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Bringing in the ‘international’: the IRA ceasefire and the end of the Cold War

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Abstract

This article argues that the IRA ceasefire of 31 August 1994 represented a major turning-point in Irish history. However, it insists that the discussion

about the ceasefire has thus far been too narrowly conceived. In particular, it suggests that the IRA decision was not just the result of factors internal to Ireland, but was also a reflection of changes in the wider international order: especially those brought about by the end of the Cold War. The article then discusses these changes in some detail and concludes from this that a political space now exists which did not exist before. However, we should be wary of false optimism. The conclusion of the Cold War may have made things possible which many once thought impossible: and that is critically important. Nonetheless, the outbreak of peace should not be mistakenly identified as a solution to the 'Irish question'. The future, though brighter, remains uncertain and fluid.*

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