

January 2013

## RTÉ and the Coverage of Northern Ireland on Television News Bulletins in the Early Years of the Troubles

Gareth Ivory

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/icr>



Part of the [Communication Technology and New Media Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Ivory, Gareth (2013) "RTÉ and the Coverage of Northern Ireland on Television News Bulletins in the Early Years of the Troubles," *Irish Communication Review*. Vol. 13: Iss. 1, Article 3.

doi:10.21427/D7S13T

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/icr/vol13/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Current Publications at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Irish Communication Review by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact [arrow.admin@tudublin.ie](mailto:arrow.admin@tudublin.ie), [aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie](mailto:aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#)

---

## RTÉ and the Coverage of Northern Ireland on Television News Bulletins in the Early Years of the Troubles

### Cover Page Footnote

THE REVIEW OF IRISH GOVERNMENT REACTION towards the breakdown of civil society in Northern Ireland after 1969 has frequently focused on key events including the Arms Trial; challenges from within Fianna Fáil to the authority of Jack Lynch; the crackdown on republican activists; the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin, and the road to Sunningdale (see, for example, O'Brien, 2000; Farrington, 2007; O'Donnell, 2007; Keogh, 2008; O'Halpin, 2008; McLoughlin, 2008; McGrattan, 2009; Craig, 2010; O'Beachain, 2010). This article examines the impact of the Northern Ireland issue on broadcasting policy in the Republic of Ireland during the Jack Lynch Fianna Fáil administration between July 1969 and February 1973. The article goes beyond a description of the relationship between the Irish government and RTÉ by drawing on written material held in the archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Unit and findings based on a review of the output of RTÉ television news bulletins between 1969 and 1973. The first section considers the tensions between the Fianna Fáil government of Jack Lynch and RTÉ in relation to Northern Ireland. The article then examines the extent of RTÉ television news coverage of the affairs of Northern Ireland, and assesses the content of this coverage as well as the editorial priority afforded to this story, before turning finally to a short review of viewership levels and reactions among the Irish television audience.

---

# RTÉ AND THE COVERAGE OF NORTHERN IRELAND ON TELEVISION NEWS BULLETINS IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE TROUBLES

Gareth Ivory

THE REVIEW OF IRISH GOVERNMENT REACTION towards the breakdown of civil society in Northern Ireland after 1969 has frequently focused on key events including the Arms Trial; challenges from within Fianna Fáil to the authority of Jack Lynch; the crackdown on republican activists; the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin, and the road to Sunningdale (see, for example, O'Brien, 2000; Farrington, 2007; O'Donnell, 2007; Keogh, 2008; O'Halpin, 2008; McLoughlin, 2008; McGrattan, 2009; Craig, 2010; O'Beachain, 2010). This article examines the impact of the Northern Ireland issue on broadcasting policy in the Republic of Ireland during the Jack Lynch Fianna Fáil administration between July 1969 and February 1973. The article goes beyond a description of the relationship between the Irish government and RTÉ by drawing on written material held in the archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Unit and findings based on a review of the output of RTÉ television news bulletins between 1969 and 1973. The first section considers the tensions between the Fianna Fáil government of Jack Lynch and RTÉ in relation to Northern Ireland. The article then examines the extent of RTÉ television news coverage of the affairs of Northern Ireland, and assesses the content of this coverage as well as the editorial priority afforded to this story, before turning finally to a short review of viewership levels and reactions among the Irish television audience.

## **The Irish Government and RTÉ**

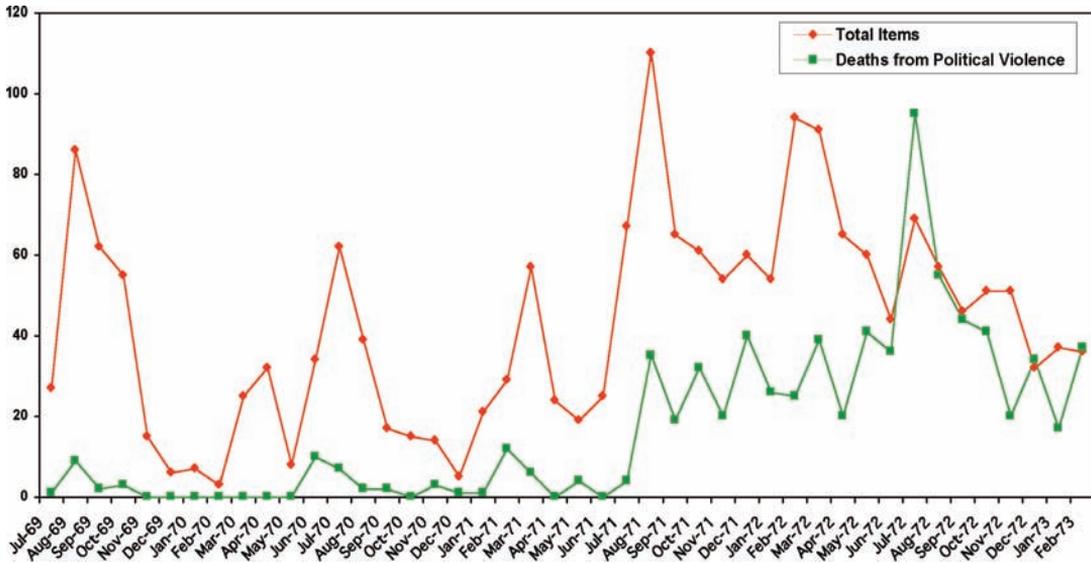
Control of the Irish airwaves has been considered in several publications (Kelly, 1967; Ó Broin, 1973; O'Brien, 1978; Fisher, 1978; Feeney, 1984; Purcell, 1991; Savage, 1996; Horgan 2002, 2004; Feeney, 2004; Corcoran and O'Brien, 2005; Savage, 2010; Bowman, 2011). At the end of the 1960s, the relationship between the Irish state and RTÉ *vis à vis* news broadcasting was determined by the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960). Alongside the requirement to report news in an objective and impartial manner, RTÉ was (as now) prohibited from broadcasting 'anything which may reasonably be regarded as being likely to promote, or incite to crime or as tending to undermine the authority of the state.' Mindful of the potential power and influence of television broadcasting from the outset, the then Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Michael Hilliard, accepted in January 1960 the need 'to establish broad-

casting as an autonomous public service with the broadcasting authority acting as trustee for the national interest subject only to such powers of ultimate control as the Government concerned have seen fit to retain' (Seanad Éireann debates, 20 January 1960). By 1966, this autonomy was being somewhat circumscribed and any expectations of complete independence from governmental supervision were negated when the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, argued that as RTÉ was 'an instrument of public policy, and as such is responsible to the Government'. He added that 'the Government has overall responsibility for its conduct, and especially the obligation to ensure that its programmes do not offend against the public interest or conflict with national policy as defined in legislation' (Dáil Éireann debates, 12 October 1966). That such an obligation existed would become more relevant, particularly as the Constitution in Article 40.6.1.i gives to the State in relation to controlling radio (and television) the right to ensure that they are not used 'to undermine public order or morality or the authority of the State' (Kelly, 1967).

Relations between the Irish government and RTÉ were prickly in the two years prior to August 1969 as RTÉ sought to establish more autonomy by subjecting a broader range of political and social issues to scrutiny whilst respecting the framework set down in legislation (Horgan, 2004: 59–72). Clearly civil unrest in an area less than 100 miles from Donnybrook was always going to force its way onto RTÉ news desks, although RTÉ only appointed its first full time correspondent (Martin Wallace) and opened its Belfast office in February 1968 (Savage, 2010: 367). Later, RTÉ appointed four duty editors to the newsroom to ensure that one would always be on duty during broadcast hours to adjudicate on difficult editorial decisions relating to the Northern Ireland issue (Fisher, 2005: 63).

A generation ago, the erudite Boston-based political analyst Padraig O'Malley remarked that 'when television brought the ugly scenes of sectarian violence in Belfast and Derry into Southern homes in 1969, people there found they were looking at a foreign country' (O'Malley, 1983: 75). This assessment, while broadly accurate, does not sufficiently acknowledge the reality of actual levels of television penetration in Irish households. In March 1969, Irish TAM Ltd estimated that there were 490,000 households receiving the RTÉ television service, accounting for 70% of private households. The total population in these homes was estimated to be 2,205,000 (RTÉ Annual Report 1970). By 1971, 76% of Irish households had a television set, of which 37 per cent were able to receive UK channels in addition to RTÉ Television (Fahy, 1992: 5). Three years later, the equivalent figures were 79 per cent and 42 per cent respectively (Fahy, 1985: 3). In 1971 therefore, 24 per cent of Irish households had no television, 39 per cent received RTÉ television only, while the remaining 37 per cent (primarily along the east coast and along the border with Northern Ireland) were able to receive four television channels in total, namely, RTÉ, BBC 1, BBC 2 and Ulster TV. By 1974, 21 per cent of Irish households still did not have a television set, 37 per cent were still only able to receive the RTÉ signal while the remaining 42 per cent were able to receive the same four channels. However those Irish television audiences that were able to receive the RTÉ signal were exposed to high volumes of coverage of the affairs of Northern Ireland, as can be seen in Figure 1 below. Typically there were two main news programmes each evening on RTÉ television. During the period under review – July 1969 to February 1973 – the early evening news was broadcast at 6.15p.m. while the main evening

**Figure 1: Film footage relating to Northern Ireland on RTÉ television news: Total number of items on a per monthly basis v Deaths related to political violence, July 1969–February 1973**



news programme aired either at 9.30p.m. or 10p.m. In addition, each day the 'Nuacht' bulletin (news presented in the Irish language) was transmitted around 8p.m. while a late news bulletin went out just before the end of transmission.

The data in Figure 1 shows the number of news items with film footage relating to Northern Ireland each month. Given the scale of the violence, deaths, injuries, bombings and shooting incidents in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s RTÉ news coverage of these events was inevitable. This coverage on RTÉ Television news bulletins peaked during the months of greatest turmoil, with the most sustained period of continuous coverage between July 1971 and July 1972. During the life of the Fianna Fáil administration of 1969–1973 Northern Ireland was the top story with film footage on well over 40% of days (Ivory, 1993). A gradual, but steady, decline in the levels of coverage is noticeable after August 1972. This may have resulted partially from the introduction on weeknights of a 30-minute news programme with a refreshed format – *Tonight at Ten* – from 25 September 1972, which replaced the former 20-minute news programme at 9.30pm. According to Mike Burns, then Editor of RTÉ Television News, the main consideration for making the change was

the conviction that for most people, the news is the most significant programme of the night; the growing demand for more and more news – not only the fact, but analysis as well as background – and from a practical point of view, the opportunity it gives of getting in later up-to-date material coming in on film or videotape (*RTÉ Guide*, 15 September 1972: 4).

While violent activity in Northern Ireland in 1973 returned to the levels seen in 1971 following the carnage of 1972 – when there had been 476 fatalities, 4876 injuries, 1853 bomb blasts and 10628 shooting incidents – the broadcasting of news stories featuring Northern Ireland on RTÉ television news bulletins reduced more sharply than might have been anticipated (statistics drawn Irish Information Partnership, 1986). However other possible explanations for this decline include the perceived weariness among Irish audiences given the relentless diet of turbulent news coming from Northern Ireland, as well as the impact of the government decision (discussed in more detail below) to dismiss the entire RTÉ Authority in November 1972, and to appoint a new Authority which, in turn, immediately issued new programming guidelines.

John Horgan summarises the challenge for RTÉ in reporting the conflagration in Northern Ireland as stemming primarily from the impartiality requirements placed on it by the 1960 Act. These legal provisions left RTÉ with the following dilemma:

[H]ow was the station to observe impartiality in a context which included the constitutional claim to the island's six north eastern counties? Evidently, no self respecting news operation could simply espouse the Nationalist – or even the civil rights – arguments. Equally evidently, any attempt by RTÉ to broadcast interviews or reports which in any way gave airtime to the Unionist political viewpoint (or a fortiori, to the RUC viewpoint on security issues) would raise communal and political hackles in the Republic (Horgan, 2004: 74).

He notes that as early as August 1969, the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, was stressing the need for print and broadcast journalists not to glamorise the activities of the IRA or the organisation itself expressing the hope that RTÉ could refer to the IRA as ‘an illegal organisation’ from time to time to highlight this legal point. In October 1969, the Minister for Justice, Michael Ó Moráin, wrote to the Minister for Post and Telegraphs, Erskine Childers, complaining about the frequent appearances by people with paramilitary connections in RTÉ output. In July 1970, a new Minister for Justice, Desmond O'Malley, wrote to the new Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Gerard Collins, criticising RTÉ for glamorising persons known to have engaged in subversive or criminal activities. Contacts between Minister Collins and RTÉ at this time suggest that this concern was actively pursued (Horgan, 2004: 81–8).

A wide-ranging paper, entitled *A View of Irish Broadcasting*, had been completed by the RTÉ Authority in May 1971 although it was not published until 1973 (RTÉ Authority, 1973). In light of the subsequent events and the deterioration in relations between the Irish Government and RTÉ, the inclusion of a sentence on page 3 that ‘[t]he Authority has never been given a direction under section 31’ seems, in retrospect, somewhat unfortunate. Interestingly, the contemporaneous account of the dismissal of the RTÉ Authority by Leon Ó Broin (Secretary General of the Department of Post & Telegraphs from 1948–67) indicates that Minister Gerard Collins first referred to this section of the broadcasting legislation in a Dáil debate in June 1971 (Ó Broin, 1973: 25). However, whether civil servants in the Department of Posts and Telegraphs had prior sight of the RTÉ Authority document is unclear. Reviewing *A View of Irish Broadcasting* at a 40-year remove, what is striking is the absence of any direct reference to the specific challenges of reporting the political situation in North-

ern Ireland. Yet clearly the challenges of broadcasting were well understood. Certain perspectives were offered that clearly could be applied (but not exclusively so) to issues associated with reporting political developments in Northern Ireland and the impact of these events south of the Border. For example, the Authority stated:

The amount of effective research [on the power of broadcasting and the impact of television on people's attitudes and behaviour] which has been carried out is small and its results seems to be in conflict with the widely held impression that television has a direct effect on values and moral attitudes. One view held among sociologists working in this field is that television reinforces, rather than changes, opinions and attitudes already formed. But those responsible for formulating broadcasting policies cannot assume that the effects of broadcasting are ephemeral and unimportant. Until there is clear and unmistakable proof to the contrary, they must assume that broadcasting is an important force in influencing the values and standards of society (RTÉ Authority, 1971: 7).

They continued:

[t]he Authority sees itself as a public trustee with responsibility for the public interest in all that it does. It must, for example, ensure accuracy in its reporting and it must hold the balance of opinion fairly. It must ensure that divergent points of view can be expressed in broadcasting without fear or favour. Broadcasting is not just a channel for any and all opinions, nor can it be neutral in its basic philosophy and attitudes. It must seek to widen and deepen the knowledge of the audience, while respecting the beliefs and values and reflecting the mores of the society in which it operates. It must be impartial and it must observe the law. At the same time, it should provide opportunities for such critical examination of public issues as are considered necessary to fulfil the needs of impartial and objective enquiry. An important function of a public service broadcasting organisation is to enable society to understand itself better. The Authority believes that broadcasting has a duty to help the society it serves to live up to its own beliefs and values by seeking to identify and present these in its programmes (RTÉ Authority, 1971: 8).

Later, in the context of broadcasting and national culture, the Authority stated:

[N]ational culture is not made up of selected social attitudes and practices; it comprises all the distinctive elements in the Irish people's attitudes to spiritual and material things which go to make up the way of life of the community, North and South. Preserving and developing the national culture means, in effect, the development of a deeper appreciation of the intrinsic value of Irish language, history and tradition, the development of a better public consciousness of national identity and the encouragement of national self-respect and understanding in a comprehensive way. It is a process of enrichment of society by drawing on what is best in our whole national heritage, as well as giving due prominence and encouragement to contemporary Irish achievements in music, literature, drama and the arts (RTÉ Authority, 1971: 13).

---

It is difficult to comprehend the subsequent scale and speed of the deterioration in relations between the Irish Government and RTÉ given the expression of such moderate views. Yet, controversy was set to grow as the conflict in Northern Ireland intensified further during 1971.

On 24 June 1971, Jack Lynch answered a parliamentary question from the Cork-based Labour Party TD, Barry Desmond, regarding the format of the radio programme *This Week* broadcast on 20 June 1971. The programme dealt with the activities of the Provisional IRA and initially proposed to have members of that organisation and a member of the government participate in a debate. It was ultimately broadcast in the form of a programme 'introduced by certain responsible people ... interrupted by an interview, and followed by another group of responsible people – politicians of different affiliations and private persons' (Dáil Éireann debates, 24 June 1971). Lynch stated that 'it was not in the public interest that members of an illegal organisation should be permitted to use such a programme for publicising their activities' (Dáil Éireann debates, 24 June 1971). This clearly marked out the limits on objectivity and impartiality in news coverage. What was at stake was whether or not the broadcast of an interview or a programme would be 'prejudicial to the public interest' (Dáil Éireann debates, 4 November 1971).

The RTÉ television programme *7 Days* broadcast on 28 September 1971 carried interviews with the Chiefs-of-Staff of both the Provisional and Official IRA. As a direct result of this broadcast the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Gerard Collins, used the powers conferred upon the Minister under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act to issue a written directive to the RTÉ Authority instructing it 'to refrain from broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims and activities of any organisation which engages in, encourages or advocates the attaining of any particular objective by violent means' (Dáil Éireann debates, 4 November 1971). The Minister did not elaborate further on his directive, which was a matter of frustration for the RTÉ Authority.

The view of the Authority was outlined clearly in the 1972 *RTÉ Annual Report* (for the period ending 31 March 1972). Following the ministerial directive, the Authority had issued a statement indicating its view that RTÉ staff had 'conscientiously endeavoured to provide the community with a comprehensive news and current affairs service', including the violent events occurring in Northern Ireland. The Authority expressed the view that it would be 'failing in its statutory duty were it to ignore the existence of any significant development in the community, legal or illegal, and that in discharging its functions it did not believe that it helped to promote the aims and activities of any organisation of the type referred to in the directive.' Reviewing RTÉ's performance since the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland, it added:

The Authority acknowledges the special responsibilities of the national broadcasting service at all times. It would be contrary to its policy to permit broadcasting to be used for the advocacy of violence by any organisation as a mean of attaining particular aims. A distinction must be made between the obligations of the Authority in the field of reporting and analysis of activities and events that are an important feature of the national scene, and incidental publicity that may derive from the broadcasting treatment of such activities or

events. The Authority is of the view that the national interest is best serviced by the provision of a comprehensive information service, and it made every effort to ensure that its broadcasting treatment of activities and events in the growing complexity of the Northern Ireland situation over the past three years was handled in a responsible manner (*RTÉ Annual Report, 1972*).

There was significant opposition to the imposition of the directive from certain sections of RTÉ staff, but the intervention by government was accommodated by others. For example, the Head of News, Jim McGuinness commented that

an Irish government was perfectly entitled to give, in a lawful way, a directive to RTÉ, and that I myself was in the business of upholding the law. Therefore, notwithstanding my own feelings on the matter, which in many ways would be sympathetic to those who think the British are behaving in a questionable way on the North, I felt it was terribly important that nobody in RTÉ would seem to cunningly set himself above the law, and attempt to appear to acquiesce in the directive given by the government and at the same time to thumb his nose at it in a boyish way (*Irish Press, 30 October 1971*, quoted in Horgan, 2004: 106).

However, political discussion on the content of RTÉ broadcasts and the suitability of the provisions of Section 31 continued throughout 1972. On 22 May 1972, an interview with Provisional Sinn Féin President Ruairi Ó Brádaigh was broadcast on the 11.45p.m. bulletin. In this interview Ó Brádaigh was afforded time of a similar duration to express his views on a statement by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, that stronger measures against the IRA were being contemplated by the government. Speaking in the Dáil on 8 June 1972, Collins stated:

I am personally very unhappy and disappointed with the amount of publicity being given by RTÉ on radio and television to members of subversive organisations. While the direction under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960) may not have been breached it seems to me that an undue amount of time has been given to these people, who have no mandate from the electorate and represent nobody but themselves, to express their viewpoints and philosophies which are clearly unacceptable to the vast majority of Irish people (*Dáil Éireann debates, 8 June 1972*).

By the time the Minister met with the RTÉ Authority in late June 1972 to convey his dissatisfaction, senior RTÉ management had compiled a report on broadcasts that had featured Sinn Féin as a programme item. In summary, between 1 October 1971 and 9 June 1972 ‘only four out of 132 7 *Days* programme items had featured Sinn Féin; three out of 62 *Féach* items; and seven out of 633 news items’ (Horgan, 2004: 108). The outcome of the Minister’s meeting with the Authority can be surmised from his comments to the Dáil on 29 June 1972:

I am satisfied there has not been a breach of the directive since it was given and I hope my words with the Authority may have the effect of bringing

home more fully to them the spirit of the directive (Dáil Éireann debates, 29 June 1972).

Further concern was expressed during July 1972 when extracts from speeches by Ruairi Ó Brádaigh (Provisional Sinn Féin) and Michael Farrell (People's Democracy) were broadcast by RTÉ (Dáil Éireann debates, 13 July 1972). While no direct intervention was made by Collins over the controversial broadcasts throughout 1972, his speech to Dáil Éireann on 13 December 1972 following the dismissal of the entire RTÉ Authority on 24 November 1972 for permitting the broadcast of a report giving the substance of an interview with the leader of the Provisional IRA, Seán Mac Stiofáin, indicates that during his meeting with the RTÉ Authority on 23 June 1972, he left them in no doubt as to what was required of them:

The Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure objective and impartial presentation of news and current affairs programmes and **it has a general responsibility to the community not to help those who try to foster unrest and violence by giving them a platform for their views or by giving encouragement in other ways** (Dáil Éireann debates, 13 December 1972) [*emphasis added by author*].

In response to an ultimatum from the Minister to explain what actions it planned to take for contravening the ministerial directive, the RTÉ Authority responded by reiterating its support for the great efforts RTÉ staff had taken to ensure compliance with a directive that had several possible interpretations, yet indicated their intention to implement a range of additional arrangements to strengthen editorial control. However, when the Authority claimed that a lack of editorial judgement was to blame for the broadcast of the substance of the Mac Stiofáin interview, the Minister attacked their failure to accept full responsibility:

They [the Authority] did not have the courage or the sense of responsibility to acknowledge that they and not subordinates carried the responsibility for it (Dáil Éireann debates, 13 December 1972).

One of the dismissed Authority members, the pre-eminent Trinity historian Professor T.W. Moody, indicated that his Authority colleagues had been very concerned with the public interest and had sought to balance two competing claims, namely freedom of public expression and debate against the protection of society and the State against subversion. Placing blame on the refusal by the Minister to clarify the original directive, Moody said:

As soon as we received the direction we had to decide how its imprecise and omnibus terms were to be translated into practice. In our attempt to interpret it for the guidance of the RTÉ staff we tried hard ... to obtain clarification from the Minister, but received none ... So either there was to be a total blackout on all references to the IRA or the Authority was to be left to discover by a process of trial and error how much liberty remained to broadcasting. In choosing the second alternative we knew our way would be

---

troublesome and painful, but we believed that we were called on to help the broadcasting service to cope with its added difficulties for the remainder of our term of office (quoted in Ó Broin, 1973: 28).

The members of the new Authority issued a set of guidelines giving a rigorous interpretation to the Section 31 directive by prohibiting the broadcast of radio and television interviews with representatives of the Provisional and Official IRA. The dismissal of the RTÉ Authority and the jailing of RTÉ reporter Kevin O'Kelly for contempt of court (he appealed the judgement, was immediately released on bail and had the sentence reduced to a fine by a court of appeal) following his refusal at a related court case to conclusively identify Mac Stiofáin as his interviewee sent shock waves through RTÉ, particularly as the actual interview was never broadcast. Unlike in May 1972 when an actual interview with Mac Stiofáin had been broadcast but had gone broadly unchallenged by the Irish government, O'Kelly had only reported the contents of the interview, albeit at considerable length. After several shots across the bow, the Fianna Fáil government resolved to deal firmly with RTÉ by clearly delineating the lines of political authority *vis à vis* the public good. Perhaps it was coincidental, but there was an interesting symmetry between the initial decision to invoke the ministerial directive under Section 31 in October 1971 and the subsequent action to dismiss the full Authority in November 1972. The first decision followed the tripartite meeting between Jack Lynch, Edward Heath and Brian Faulkner at Chequers, while the second played out as Lynch met with Heath in London to discuss the Green Paper *The future of Northern Ireland* published by the British government the previous month. According to a former Deputy Head of RTÉ News, Des Fisher, at least some political observers at the time believed the dismissal was linked to extensive pressure from the British government to act against the IRA (Fisher, 2005: 67).

After the dismissal of the Authority and the clear indication that journalistic autonomy on this issue would no longer be tolerated, opposition within RTÉ, while prevalent, became muted over time (Kenny, 2005). Alternative perspectives coexisted. For example, Joe Fahy, RTÉ Political Correspondent and a senior member of the NUJ, suggested in private correspondence to the NUJ General Secretary in January 1973:

Last October (1972), a cleverly manipulated press campaign suggested that the Dublin radio branch was going to have a one-day strike on the anniversary of the Section 31 directive, and that all journalists in RTÉ were up in arms against this restriction. When the strike motion had to be withdrawn, because its sponsors quickly became aware that it would not receive a majority, that fact was not considered worthy to be reported in the same public press [...] I have already told my branch colleagues that I will not have my political attitude or actions determined for me by any Union [...] I will not support any direct challenge to the Government of Ireland on this issue, and I believe if there is one, it is doomed to failure (Quoted in Horgan, 2004: 123).

Given the significance and impact of the government decision, the account detailed in RTÉ's 1973 Annual Report (covering the period to the end of March 1973) was limited to the factual situation. It stated:

---

Every effort was made during the year to ensure that matters related to the complex situation in Northern Ireland continued to be handled in a responsible manner. However, following a radio programme on 19 November 1972 in which the substance of an interview with a person subsequently convicted of membership of an illegal organisation was broadcast, an exchange of correspondence took place between the Minister and the Authority. The Government dismissed the Authority on 24 November. A new Authority was appointed on the same date. Shortly after its appointment, the new Authority approved of detailed guidelines to assist editorial staff in observing the Minister's direction. The new Authority also endorsed the view of its predecessor that a statutory direction under Section 31 should not be of indefinite duration; that it should be for a specified period and should be renewed only if considered essential (RTÉ Annual Report 1973).

### **The Northern Ireland Story on RTÉ Television News Bulletins July 1969–February 1973**

In March 1975 Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien (Labour Party Minister for Posts and Telegraphs with responsibility for broadcasting in the Fine Gael–Labour coalition government) made certain assertions with regard to broadcasting, broadcasters and violence. While not specifically focused on RTÉ, the remarks formed part of his wide-ranging contribution to the debate on the Broadcasting (Amendment) Act of 1976 which enacted new provisions relating to Section 31. O'Brien asserted:

[B]roadcasting, of all the media, both through sounds and images, has by far the most immediate impact on people and situations, has by far the greatest capacity to generate emotion, and that its capacities in these regards have aroused and held the fascinated attention of people interested in promoting and justifying violence, and strongly desirous of access to broadcasting for these ends. Professional broadcasters have themselves publicly noted that in certain conditions the mere appearance of a television camera on a street may tend to speed up the action of a riot – the speeding up being clearly aimed at the television camera and through it at television screens throughout the area, the presumed object and probable effect of this being to spread similar patterns of conduct more widely (Seanad Éireann debates, 12 March 1975).

O'Brien also argued that:

Just as violence is attracted to the camera, so the camera is attracted to violence, it is a case of love at first sight on both sides.

while later on he added:

The broadcaster's professional instinct inclines him towards exposure of what is exciting, even sensational, and to regard the possible social effects of such exposure as conjectural and outside his sphere (Seanad Éireann debates, 12 March 1975).

Even though O'Brien's overall perspective on the broader political issue of Northern Ireland differed radically from that of Fianna Fáil, his view of broadcasters and broadcasting is a useful prism through which to analyse news outputs. The next sections draw from an earlier analysis of RTÉ television news stories with film footage relating to the Northern Ireland issue (Ivory, 1993). The cataloguing system retained by the RTÉ Library indicates the running-order of news stories and made this analysis possible. In addition, each news item was shot-listed for reference purposes.<sup>1</sup> A detailed framework for classifying the content of these news stories was constructed. The central theme of the film footage and news story broadcast has been used to determine into which of the mutually exclusive categories listed below each report should be assigned:

*Law and Order issues:*

- 1 Scenes of violence (eg., rioting)
- 2 Aftermath of violence (eg., explosions, shootings and riots)
- 3 Barricades, arms finds, British army operations, roadblocks, armed raids

*Stories/Comments on the Northern Ireland Situation about/from:*

- 4 Elected representatives from all political parties in Northern Ireland and members of the 'Establishment' including the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the RUC Chief Constable, the Army General Officer Commanding, Judges, etc.
- 5 Non-elected individuals including members of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, members of People's Democracy, members of Sinn Féin and the IRA, vox pops and 'eye witness' interviews with members of the public, members of 'Republican clubs', members of Citizens' Defence Committees, non-elected Unionists/Loyalists and British Army deserters.
- 6 Church representatives (Catholic and Protestant)
- 7 Politicians from the Republic of Ireland
- 8 Politicians from Britain
- 9 Funerals
- 10 Demonstrations and other protest meetings
- 11 Peace gestures and meetings
- 12 Orange parades and Protestant rallies
- 13 Refugee problems
- 14 Visiting fact findings missions
- 15 Intimidation
- 16 Other

Seven months during the period under review were analysed in detail: July of each year 1969–1972, August 1969, August 1971 and February 1972. The choice of July covers the traditional marching season in Northern Ireland while the remaining three months were selected because heightened political activity, constitutional and paramilitary, led to increased television news coverage. The findings are set out in Table 1.

<sup>1</sup> This review does not extend to an analysis of items relating to Northern Ireland that were broadcast as part of an RTÉ current affairs television programmes such as *7 Days* or *Féach*.

**Table 1: Detailed Analysis of Monthly Broadcasts**

Category	July 1969	August 1969	July 1970	July 1971	August 1971	February 1972	July 1972
1	1	6	2	9	8	0	1
2	3	2	9	15	22	30	14
3	0	8	4	2	5	5	8
4	6	22	11	16	23	16	19
5	3	12	8	2	18	10	5
6	0	5	1	1	3	4	2
7	0	8	3	0	7	2	1
8	0	2	2	0	3	1	0
9	2	3	0	3	4	4	1
10	5	4	3	3	5	10	4
11	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
12	2	2	8	6	0	2	1
13	0	6	2	1	4	0	5
14	0	2	0	0	0	1	1
15	2	1	1	4	2	0	2
16	3	2	8	5	6	8	4
Total	27	86	62	67	110	94	69

#### *Content – Law and Order Issues*

News stories featuring film footage of law and order concerns are separated into three, hierarchical, categories. Across the seven months reviewed, it is clear that the most significant coverage of actual scenes of violence occurred in August 1969, July 1971 and August 1971. The August 1969 figure is linked to the outbreak of serious communal violence across Northern Ireland and the deployment of the British Army in Belfast and Derry. The July 1971 figure reflects widespread rioting following the deaths of two youths in Derry at the hands of the British Army while August 1971 marks the violence following the introduction of internment. Overall though, the analysis shows that it was news items capturing the aftermath of violence that dominated broadcast outputs. These months were also highly significant as regards increased levels of violent activity and particularly so in the case of February 1972 (in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday) and July 1972 (which included Bloody Friday – the day when the Provisional IRA detonated 22 bombs across Belfast killing 9 people and injuring 130 others). To a considerable extent, the changing focus of news coverage mirrored the deteriorating law and order situation in Northern Ireland as protest rallies, marches and the resulting confrontations and violence were replaced

by coverage of, and reaction to, the escalating bombing campaign of the Provisional IRA, the backlash to this campaign of violence and the abolition of the Stormont regime. However, relative to its entire coverage of Northern Ireland on television news bulletins during this period, occasions where actual scenes of violence were broadcast on RTÉ television news bulletins were relatively uncommon. This finding challenges the view of broadcasters being attracted to violence to the detriment of other newsworthy items.

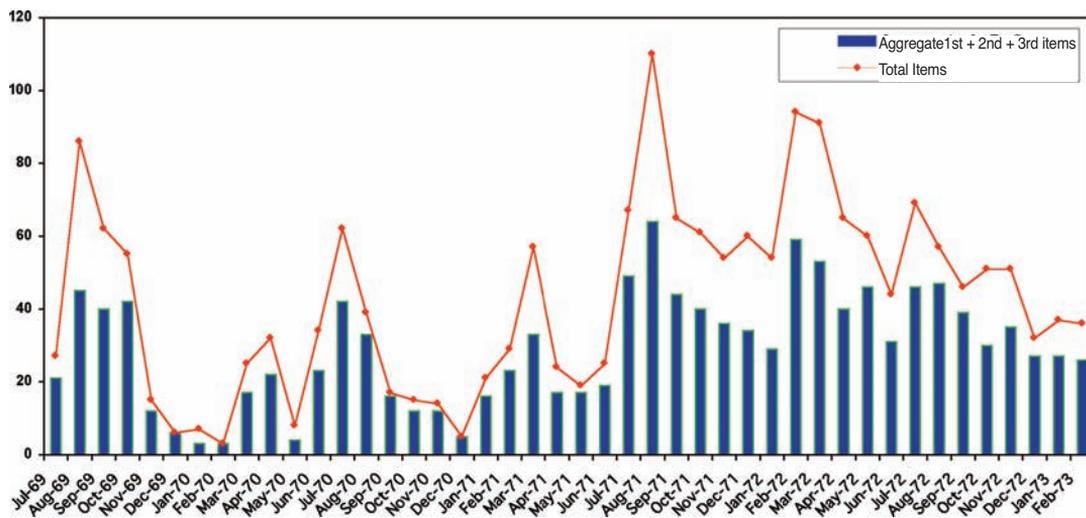
*Content – Stories/ Comment from Elected Representatives and Non-Elected Individuals*

Predictably, contributions from elected representatives featured strongly on RTÉ television news bulletins. Comments were drawn from across the political divide in Northern Ireland and featured public representatives who favoured the political status quo (typically Unionists and members of the ‘Establishment’) as well as those on the Nationalist and Republican Labour side who clearly desired substantial political change. Across the seven months reviewed in detail, contributions from elected representatives consistently outnumbered those included in the grouping of non-elected individuals. This latter grouping included a very wide range of individuals and their inclusion in news stories broadly tracked political developments as they occurred in Northern Ireland. For example, the leaders of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, People’s Democracy and Citizens’ Defence Committees were asked for comment in the earlier years. Anti-internment lobbyists and concerned relatives featured in mid/late 1971 as tougher security measures were introduced against the backdrop of intensified Provisional IRA activity. The increase in violence through 1972 arguably necessitated the seeking of comment from political organisations and individuals sympathetic to the aims and aspirations of the IRA while endeavouring not to contravene the provisions of the Ministerial Order of 1 October 1971. In some instances, the reactions of Sinn Féin leaders and other republicans were presented alongside the views of more moderate nationalists. However, taking the full scale of items covered in RTÉ television news bulletins across the early years of the Troubles, the breadth and diversity of contributions included strongly supports the perspective advanced by the RTÉ Authority that their staff had been conscientious in providing a comprehensive news and current affairs service and that all significant developments had been covered.

*Priority*

Geographical proximity to the political upheaval in Northern Ireland ensured that this news story was always going to receive significant attention within RTÉ. There were thirteen months between July 1969 and February 1973 where more than 60 items with film footage relating to Northern Ireland were broadcast on RTÉ television news within the month. These were August and September 1969, July 1970, July to October 1971, December 1971, February to May 1972, and July 1972. In each of these months, items with film footage from Northern Ireland topped the RTÉ television news bulletins on 19 or more occasions. Proportionately, September 1969 saw the highest number of instances of news items relating to Northern Ireland (25 days in the month) topping RTÉ news bulletins. This was followed by August 1971 and March 1972 (with 23 days in the month) and February 1972, May 1972, July 1972 and August 1972 (all with 22 days in the month). In addition, 9 months (8

**Figure 2: Film footage relating to Northern Ireland on RTÉ television news: Total number of items on a per monthly basis v Aggregate of 1st, 2nd and 3rd news items, July 1969–February 1973**



of the months being listed above) had in excess of 15 days in the month where reports showing film footage from Northern Ireland featured as the second news item in the running order. Finally, 10 months (7 of them being the months listed) had in excess of 10 days in the month where this type of report with film footage featured as the third news item in the running order. Figure 2 below examines the priority of news items relating to the Northern Ireland issue relative to total output on this issue and shows that the monthly totals exceeded 46 reports out of a possible 92–93 (ie. >50%) during 7 months.

### **The Reaction of the Irish Television Audience to RTÉ Coverage of the Affairs of Northern Ireland**

Television audience measurement in Ireland (and internationally) was in its infancy in the late 1960s by comparison to current service demands. Television ownership was far from universal, while more than 50% of the Irish households that had a television could only receive RTÉ. At that time the most demanding (and technologically advanced) television households required the measurement of viewing levels to a maximum of four channels. Notwithstanding the relative simplicity of the television marketplace the basic requirement of the TAM service at that time was similar to needs of the current service, namely, to estimate the levels of viewing per programme and per channel down to the level of quarter hour. Reflecting a much less competitive media marketplace, the TAM panel provided by Irish TAM Ltd comprised 200 reporting television homes where 830 individuals aged 4+ lived.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Irish TAM Ltd Monthly TAM Ratings Report for the Republic of Ireland, 4 weeks ending 25 January 1970. Archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Department, Box No. 194.

**Table 2: RTÉ Television Panel survey statements**

<i>Statement on Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Disagreement</i>
(d) The reporters are doing a very good job	82%	5%
(a) On the whole the coverage has been excellent	74%	19%
(e) I would like to hear both sides given more often	62%	33%
(b) sometimes you feel you're hearing too much about NI	58%	38%
(h) Interviews are often poor	47%	45%
(f) Very good background information always given	44%	45%
(c) It is biased	38%	49%
(g) It can be confusing	37%	54%
(i) Would like more	29%	60%

Stories with film footage relating to the Northern Ireland situation featured very strongly on RTÉ's television news programmes during August 1969 and September 1969. The Irish TAM Weekly Reports held in the archive of RTÉ's Audience Research Unit indicate that viewing levels to RTÉ's news programmes at 9.30p.m. were significantly and consistently higher than for the 6.15p.m. programme.<sup>3</sup> For example, in August 1969, on average 69% of television households watched the later transmission while 46% of television households watched the earlier broadcast. In September 1969, the equivalent figures were 75% and 50% of television households respectively. Significantly, the average household rating for the 9.30p.m. news programme from 1–13 August 1969 was 64%; that average increased to 72% across the remaining days of August after the deployment of the British Army in Northern Ireland on 14 August 1969. The story dominated RTÉ television news bulletins, accounting for three or more of the top four news stories with film footage on nine days between 15 August and the end of that month. In September 1969, the household rating for the 9.30p.m. news bulletin averaged almost 75% for the month and equalled or exceeded 75% on 20 days in that month, a month that saw RTÉ television news bulletins lead with the Northern Ireland story on no fewer than 25 days.

At the request of the RTÉ News Division in the late autumn of 1969, survey questionnaires on the timings and content of both radio and television news were sent to members of RTÉ's voluntary Radio and Television Panels.<sup>4</sup> 232 of the radio questionnaires were returned by members of that Panel while 255 of the television questionnaires came back. Both returns represented a response of approximately

<sup>3</sup> Viewing data for 1969 is contained in Irish TAM Weekly Reports, Archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Unit, Box No. 139. The Irish TAM Weekly Reports defined a Household TAM Rating as 'the percentage of homes with a set tuned to a specific transmission for a particular quarter-hour or the greater part of it. A TAM Rating for a period longer than a quarter-hour is the average of the quarter-hours comprising the period or approximating closest to it.' A Programme TAM Rating was defined as 'the average of the quarter-hours most nearly approximating to the span of the programme.'

<sup>4</sup> 'Report on Reactions to RTÉ News, Radio and Television with special reference to Northern Ireland news coverage', 10 February 1970 (RTÉ Audience Research Service Report No: News/2/70). Archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Unit, Box Number 109.

50%. Both sets of panellists were invited to offer their opinions on a range of statements using a 5-point agree/disagree scale. The survey findings from the panel of television viewers are shown in Table 2. The statements are listed in rank order of decreasing agreement with the prefix letters (a) to (i) indicating their order on the printed questionnaire. Interestingly, the rank order was very similar to results from the panel of radio listeners but the more critical statements (e), (b), (h), (c) and (g) received slightly greater agreement and there was a rather more emphatic disagreement with statement (i) – ‘would like more’.

On the charge that RTÉ’s television news coverage of Northern Ireland was biased, this statement was agreed to by more than one third of the panellists of television viewers while the corresponding proportion among the panellists of radio listeners for RTÉ’s radio coverage was only a quarter. However, there was no consensus among the viewers as to the meaning of bias. Their comments suggested that some of them thought ‘ordinary Protestant views’ were under-represented with ‘too much of Ian Paisley’ and ‘never a chance given to the Northern Ireland Government’. Others qualified the charge by saying that bias was ‘slight’ or only occurred ‘sometimes’. Of the 38% agreeing there was bias, as many as 32% indicated they agreed strongly. However, separately individual remarks from those disagreeing that there was bias on RTÉ television news coverage of Northern Ireland included that it ‘couldn’t but be biased in favour of United Ireland’ and ‘can’t be impartial about injustice’. Interestingly, three years later, another survey conducted with the voluntary panellists found that two-thirds of respondents believed RTÉ’s coverage of Northern Ireland to be balanced and of those who felt RTÉ’s coverage was biased, the overwhelming majority believed this bias to be of an anti-Unionist hue (Horgan, 2004: 110). Finally, the statement ‘would like more’ aroused most disagreement. Nearly two-thirds disagreed with this statement, many of them strongly. Comments ran on the lines of ‘emphatically no’; ‘enough as it is’; ‘has reached saturation point’. A few qualified their disagreement, saying ‘not unless any major development’. Only one or two of those who wanted more news on the affairs of Northern Ireland particularised. They sought ‘more interviews with ordinary people’ and ‘different interviewers’. Overall, the 1969 survey results suggest that the Irish audience was not monolithic when it came to interpreting the television news coming from Northern Ireland. Of course, other news sources were bringing extensive coverage and commentary on events north of the border to Irish audiences too (for example, see Burke, 2010).

August 1971 witnessed the broadcast of the greatest number of news items with film footage relating to Northern Ireland in a single month. The average homes rating for the main evening news programme was 67.3%. This comparatively low figure may have been due to seasonal factors, as typically television-viewing levels decrease during the summer months. The key event of that month was the introduction of internment on 9 August and viewing levels were 72% that evening.<sup>5</sup> 70% of households were tuned in the following evening with 74% on households tuning in on 12 August when the top news item related to a statement from the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, in which he called for an end to the Stormont administration (Transmitted News Logs, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Viewing data for 1971–1972 is contained in Irish TAM Weekly Reports, Archive of the RTÉ Audience Research Unit, Box No. 140.

**Table 3: RTÉ Main Evening News, Sunday 30 January–  
Saturday 5 February 1972**

	<i>Tx Order</i>	<i>Items Shotlisted</i>	<i>Homes Rating</i>
30 Jan	A	Derry: 13 shot dead after internment protest	77
	B	Tipp CC: Row over proposed closure of Loreto School	
	C	Cork: Jacob's Radio & TV Awards	
	D	Dublin: 25th anniversary of death of Jim Larkin	
	E	Ireland: Heavy Snow	
	F	Derry: 13 shot dead by British troops	
31 Jan	A	Dublin: Crowd tries to burn British Embassy	86
	B	Derry: people mourn the killing of 13 men in Derry	
	C	Dublin: Jack Lynch comments on Derry tragedy	
	D	Ireland: Protests over Derry killings	
	E	Derry : 7 priests who witnessed Derry killings	
	F	Belfast: fires following explosions	
	G	Ireland: Snow	
	H	Ireland: army recruiting campaign	
	I	Dublin: Leinster House demo against Derry killings	
	J	Derry: Sean Duignan report on situation	
1 Feb	A	Northern Ireland: Faulkner says unity out	78
	B	Ireland: B&A flights cancelled	
	C	Northern Ireland: i/v wounded in Derry	
	D	Ireland: Derry massacre protests	
	E	Ireland: gun battle on border	
2 Feb	A	Dublin: British Embassy burning	75
	B	Northern Ireland: Funerals of Derry victims	
	C	Belfast: city quiet	
	D	Dublin: British Embassy fire	
	E	Ireland: Flooding - Dublin, Wexford & Waterford	
	F	NI Alliance Party's Bob Cooper on Westminster policies	
	G	Ireland: demonstrations re Bloody Sunday	
	H	Ireland: Day of Mourning	
	I	Ireland: Trade Union march over Bloody Sunday	
3 Feb	A	Dublin: UCD Says Entry Requirements not difficult	80
	B	Northern Ireland: Newry Civil Right March to go ahead	
	C	Dublin: Aftermath of British Embassy burning	
	D	Northern Ireland: SDLP reject Widgery enquiry	
	E	Dublin: British Ambassador visits Taoiseach	
	F	Derry: Explosions in two premises	
	G	Dublin: UCD Says Entry Requirements not difficult	

4 Feb	A	Newry: British troops massive security operation	77
	B	Dublin: Kevin McCorry on forthcoming Newry march	
	C	Northern Ireland; Ivan Cooper wants Irish troops in Newry	
	D	Cork: British Rail office damaged by explosion	
	E	Belfast: Fog causes M1 accidents	
	F	Dublin: Jack Lynch appeals for peaceful march	
	G	Coleraine: Rev T O'Keeffe talks about Newry	
	H	Dublin: Dept of Microbiology opened at UCD	
5 Feb	A	Monaghan: 40 hour fast over Derry	76
	B	Derry: Mine Explosion	
	C	Northern Ireland: Checkpoints at Newry	
	D	Northern Ireland: Checkpoints at Newry	
	E	Sligo: Students on protest fast	
	F	Northern ireland: Newry before march	
	G	Donegal: Ship partly submerged	
	H	Wexford: New Lifeboat	
	I	Northern Ireland: Report on Newry situation	

In this anniversary year, it is important to review the impact on Irish television audiences of the Bloody Sunday killings on 30 January 1972. The household rating for RTÉ's 9.30p.m. news programme on 31 January 1972 reached 86% as the full scale of the death toll became known. The rating for the ministerial broadcast that evening was 79% while a ministerial broadcast the following day had a rating of 70%. Across the month of February 1972, the lead item with film footage on 22 of the 29 days related to the Northern Ireland issue while the household rating levels for the 9.30p.m. news programme equalled or exceeded 75% on 21 of the 29 days and average 76% across the month. The coverage of events relating to the Northern Ireland issue dominated news broadcasts in the week immediately following the Bloody Sunday killings, with high audience viewing levels throughout, as shown below in Table 3 (Transmitted News Logs, 1972). The highest rating achieved for a news programme that month was on Sunday 13 February, when 88% of homes were tuned in. On that evening the news stories with film footage included items on a demonstration in Enniskillen and a Sinn Féin rally in Dublin. Given the events of the previous fortnight these items are somewhat less visceral and therefore the large audience for this programme is perhaps surprising. However, the explanation lies in the fact that it inherited an 87% rating from the preceding programme, the Eighth National Song Contest. In March 1972, the household rating levels for the 9.30p.m. news programme equalled or exceeded 75% on nine of the 31 days that month but the overall average fell back to 72% across the month.

### Conclusion

The role of RTÉ and the scope of its news and current affairs activity expanded significantly prior to the outbreak of the troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969. Already

strained by issues unconnected to Northern Ireland, relations between RTÉ and the Fianna Fáil government were aggravated further as the political situation deteriorated north of the border. RTÉ News opened an office in Belfast and deployed additional journalists in response to the civil unrest there. Evening television news bulletins reported on all the key events as they happened in the early years of the Troubles. Periods of intense disturbance on the streets, the displacement of communities, increasing political entrenchment, paramilitary activity and the resulting security responses were covered in depth with film footage conveying the raw experiences of all the people of Northern Ireland. Viewing levels among television audiences in the Republic of Ireland were high. Predictably, periods of relative calm were reflected in the smaller number of stories coming southwards.

The research findings highlight the fact that there was a gradual, but steady decline in the very high levels of coverage of the affairs of Northern Ireland from mid-1972, although the level of priority afforded to the story remained fairly constant. RTÉ news crews routinely sought comment from a broad cross-section of elected representatives and other individuals. Contributions from individuals in the non-elected grouping were widely drawn and to this extent the multiplicity of voices included suggests that reporting was not sectional. Separately, audience reaction reminded RTÉ news editors of the demand for greater diversity in their range of sources. A key finding from this research is that while diverging comments from and balance between elected representatives was evident (being inextricably linked to their political allegiance) comment from almost all of the non-elected individuals was invariably opposed to the maintenance of the political status quo. In fact, audience remarks suggest that this characteristic of RTÉ news reporting had been noted. However it is important to re-iterate that the inclusion of direct comments from IRA leaders was very limited on RTÉ television news bulletins. Indeed, even on RTÉ current affairs programming the inclusion of comment from this quarter was exceptional. Separately, the findings from this research directly challenge subsequent analyses that questioned the relationship between broadcasters, broadcasting and violence, as it is clear that the majority of this type of film footage broadcast by RTÉ showed the aftermath of violence rather than scenes of actual violence. Given the political climate of the time, it is possible that some people regarded film footage showing demonstrations, protest meeting and rallies to be of a violent character where the mood was confrontational. Also, vehemently held views articulated forcefully by elected representatives and non-elected individuals might have been similarly regarded by some. However, as the core characteristics of film footage accompanying each news story determined the classifications, neither type of report was categorised in this manner within this review.

The Irish government was managing its domestic and international response to a political crisis that threatened to spill southwards. Protecting against instability within its own jurisdiction was a fundamental political objective. This imperative framed public policy decisions and was the underlying context for Irish broadcasting policy in the early years of the Troubles. Given that the Provisional IRA was intent on overthrowing by violent means the political order on both sides of the (relatively porous) border, the Irish government was determined to thwart this ambition completely. It was therefore a far broader and fundamentally different canvas where RTÉ's journalistic principles and the impact of certain editorial judgements played

out. Any exposure given to Sinn Féin and the IRA on the airwaves was therefore likely to heighten levels of anxiety within government circles.

As the conflict in Northern Ireland intensified, news editors and RTÉ management grappled with several competing challenges. Against such an unprecedented set of circumstances, RTÉ television news clearly covered all aspects of the Northern Ireland conflict in an adequate manner. In many instances reporters, cameramen and sound-recording support staff risked their personal safety to bring news of the latest developments to the Irish viewing public. Audience reactions to RTÉ coverage of the affairs of Northern Ireland highlighted the complexities of establishing editorial balance. Those believing that bias existed offered a variety of perspectives, including the view that sympathy for the Northern nationalist was inevitable given their ultimate political aspiration for Irish unity. Notwithstanding substantial criticism from the Fianna Fáil government, the RTÉ Authority clearly took seriously the responsibilities entrusted on it. It had been determined to retain organisational autonomy as well as journalistic freedom. That the Irish government refused to clarify the meanings of its own directive despite repeated requests to do so from an Authority that it had originally appointed to office is difficult to understand in isolation. However, governmental authority and democratic principles in the Republic of Ireland had been under severe strain on many occasions since 1969 and the Authority's dismissal in November 1972 must be seen in this wider context. The initial years of the Troubles were a truly terrible period for all the people of Northern Ireland given the scale of violence there. By this measure, the Southern state got off lightly, yet it was an extraordinary period for the Republic of Ireland too.

## AUTHOR

Dr Gareth Ivory has been Audience Research Manager at RTÉ since 2002. Previous publications include (2012) *'TV: from luxury item to an essential'*, <http://www.rte.ie/tv50/essays/garethivory.html>; 'The meanings of republicanism in contemporary Ireland', in Iseult Honohan (2008) ed., *The Future of Republicanism in Ireland: Confronting Theory and Practice* and (1999) 'Revisions in nationalist discourse among Irish political parties', *Irish Political Studies*.

## References

- Bowman, J. (2011) *Window and Mirror: RTÉ Television 1961-2011*, Cork: The Collins Press.
- Burke, R. (2010) 'The *Irish Press* coverage of the Troubles in the North from 1968-95', *Irish Communications Review*, 12: 21-36.
- Corcoran, M.P. and O'Brien, M. (eds) (2005) *Political Censorship and the Democratic State: the Irish Broadcasting Ban*, Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Craig, A. (2010) *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo Irish Relations in the Early Troubles*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- Fahy, T. (1985) 'Research in Broadcasting', in Pine, R. (ed.), *Issues in Broadcasting, 5 - Audience Research*, Dublin: Radio Telefís Éireann pp 1-12.
- Fahy, T. (1992) 'Audience Research in RTÉ', *Irish Communications Review*, 2: 1-7.
- Farrington, C. (2007) 'Reconciliation or Irredentism? The Irish Government and the Sunningdale Communiqué of 1973', *Contemporary European History*, 16: 89-107.
- Feeney, P. (1984) 'Censorship and RTÉ', *The Crane Bag*, 8(2): 61-4.

- Feeney, P. (2004) 'Government and Broadcasting: Maintaining a Balance' in Garvin, T., Manning, M. and Sinnott, R. (eds), *Government, Elections and Political Communication: A Festschrift in Honour of Brian Farrell*, Dublin: UCD Press, pp 231–51.
- Fisher, D. (1978) *Broadcasting in Ireland: Case studies of broadcasting systems*, London: Routledge.
- Fisher, D. (2005) 'Getting Tough with RTÉ' in Corcoran, M.P. and O'Brien, M. (eds), *Political Censorship and the Democratic State: The Irish Broadcasting Ban*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, pp 61–72
- Horgan, J. (2002) 'Journalists and Censorship: A Case History of the NUJ in Ireland and the Broadcasting Ban, 1971–94', *Journalism Studies*, 3(3): 377–92
- Horgan, J. (2004) *Broadcasting and Public Life: RTÉ News and Current Affairs 1926–1997*, Dublin: Four Courts Press
- Irish TAM Limited, Weekly TAM Ratings Reports.
- Irish TAM Limited, Monthly TAM Ratings Reports.
- Irish Information Partnership (1986) *Agenda – Information Service on Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish Relations*, Vol. 2, 5th Ed., London: IIP.
- Ivory, G. (1993) 'Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, Section 31 and the coverage of Northern Ireland affairs on RTÉ TV News bulletins, 1968–1974', unpublished MA thesis, Department of Politics University College Dublin.
- Kelly, J.M. (1967) 'The Constitutional Position of RTÉ', *Administration*, 15(3): 205–16.
- Kenny, C. (2005) 'Censorship, Not 'Self Censorship'', in Corcoran, M.P. and O'Brien, M. (eds), *Political Censorship and the Democratic State: The Irish Broadcasting Ban*, Dublin: Four Courts Press. pp 73–85.
- Keogh, D. (2008) *Jack Lynch: A Biography*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- O'Beachain, D. (2010) *Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the IRA, 1926–1973*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- O'Brien, C.C. (1978) *Herod: Reflections on Political Violence*, London: Hutchinson.
- O'Brien, J. (2000) *The Arms Trial*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- Ó Broin, L. (1973) 'The Dismissal of the RTÉ Authority', *European Broadcasting Union Review* 2: 24–8.
- O'Donnell, C. (2007) *Fianna Fáil, Irish Republicanism and the Northern Ireland Troubles 1968–2005*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- O'Halpin, E. (2008) "A Greek Authoritarian Phase"? The Irish Army and the Irish Crisis, 1969–70', *Irish Political Studies* 23(4): 475–90.
- O'Malley, P. (1983) *The Uncivil Wars: Ireland Today*, Belfast: Blackstaff.
- McGrattan, C. (2009) 'Dublin, the SDLP and the Sunningdale Agreement: Maximalist Nationalism and Path Dependency', *Contemporary British History*, 23(1): 61–78.
- McLoughlin, P.J. (2008) "Dublin is Just a Sunningdale Away"? The SDLP and the Failure of Northern Ireland's Sunningdale Experiment', *Twentieth Century British History*, 19(4): 74–96.
- Purcell, B. (1991) 'The Silence in Irish Broadcasting', in Bill Rolston (ed.), *The Media and Northern Ireland*, Basingstoke: Macmillan) pp 51–68.
- RTÉ Authority (1973) *A View of Irish Broadcasting*, Dublin: RTÉ.
- RTÉ Annual Report*, 1970.
- RTÉ Annual Report*, 1972.
- RTÉ Annual Report*, 1973.
- Savage, R.J. (1996) *Irish Television: The Political and Social Origins*, Cork: Cork UP.
- Savage, R.J. (2010) *A Loss of Innocence? Television and Irish society 1960–72*, Manchester: Manchester UP.
- Transmitted News Logs 1971, RTÉ Libraries & Archives, Television.
- Transmitted News Logs 1972, RTÉ Libraries & Archives, Television.