

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PA Euro Elections

European Elections in Northern Ireland, 10 June 1999

1. The European Elections in Northern Ireland delivered fewer surprises than some had predicted. The three sitting MEPs were returned in the same order as in 1994. Ian Paisley again topped the poll, although John Hume ran him close, and Jim Nicholson stayed ahead of Sinn Féin on first preferences. However, while in the short-term the results could be read as giving comfort to many parties, they have also served to highlight difficult issues facing several of them in the longer-term.

UUP

2. European elections have always been difficult for the UUP. The party which sees itself as the voice of mainstream Unionism, and the largest party in the North, fares particularly badly when pitted against Ian Paisley in 'beauty contest' elections. It has finished third in every European Election since 1979 and entered this contest with a weakened candidate, at a time when the party was fraught with inner difficulties and under pressure from anti-Agreement unionists over the formation of the Executive. Under those circumstances it is possible to see, and the UUP would certainly argue, that to hold the seat and to poll more first preferences than Sinn Féin was a success. It was, however, only a success in so far as things could have been worse.

3. For the UUP there is, ultimately, no escaping the fact that it turned in its poorest performance ever. Their vote share fell by 3.7% from their previous low of 21.28% in last year's Assembly elections, their actual vote was down almost 53,000. They only out-polled Sinn Féin by some 2000 first preferences. As a pro-Agreement party they saw 60% of Unionists vote for anti-Agreement candidates (although it has been argued that some portion of Paisley's massive vote came from UUP voters who did not wish to see John Hume top the poll). While the re-election of Nicholson will have been a source of immediate relief to David

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Trimble, it clear that he is leading an internally riven party which is, perhaps, no longer as representative of wider Unionist opinion as it ought to be. The results will inevitably be seen by many as further weakening his position as party leader.

SDLP

4. While the SDLP would dearly have loved to see John Hume top the poll, that he came so close, increasing his personal vote (even if it dropped in percentage terms) in an election where Sinn Féin engaged in a serious bid to take votes from him, will have been heartening.

5. However there can be no doubt that the scale of the Sinn Féin vote does not bode well for the SDLP in the longer term. The high nationalist vote (45.4%) was in part the result Sinn Féin's efforts to get its vote out. That McLaughlin managed to secure 117,643 votes in a contest which saw John Hume take his highest first preference vote ever, and in which the SDLP made much of Hume's chances of topping the poll, must raise the question of how well the SDLP would have fared without the unique pull of Hume as a candidate. As Sinn Féin continues to grow and consolidate its vote, in a post-Hume era, the SDLP is going to have to fight hard to maintain its position as the dominant party of Nationalism.

Sinn Féin

6. While Sinn Féin would have appreciated greatly the psychological boost of out-polling Nicholson in the first count, it will still have been very pleased with its performance. Unlike in previous European Elections, the party succeeded in getting its vote out and it share of first preferences was impressive given Hume's enormous stature. On a personal level, Mitchel McLaughlin has greatly improved his chances of taking the Foyle seat at Westminster when Hume retires.

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DUP

7. The DUP was deservedly delighted with its performance - for the fifth time Ian Paisley topped the poll in a European Election. They were also able to point to the fact that the unionist community voted 60/40 in favour of anti-Agreement candidates. While it is impossible to deny that Paisley's share of the vote was a personal triumph - and a tribute to the huge personal charisma of the man - the second claim is harder to sustain. Many of Paisley's surplus votes transferred to Nicholson, suggesting that the message from the unionist electorate was more ambiguous than the DUP would be prepared to allow.

Alliance/PUP/UKUP

8. European Election contests are rarely good news for smaller parties, however the Alliance will have been very disappointed with its miserable 2.1% share of the vote. Their vote has been declining in recent elections (6.5% in the Assembly elections in 1998, 8.0% in the Westminster elections in 1997) and reflects, perhaps, the increased polarisation of politics in the North. It is difficult to predict whether, in the long term, it will be possible for the party to reverse its decline.

9. For Robert McCartney the indignity of having received such a poor first preference vote was compounded by being beaten into sixth place by David Ervine. His political future must also now be uncertain. David Ervine, while he might have hoped for more, held his party's vote steady and can also take some satisfaction at having beaten McCartney.

Share of the Vote

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10. The turnout, at 57.71%, was higher than many had expected and the 45.4% share achieved by nationalism represents a new high-water mark. While there is no doubt that the nationalist electorate is growing, the figure also reflects a continuing trend towards higher turnout in nationalist than in unionist areas. Although it is not possible on this occasion to adjust the figures to take the different levels of turnout into account, on previous occasions it has been estimated that, were turnout for both communities to be the same, the nationalist share might be some 2% lower.

11. It is hard to argue that the outcome has caused lasting damage to the Agreement (despite the poor UUP performance) - but equally it is hard to argue that it has made its position any more secure. While the unionist vote was cast 60/40 in favour of anti-Agreement parties, the message from the electorate may have been more ambiguous that the raw figures suggest.

Helen Blake
Anglo-Irish Division.

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European Election 10 June 1999	First Count	Second Count (Elimination of Anderson, Neeson, McCartney and Ervine)	Third Count (Distribution of Paisley surplus)
Ian Paisley (DUP)	192,762 (28.4%)		
John Hume (SDLP)	190,731 (28.1%)		
Jim Nicholson (UUP)	119,507 (17.6%)	(+ 43,120) 162,627	(+ 22,162) 184,789
Mitchel McLaughlin (SINN FÉIN)	117,643 (17.3%)	(+ 1,709) 119,352	(+ 32) 119,384
David Ervine (PUP)	22,494 (3.3%)		
Robert McCartney (UKUP)	20,283 (3.0%)		
Seán Neeson (Alliance)	14,391 (2.1%)		
James Anderson (NLP)	998 (0.1%)		

Valid Poll: 678,808 Turnout 57.7% Quota: 169,703

Election	June '99 European Elections	June '98 Assembly Elections	May '97 General Elections	May '96 Forum Elections	June '94 European Elections
Turn Out	57.7%	69.68%	67.1%	64.69%	49.4%
UUP	119,507 (17.6%)	172 225 (21.28%)	258 352 (32.7%)	181 829 (24.17%)	133 459 (23.8%)
SDLP	190,731 (28.1%)	177 963 (21.99%)	190 818 (24.01%)	160 377 (21.37%)	161 992 (28.9%)
DUP	192,762 (28.4%)	145 917 (18.03%)	83 445 (13.6%)	141 413 (18.8%)	163 246 (29.2%)
Sinn Féin	117,643 (17.3%)	142 858 (17.65%)	127 444 (16.1%)	116 377 (15.47%)	55 215 (9.9%)*
Alliance	14,391 (2.1%)	52 636 (6.5%)	62 975 (8.0%)	49 176 (6.54%)	23 157 (4.1%)
PUP	22,494 (3.3%)	20 634 (2.55%)	10 928 (1.38%)	26 082 (3.47%)	
UKUP	20,283 (3.0%)	36 541 (4.52%)	12 81 (1.62%)	27 774 (3.69%)	
NIWC	- -	13 019 (1.61%)	3 024 (0.38%)	7 731 (1.03%)	

*Sum of first preference votes for three candidates

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Northern Ireland

European Election Result

1. The turnout at the European election in Northern Ireland (**57.71%**) was higher than first indications. This represents an increase of almost 8% on the last European election in 1994. There was a much higher poll in Western areas than along the Eastern seaboard. Main interest focused on the relative performances of John Hume and Ian Paisley who were vying for first position. On the first count, Paisley held off Hume by 2,000 votes. Hume's own personal vote is up from 161,000 to 190,731. It is clear, after the first count, that the 3 current MEPs will be returned.

2. For Ian Paisley, the election is both a political and personal triumph. He will be delighted with his own performance and will claim to be the leader of unionism. David Trimble will be somewhat relieved as his leadership was widely perceived as being dependant on Jim Nicholson retaining the seat and more especially on out polling Sinn Féin's Mitchel McLoughlin. Both these targets were achieved. While Nicholson's share of the vote fell somewhat, his performance was better than the most pessimistic pundits had predicted. However, there is no escaping the fact that the UUP performance was worst ever and the party was comprehensively out polled by the DUP. In fact, **60%** of unionist votes voted for anti-Agreement candidates.

3. For Sinn Féin, the party did not make the dramatic breakthrough of either winning a seat or beating Nicholson on the first count. However, it is very pleased with its performance and will point out that its share of the vote (**17.3%**) has increased substantially on the last European Election result (9.9%). That it performed up to the level of recent elections, even when pitted head to head with John Hume, is a very credible result. In addition, Mitchel McLoughlin has greatly improved his chances of taking the Foyle seat at the next Westminster election.

4. For the Alliance Party, which traditionally does badly in European elections, this election is nothing short of disastrous. It is its worst performance since its establishment in the 1970. Seán Neeson's leadership will come under increased pressure and there must be question marks about the future viability of the Alliance Party. Most of its Catholic support went to the SDLP and Protestant to the UUP.

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The centre ground in Northern politics, which has never been large, all but disappeared in this election.

4. For David Ervine and Robert McCartney this election showed disappointing levels of support. The limits of McCartney's alleged personal appeal was exposed. In a contest, where Sinn Féin claimed that it could take the second unionist seat, unionist voters backed their two strongest candidates Paisley and Nicholson. However, Ervine had the personal satisfaction of beating McCartney.

5. In terms of the political situation in Northern Ireland, the overall vote is in line with the Referendum result, with nearly 70% supporting pro-Agreement parties. While the UUP party may be disappointed, it could have been worse. Within nationalism, the SDLP and John Hume, have managed to hold onto their first position but will be worried by the long term trend. The overall nationalist vote at **45.4%** was highest ever recorded in a Northern election. This figure was achieved, in part, by a higher turnout in nationalist areas.

6. The first count results are attached.

Anglo-Irish Division
14 June 1999

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European Parliament elections in Northern Ireland

Thursday 10 June 1999

Valid Poll: 678,808, Turnout: 57.7%, Quota: 169,703

Ian Paisley (DUP)	192,762	28.4%
John Hume (SDLP)	190,731	28.1%
Jim Nicholson (UUP)	119,507	17.6%
Mitchel McLaughlin (SF)	117,643	17.3%
David Ervine (PUP)	22,494	3.3%
Robert McCartney (UKUP)	20,283	3.0%
Sean Neeson (All)	14,391	2.1%
James Anderson (NL)	998	0.1%

Ian Paisley (DUP) and John Hume (SDLP) were elected on the first count.

Thursday 9 June 1994

Valid Poll: 559,867, Turnout: 49.4%, Quota: 139,968

Ian Paisley (DUP)	163,246	29.2%
John Hume (SDLP)	161,992	28.9%
Jim Nicholson (UUP)	133,459	23.8%
Mary Clark-Glass (All)	23,157	4.1%
Tom Hartley (SF)	21,273}	
Dodie McGuinness (SF)	17,195}	9.9%
Francie Molloy (SF)	16,747}	

Ian Paisley (DUP) and John Hume (SDLP) were elected on the first count. Jim Nicholson (UUP) was elected on the second count.

Thursday 15 June 1989

Valid Poll: 534,811, Turnout: 48.81%, Quota: 133,703

Ian Paisley (DUP)	160,110	29.9%
John Hume (SDLP)	136,335	25.5%
Jim Nicholson (UUP)	118,785	22.2%
Danny Morrison (SF)	48,914	9.1%
John Alderdice (All)	27,905	5.2%
Laurence Kennedy (Con)	25,789	4.8%

Ian Paisley (DUP) and John Hume (SDLP) were elected on the first count. Jim Nicholson (UUP) was elected on the second count.

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Thursday 14 June 1984

Valid Poll: 685,317, Turnout: 65.4%, Quota: 171,330

Ian Paisley (DUP)	230,251	33.6%
John Hume (SDLP)	151,399	22.1%
John Taylor (UUP)	147,169	21.5%
Danny Morrison (SF)	91,476	13.3%
D. Cook (All)	34,046	5.0%
Jim Kilfedder (UPUP)	20,092	2.9%

Ian Paisley (DUP) was elected on the first count. John Taylor (UUP) was elected on the second count and John Hume was elected on the fourth count.

Thursday 17 June 1979

Valid Poll: 572,239, Turnout: 56.92%, Quota: 143,060

Ian Paisley (DUP)	170,688	29.8%
John Hume (SDLP)	140,622	24.6%
John Taylor (UUP)	68,185	11.9%
Harry West (UUP)	56,984	10.0%
Oliver Napier (All)	39,026	6.8%
Jim Kilfedder (UPUP)	38,198	6.7%
Bernadette McAliskey (Ind)	33,969	5.9%

Ian Paisley (DUP) was elected on the first count. John Hume (SDLP)was elected on the third count and John Taylor (UUP) was elected on the sixth count.

% of poll by party

Party	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
DUP	29.8	33.6	29.9	29.2	28.4
SDLP	24.6	22.1	25.5	28.9	28.1
UUP	21.9	21.5	22.2	23.8	17.6
SF/Republican	5.9	13.3	9.1	9.9	17.3
All	6.8	5	5.2	4.1	2.1

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% of poll by community

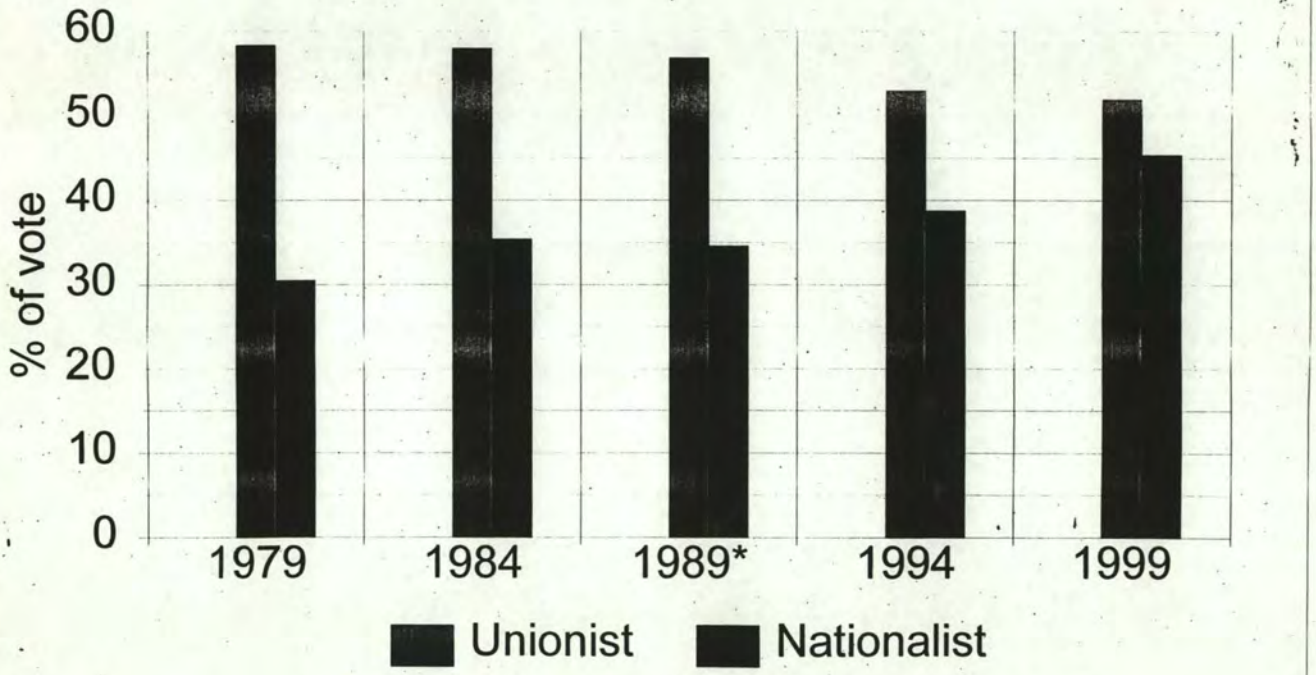
	1979	1984	1989*	1994	1999
Unionist	58.4	58	56.9	53	52
Nationalist	30.5	35.4	34.6	38.8	45.4

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European Parliament Elections

Share of vote by Community



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ELECTORAL TRENDS

Elections were by Proportional Representation except where otherwise stated. Unless otherwise indicated, figures represent first preference votes gained, and those above 5% are rounded percentages.

Assembly Elections 25 June 1998

Party	Percentage	Seats won
SDLP	22	24
UUP	21	28
DUP	18	20
Sinn Féin	18	18
Alliance	6	6
UKUP	4.52	5
PUP	2.55	2
NIWC	1.61	2
UDP	1.07	0
UUU (Denis Watson)	0.81	1
UU (W Fraser Agnew)	0.57	1
Ind (Boyd Douglas)	0.53	1
LAB	0.34	0

Local Elections	1985	1989	1993	1997
UUP	30	31	29	28
DUP	24	18	17	16
SDLP	18	21	22	21
Sinn Féin	12	11	12	17
Alliance	7	7	8	7
PUP	–	–	–	2.3
UDP	–	–	–	1.2
labour	–	–	–	0.6
NIWC	–	–	–	0.5
UKUP	–	–	–	0.5

European Elections	1984	1989	1994
UUP	22	22	24
DUP	34	30	29
SDLP	22	26	29
Sinn Féin	13	9	10
Alliance	5	5	4

*General Election**	1983	1987	1992	1997
UUP	34	38	32	33
DUP	20	12	13	14
SDLP	18	21	24	24
Sinn Féin	13	11	10	16
Alliance	8	10	9	8
UKUP	–	–	–	2.1
PUP	–	–	–	1.4
NIWC	–	–	–	0.4
LABOUR	–	–	–	0.05
UDP	–	–	–	Did not stand

*Elections decided by first past the post in 18 constituencies.**

(17 constituencies only before 1997)