of an anti-immigrant party in Ireland

We can identify a number of explanations for the absence of RR parties in Ireland in the last decade. One explanation that has been proposed by Fanning and Mutwarasibo (2007) and Garner (2007) argues that the Irish political system, with non-ideological populist nationalist parties dominating reduces the space available to RR parties. In addition, by promoting populist anti-immigrant measures Irish parties effectively provide the types of rhetoric and policy that RR parties emerge to supply. Specifically both articles look at the Citizenship referendum in 2004 in which the citizenship rules were changed to remove the automatic right of citizenship to anyone born on the island of Ireland. It was introduced as a reaction to what some saw as ‘citizenship tourism’, where anecdotal evidence was offered that some British residents were travelling to Belfast and Dublin for the birth of their children on the assumption that once the child was granted citizenship, their right to remain in the EU would be secure. This assumption was based on the fact that under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement anyone born on the island of Ireland was entitled to Irish citizenship and on a legal decision that children have a right to the ‘company and protection’ of their parents, that citizens have a right to live in the state and therefore the parents of citizens cannot be removed from the state. The extent to which this was happening was disputed and the courts reversed the decision to grant automatic residency rights to parents of citizens. But the legal decision retained some ambiguity, which the government sought to remove through this referendum.

The claim is that this referendum effectively ‘racialised’ Irish citizenship, and used language which pandered to populism. However, Ireland already had a *jus sanguinis* element to its citizenship and the new rule remains much more liberal than that of the UK, which requires ten year residency for those born of foreign parents before citizenship can be applied for (Weil 2001). In fact most of the opposition to the referendum at the time was to the way it was brought forward – without much time for debate, consultation and at the same time as European and local elections – rather than to the substance of the proposed constitutional amendment.

The evidence Fanning and Mutwarasibo (2007) and Garner (2007) provide for heightened populism and anti-immigrant rhetoric is minimal, but their explanation would be plausible if the parties did act in a way that would have appealed to anti-immigrant sentiment. In fact the claim by Garner (2007: 116) that Fine Gael included a call for AIDS-testing and fingerprinting all foreigners in its 2002 election manifesto is untrue. Apart from

their claims about the nature of citizenship referendum these writers' best evidence is that Noel O'Flynn, a backbench Fianna Fáil TD (MP), had made claims that he was

'against the spongers, the freeloaders, the people screwing the system. [There are] too many are coming to Ireland...In the past five years there have been 35,000 applications for asylum and 80 per cent of those have been from illegal immigrants using the refugee system to get in' (*Irish Times* 29 January 2002).

O'Flynn received no formal sanction from his party; he was merely criticised and told 'to shut up' by his party leader. Yet this alone hardly constitutes strong evidence of 'anti-asylum populism within the mainstream' (Fanning and Mutwarasibo 2007: 442).

A second explanation might be that the conditions are in fact not suitable for the rise of an RR party. Though many factors exist, other necessary conditions may not. For instance, it might be difficult for such a party to make a breakthrough because a right-wing reactionary press does not exist in the same way it does in the UK. However the Irish editions of the UK tabloid press, which have large readerships do offer the type of anti-immigrant opinion that might induce hostility to immigrants among the native population. For instance the *Irish Mirror* ran an untrue story with the headline 'Free Cars for Refugees: Cash Grants Buy BMWs' on 16 September 2002. Earlier research by Pollak (1999) showed that this was a common phenomenon, and he collated many similar headlines.

Tolerance of immigrants, or the lack of it, will have a number of different causes. The literature is not clear on which are important in relation to RR parties, but material or economic threat (whether objective or perceived), racial and (objective or perceived) cultural threat due to difference in religion or language are probably important. Judging by campaigns of RR parties, part of it is based on the economic threat of immigration by those sections that compete with immigrants. The evidence above shows that there are some fears of job displacement in Ireland. If intolerance to migrants is partly racial in origin, then immigration of racially-similar groups to the native population may not elicit negative responses. Nearly 95 percent of the population of Ireland is white and of non-Irish living in Ireland over 70 percent identify themselves as white. In addition there are reportedly fewer than 32,000 Muslims in the country (Central Statistics Office 2007: Tables 1A & 7). Many immigrants to Ireland are white Eastern Europeans. As such the cultural threat by the dominant immigrant groups to Ireland is probably low. This, however, is not unlike the type of immigration which the FPÖ successfully mobilised support against, and is in contrast to the immigration of Africans and non-white South Americans that predominates in Spain and Portugal.

Allport's (1954) famous contact thesis would suggest that where different groups come into contact then tolerance is more likely. One of the ways inter-group contact is impeded severely is linguistic barriers. Many immigrants to Ireland, especially from CEE stand out in one important way; that English is not their native language. No data are available on the linguistic ability of immigrants, but the increased costs to the state of translation services would indicate that this might form a barrier.

A further difference with immigration to Ireland is that the immigrants have no (negative) historical associations with the country. Unlike say Pakistanis, Indians or Irish to Britain or Algerians to France, immigrants to Ireland will harbour no resentment to the host country as a result of previous imperial occupation. Whether these factors have lessened possible tensions between immigrants and the native population and hence reduced the demand for a RR party would require further research. Yet it is clear from survey data cited above that Irish people do perceive high levels of immigration and a large minority see it as excessive.

The explanation that is explored here is that Sinn Féin attracts support from those who might support RR parties in other parts of Europe. We can ask why do these people support Sinn Féin and why does it not exploit this opportunity by adopting anti-immigrant rhetoric. Sinn Féin is an extreme, often violently nationalist party which has promoted the exclusion of those it sees as outsiders and is anti-establishment condemning mainstream parties and the EU for a lack of democracy, corruption and waste. Mudde (2007: 51) has argued that Sinn Féin satisfies many of the criteria for classification as Populist Radical Right. Yet Sinn Féin sees itself as a radical leftist party, in favour of a strong social welfare state, increased protectionism and against globalisation.

If origins can tell us something about a party, then the origins of Provisional Sinn Féin, as the party was first known, were actually a reaction against left-wing politics of Official Sinn Féin. One leader of the Provisionals, Joe Cahill,

‘had a feeling that ultra-left politics were taking over. As far as I was concerned, the main purpose of the IRA and Sinn Féin was to break the connection with England and get the Brits from Ireland.’

For the Official Sinn Féin leadership, Cahill and people like him, ‘were simply right-wingers living in a fantasy world and clinging to a romantic past’ (Taylor 1998: 24). The Provisionals saw the original party as having being infiltrated with ‘Red Agents’ whereas the new Belfast-based Sinn Féin were defenders of their community whose ‘allegiance [was] to God and Ireland’ (Moloney 2002: 75). It also appears authoritarian; Moloney (2002) in particular

suggests that the organisation is tightly controlled by the leader and a group around him. Despite being most outspoken in the defence of human rights it is known that the party was involved in punishment beatings for ‘anti-social behaviour’, and the party is the strongly supportive of ‘restorative community justice’. So Sinn Féin has certain aspects in common with RR parties – its nationalism, even nativism if the ‘outgroup’ is Britons, authoritarianism and populism – but is distinctly pro-immigrants rights and while sometimes equivocal on moral issues such as abortion and homosexuality is not more conservative than other Irish parties. In the next section I will look at Sinn Féin in more detail and specifically study whether despite its position on immigration, it attracts support from those who would typically be RR supporters in other countries.

Sinn Féin: a tolerant party with intolerant supporters?

Many works on the radical right tend to study voters attitudes and characteristics. This has led to some firm conclusions and consensus. Given (2005: 46) finds that ‘in general, survey evidence indicates that radical right voters are predominantly male, blue collar workers or small business owners who have a low level of education’. Immerfall (1998: 250) characterises the median voter of RR parties as ‘a younger male, with no college education, working in a blue collar job in the private sector and living in an urban environment’. These are ‘losers-of-modernisation’ – people who have not profited from neo-liberal policies of free trade and increased globalisation of manufacturing and services. The concomitant downgrading of public services and welfare supports hits them hardest, and the cause of their position appears obvious to them – excessive demand placed on these resources by immigrants. Having become disillusioned with the state and the liberal establishment these people will have anti-system, anti-establishment attitudes.

Table 1 shows some demographic characteristics of Sinn Féin votes in the last three elections which are very much in line with what are usually called radical or extreme right parties. Sinn Féin’s voters are (statistically and substantively) significantly more likely to be working class. There is an obvious and strong relationship with age. Support among the young is four times higher than among pensioners. The rural/ urban divide and gender gap exist but are less pronounced than one might expect.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Sinn Féin voters are also likely to feel aggrieved at or not part of the economic growth Ireland has experienced in the last fifteen years. 21 percent of Sinn Féin voters thought their quality of life had not improved in the five years up to 2002 compared to 12 percent among voters of other parties (own calculation of RTÉ exit poll, 2002).

An analysis of a 1989 Lansdowne survey (n=945) and Garry et al's (2003) analysis of RTÉ exit poll (n=3175) shows support for Fianna Fáil dropped between 1989 and 2002, but did so most significantly among the young – from 50.5 percent to 35 percent among 18-24 year olds, compared to 51.6 percent to 42 percent in the general population.² It is noteworthy that Labour has become a much more middle class party. Whereas in 1989 support for Labour among the middle class was 9.4 percent as opposed to 11.2 percent generally, by 2002 it was at 14.1 percent among the middle classes compared to an overall level of 12.5 percent.³ Conversely support among the working classes fell from 15.9 percent in 1989 to 11.9 in 2002. This would seem to indicate that the shift in support to Sinn Féin, which is primarily among the young and working class could have come from these two parties. Of those who voted for Sinn Féin in 2002 and 2007 after those who either did not, could not or voted for Sinn Féin in the previous elections are removed, half of the remainder had switched from Fianna Fáil (RTÉ exit polls, 2002 & 2007).

A multivariate analysis of Irish voters can be used to investigate both the socio-demographic characteristics of Sinn Féin supporters and their attitudes. I use Irish National Election Study data. Probability to give Sinn Féin a first preference vote (PTV) is used as the dependent variable. PTV has a number of advantages over taking just the respondents who will or have voted for a party (see van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Small parties, by their nature, translate into a small number subjects in surveys (usually less than 100). By using PTVs it increases the sample size. Because PTVs are on an interval scale we lose less information and can reasonably use OLS regression.

Model 1 in Table 2 looks at socio-demographic variables and confirms that what we see in Table 1 using a different dataset. Age, sex and income are all significant and in the expected directions. So the younger and poorer you are the more likely you will consider voting for Sinn Féin. Men are more likely to vote Sinn Féin than women. Sinn Féin voters

² These are both from opinion polls. The 1989 probably over estimated support for Fianna Fáil, though this is irrelevant to my argument as we are looking at changes in comparative difference within Fianna Fáil support.

³ The 1989 support for Labour reported here actually includes support for the Workers' Party, the original home of a group of breakaway TDs who formed Democratic Left and which merged with Labour in 1999. What remains of the Workers' Party is a tiny rump.

are less well educated, even when controlling for age. So Sinn Féin voters are more likely to be young, poorly educated men - the type of voter that might support a RR party.

However to make the case that Sinn Féin voters are more or less like supporters of RR parties we need to see their attitudes to certain groups and issues. Contrary to what one might expect, given Sinn Féin's policies, Sinn Féin supporters are more likely to feel that there are already too many immigrants in Ireland. Sinn Féin supporters are not more likely to consider asylum seekers entitled to full state welfare benefits. This is surprising given the tone of Sinn Féin policy. In Model 3 'Efficacy' shows that those who think their vote not count and changes in party not to matter are more likely to consider voting for Sinn Féin. This is unsurprising for an anti-system party. The other variable measuring the extent to which respondents consider it their duty to vote is not a useful predictor. Model 4 adds a variable measuring opinion on Northern Ireland where lower responses indicate greater insistence on a united Ireland. These show that as one might expect, and that those who are more demanding of a united Ireland will vote Sinn Féin. It is noteworthy that even when an item on Northern Ireland is added – Sinn Féin's central policy plank – the negative attitude to immigrants is still a predictor of Sinn Féin support. Other variables tested but not shown indicate that subjective left-wing voters are more likely to support Sinn Féin, but an objective left-right measure of economic policy is not significant. Though the socio-demographic profile and the low political efficacy might be consistent with Sinn Féin as a radical left party, what is of interest is that Sinn Féin support is correlated with anti-immigrant sentiment. This result is stable and robust across different models. This is especially unexpected given the age profile of the party's support.

Other evidence supports this interpretation of the data. In 2004 the referendum on Citizenship (discussed above) was easily passed with nearly 80 percent of voters supporting the change. Sinn Féin opposed the change and campaigned vigorously on the issue taking a liberal, pro-immigrant rights line. An opinion poll taken at the start of campaigning showed a majority of people (54 percent) in favour of the change, including 56 percent of Sinn Féin supporters. This is despite the fact that working class (C2DE) voters were less likely to support the change (*Irish Times* 24th May 2004). We can also look at the vote transfers from the only explicitly anti-immigrant candidate to run and achieve reasonable vote in the 2002 election. A quarter of the Immigration Control Platform candidate, Áine Ní Chonnaill's 921

transferable votes went to the Sinn Féin candidate, more than for any other party.⁴ The inconsistencies between voter and party ideology may indicate that Sinn Féin voters do not vote on certain policy issues, which are not important except in terms of the larger goal of national self determination. To this end it chose to align itself to international radical left in order to end its political isolation, but sold itself differently to its Irish-American audience (Frampton 2004). Another factor is that voters may not support Sinn Féin on its policies at all, or may become drawn to its policies only after being drawn to the party through its community activities, just as many radical Islamic groups draw support on the basis of tangible welfare services they supply (Cavatorta 2008). Sinn Féin's community activism is important to its support (Doyle 2005), with anti-bin charges and anti-drug campaigns being most prominent. Many have alleged that this activism is closer to vigilantism (Maillot 2005: 91-94). Apart from the Northern Ireland issue, Sinn Féin's voters tend to be more interested in local issues, housing, unemployment and drugs than voters for other parties, and less interested in the economy and the environment (analysis of 2002 and 2007 RTÉ exit poll). If parties whose support comes from the politically disengaged relies on its activity on local issues, then the parties' positions on some issues may not be relevant. Just as Sinn Féin's position on Iraq is irrelevant or unknown to those in the US who finance the party, its position on immigration maybe irrelevant or unknown to supporters in Dublin housing estates.

Rydgren (2005) has argued that party types contagion of party types is possible as a innovative new party's 'master frame' is copied and adapted by new parties. Sinn Féin has not copied a RR 'master frame', but its expression of nationalism has been adapted to local historical conditions. Nationalist ideology in Ireland has a very different experience on which to draw, compared to the rest of Europe. All nationalist parties attempt to reserve power for their group. This is why nationalists are against internationalism as it cedes power out of their country. Irish nationalists tend to argue that Catholics in Ireland and latterly in Northern Ireland were victimised and so seek power and resources for this group. Nationalist parties tend to engage in mythmaking and in glorifying the past. Ireland's 'glorious' past was that of a struggle against colonial powers, so we'd expect to see that the rhetoric of an ultra-nationalist party would be different.

One of Irish nationalism's rallying cries is a call to arms against discrimination of the Irish in Britain. The alleged existence of 'No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish' or 'No Irish need

⁴ Ireland has an electoral system in which each voter is asked to rank order each candidate in a multi-seat constituency. It is a system which offers no rationale to vote any way other than sincerely.

apply' signs in the UK features in Irish nationalist songs and mythology. Even if it were minded to, to engage in anti-minority campaigns Sinn Féin or any Irish nationalist party would be inconsistent with the other (more important) aspect of its ongoing nationalist campaign, which is to achieve recognition for its minority culture in the UK (in the short term) and take control over this territory in the long term. Such dissonance would, presumably, damage opinion of the party, especially in the media, and perhaps damage it electorally.

Conclusion

Ireland's political and social structure makes it conducive to the presence of a reasonably successful RR party. Yet Ireland has none according to conventional classifications. It was shown that potential supporters of such a party tend to support Sinn Féin. Though displaying some features of RR parties – nationalism, populism and authoritarianism Sinn Féin, is avowedly leftist and pro-immigrant rights. That these voters end up voting for a left-wing party leads one first to question the utility of the left-right denomination for Radical Right parties. Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002) in attempting to explain attitudes to the EU have argued (convincingly) that the left-right definition of politics is essentially meaningless. They argue that parties can be categorised into two types: GAL or TAN. These are Green, alternative, libertarian parties and traditional, authoritarian, nationalist parties. TAN parties are more likely to be anti-European. Similarly we may see that the normal left-right divide is not useful to understand attitudes to nationalism or immigration. We can see that in the UK one Labour government minister suggested eight out of ten people in her 'Labour heartland' constituency were considering voting for the BNP (*The Sunday Telegraph* April 16, 2006). Elsewhere we can see that parties such as the German NPD campaign against neo-liberal reforms (*Business Week* 28 February, 2005). Equally, there are left-wing parties with similar anti-elite, anti-EU and anti-globalisation views and populist rhetoric that we associate with the Radical Right such as the Dutch Socialist Party and the Italian PRC.

Second we can ask why Sinn Féin does not exploit this issue. Here one needs to look at the specific environment in which a party operates. Crucially nationalism in Ireland cannot sit easily with anti-immigrant bigotry, so it is less likely that a nationalist party in Ireland could be xenophobic. Sinn Féin can attract this support for its nationalist campaign through anti-system populism, community activism and alleged vigilantism. So when we look for other manifestations of the core ideology Mudde identifies, Sinn Féin provides a good exemplar.

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Table 1: Sinn Féin voters 1997, 2002 and 2007

	Sinn Féin 1997	Sinn Féin 2002	Sinn Féin 2007
Total	3.3	7.1	7.3
Middle class†	1.41	4.5	3.5/ 5.6
Working class	5.0	10.3	8.7/ 13.3
Farmers	1.0	2.4	3.5
18-24	5.4	14.5	10.7
25-34	4.4	8.7	9.9
35-49	3.1	6.7	7.9
50-64	1.8	4.6	5
			6
65+	1.8	3.6	1.5
Urban *	4.2	8	7.8
Rural	2.9	5.8	6.5
Male	4.4	8.4	8.4
Female	2.0	5.8	6.1

Sources: own analysis of RTE/ Lansdowne exit poll 1997 and 2002, and Marsh (2007). * For 1997 Urban refers to Dublin versus not Dublin. † For 2007 class cells refer to the market research classifications AB/ C1 and C2/ DE in Middle and Working class respectively.

Table 2 – OLS models predicting PTV Sinn Féin
 Not probable / probable to give to Sinn Féin 1st preference (1-10 scale)

Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Socio-demographics</i>				
Age in years	-0.052** (13.70)	-0.053** (13.65)	-0.050** (12.71)	-0.046** (11.74)
Sex (M=1; F=2)	-0.331** (2.76)	-0.334** (2.78)	-0.350** (2.91)	-0.290* (2.45)
Highest level of education (6 point scale)	-0.279** (5.29)	-0.257** (4.80)	-0.228** (4.19)	-0.187** (3.49)
Level of net household income (4 point scale)	-0.224** (3.46)	-0.220** (3.39)	-0.191** (2.92)	-0.169** (2.63)
<i>Social attitudes</i>				
Immigrants in Ireland – already too many (7 point scale)		0.137** (3.45)	0.130** (3.30)	0.115** (2.94)
Asylum seekers – same rights as Irish (7 point scale)		0.050 (1.48)	0.053 (1.57)	0.046 (1.40)
<i>Voter type</i>				
Duty to vote in election (7 point scale)			-0.068 (1.59)	-0.072 (1.73)
Efficacy – vote doesn't count/ parties don't matter (14 point scale)			0.051* (2.49)	0.060** (2.97)
<i>Political attitudes</i>				
Insist on or abandon goal of united Ireland – self placement (11 point scale)				-0.167** (8.67)
Constant	8.015** (21.64)	7.002** (14.77)	6.756** (12.23)	7.062** (12.97)
Observations	2221	2221	2221	2221
R-squared (adjusted)	0.08	0.09	0.09	0.12
Absolute value of t statistics in parentheses				
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%				