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Sommario/riassunto	Political scientists have often assumed that communities severely divided by cleavages such as religion and ethnicity will also be unstable. The civil strife experienced by Northern Ireland seems to confirm this assumption. Yet other communities, no less divided than Northern Ireland, have maintained political stability in spite of serious tensions created by religious and ethnic differences. The Canadian province of New Brunswick is an example of such a community. In Search of Political Stability offers a detailed comparison of society and politics in New Brunswick and Northern Ireland. It reveals the fragmented nature of the two communities by comparing the distinctive cultures and separate social institutions of the major blocs, whether English or French, Protestant or Catholic. It documents the

contrasting experiences of stability and instability by assessing the durability of each community's political institutions, the legitimacy and efficacy of their governments, and the prevalence or absence of civil strife. The search for the causes of stability and instability focuses on the nature of the social conflicts and the behaviour of the political elites. In New Brunswick major conflicts have cut across the division between the English and French blocs. In Northern Ireland conflicts have tended to reinforce the division between the Protestant and Catholic blocs. The effects of these differing patterns are consistent with the theory of crosscutting cleavages. An examination of the elite political cultures, including such specific elements as campaign strategies, cabinet formation, and civil service composition, shows a pattern of elite cooperation in New Brunswick and elite confrontation in Northern Ireland. These results are broadly consistent with Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy, although significant revisions are made to this theory.
