

Welcome return for democracy

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Acceptance of The Agreement will mean the return of democracy. The Agreement reflects reality: the border secure and recognition by the Republic of Ireland that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom; a government in Northern Ireland for the good of all citizens, where all can play an effective part; the development of normal cross-border co-operation within the island of Ireland where all decisions taken are with the authority of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Also, there will be the development of co-operation within the British/Irish Isles that will involve the elected bodies for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland as well as the Republic of Ireland. Those advocating 'No' never recognise this last point – the important dimension of East-West co-operation.

These developments reflect the reality of the modern world. The alternative would be the continuation of the past 30 years. Do those who advocate 'No' really think that by going back to the drawing board we will get a better outcome? Have they learnt nothing over the past 30 years regarding how to advocate the unionist position?

The Irish Government's release of prisoners is undoubtedly trying to influence Sinn Fein's attitude to the Agreement. It's doubly beneficial to Sinn Fein: a concession and also puts Unionism under pressure to say 'No'. Republicanism is unhappy with The Agreement and fervently hopes that Unionism says 'No'. It would let them 'off the hook' and at the same time give them a massive publicity coup. We must not fall into this trap.

The Agreement is the best achievable, not just for unionism, but for all citizens in Northern Ireland.

It gives the potential to secure a peaceful and stable Northern Ireland - firmly within the United Kingdom.

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