

Elizabeth Meehan ‘Best Article’ Prize

On behalf of the editorial board, the editors of *Government and Opposition* are pleased to announce the winners of the annual ‘best article’ prize, named in memory of long-time editorial board member Elizabeth Meehan (1947–2018). This prize is offered to the non-commissioned, peer-reviewed, original research article published during the previous calendar year that the editorial board members believe best represents the scholarly excellence of the journal and the tradition of commitment to public discourse on important topics in comparative politics that *Government and Opposition* has maintained for more than fifty years.

The prize winner for Volume 53 (2018) is Professor Allison McCulloch of Brandon University, Canada, for her article entitled: ‘The Use and Abuse of Veto Rights in Power-Sharing Systems: Northern Ireland’s Petition of Concern in Comparative Perspective’.

This article assesses the articulation of vital ethno-national interests and the use and abuse of veto rights in deeply divided societies. In consociational theory, veto rights represent the primary means by which ethnic groups defend their ‘vital interests’, though they are often criticized for rewarding extremism and producing institutional instability. Situating a case study of Northern Ireland in a comparative perspective, I consider two lines of veto practice: liberal vs corporate (i.e. who has veto rights?) and permissive vs restrictive (i.e. to what issue areas do vetoes apply?), to assess what political incentives, if any, they offer for moderation and stability. Drawing from a review of the legislative debates when a veto was enacted and on semi-structured interviews with members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, I argue that a permissive approach, in which groups can determine their own vital interests, can contribute to moderation, peace and stability in divided societies.

Allison McCulloch, ‘The Use and Abuse of Veto Rights in Power-Sharing Systems: Northern Ireland’s Petition of Concern in Comparative Perspective,’ *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics*, 53:4 (October 2018) pp. 735–756. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2017.6>.

We are particularly pleased to celebrate Professor McCulloch’s case study on Northern Ireland, both because it was a particular area of interest for Professor Meehan and because it demonstrates our continuing commitment to publish single-country case studies that make a wider contribution to the study of comparative politics.

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