Butler, Graham

Published in:
Irish Political Studies

DOI:
10.1080/07907184.2014.920600

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
The Irish Presidency: Power, Ceremony and Politics

Graham Butler

University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Law

Published online: 19 May 2014.

To cite this article: Graham Butler (2015) The Irish Presidency: Power, Ceremony and Politics, Irish Political Studies, 30:1, 145-147, DOI: 10.1080/07907184.2014.920600

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2014.920600

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.
domestic pressure to come to grips with the soaring costs of financing Ireland’s mounting debt. One of the most controversial aspects of the bailout of the troika was the insistence that all bonds, including those of unsecured bondholders, must be guaranteed. This was important especially for the international actors who feared a contagion effect that might have undermined confidence in bonds of other states.

Donovan and Murphy do an excellent job of not only detailing the financial collapse, but also emphasizing its important social and psychological impacts in Ireland. The authors highlight both the demise of Fianna Fáil in the 2011 elections and the acceptance of the Irish people of the need for austerity after the excesses of the Celtic Tiger. They also suggest that economic growth can only be recovered by sustaining foreign direct investment and a recovery in domestic confidence and consumption. Second, they highlight that further austerity is necessary in Irish government finances in order to cope with the large debt and deficits that continue to plague Irish public finances. Donovan and Murphy highlight the need for more effective European wide financial regulation which would prevent future crises like the ones in Ireland and other EU states. The collapse of the bubble has had different impacts on different groups in society with those exposed to mortgages taken out at the peak of the bubble, the younger cohorts, and those in the private sector most likely to have suffered financial losses. In summary, this book represents the most comprehensive and thorough analysis to date of Ireland’s economic crisis and its consequences.

Tim White © 2014
Xavier University
Email: white@xavier.edu
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2014.919740

The Irish Presidency: Power, Ceremony and Politics
John Coakley and Kevin Rafter (Eds)

Debate on the role and function of the President of Ireland is all too sporadic, and only generally comes into the public arena when either there is an impending presidential election, or when there are perceived controversial actions by a President, who could be accused of stepping outside his or her narrow constitutional mandate. This edited publication by Coakley and Rafter, The Irish Presidency: Power, Ceremony and Politics, seeks to plug the absence of thorough academic literature, from both a historical and political point of view.

Approaching the office of President from a chronological perspective, each of the chapter authors put their own take on the role throughout their given period. One of
the often spoken norms is that the position is unique when contrasted with other officeholders in other nation states. In Chapter 2, this assumption is proven to be unfounded, with many comparable directly elected positions in other jurisdictions with a relatively limited set of powers. The Presidency and its political role are discussed in Chapter 3, seeking to put a place for its function within the Irish political dynamic, whilst in Chapter 4, the background discusses the lead-up to the bold creation of the office in 1937, contrasting it with the Lord Lieutenant and Governor-General positions both predating and after the foundation of the state. The middle chapters weave in and out of the intricate details of each of the Presidencies, beginning with some of the more transient holders in the earlier decades. Inevitably, getting to grips with the challenges faced by early holders of the office, particularly Hyde, who acceded to the Presidency without a public mandate, are laid down solidly in Chapter 5, before setting out the surroundings for the directly elected two terms of both O’Kelly and de Valera, where presidential elections were played out on the success of the government of the day, yet working in strict conservative operations once elected or re-elected. It then continues by evoking the more innovative but short-lived aptitudes of Childers and Ó Dálaigh. For much of its history, the Presidency has been a steady position with infrequent change, yet, between 1973 and 1976, four different figures held the office for reasons of the expiration of terms, death and resignation. This turbulent state of affairs lends for intriguing debate as played out by one of the editors in Chapter 6, before reverting to strictest constitutional observance of Hillery, and then back to the most activist era of the Presidencies belonging to Robinson, McAleese and Higgins in Chapter 7.

This publication is not without its criticisms. Given that the President’s occupation is to deal solely with the powers and prerogatives provided to them under the Constitution, a greater legal perspective could have been placed within the book, which would have contributed greatly to the collection. Likewise, the important role that the Presidential Commission plays is only touched upon lightly, far less than the Council of State, which is debatably a less important constitutional body. More generally, however, given the books edited status, what one author may fail to mention in a particular chapter is occasionally expanded more on in another by a different writer. With the book being derived from a previous special issue of *Irish Political Studies*, the appendices of this book add much added value to it, giving the full results of all presidential elections to date; a full collection of the inauguration speeches delivered through the decades and a full list of the Council of State meetings.

A key development in 2013 was the *Thirty-second Amendment of the Constitution (Abolition of Seanad Éireann) Bill*, which was rejected in a referendum by the Irish people. Within the proposed changes, however, was a number of indirect aspects relating to the Presidency, including changes in the nominating process (the number of Oireachtas nominators being reduced) and altering the Presidential Commission membership (replacing the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann with the Leas-Cheann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann), with both acting as suitable starting points for looking at the potential effect of reducing the Oireachtas to just the Dáil and President. Similarly, the recent Constitutional Convention concluded its work
in March 2014, and made a number of recommendations for the constitutional reform of Presidency, including, to provide Irish citizens outside of Ireland with an entitlement to vote in presidential elections; to reduce the age of candidacy and to expand the nominating process to go beyond the political establishment. With many of these proposals possibly being on a ballot paper in the near future, and the lengthy gaps that exist between publications on the Irish Presidency, there will be ample material for another similar volume in time to come, with another such contribution of papers being warranted in the coming years.

This scholarly contribution to the field of study on the Irish Presidency is very much of its era following the most unusual Presidential election to date during 2011. The Editors’ aims of the publication sought to put a sort of cohesive collection of papers together to give an overarching view of the office, and in that way, they have succeeded, making it an essential component for anyone seeking to comprehensively understanding the role of President of Ireland from a historical standpoint and the powers associated with the role. In the coming years, it will be the literary starting point (or indeed, essential reading) for any citizen of Ireland seeking the Presidency.

Graham Butler © 2014
University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Law
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2014.920600

Template for Peace
Shaun McDaid
Manchester University Press, 2013, (hb) 209pp., ISBN 9780719086960, £70

The main focus of this book is the creation and collapse of the Sunningdale power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland and the relationship between the British and Irish governments between 1972 and 1975. Shaun McDaid provides us with an account of this period which draws on the memoir accounts of major officials, and recently available official documents from the archive which most other books on this topic have not benefited from. McDaid strives to provide us with a more detailed account of these events and for the most part is successful. One of the major strengths of this book is McDaids’s balanced style of writing which is academically grounded but accessible to all; a task not easily accomplished.

McDaid presents us with a more nuanced account of the events surrounding the failed executive; he concentrates his argument on three main areas. First, he maintains that the nature of the relationship between the Irish government and constitutional nationalists was not as amicable as has been portrayed by many other academics. He suggests that most other accounts of this topic have either had too broad a focus or have not had the benefit of recently available official documents. These, he claims, have allowed him to present ‘a more detailed study of the high politics and processes of policy formation than has been hitherto possible’ (p. 3). McDaid argues that the Irish government had little desire for achieving a united Ireland