



**The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College**  
*The Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences*

# INSIGHTS FROM PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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*Task Force Report*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thomas Hobbes once wrote that “the condition of man...is a condition of war.”<sup>1</sup>

Violence—as a vehicle for achieving greater political goals—is a natural phenomenon. But what policies can reverse the inclination for violence and foster peace instead?

The following memorandum extrapolates lessons from Northern Ireland's “Troubles”— a sectarian war between Irish Catholics and British Protestants—to present policy recommendations on how to end conflict, construct peace accords, and build societal reconciliation.

The six-county British province of Northern Ireland is innocuously described by locals as a “wee little place.” Yet in 1969, brutal violence erupted. Catholics eager to re-unite with the Republic of Ireland fought Protestants determined to retain formal connections with the United Kingdom. The British Army failed to immediately quell the violence between nationalists (Catholics who believed in a united Ireland) and unionists (Protestants who supported the United Kingdom). After three decades, 3,665 deaths, and hundreds of dirty bombs, a 1998 peace deal gave Catholics full civil rights but further cemented Northern Ireland as a dominion of the United Kingdom.

Ironically, both the United Kingdom and Ireland would like to ignore Northern Ireland. While peace exists, the politics remain identity-based, century-old history still dictates where people live and whom they marry, and the public-sector economy drains British financial resources. Yet it is exactly because of these conditions – features which manifest in so many other global conflicts – that Northern Ireland demands the attention of all those interested in armed conflict.

## Methods

Over the past three months, we have taken a holistic approach to understanding armed conflict. Relevant academic literature, interviews with political

The United Kingdom, Ireland, and Northern Ireland



Source: Google Images: Map of Ireland, Retrieved Jan. 6, 2015. <<http://www.proudlyeurope.com/Britain/Best-of-Britain.aspx>>

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*. Chapter XIV < <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-c.html>>

leaders, and insights from locals in London, Dublin, and Belfast all made their way into our final recommendations. From cab drivers' colorful stories to power-sharing governance structures, the following white paper simultaneously captures the unique oddities of the Northern Ireland and extrapolates lessons for ending conflict around the globe.

The white paper divides lessons learned into four policy buckets: "*History*" describes how grievances manifest into deadly conflict, "*Getting to the Table*" explains what incentivizes paramilitaries to stop fighting and start negotiating, "*Getting to Peace*" examines how to negotiate and then structure a peace deal, and "*Getting to Reconciliation*" discusses how post-conflict societies deal with sensitive issues—ranging from the application of justice to addressing divisive symbols and flags.



What follows is an overview of those recommendations and lessons.

## **1. History: A Century-Old Conflict**

Northern Ireland has two versions of history: the Catholic/nationalist narrative and the Protestant/unionist narrative. Differing in their interpretations but similar in their emotional impact, the two narratives demonstrate how historic events foster grievances, which, if left unchecked, create conditions ripe for violence

Meeting with Bertie Ahern, Ireland's former Taoiseach (Prime Minister)

Northern Ireland's history is therefore best separated into three different chronological and grievance-based eras.

- i. **Territorial Grievances (1169-1858):** England first exerted influence over Ireland in 1169 when Norman clan rulers appealed to Britain for military support in conquering parts of the island. In 1171, monarch Henry II invoked the 1156 Papal Edict—which gave ownership of the clan-based Ireland to England—to officially enshrine Ireland as a colony of England. Yet when England separated from the Catholic Church in 1534, it began to fear that other Catholic countries might use Ireland as a launch-point for an invasion. As Gaelic Irish and Norman-Irish populations came together in defense of their Catholicism, the English Protestants instituted a series of penal codes which prevented Catholic political, economic, and social mobility. In 1688, Protestant William of Orange defeated Catholic King James II, further cementing the position of the Orange Order, or upper-echelon Protestant elite.
- ii. **Political Grievances (1858-1921):** The loss of land, through the British penal codes, and the loss of people, due to the 1845 Great Potato Famine, generated an eagerness among Irish people to reclaim the island and re-emphasize traditional Gaelic culture. In 1858, the Fenian Movement, led by Irish hero Charles Stewart Parnell, campaigned on the platform of instituting home rule in Ireland. In the early 1900's, Britain finally agreed to transfer legislative powers from London back to Dublin, but declared that Home Rule would not be implemented until the end of WWI. Yet in 1916—only two years into WWI—school teacher Patrick Pearse and approximately 1,500 Irish nationalists occupied symbol locations in Dublin and declared the establishment of a Free Irish Republic. When the British Army brutally executed those responsible for the insurrection, the nationalist movement received wide-spread sympathy and support. Tensions finally boiled over into the 1919-1921 Anglo-Irish War. After the 1921 ceasefire, the British only granted the Irish people half of what they wanted - England partitioned the island of Ireland. In the south, 26 counties became the Irish Free State, an official dominion of the United Kingdom with the freedom to pass its own legislation. In the north—home to many Protestants and the major economic ports of the 20th century—six counties remained under the direct rule of Britain. The split between Ireland and Northern Ireland had been created.
- iii. **Social Grievances (1921-1969):** As the Irish Free State grew into a well-functioning society (it officially became an independent republic in 1949), Northern Ireland remained plagued by old sectarian divisions. Protestants—who were a minority across the entire island but constituted 66 percent of Northern Ireland residents—feared losing even more of their land and its associated privileges. Catholics—who comprised a majority across the entire island but a minority within the six-counties of Northern Ireland—found it increasingly difficult to purchase a house, vote in elections, and find jobs. By the 1960's, a civil rights movement had emerged which demanded fair and equal representation across politics, the workplace, and housing.
- iv. **The Troubles (1969-1998):** In 1969, the peaceful civil rights marches routinely ended in deadly riots between Catholic and Protestant gangs. On August 14th, the British Army deployed troops to quell the domestic violence. Unfortunately, tactical and strategic missteps— including the obvious targeting of all Catholics, internment-without-trial of

innocent people, and civilian casualties—led Catholics to view the supposedly-neutral British army as another arm of Protestant oppression. Into this vacuum emerged the Provisional Irish Republican Army, a guerrilla organization which traced its roots back to the 1920's and fought for a united island of Ireland. Catholics viewed the IRA as the only organization fighting for their political and social rights. Tit-for-tat violence, mainly between the IRA and the British Army, occurred on a daily basis. The 1970s was the deadliest era of the conflict, with nearly 500 deaths occurring in 1972 alone. Among the nationalist and

Catholic populations, violence remained the only legitimate vehicle for expressing their grievances until the 1981 Hunger Strikes. Bobby Sands and 22 other prisoners starved themselves in protest over the fact that they were forced to wear the uniforms of criminals, instead of political prisoners. While 10 hunger strikers, including Sands, eventually died, the movement received international attention, and in 1981 still-alive Bobby Sands and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams were elected to parliament. Suddenly, the IRA and Sinn Féin (the political arm of the IRA), began to invest resources into political success. The next 18 years saw various paramilitaries waver between a commitment to peace and a resumption of violence. Finally, in the mid-1990s, America sent U.S. special envoy George Mitchell to Northern Ireland. Between 1995 and 1998, Mitchell chaired official talks that resulted in the 1998 Good Friday



Agreement. After 29 years of fighting, Northern Ireland signed a peace deal.

## 2. Getting to the Table: How to Change Incentives

Thirty years later, hunger-striker Bobby Sands' image still adorns a wall in West Belfast. Both unionists and nationalists dedicate building-high murals to their respective martyrs.

In Northern Ireland, citizens with legitimate grievances and a lack of faith in their government turned to violence as a means for achieving political goals.

Unless peace negotiations can promise more beneficial – and realistic – political outcomes for those doing the fighting, violence will remain the status quo in armed

conflicts around the world.

Northern Ireland demonstrates three ways to incentivize peace over conflict.

### *i. Defeat paramilitaries' military capabilities and undercut their social legitimacy*

States defeat paramilitaries two ways—militarily and psychologically. States must force guerrillas into a tactical stalemate while maintaining legitimacy with the populations they purport to protect. If guerrillas recognize they cannot win an armed conflict and do not have support from local populations, war becomes too costly to continue.

States achieve a military victory or stalemate with campaigns that feature a clean chain of command and a constant military presence. Strategies must be established within the ‘honeymoon’ period, or the first 100 days of conflict when local populations still trust the state.

States, by definition, have a legitimate monopoly on the use of violence prior to the outbreak of armed conflict. As a result, governments need only to avoid the indiscriminate use of force to maintain their moral authority over terrorists. In Northern Ireland, the British Army’s anti-Catholic strategies and haphazard use of force set the Army back a self-admitted 25 years.

Militaries must also recognize their limitations. Due to the nature of warfare itself, soldiers will find reconciliation and long-term healing hard to accomplish while deployed.

### *ii. Make politics inclusive*

Defeated or discouraged paramilitaries must receive immediate benefits from participating in politics, lest they slip back into violence. In Northern Ireland, peace occurred once Sinn Féin – the political arm of the IRA – decided to take their seats in Northern Ireland’s and Ireland’s assembly. Once ex-fighters become involved in politics, they must be retained– inclusive politics features increasing marginal returns. The newly minted politicians interact with former enemies and begin to devote their time to taxes, health care, and job creation. Importantly, violence does not feature in any politicians’ political platform.

### *iii. Look to the outside: Diasporas and the international community*

Diasporas—especially in the case of Northern Ireland—tend to take hardline approaches and extremist positions. After all, it is easy to support violence when you live 2,000 miles away and don’t face the repercussions of your actions. To end conflict, in-county and out-of-country politicians must work to limit the flow of financial support to terrorist groups. In the 1970’s, Americans funneled money to the IRA through Irish organizations located on the East Coast.

Other countries cannot solve an international conflict, but they can propel certain aspects of the peace process. America—willing to take a neutral stance because it no longer needed British support in the post-Cold War world—leveraged their status as a superpower to support the Northern Ireland peace process. President Bill Clinton visited Belfast in 1995 and spoke with leaders, via phone, throughout the negotiations. Many believe that Clinton helped convince former paramilitaries of the importance of peace.

## **3. Getting to Peace: How to Structure Negotiations and Treaties**

Between 1995 and 1998, U.S. Special Envoy George Mitchell chaired all-inclusive negotiations that culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. The negotiations were broken into three separate strands of discussion: Northern Ireland’s internal political structure, Northern Ireland’s connection with the Republic of Ireland, and Ireland’s relationship with the United Kingdom.



The final document granted Northern Ireland the autonomy to decide to which country it belonged, established a power-sharing government structure that regulated all major issues (with the exception of defense, policing, and taxes), and made Ireland renounce their territorial claim over Northern Ireland. The document cited the need to deal with decommissioning and to revise the Protestant-dominated police force. However, it did not explicitly provide answers to these issues in 1998.

Six transferable lessons emerged from the negotiations.

*i. Clear end-dates, when combined with mid-negotiation flexibility, is key*

Strict deadlines and infrequent breaks keep discussions on track and oriented in the right direction. Combined with inclusive negotiations—a key lesson from Northern Ireland is that you should always talk to terrorists because they are the ones which must buy into the peace deal—and few preconditions—preconditions prematurely create winners and losers, making any negotiation a zero-sum game—negotiators can create a good structure for peace talks.

As negotiations progress, media leaks and walkouts inevitably occur. However, this is not always a worst-case scenario—both tactics allow participants to blow off steam and reassure their base. In private, backchannels provide participants with the political cover necessary to make unpopular concessions.

If the primary goal of negotiations is to create peace, some contentious issues are better left for future commissions. In Northern Ireland, George Mitchell tabled the issues of decommissioning and reforming the Protestant-dominated police force when it became clear that agreement on these topics could not be reached before the 1998 Easter deadline. Mitchell also included ambiguous language in some parts of the final document, thereby allowing each side to claim victory when selling the document to their people in the nation-wide referendum. The vote, in which over 80 percent of citizens voted, gave the document a sense of natural legitimacy.

*ii. Individuals matter*

The role of specific leaders should not be underemphasized. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, SDLP leader John Hume and UUP head David Trimble demonstrated an incredible commitment to peace.<sup>2</sup> The latter two won the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize.



A unionist mural on Shankill Road. In conversation, a local argued that the mural does not glorify violence because the combatants are smiling.

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<sup>2</sup> SDLP stands for the Social Democratic Labor Party and UUP stands for Ulster Unionist Party. They represented the more moderate wings of the nationalist and unionist movements, respectively.

We do not recommend that other countries mired in conflict, such as Israel and Palestine, wait for their own version of Nelson Mandela before starting peace negotiations. Yet politicians who are deeply driven, understand the other side's perspective, and can build trust through informal channels will catalyze the peace process.

### ***iii. Minimizing spoilers and last-chance violence***

As negotiations enter the final stage, extremists who feel left out will ramp up violence in a last-ditch effort to prove their worth. Yet conflict must not derail the peace process. Leaders should work to support the moderates currently engaged in the negotiations and create conditions under which extremists can enter negotiations upon renouncing future violence. In balancing harsh justice versus political expediency when punishing extremists, leaders should emphasize the latter if they want to reach peace.

### ***iv. Remember to address economic inequality***

While there is not a casual relationship between violence and economics, attacks during the Troubles strongly correlated with increased economic discrimination against Catholics. Disenfranchise and disheartened, unemployed Catholics resorted to violence. Post-conflict societies can lean on public sector employment to remedy economic discrimination and should install review boards which prevent unfair hiring processes.

### ***v. Balancing Act I: Fair government vs. effective government***

Northern Ireland's consociation, or power-sharing, government protects minorities, ensures that nationalists and unionists have equal representation, and gives each side a veto on important legislation. The government uses the d'Hondt apportionment system to ensure that the Assembly is representative of the society which it governs.

Yet the government enshrines sectarian divides by asking each party to register as nationalist or unionist. Politicians are therefore judged on this singular issue, rather than their views on taxes, education, or health care. Very few swing voters and 'moderate' candidates exist in Northern Ireland.

Power-sharing is an effective post-conflict governing structure. However, it has its limits and should be phased out once society accomplishes reconciliation.

### ***vi. Balancing Act II: Peace vs. justice***

Leaders must often compromise on justice in order to accomplish peace. So-called 'transitional justice'—which in Northern Ireland called for the release of prisoners, capped sentences for crimes committed at a maximum of two years, and granted amnesty to top leaders—allows society to move on from the conflict. While transitional justice creates closure for most families, there will always be citizens who want murderers to receive life sentences. Yet in reality, paramilitaries' loyalty to their imprisoned members and the overall cause means that transitional justice is a necessary compromise to reach peace.

#### **4. Getting to Reconciliation: Unwinding false narratives and tensions**

If peace is hard, reconciliation is even harder.

Psychology has shown that individuals, upon perceiving themselves as part of a group, allow that group identity to strongly influence their behavior. The greater one's identification with the group becomes, the more one favors in-group members and discriminates against out-group members. Today, only 9 percent of Northern Irish citizens identify with more than one nationality, 93 percent of students attend segregated schools, and 48 barbed-wire barricades—ironically called 'peace walls'—divide nationalist and unionist communities in Belfast.

Creating reconciliation is the final component of transitioning a society away from the narratives which created violence in the first place.

Four transferable lessons emerged from our time in Northern Ireland's divided society.

##### ***i. Promote cross-community contact***

Inter-community contact breaks the perpetuating cycle of group dynamics by dispelling false stereotypes and narratives. Civil society, or self-organized groups which seek to better communities, should receive long-term block grants to promote programs. In Northern Ireland, this has yet to occur because EU funding often runs out after a short period and organizations which purport to promote cross-border contact—such as the Gaelic Athletic Association or rugby clubs—still cater to the nationalist and unionist communities, respectively.

##### ***ii. Fix education and schools***

Approximately 25 percent of Northern Ireland's population is under the age of 16. Creating reconciliation in children's environments, now, will lead to near-permanent reconciliation in the future. Schools and housing are the two places to start. In Northern Ireland, only 7 percent of children attend an integrated school. Creating a national, cohesive curriculum ensures that children are not taught different, and opposing, versions of history. At the same time, the Northern Ireland government must invest in integrated public housing, 90 percent of which is still segregated.

##### ***iii. Deal with the past, but carefully***

Roughly two-thirds of Troubles deaths have yet to be solved. Given that 500,000 citizens are classified as 'victims' of the armed conflict, the government must take steps to address the past. However, they must do so at minimal emotional cost. Creating a shared oral history is a smart policy. While South Africa relied on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the unique nature of each armed conflict suggests that the commission is not a universal policy option. Rather, governments will be most successful when they create programs with large participation that foster high participation numbers, promise some form of amnesty to those who are guilty, and seek closure instead of justice.

*iv. Address the symbols that represent conflict*

In Northern Ireland, flags and parades are the avenues through which nationalist and unionist communities declare their allegiance. Flags are flown on significant holidays and 4,400 marches occur to commemorate (mostly) unionist British victories over the Irish. Both of these issues must be addressed if Northern Ireland wants to create a national, rather than sectarian, identity.

In 2013 and 2014 U.S. special envoy Richard Haas chaired talks to solve these problems. In December 2014, the parties announced they had established a commission to investigate killings during the Troubles but failed to make significant progress on the issues of flags and parades.

**Conclusion**

In 2014, 41 armed conflicts killed 112,906 people.<sup>3</sup> While each war is unique in its own way, there are underlying aspects and variables which all conflicts share. Northern Ireland's ability to achieve peace is therefore as relevant as its failure to create reconciliation. Lessons, good and bad, can be applied on a global scale.

It is true that Northern Ireland is a "wee little place." Yet the recommendations it provides for policymakers are anything but small.

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<sup>3</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies: Armed Conflict Database. <<https://acd.iiss.org>>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

At a time when current events are dominated by spectacular headlines and policy debates over violence occurring around the world, the small and relatively peaceful six counties of Northern Ireland receive little international attention. Yet beginning in 1969, 3,665 people died there in a conflict between groups with opposing ethno-national identities, traditionally divided between Catholics and Protestants. The conflict, known as the “Troubles,” ended with a peace agreement in 1998 that fundamentally transformed Northern Ireland. Today, the children of Northern Ireland grow up in a far different place than their parents did. In 2013, Belfast hosted the G8 summit and Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland’s second largest city, was named United Kingdom city of culture.<sup>4</sup> These would not seem to be the markers of a society



Located along Northern Ireland’s coast, Giant’s Causeway is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

<sup>4</sup> As often happens in Northern Ireland, naming is a tricky issue with this city. Nationalists, who make up the majority of its residents, prefer the name “Derry,” while unionists call it “Londonderry,” which is its official name.

still marred by conflict, yet while the violence has ended, the reconciliation process is far from over. Housing and schools remain about 90 percent single-community, and Belfast has 48 “peace walls” physically dividing the communities. Given the scale of the violence, lingering divisions are expected. One in five people had a family member injured or killed during the Troubles. If the deaths had happened on the same scale in the United States, the conflict would have claimed 600,000 lives.<sup>5</sup> As one civil society leader we met in Northern Ireland said, “the big blaze is over but the embers burn.”<sup>6</sup> This situation, however, has inhibited the society from realizing the full dividends of its peace process.

While the case of Northern Ireland is fairly unique—its UK membership and the Irish-American Diaspora tie it to two of the world’s largest liberal democracies—it yields valuable insights for those looking to solve other conflicts, especially those with a sectarian nature. These recommendations are based on a term of in-class study of Northern Ireland’s past and present, as well as a 16-day trip to the region during which we met with academics, politicians, members of civil society, and a number of opinionated cab drivers. Throughout, we aimed to find actionable recommendations and get past answers like “come back in 30 years” or “the whole place is a mess.” The trip started in London, where Northern Ireland is seen as more of a nuisance, continued in Dublin, where despite the country’s involvement there is a certain disdain of northern politics, and ended in Belfast, where sectarianism is still a feature of everyday life.

### **1.1. A short overview of a long conflict**

The battle lines of this conflict are multi-layered, spanning from the community to the national level. Northern Ireland consists of six of the counties in Ireland’s historical Ulster province, which had a Protestant majority due to migration of Scottish Presbyterians and English Anglicans to run the province’s plantations. These six counties were partitioned from the southern 24 in 1921, dividing Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland. Catholics in the north have historically faced discrimination at the hands of the Protestant majority, yet Protestants have also felt threatened as a minority on the island of Ireland. This has created a “double-siege” mentality, as many describe it. Yet while this divide runs along religious lines, it is sectarian rather than theological in nature. The groups also have divergent national aspirations. Unionists, who are predominantly Protestant, desire to remain within the UK. Nationalists, who are predominantly Catholic, traditionally aspire to Irish reunification. Yet neither Britain nor Ireland particularly wants Northern Ireland, often seeing it as a troublesome backwater, despite the fact that both are inextricably tied to it. Beginning around the time of Irish independence and recurring in the late 1960s, the extremes of unionism and nationalism—labeled loyalists and republicans, respectively—turned to violence to achieve their political goals and to defend their communities.

One other idiosyncratic fact of the conflict in Northern Ireland is that people on both sides have a remarkably long memory, often dating the conflict to the Norman invasion of the 1100s and the

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Meticulously neutral commentators call it “Derry/Londonderry,” (pronounced “Derry-stroke-Londonderry) which has led to the common nickname of “stroke city.”

<sup>5</sup> Smith, Jeremy. *Making the Peace in Ireland*. Harlow: Longman, 2002. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Paul Nolan, author of Peace Monitoring Reports published by the Community Relations Council, Dec. 16, 2014.

social hierarchy England imposed in the 1600s. This leads to jokes that every Englishman should remember Irish history and every Irishman should forget it. At a minimum, every outside observer should be aware of its enduring relevance.

The Troubles began in 1969, following a breakdown in the nonviolent civil rights movement that Catholics had started based on the U.S. model. After raging on for nearly three decades, the public grew exhausted with sectarian violence, violent actors showed a readiness to turn to politics, and local and international political actors were willing to engage in negotiations. After a series of failed and semi-successful measures, the Good Friday Agreement ended the armed struggle in 1998. The peace has held in the intervening years, but tensions remain prevalent on a community level and politics still runs along sectarian lines. Despite these challenges, however, the importance of Northern Ireland's successful peace process should not be underestimated. As one Queen's University professor told us, when a car pulled up behind you in the 1970s, you thought, "this is it." Today, it's an American tourist asking for directions.<sup>7</sup>

## **1.2. Roadmap: negotiations, peace and reconciliation**

Our memorandum begins with an overview of the relevant Irish and British history, designed to give those seeking to understand the conflict a sense of its trajectory as well as an awareness of the key names and dates that might come up in discussions. We have divided our recommendations into three main categories based on the peace process' main goals, labeled "getting to the table," "getting to peace," and "getting to reconciliation." Put simply, these are lessons derived from the before, during and after of the peace process. Each of these buckets contains a number of specific insights and action items for those looking to other conflicts.

Getting to the table requires a certain "perfect storm" in the conflict's conditions, yet internal and external actors with a genuine desire for peace can create incentives that catalyze the turn from violence to politics. Getting to peace requires flexibility and strong leadership during negotiations, as well as giving everyone who was part of the conflict a stake in its resolution. Last, getting to reconciliation is a goal whose importance should not be underestimated, and requires taking a long-term approach to the unfinished business of the conflict. While the recommendations contained in each of these categories are no guaranteed recipe for success, they hold important lessons for those taking a comprehensive, long-term approach to international conflict resolution.

## **1.3. Overview of recommendations**

### **Getting to the Table**

#### *Dismantle the capabilities of paramilitary groups*

- Counteract paramilitary violence with a consistent military presence
- Establish a unified strategy during the 'honeymoon'
  - Establish long-term objectives

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Peter Shirlow, Deputy Director of the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queen's University Belfast, Dec. 15, 2014.

- Have a clear chain of command
- Never waver in commitment
- Maintain legitimacy with the local population
- Avoid the indiscriminate use of force
- Focus on ending conflict, not on creating reconciliation

*Democratic politics should be as inclusive as possible*

- Use political engagement to adjust the incentives of militant groups
- Utilize participation in politics to prevent violent conflicts from emerging entirely
- Use participation in constitutional politics to change the conversation

*The international community has an important role to play*

- The international community should intervene when conditions suggest the conflict is ready for resolution
- The international community should help bring militant groups to the table and should concurrently exert available leverage to propel state actors towards negotiations
- Encourage Diasporas to play a constructive role in the peace process

## **Getting to Peace**

*Background on the peace process*

*Successful strategies require smart tactics*

- Negotiation tactics can mirror post-conflict processes
- Too many preconditions will hurt, not help, the peace process
- Inclusivity around the table is key
- Use backchannels to build relationships and trust
- Do not fear: media leaks aren't always bad
- Let it go: dramatic walkouts are not always bad
- Don't break too frequently
- Hard deadlines may not ensure success, but their absence can prevent it
- Ambiguity: A syntactic tactic that can get you to "Yes"
- "It's Your Decision": Include civilians in the peace process

*Leadership is an action not an intrinsic quality*

- Personal motivation, patience and commitment are fundamental
- Build trust through personal relationships
- Strategic communication has benefits during and after negotiations

*Manage the relationship between violence and the peace process*

- Work with the moderates to deflate the spoilers
- Balance justice with political expediency when deciding whether to expel parties
- Take calculated political risks to support moderates and marginalize spoilers
- Use a neutral third-party organization and allies to achieve decommissioning



- Reform internal security with a third-party organization, domestic talks and removal of external sources of violence

*Address economic inequality to address violence*

*Stable post-conflict political structures must be inclusive, but be aware of transitional vs. long-term needs*

- Post-conflict structures must protect minorities and be inclusive
- Power-sharing can enshrine sectarian divisions and should be transitional
- Stability should not be underrated
- Cross-border institutions foster cooperation, acceptance of bi-national identities

*Balance peace and justice*

- Prisoner release offers closure, but also controversy
- Short sentences offer symbolic justice, real relief
- Amnesty for leaders helps stability, but not reconciliation

## **Getting to Reconciliation**

*Promote cross-community contact*

- *Leverage civil society organizations to promote meaningful contact*
- *Promote integration within schools*
- *Encourage mixing of neighborhoods and housing estates*

*Develop a plan for dealing with the past*

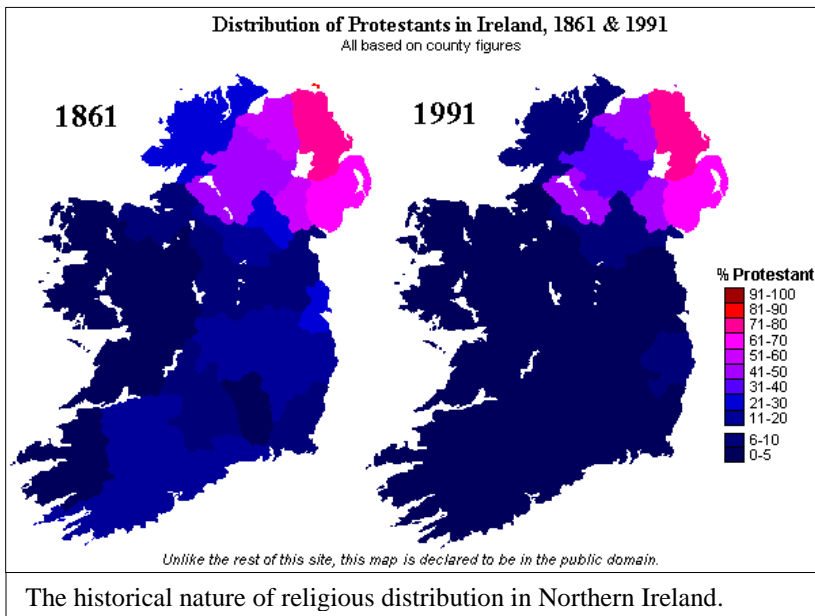
- *Provide support services for victims and survivors*
- *Establish a mechanism for openly dealing with the past*
- *Bring together representatives of both communities to agree on a shared history*

*Address divisive symbols and create shared ones for the long term*

## **2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The terms “conflict” and “Northern Ireland” have been excessively intertwined for the duration of the past millennium. The six counties of Ulster that collectively compose the state of Northern Ireland have continually served as the epicenter of the ethnic tensions that have tainted Ireland



since the first arrival of English settlers on the island towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. To a people conditioned by a seemingly ceaseless spiral of violence, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement has represented the first significant glimmer of hope. Indeed, the agreement signed on the eve of the new millennium has succeeded in securing a state of stable peace that endures to this day, and as such represents tangible progress towards the irrevocable resolution of a conflict that had previously appeared fundamentally intractable. However, in spite of the fact that peace has unquestionably been secured, it has just as clearly not been guaranteed. The distinct absence of broad-based inter-

community reconciliation continues to represent a significant threat to the stability that Northern Ireland has become accustomed to since 1998.

And yet, for a conflict in which the minimization of violence has for so long appeared to be the end goal, the complete absence of it must be heralded as a monumental success. As a result, we may attach significant value to the lessons that can be derived from the Northern Ireland peace process, and consequently apply them in aid of efforts may reconciliation in ongoing sectarian conflicts around the globe.

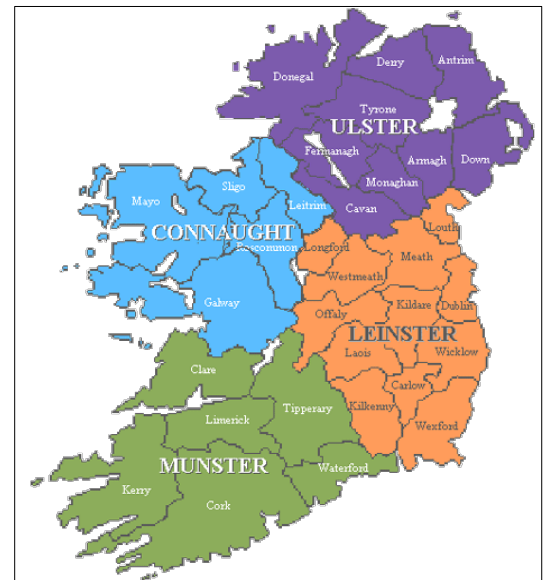
In order to truly understand the conflict as we know it today, it is firstly necessary to comprehend the manner in which ethnic tensions in Ireland originated amidst a history of British Imperialism, and, subsequently, how that dynamic became entrenched by the sheer duration of history. Although it is impossible to fully encapsulate the history of Ireland - or even the history of ethnic tensions within Ireland - in a concise manner, it is necessary to seek to understand the historical processes and the legacy of historical events against which the prospect of peace in Northern Ireland has always fought. Thus, this account is by no means intended to serve as a comprehensive account of Irish history, but rather is intended to provide the background necessary to fully comprehend the intricacies of the peace agreement.

In spite of the vast extent to which historical violence has permeated communities' relative narratives of their own pasts, ongoing attempts to secure peace in Northern Ireland must not be inhibited by the weight of history. The correct role that history should play in peace talks was succinctly articulated by one British negotiator engaged in discussions relating to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, who stated following the signing of the agreement that “we were aware of

history but we were not cowed by it.”<sup>8</sup> It is critically important that those involved in the conflict, as well as its observers, do not become so engrossed in the history that they lose sight of the present and the opportunities for reconciliation. Therefore, the importance attached to impact that the history of the island has had on the peace process should be limited to the simple role it played in establishing the conditions through which the ethnic tensions persisted and, subsequently, through which the peace process commenced.

## 2.2. The one-thousand-year-old conflict

The earliest commonly cited foundation of the sectarian fracture that continues to be apparent within the fabric of Irish society is the Norman occupation of Ireland in 1169. This time period holds significance for several reasons. It began when Dermot MacMurrough, the ruler of the kingdom of Leinster in southeastern Ireland, suffered a heavy military defeat at the hands of the High King of Ireland, and thus was dispossessed of his kingdom. In a dedicated effort to reclaim his kingdom, MacMurrough traveled to Wales to recruit military aid, and consequently secured the support of the Earl of Pembroke, known as Strongbow, in exchange for the future ownership of the line of succession to the Leinster monarchy. With the aide of Strongbow’s forces, MacMurrough re-conquered his kingdom and expanded further into an Irish countryside then governed by a divided clan system. Fearing the growth of a rival kingdom in Ireland, English monarch Henry II (1154-1189) arrived on the island in 1171 to ensure that he would receive payments from his vassals, including Strongbow, and in the hope of securing the allegiance of several Irish political and religious leaders. In the process, Henry II became the first English monarch to enforce the 1156 Papal Edict that had designated ownership of Ireland to the English monarchy. Opposing sides engaged in the current conflict in Northern Ireland continue to derive the legitimacy of their struggle from differing assessments of the importance of Henry II’s actions. Nationalists point to this episode as the earliest illustration of British imperialism in Ireland, while, in the contrast, unionists argue that it merely represents the rightful enforcement of a papal edict in unison with the just reclamation of the Kingdom of Leinster by its original ruler.



The four historical provinces of Ireland.

Over the course of the following several centuries, Norman settlements in Ireland faced habitual raids from local dissidents, but in large part proved capable of resisting their attacks. The Normans, meanwhile, attempted to subdue the Irish population through a process of cultural Anglicization and Romanization. Henry VIII (1509-1547) augmented the expansion of English control over Ireland by convincing Irish clan leaders to surrender their territory to the monarchy in exchange for territorial titles that accompanied the willingness to serve as his vassals, a strategy that proved effective in expanding the use of English common law as well as in accelerating the spread of the Anglican faith.

<sup>8</sup> David McKittrick and David McVea. *Making Sense of the Troubles*, New Amsterdam Books, 2002, 161

Furthermore, the 1534 Act of Supremacy declared Henry VIII as the head of the newly independent Church of England. The break from the Catholic Church had a substantial role in shaping the future Anglo-Irish relations. Initially, the shift of religious authority from the Papacy to the monarchy had only a subdued effect. However, the concerted effort to evolve the liturgical and theological practices of the Anglican Church subsequently implemented during the reigns of Edward VI (1547-1553) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) would have a much deeper effect on fostering sectarian divisions. This shift in religious practice, rather than the initial transfer of formal authority, created a significant amount of discontent among the existing Gaelic Irish and Norman-Irish populations, who were reluctant to abandon the religious customs at the heart of their communities. This sense of discontent had a critically important role in causing the formation of a singular Irish identity centered upon a common allegiance to Catholicism. Furthermore, in creating a distinct religious rift between Irish Catholics and Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the evolution of Anglican liturgical practices would have a fundamentally disruptive effect on the cultural assimilation process and would serve to further cement the ethnic distinctions that would persist as the basis for conflict in the coming centuries.

### **2.3. The origins of sectarian conflict**

In the aftermath of the foundation of an independent Church of England, the nation's establishment became increasingly concerned about the existential threat posed by the combined force of a potential alliance between an antagonistic Catholic Ireland, and the traditional Catholic powers of Europe, which included historical enemies France and Spain. This visceral fear of the potential utilization of Ireland as a launch point for an invasion of English soil had a critical role in fostering a heightened sense of Protestant nativism. Consequently, the English made an intensive effort to pacify the island through the seizure, and subsequent redistribution, of land previously held by native Irish forces. During the rule of James I (1603-1625), large numbers of Scottish Presbyterians and English Anglicans settled in the northern province of Ulster as the result of the attempt to tame the once predominantly Gaelic region. Moreover, the ascension of Oliver Cromwell to power in 1653, following the culmination of the English Civil War and the establishment of the English Commonwealth, provoked the aggressive seizure and redistribution of massive segments of territory within Ireland that would continue throughout his five-year reign.

Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which William of Orange overthrew the Catholic King James II (1685-1688), James fled to Ireland in order to raise a substantial Catholic military force. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1690 William's army of 36,000 Protestant soldiers including Englishmen, Irish Protestants, French Huguenots, Dutchmen, and Danes defeated James's force, which predominantly consisted of Irish Catholic soldiers supported by French officers, in the Battle of the Boyne. The victory of William's army at the Battle of the Boyne has assumed substantial historic importance for Protestants in Northern Ireland, due to the fact that it is perceived as one of the great victories over Irish Catholics, and thus is revered by the Unionist community dominated by the legacy of the Orange Order. Following the battle, the perpetuation of strict penal codes over the ensuing century ensured the continuation of discrimination against Catholics in Ireland. The second-class citizenship of the Catholic population became codified in a series of discriminatory laws at the heart of the penal code that prohibited them from entering

into the professional classes. In the process, the victory of William's forces cemented the seemingly inexorable nature of the protestant ascendancy.

#### **2.4. The Catholic battle for emancipation**

In response to the ongoing discrimination against the Catholic population in Ireland, a Republican revolutionary group referred to as the United Irishmen launched a rebellion in 1798 in opposition to the presence of English rule in Ireland. The English responded to the rebellion with the passage of the Act of Union in 1800, which formally united England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, thereby laying the foundation for the sentiment of Irish nationalism that would impact the following two hundred years of European history.

Over the next several decades, Ireland experienced a substantial expansion in population that in turn placed a great strain on the island's infrastructure. The island's largely agrarian economy lacked the ability to supply its ever-expanding population with employment, creating a cycle of economic deterioration. The deteriorating conditions faced by the largely Catholic tenant farmers, both in terms of lackluster employment prospects and a severe food shortage that resulted from the 1845 Great Potato Famine, exacerbated tensions with a Protestant landlord class that governed in absentia. To a suffering Catholic population, the unwillingness of British politicians to come to their aid bred an image of an uncompassionate foreign ruling class that stimulated further agitation.

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Irish Catholics under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell challenged their political subjugation. O'Connell secured the right of Irish Catholics to hold office, and subsequently pursued parliamentary politics and articulated the argument for the repeal of the Act of Union. O'Connell's Young Ireland movement promoted cultural nationalism, unified identity, and pride in the traditional Irish Gaelic tradition and language.

#### **2.5. The Home Rule movement**

The Fenian movement that emerged in 1858 spurred the democratic and egalitarian thinking that would underlay attempts to achieve Home Rule for Ireland. Under Charles Stewart Parnell's leadership, the Home Rule party sought to force the British government to support Home Rule bills by filibustering all other pieces of legislation in the House of Commons and through leveraging their positions in coalition governments.

As a reaction to the prominence attained by the Home Rule Movement, a political unionist movement emerged with Ireland that espoused the necessity of close political ties with Britain. Unionists, who enjoyed their privileged position in Ireland, advocated for unity with their Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and British brethren. The rivalry between Home Rulers and unionists intensified as the likelihood of a Home Rule bill for Ireland increased. Leaders of the Unionist Party, including Sir Edward Carson, campaigned tirelessly against the Home Rule bill claiming it was a knife pointed at the heart of Ulster, and that it would threaten the rights of industrial Protestants. In a large public demonstration, a collection of 471,000 unionists in Ulster signed a pledge to resist and refuse any attempt to establish a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.

## **2.6. The birth of the paramilitaries**

The pledge of opposition to Home Rule was made in conjunction with the establishment of the Ulster Volunteer Army (UVA), a paramilitary organization created for the purpose of violently resisting Irish rule from Dublin if necessary. In response, the IRB established the Irish Volunteers, a predominantly Catholic paramilitary counterpart to the UVA. The British government was understandably reluctant to propose a solution to the Ireland question in the midst of the uncertainty that defined the years leading up to the outbreak of World War I. This inaction, however, proved only to incite greater tension between Unionists and the Home Rule party.

Faced with the growing threat of Unionist and Home Rule party insurrection at the dawn of the First World War, the British Parliament began to consider a policy option that would indelibly shape the future of Irish politics. Being that one of the primary concerns of Unionists was subservience under an Irish Catholic political majority, their political leaders forcefully argued that the island be partitioned into two political entities in the event of the passage of an Irish Home Rule bill. While the size and number of counties that would compose these two areas was hotly contested, the underlying principle remained the same: to divide Ireland into a southern region dominated by Irish Catholics and a northern region with a majority of Unionist Protestants. Each region would operate under separate political authorities. The issue of partition sharply divided Irish society even prior to its enactment as Irish nationalists argued in favor of a unified Ireland with greater autonomy whereas Unionists fiercely opposed an increasingly independent unified Ireland. Both sides threatened violence if their demands were not met and further militarized. The resolution of this pressing conflict was delayed however by Britain's entry into World War I. In a strategy designed to appease both Irish Nationalists and Unionists, the British Parliament enacted a Home Rule bill but simultaneously delayed the enforcement of the legislation until the end of the war, thereby effectively tabling the issue.

## **2.7. The 1916 Easter Rising**

In 1916, a mere two years into the war effort, a collection of 1,528 Irish nationalist activists organized under the leadership of seven members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood military council and led by schoolmaster Patrick Pearse occupied several strategic and symbolic locations in Dublin. Although they were heavily underequipped, the insurrectionists continued their fight for six days before being fully pacified by the British military. Although the protestors initially lacked the support of the Irish public at large that had sent many soldiers to frontlines of WWI and viewed the protest as traitorous in a time of war, the public perception would soon change. The British crackdown on protesters was severe, as 15 leading nationalists were executed by firing squad and over two thousand Irish republican supporters were arrested.

The executed leaders of the movement soon became martyrs as the Easter Rising quickly took on mythic status amongst the Irish population, fomenting a greater sense of Irish nationalism. In the coming years, the Irish Volunteers extended increasing control over the Irish political party Sinn Féin, which supported the establishment of an Irish national legislature. The party drew great popular support, in part due to its vocal opposition to forced conscription of Irishmen for the British military. Elected Sinn Féin representatives refused to take their seats in the British

Parliament, which they viewed as illegitimate, and in 1919 assembled in Dublin as the Dail Eireann, the legislative body of the Irish Republic, while declaring independence from Britain. The conflict would escalate further following the November 21<sup>st</sup> 1920 episode known as Bloody Sunday in which twelve British Army officers, one RIC official, and a civilian informant were assassinated. Their deaths prompted members of the Army to open fire at a civilian crowd at a Gaelic football match. This conflict, known as the Anglo-Irish War or the Irish War for Independence, would continue until a preliminary ceasefire was called on July 11, 1921.

## **2.8. The Irish War of Independence**

Faced with increasing international pressure, the British Government was forced to negotiate. Following the Anglo-Irish ceasefire, negotiations over the terms of an Irish Free State proved difficult. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, insisted on a partitioned settlement to consist of a six county Northern Ireland and a twenty six county Irish Free State as a dominion within the British Commonwealth. The President of the Irish Dail, Eamon de Valera, was absent for both the final round of negotiations and the signing of the treaty. After a bitter debate in the Dail, the decision to partition the country was only narrowly approved by a margin of 64 to 57. This debate would result in a major political rift amongst Irish nationalists between those who supported the partition treaty and those who argued against it as a compromise of Irish ideals, including de Valera. In what would soon become Northern Ireland, the treaty was quickly ratified as unionists viewed the treaty as a guarantee of ongoing unity with Britain and the solidification of a Protestant state. The anti-treaty republican including de Valera withdrew from the Dail insisting that the treaty could not approve the partitioning of the Republic of Ireland declared during the Easter Rising. A ten-month civil war ensued in which the provisional government of the Irish Free State, which incorporated the majority of those who supported the treaty, fought the anti-treaty republican opposition. The provisional government ultimately proved victorious with the support of arms from the British military, although the conflict inflicted a great cost on the Irish people. The fallout of the conflict would have a defining impact on the narratives of the major political parties in Ireland moving forward, including Sinn Féin whose members were amongst the most vocal advocates of the partition treaty and subsequently abstained from assuming seats in the Dail.

After the return of Fianna Fail's members to government, the Dail turned to several other prominent issues. The Dail established a new Constitution for the Free State of Ireland that was based on the principles of liberal democracy. On an ideological level, members of the Dail led by de Valera worked for an independent republic of Ireland not under the dominion of the commonwealth. This would eventually be achieved on Easter Monday 1949. The British government soon passed the Ireland Act which accepted the change in status of the Republic of Ireland, with a provision that Northern Ireland would never detach from Britain without the majority consent of the Northern Irish legislature. On a practical level, the Dail faced the extraordinary task of managing the economy and social services of the Free State. Stripped of its industrial center of Northern Ireland and Belfast, the Free State would have to restructure its economy and build up its public services. It, also, had to contend with the abstentionism of Sinn Féin and with the activism of the IRA, who actively opposed the 1937 Constitution on the basis that it represented a betrayal of Ireland and a sanctification of partition.

In Northern Ireland, Protestants comprised sixty-six percent of the population and, as a result, exercised complete control over the political sphere. Indeed, the Northern Irish Parliament at Stormont possessed an even larger majority of unionists than the demographics of the population would suggest as a result of the amplifying effect that gerrymandering had on unionist dominance. This would lead to the continuation and expansion of policies, especially on issues relating to employment practices, which espoused ant-Catholic discrimination. As stated by the first Stormont Prime Minister Lord Craigavon, the Parliament at Stormont was “a Protestant government for a Protestant people.” The unfaltering dominance of unionists over public life in Northern Ireland is further demonstrated by the fact that the police force, known as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), possessed a largely disproportionate number of Protestant officers. In the face of heavy discrimination, the IRA continued its violent campaign, however, its activities temporarily halted in 1962 as the Irish Catholic civil rights movement was just beginning to take shape.

## **2.9. The Irish civil rights movement**

Towards the end of the 1960s, Nationalists seeking a new way to politically mobilize took to the growing civil rights movement, demanding equality in housing, employment, and one-man-one-vote. The movement reflected its American predecessor in its strong leadership figures like John Hume and Bernadette Devlin, and in its unfettered commitment to non-violent marches as the principal means through which to operate. Terence O’Neill became the first Stormont leader to consciously attempt engagement in the rhetoric of reform that had been inspired by the global movement in defense of civil rights. As the debate over the necessity of political reform spiraled out of control in the streets, O’Neill limped out of office with a country in disarray. Indeed, by the start of 1969 the civil rights movement had degenerated into bouts of sectarian violence. Nationalist demonstrations were met by loyalist counter-demonstrations, precipitating heavy-handed, and often one-sided, action by the RUC.

The street violence came to a head in August 1969 as the Apprentice Boys of Derry attempted to hold its annual march in commemoration of the 1689 Siege of Derry, in which William of Orange’s forces had successfully defended the city in the face of a Catholic siege.<sup>9</sup> The march deteriorated into direct conflict between the unionists participating in the march, and the Catholics living in the Bogside district of Londonderry. The RUC eventually broke through barricades erected by Bogsideers, and in the process enabled Protestant mobs to rampage through Catholic neighborhoods. Concurrent violence broke out in Belfast, where the streets echoed with gunfire and hundreds of houses were set on fire. The riots lasted for days, killing eight, injuring over 750, and destroying 180 homes.<sup>10</sup> In the aftermath of the riots, makeshift barricades came to scar the streets of both Londonderry and Belfast, physically demonstrating the deepened sectarian divisions. The crisis overwhelmed the undersized police force, and as a result newly installed Stormont leader James Chichester-Clark formally requested that British troops be deployed, in spite of the fact that he was fully aware that such a deployment would fundamentally alter the political balance between Belfast and London.<sup>11</sup> On August 14<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>9</sup> Cochrane, Feargal. *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Print. 51.

<sup>10</sup> McKittrick and McVea 56.

<sup>11</sup> McKittrick and McVea 55.



Operation Banner was launched and British troops were deployed to Northern Ireland for the first time in the Troubles, with the immediate aim of quelling civil unrest.

In addition to placing British troops on the ground in Northern Ireland and eliciting renewed attention from the Republic of Ireland, the violence of 1969 revived the fortunes of republican paramilitaries. The IRA had historically been responsible for protecting precarious Catholic areas in Belfast, which include the likes of Falls Road and Ardoyne, and thus the displacement of over 1,500 Catholic families from the city convinced the working-class Catholic community that the IRA needed new life.<sup>12</sup> The Official IRA's Marxist turn in the 1960s that signaled a shift away from traditional republican nationalism had troubled many within the organization, and, in the process, had laid the fault lines along which the violence of August 1969 could produce fracture. As such the Provisional IRA (hereon referred to as IRA) was born upon the simple premise that the primary focus of their activities should be on Northern Ireland, and the group, therefore, espoused the simple, time-honored message that their principal role was that of serving as the defenders of the nationalist community. The IRA's reversion to a predominantly military role, also, galvanized the paramilitary groups on the loyalist side, which included the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and later, the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), behind a reactionary defense of their own communities.

## **2.10. The Troubles**

The IRA and loyalist forces began to clash routinely. In July 1970, in response to IRA activity in the Falls Road area, the Army imposed a curfew that forced 20,000 people in predominantly Catholic communities to stay in their homes and subjected them to rigorous house searches.<sup>13</sup> Roads were closed off with barbed wire, helicopters hovered with loudspeakers blaring, and the Army killed four local residents.<sup>14</sup> The Falls Road curfew irreparably harmed the initially positive relationship between Catholics and British troops. The imagery of British oppression was painfully clear and essentially served as a recruitment tool for the IRA. As one senior civil servant stated, "It is hard to remember any other incident that so clearly began the politicization and alienation of a community."<sup>15</sup>

Chichester-Clark found himself stuck between London, which was pushing for a reform package, and intransigent unionists who were becomingly increasingly hardline after seeing the electoral appeal of "no-popery" radicals like Ian Paisley. IRA violence continued to undercut Chichester-Clark's attempts to restrain Unionist aggression. In February 1972, a British soldier killed by the IRA became the first British casualty of the Troubles. Months later, the IRA planted a bomb on a County Tyrone mountain that was intended to target security forces, but that instead killed five civilians.<sup>16</sup> Further premeditated sectarian killings prompted an editorial to observe: "Ulster people have almost lost the capacity for feeling shock."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> McKittrick and McVea 60.

<sup>13</sup> McKittrick and McVea 61.

<sup>14</sup> Cochrane 57.

<sup>15</sup> McKittrick and McVea 62.

<sup>16</sup> McKittrick and McVea 64.

<sup>17</sup> McKittrick and McVea 65.

Chichester-Clark resigned, making way for the more politically adept Brian Faulkner. With the feeling that a steady descent into full-scale violence was imminent, Faulkner convinced London that internment without trial was necessary. On August 9<sup>th</sup> 1971, Operation Demetrius was launched leading to the arrest of 2,400 people over the first six months.<sup>18</sup> Soldiers were, however, accused of using brutal methods and cruel interrogation techniques. In the wake of internment, thousands of families fled their homes, property was damaged, and violence escalated.<sup>19</sup> While internment purported to be responding to IRA violence, IRA leaders conversely believed that they were simply reacting to the violence of the state and ratcheted up attacks. Such was the feedback loop of Northern Ireland violence. Internment continued for four years and further deepened the sectarian divide. The Catholic community felt unjustly targeted, a sentiment that is supported by the fact that of the nearly two thousand people interned, only five percent were Protestants.<sup>20</sup>

A total of nearly 500 deaths made 1972 the bloodiest year of the conflict. A watershed moment came on January 30, 1972 when a Parachute Regiment in Londonderry shot dead fourteen civilians during a banned civil rights march. The British Army claimed it had been fired upon, an account that was disputed by locals—none of those killed were carrying weapons and no soldiers were injured. The event known as Bloody Sunday appeared to the Catholic community to be equivalent to murder. Bloody Sunday garnered international condemnation on the British and “probably led more young nationalists to join the provisional IRA than any other single action by the British.”<sup>21</sup> It also fed into the perception that Faulkner’s government could not manage the situation. In April 1972, Stormont closed and direct rule from Westminster was re-introduced to Northern Ireland.



A mural in Derry’s Bogside marking the site of Bloody Sunday. A three-person committee approves changes to the wall’s background, which happen every few months.

Sustained violence and a lack of communication between interested parties made Northern Ireland Secretary William Whitelaw’s task of devising a new system of governance for Northern Ireland particularly challenging. Whitelaw made the historic move of inviting senior republicans, including Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams, to his home in London, an act which signaled a clear shift from the British government’s previous reluctance to negotiate with terrorists. The meeting was in Whitelaw’s words a “non-event,” as the IRA made demands that the British government could not reasonably concede.<sup>22</sup> However, the fact that the meeting even occurred

<sup>18</sup> McKittrick and McVea 68.

<sup>19</sup> McKittrick and McVea 69.

<sup>20</sup> Cochrane 61.

<sup>21</sup> English, Richard. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004). 151.

<sup>22</sup> McKittrick and McVea 85.

was of psychological value to both sides and, in the longer view, informed the open dialogue between the British government and republicans.<sup>23</sup>

### **2.11. The Sunningdale Agreement: A failed attempt at peace**

More problematic was the unrelenting exchange of violence. The Ulster Defence Association bombed the Catholic bar McGurk's. A loyalist broke into a Catholic home, raping the mother and killing a handicapped youth. The IRA killed nine and injured 130 in a series of explosions set off on Bloody Friday, and concluded the month by killing nine people via car bombs in the previously peaceful village of Claudy.<sup>24</sup> It was in this context that Whitelaw assisted in drafting a white paper that became the Sunningdale Agreement. This agreement was largely a political lowest common denominator, calling for "power sharing with an Irish dimension."<sup>25</sup> A cabinet style government would mean an executive shared between unionists and the emerging Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), which was the face of moderate constitutional nationalism. The agreement was short lived. Contempt for power sharing and grave suspicion of a growing southern foothold in Northern Ireland affairs drove a wedge through unionists. Faulkner lost his party and the government lost control, a development that contributed significantly to the collapse of the Sunningdale Agreement.

"The hamster wheel from hell," as loyalist paramilitary member David Ervine quipped, continued spinning at a rapid rate through 1975 and 1976. The civilian casualty rate remained high as victims were frequently caught in the crossfire of nationalist and loyalist tit-for-tat violence. A particularly startling incident came in August 1976 when an IRA member was shot dead in a car chase by British troops, causing the car to swerve off the road and crush a Catholic woman and her three children. The seemingly senseless death of Anne Maguire and her family gave rise to the women-led 'Peace People' movement. Although short-lived, the movement encapsulated a feeling of violence fatigue that moved the conflict into a new phase of consistent but decreased violence.

While politically stagnant, the British Government began to shift its security policy in Northern Ireland towards a policy of criminalization predicated on the dual aims of displaying a return to normalcy and getting tough on the IRA. Paramilitary members were denied acknowledgement of political motivation and taken through criminal courts. Specially designed interrogation centers, including that at Castlereagh, kept indictments steady even as violence dropped.<sup>26</sup> In the face of stronger criticism from the John Hume-led SDLP, the IRA inflicted its own wounds. In February 1978, IRA members bombed the La Mon House in East Belfast without providing adequate warning to the hotel. The explosion killed 12 people, including seven women, and brought the IRA's morale to a historic low.<sup>27</sup>

### **2.12. The hunger strikes**

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<sup>23</sup> Cochrane 76.

<sup>24</sup> McKittrick and McVea 87.

<sup>25</sup> Cochrane 87.

<sup>26</sup> McKittrick and McVea, 124.

<sup>27</sup> McKittrick and McVea 129.

The ever-growing number of IRA prisoners made it possible for the criminalization battle to be fought in the prisons. The British government's policy of criminalization had removed the special status granted to paramilitary prisoners by Whitelaw as a conciliatory gesture in 1972. Republican prisoners fiercely resisted the label of common criminal as illustrated by this anthem:<sup>28</sup>

*I'll wear no convict's uniform,  
Nor meekly serve my time,  
That England might  
Brand Ireland's fight  
Eight hundred years of crime*

The H-Block prisoners in the Maze Prison started with the "blanket protest" in 1977 by refusing to wear prison uniform, and instead solely wrapping themselves in blankets. Next, they initiated a "dirty protest" in which excrement and food was smeared on cell walls. These acts garnered little attention compared with the first hunger strike that followed in October 1980. In a move of both desperation and courage, Bobby Sands refused food for 66 days, calling on the British government to grant prisoners the right to wear their own clothes, refuse work, have free association with other prisoners, get remission of sentences, and have normal visits.<sup>29</sup> The IRA leadership initially opposed the effort as a result of the fact that the previous hunger strike had disintegrated, and in the process had diminished morale. Additionally, the possibility for the hunger strikers to "hijack the struggle" and conflict with the IRA's "political priorities of the moment" concerned the leadership.<sup>30</sup> However, the 1981 hunger strike proved to be a massive propaganda victory for the Republican cause. It demonstrated the political nature of the IRA and revitalized public sympathy for the entire organization. Moreover, the international attention that it drew to Northern Ireland furthered the perception of Margaret Thatcher's policies as simply serving to "criminalize Britain in the eyes of the world."<sup>31</sup> As one newspaper wrote at the time, "this is one of the best times the IRA has ever had. The Northern Ireland problem is seen worldwide as the IRA always wanted it to be: the hammer and the anvil, the Brits versus the Provos [Provisional IRA], nothing in between and nothing else relevant."

The hunger strike bolstered the republican movement, and unequivocally impacted the electoral prospects of Sinn Féin. Formerly, IRA leadership had thought that political engagement counteracted their revolutionary objectives. Yet, when Bobby Sands won the County Tyrone seat in Westminster, and IRA leader Gerry Adams won the West Belfast MP seat, the fact that political organization could serve as a means of legitimate leverage over the unionist establishment strongly resonated with the IRA leadership.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the Republican policy of absenteeism officially ended in Stormont in 1981. The IRA's political arm, Sinn Féin, firmly established itself by taking 12 percent of the total vote and 40 percent of the nationalist vote between 1982-1985. Sinn Féin's electoral success was unsettling to both the protestant majority in Northern Ireland, and to the British Government. The SDLP and London believed that the

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<sup>28</sup> McKittrick and McVea 138.

<sup>29</sup> English 194.

<sup>30</sup> Cochrane 114.

<sup>31</sup> English 203.

<sup>32</sup> McKittrick and McVea 158.

nationalists' political ascendancy posed a threat to constitutional nationalism, while Irish Taoiseach Garrett FitzGerald worried that the "malignant dry rot" of Sinn Féin would spread to the republic in the south.<sup>33</sup>

Consequently, Thatcher, FitzGerald, and SDLP leader John Hume began a series of negotiations regarding security considerations. These talks gave birth to the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, which both reaffirmed the fact that the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland would be necessary to pass any significant constitutional alteration, and created intergovernmental structures connecting London and Dublin. The agreement principally served to curb the electoral rise of Sinn Féin through demonstrating to Catholic communities in Northern Ireland that the British government's actions in Northern Ireland were determined not by any selfish motivation, but instead simply represented their best attempts at achieving peace in the region. However, the agreement was, also, critical in developing the sense of personal trust and mutual understanding between the actors in London and Dublin that would profoundly aid the peace process that culminated in an agreement in 1998.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.13. Violence returns to the streets**

The agreement signaled to republicans that London could be shifted and to unionists that there were costs associated with abstaining from the reform process. However the political well had run dry, leading to a cooling of Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations. The focus again returned to IRA and loyalist activity. IRA violence was aided by imports of Libyan arms, but the decrease in public support attached to its continual killing of civilians again weighed down the movement. The November 1987 Enniskillen bombing killed 11 Protestant civilians gathered for Remembrance Day. An IRA official branded Enniskillen "a major setback" politically and internationally, which was one of the key events prompting Adams' public plea in 1989 to IRA volunteers "to be careful and careful again." IRA activity in Britain ticked up as they targeted key individuals as well as city centers. Two bombs set off in London's financial heartland killed three people, and inflicted more financial damage than all of the 10,000 bombs that had gone off in Northern Ireland.<sup>35</sup>

Martin McGuinness proclaimed in 1986: "Our position is clear and it will never, never, never change. The war against British rule must continue until freedom is achieved." However the late 1980s brought forth challenging realities. The IRA was unintentionally killing civilians and thereby losing the public opinion battle, they were losing members, and they were losing materials.<sup>36</sup> The intransigence of the Thatcher government during the hunger strike and the sheer passage of time began to convince many republicans that the British were actually there to stay. The prospect of continued stalemate brought forth the notion that a continuation of the present course may be detrimental to the IRA and Sinn Féin, and that "non-violent republicanism may be the most advantageous shape to give to the next phase of the longest war."<sup>37</sup> A more inclusive tone from the IRA was, also, encouraged by the pushback of the SDLP. John Hume powerfully

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<sup>33</sup> McKittrick and McVea 159.

<sup>34</sup> McKittrick and McVea 162; Cochrane 118.

<sup>35</sup> McKittrick and McVea 181.

<sup>36</sup> English 260.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

voiced a brand of constitutional nationalism that reframed the conflict's narrative from one of resistance against British occupation to one that focused on convincing the unionist population of the need for a reformed and integrated Northern Ireland. The gradual penetration of this mindset in the nationalist community along with distinctly anti-imperial British policies fostered a shift in course by the IRA and Sinn Féin.

In 1993, the public learned that Adams and Hume had been communicating through a back channel. As the dominant figures of nationalism in Northern Ireland, their personal relationship was an important ingredient for the peace process and contrasted with Hume's public criticisms of the IRA. The line of communication was actually just one of the many concealed webs of contact republicans had established in the prior years with the SDLP, the Irish government, and the British government.<sup>38</sup> In October 1991, Hume prepared a draft declaration that made its way through backchannels to Adams, Taoiseachs Haughey and Reynolds, and Prime Minister John Major. However, when the Adams-Hume talks were made public in 1993, Major and Reynolds were quick to step back. The process was further hampered by the worst month of violence since 1976. In October 1993, an IRA bomb went off at Shankill Road killing four women and two children.<sup>39</sup> A loyalist reprisal in Greysteel near Londonderry killed eight people, seven of whom were Catholics.<sup>40</sup> Instead of derailing the developing talks, they inspired a new sense of resolve. Major stated later that, "I think it would have broken down had not the Shankill and Greysteel tragedies intervened."<sup>41</sup>

After numerous tense meetings, Major and Reynolds jointly unveiled the Downing Street Declaration in 1993. The Declaration underlined that Britain has no selfish interest dictating its continued involvement in Northern Ireland, while, also, reaffirming that Irish unity could only come about with the consent of the people of Northern Ireland.<sup>42</sup> Sinn Féin importantly did not reject the Declaration even though many of the republican aspirations were diluted. Republicans did, however, receive a substantial boost in February 1993 when President Clinton granted a 48-hour visa to Gerry Adams. Disregarding London's wishes, Clinton allowed Adams into the United States with the hope that such a concession would push Adams towards a renunciation of violence. It did not come immediately; however, as conditions appeared wrought with uncertainty, the IRA declared a ceasefire on August 31, 1994.

## **2.14. A tense but lasting peace**

The IRA had decided to test the sincerity of the British Government's willingness to negotiate. On the other hand, unionists and the British government shared a deep concern regarding the sincerity of the ceasefire. Their anxiety was a primary reason why the parties argued over IRA weapons instead of entering into political negotiations. Adams insisted that the decommissioning of weapons must not be a precondition but, rather, a part of a political settlement. In November 1995, after President Clinton's rousing visit to Belfast, U.S. Senator George Mitchell was brought in to head an international body to report on the decommissioning issue. His report

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<sup>38</sup> McKittrick and McVea 185.

<sup>39</sup> McKittrick and McVea 192.

<sup>40</sup> McKittrick and McVea 193.

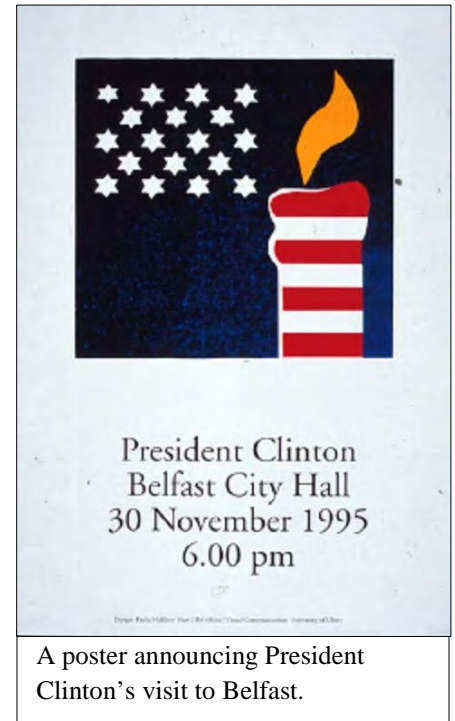
<sup>41</sup> McKittrick and McVea 194.

<sup>42</sup> Cochrane 131.

released in January 1996 asserted that prior decommissioning would not happen, but, also, recommended foundational principles of non-violence to guide the process.

The progress made towards achieving a peaceful settlement appeared to have been lost, as Major rejected Mitchell's report. Furthermore, in February an IRA bomb detonated in Canary Wharf ending the ceasefire, and the subsequent IRA killing of a British soldier severed the ties between republicans and the Major government. Major publicly attacked Adams, saying "don't tell me this has nothing to do with you. I don't believe you, Mr. Adams, I don't believe you."<sup>43</sup>

Elections in 1997 ushered in Tony Blair as the new British prime minister and Bertie Ahern as Irish Taoiseach. Renewed communications aided by the mediating role of George Mitchell infused life back into the peace process. Most importantly, London and Dublin dropped IRA decommissioning as a precondition for negotiation allowing republicans to formally enter the talks and prompting a second IRA ceasefire. With republicans included in the talks, the focus now shifted to Unionist party leader David Trimble. Known as a hardliner, many believed he would lead the unionists out of negotiations upon Sinn Féin's arrival. Trimble, however, decided to stay engaged, and thus built working relationships with the SDLP and the Irish government amid turmoil on the ground. Throughout the course of the negotiations that followed, Sinn Féin and the unionists never spoke formally. Nevertheless on April 10, 1998 George Mitchell announced the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and in doing so affirmed the creation of a stable peace in Northern Ireland.



A poster announcing President Clinton's visit to Belfast.

### 3. GETTING TO THE TABLE

"Jaw-jaw is better than war-war"  
—Winston Spencer Churchill

The critical first step in resolving any conflict is to get opposing actors to the negotiating table. This seemingly simple task is rendered more difficult by the dehumanization of the opposition that is all too often at the heart of conflicts. Thus, the simple act of sitting opposite from representatives of the opposing side can easily be viewed as an act of betrayal by one's own community. Indeed, in the midst of the conflict, the easiest course of actions is unquestionably to maintain the status quo, and yet the defining quality of true leadership is having the courage and prescience to take action in spite of countervailing, short-term political interests in pursuit of a better future.

<sup>43</sup> McKittrick and McVea 213.

Any peaceful resolution to sectarian conflict must be preceded by an agreement from both sides to actively seek resolution at the negotiating table. Indeed, it is often the case that the course of conflict causes the opposition to view shared peace as surrender. It is, therefore, necessary for the principal actors to put aside personal enmity in order to come to the table in pursuit of the greater goal of peace for their communities. This is best accomplished by shaping the environment in such a way that the various groups see peaceful negotiation as the only reasonable option to securing their future.

### **3.1. Dismantle the capabilities of paramilitary groups**

“Security forces do not ‘win’ insurgency campaigns militarily; at best they can contain or suppress the level of violence and achieve a successful end state”

– Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland  
*Prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, British Army*

Effective policing and state-sponsored military campaigns have the ability to help bring paramilitaries to the table. While police and military groups may struggle to create long-term reconciliation, their ability to achieve a military victory or to force a stalemate can incentivize paramilitaries to lay down their weapons and negotiate.

The following section provides five recommendations on how a state can dismantle the capabilities of a paramilitary group. First, states should rely on policing to demonstrate to guerrillas the costs of continuing conflict and that violence, alone, will not bring about their desired political goals. Second, leaders should establish a clear, cohesive and long-term strategy to dismantle the non-state actors’ capabilities. Third, the state should establish legitimacy by striving to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of local residents. Fourth, militaries should be careful to avoid the indiscriminate use of violence that simply detracts from their base of public support. Fifth, the police and military should narrow their goals—it is hard to create long-term reconciliation when fighting a war.

In Northern Ireland, the British Army failed to establish lasting harmony between the Catholic and Protestant populations. Yet their ability to achieve a tactical stalemate against the IRA demonstrates why, and how, a military and police groups can effectively lead paramilitaries into a peace process.

#### *3.1.1. Counteract paramilitary violence with a consistent military presence*

By nature, paramilitaries believe that violence is an effective mechanism through which to achieve ideological goals. Competent policing—which decreases both the frequency and impact of violent acts—makes it more difficult for paramilitaries to accomplish political change through violence alone. By increasing the risk associated with violent acts, governments can alter paramilitaries’ incentive structures so that ceasefires and negotiations become tenable policy options.



The British Army outnumbered the IRA in both soldiers and available resources. Through superb intelligence operations, constant street patrols, and routine checkpoints, the Army disrupted the IRA's preferred pattern of activity. In the late 1980s, the IRA suffered an annual death toll of 26 soldiers, lost over 50,000 rounds of ammunition and 100 pounds of explosives in a British raid, and had British spies lurking within their organizational structure.<sup>44</sup> For example, an IRA member was as likely to die at the hands of an IRA informer as they were by a British soldier.<sup>45</sup> A former IRA member explained "The IRA's aim is to create such psychological damage to the Brits that they'll withdraw...but we know we can't defeat them in a military sense, no more than they can beat us. So there's a kind of stalemate."<sup>46</sup>

All this proved that the IRA could not achieve a united Ireland through military means. Gerry Adams himself admitted that there was "a situation of deadlock in which the Ólaigh na hÉireann [the IRA] were able to block the imposition of a British solution but were unable to force the British to withdraw."<sup>47</sup>

Notably, the British Army did not completely eradicate the IRA before negotiations began. Rather, the Army simply reduced violence to an 'acceptable level.' The British Army defines an acceptable level of violence as one "at which the population can live with, and with which local police forces can cope...the point at which dissidents believe they will not win through a primary violent strategy."<sup>48</sup> This insight suggests that a tactical stalemate might be enough to undercut paramilitaries' activities and force guerrillas to the negotiating table.

### *3.1.2. Establish a unified strategy during the 'honeymoon'*

The British Army defines the first 100 days of an operation—in which operational forces have broad latitude to establish objectives—as the most critical stage of a campaign: the "honeymoon period." If an army deploys into a sectarian conflict, it should focus on the following aspects of strategy:

- i. Establish long-term objectives: Beyond immediately quelling the civil unrest, the British did not land in Northern Ireland armed with overarching strategy. This failure to define the Army's long-term goals had tangible effects—as sectarian violence increased and The Troubles evolved into a war-like atmosphere, the British troops scrambled to react and change tactics. A significant percentage of deaths occurred during the initial years of Operation Banner (see below figure).

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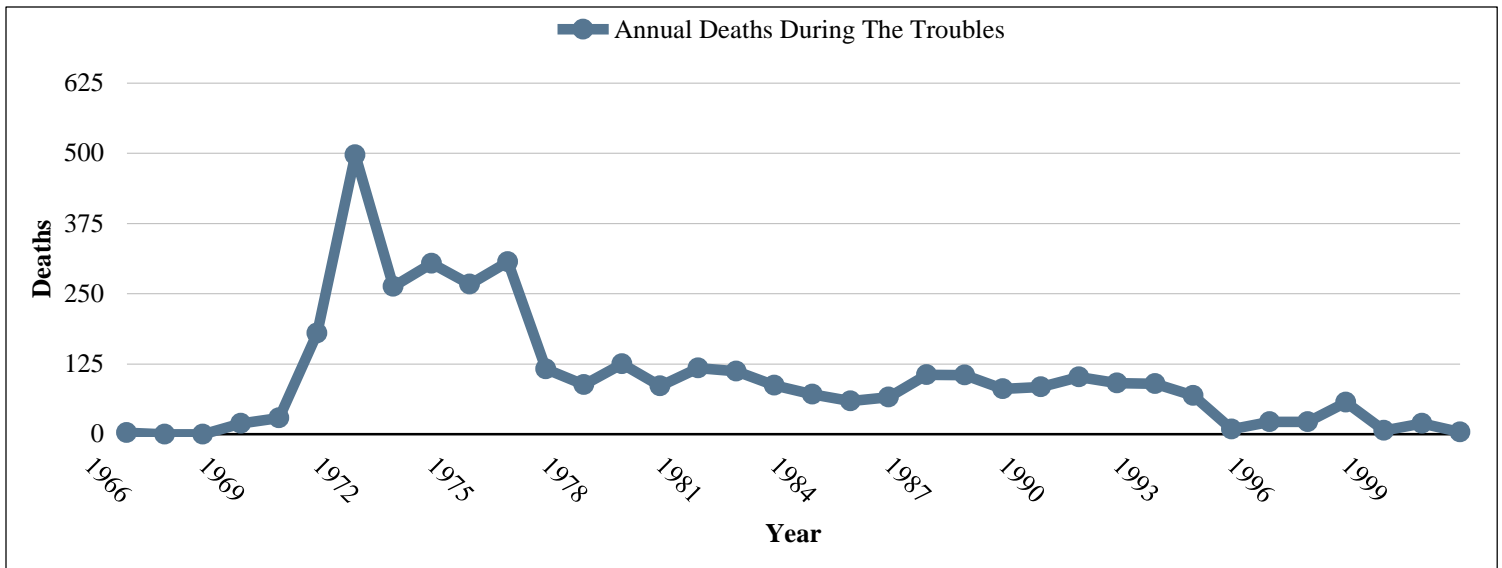
<sup>44</sup> English, Richard. *Armed Struggle: History of the IRA*, 260.

<sup>45</sup> Dixon, Paul *The Victory and Defeat of the IRA?*. Found in *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process*, Edited by Timothy White.

<sup>46</sup> Coogan, T.P. *The IRA*, 604.

<sup>47</sup> Adams, Gerry. *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, 58.

<sup>48</sup> *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland*. 8-3  
<[http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op\\_banner\\_analysis\\_released.pdf](http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op_banner_analysis_released.pdf)>.



- ii. Have a clear chain of command: Stormont, Britain’s Northern Ireland Office, Britain’s Ministry of Defence, and the RUC all claimed jurisdictional powers over the British Army’s campaign. Without a single authority in charge, the British Army found it difficult to evolve and adapt. To highlight the disjointed approach in Northern Ireland, it is relevant to note that the Army admitted that “action against terrorists was not linked closely to addressing the causes of the problem”<sup>49</sup> While the military structures which forced the IRA into an eventual stalemate were installed as early as 1980, the Army believes that their inability to coordinate across departments was a key reason why The Troubles lasted until 1998.



A British soldier on “patrol.” Britain misused its resources. Photo taken from Britain’s “Operation Banner” summary: [http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op\\_banner\\_analisis\\_released.pdf](http://www.vilaweb.cat/media/attach/vwedts/docs/op_banner_analisis_released.pdf)

- iii. Never waver in commitment: The British Army’s presence of 10,000 soldiers for 30 years during The Troubles showed the IRA and loyalist paramilitaries that they could not bomb the Army out of Northern Ireland. As one author aptly summarized, “The continuation of IRA violence was not going to better the bargaining position that republicans possessed. The longer the IRA’s campaign had continued without breaking the will of the British, arguably the *less* effective a weapon it had become.”<sup>50</sup> While too many soldiers can psychologically dispirit citizens, its effectiveness in reducing paramilitaries’ operational success must not be discounted.

### 3.1.3. Maintain legitimacy with the local population

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> English 308.



Psychologist Stephen Pinker argues that when citizens believe that the government has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, violence from non-state actors naturally dissipates.<sup>51</sup> To be viewed as a legitimate force, military and police groups must convince citizens of their neutrality and impartiality.

The Operation Banner analysis demonstrates that militaries should develop rigid rules of engagement, consciously align the ethnic/religious/racial makeup of soldiers with the community they are protecting, and financially support community officers in developing and directing community projects.<sup>52</sup>

Accompanied by unbiased and well-reasoned policies, the military can further advance its legitimacy by winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of a local population. While there is no cookie-cutter approach, the immediate benefits are clear: “without hearts and minds one cannot obtain intelligence, and without intelligence terrorists can never be defeated.”<sup>53</sup> In the long-term, increased confidence in the police force decreases the appetite for terrorism and non-state violence. In the words

of a British soldier, “Hearts and minds is something that will come up again and again and again. You’ve got to win the hearts and minds of those people.”<sup>54</sup>

#### *3.1.4. Avoid the indiscriminate use of force*

Fostering legitimacy with a local population can take months or even years to establish, but only seconds to lose. If a military or police group indiscriminately applies force, they will struggle to win back local support.

Early in the conflict, the British Army employed a superfluous amount of force against innocent Catholics through internment, the Falls Road Curfew, and Bloody Sunday. Compounded by the fact that the Protestant-dominated RUC had a history of discriminating against Catholics, republicans quickly came to view the actions of the British Army as merely an extension of unionist violence.<sup>55</sup>

These perceptions built upon themselves. As the British Army recognized in the Operation Banner summary, the IRA used the British Army’s initial abuse of force to create an image of a British army that was, and would forever be, partisan and untrustworthy. No change in British policy could alter this attitude. “The truth was not necessarily important: dissatisfaction is a sentiment, and feeds off perceptions.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Pinker, Steven. The Better Angels of Our Nature.

<sup>52</sup> The RUC was 90 percent Protestant. This led nationalist Catholics to distrust the police and turn to the IRA and other paramilitaries for protection.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Howard: What’s in a Name?: How to Fight Terrorism.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with former British Soldier, Dec. 5 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with former British Soldier, Dec. 5 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Operation Banner, Section 8, Page 3.

Indeed, Eugene Coyle, a lifelong resident of Derry/Londonderry, served jail time for paramilitary activity. Coyle traces his decision to join the IRA back to the day when he saw a childhood friend die, his head bloodied by British rubber bullets. Coyle's personal narrative demonstrates the extent to which an army's indiscriminate use of force can create a self-perpetuating cycle of violence in which otherwise-peaceful people lose faith in the legitimacy of public institutions and consequently feel compelled to endorse violence as a means of political redress.

### *3.1.5. Focus on ending conflict, not on creating reconciliation*

Remember that the utility of military force has its limits. Due to the complicated nature of warfare, soldiers will find it difficult to achieve broad-based reconciliation. In fact, soldiers often exacerbate the ethnic tensions that they ideally purport to soothe. As previously described, the British Army struggled to maintain neutrality and was often viewed by the Catholic nationalists as an extension of Protestant oppression. The Northern Ireland experience serves as a reminder that the police and military have a clear role to play in getting paramilitaries to the table. Getting to peace, however, requires a different set of actors and tactics.

## **3.2. Democratic politics should be as inclusive as possible**

“Who here really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in this hand and an Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?”

– *Sinn Féin organizer Danny Morrison speaking at the party's annual conference in 1981*

From the start of the 1980's, the strategy of Sinn Féin/ the IRA was “the Armalite and the ballot paper”, and the relative attractiveness of these two options largely determined the level of violence employed by the group.<sup>57</sup> Although democratic politics were a very unappealing option under the first Stormont regime, in the 80's Sinn Féin's electoral success increased the appeal of democratic politics as a strategy to reunify Ireland and secure Catholic Irish interests and therefore encouraged Sinn Féin/ the IRA to pursue a more peaceful path. From this trend in the conflict, three main recommendations regarding the use of democratic politics to prevent and diffuse armed conflicts can be drawn: first, use the political system to alter the incentives faced by paramilitary actors towards peace and away from violence; second, use democratic politics as a safety valve to prevent violent conflicts from emerging in the first place; and finally, utilize democratic politics to change the political conversation.

### *3.2.1. Use political engagement to adjust the incentives of militant groups*

Democratic politics fundamentally change the incentive structure faced by militant groups. Violence is seldom popular, and once paramilitary groups have any stake in the political process, they will have a substantial incentive to give up violence. This fact is aptly demonstrated by Sinn Féin and the IRA's long slide away from violence towards politics. Initially, Sinn Féin's engagement with the political system was to be purely supplementary to the ‘armed struggle.’ It was supposed to be the Armalite and the ballot paper – not just the ballot paper.

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<sup>57</sup> Cochrane, Feargal. *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Print. 116.

However, as Sinn Féin continued its involvement in the democratic process it became increasingly clear that the military strategy was costing Sinn Féin votes. Although Sinn Féin's vote share had grown throughout the eighties, in the 1992 elections they suffered two major setbacks when Gerry Adams lost his seat in parliament and Martin McGuinness lost his challenge to John Hume in a blowout. As English explains, these events were "a blow...[and] demonstrated the length of the road faced by militant republicans if they wanted to claim nationalist pre-eminence in the north."<sup>58</sup> Sinn Féin's shrinking share of votes did much to convince many in Sinn Féin and the IRA that an end to the conflict was necessary, and demonstrates how a vibrant democratic system alters incentives of militant groups to favor peace instead of violence. Engagement with the democratic process, even if initially minimal, can be the first step on the long journey towards peace. To be convinced to give up violence, paramilitary groups must be shown that there is a better way to achieve their goals without it. A vibrant democratic political system can serve exactly this purpose.

### *3.2.2. Utilize participation in politics to prevent violent conflicts from emerging entirely*

In addition to changing the incentive structure of the conflict, an inclusive democratic system can also act as a safety valve that prevents conflicts from emerging in the first place. Political violence is often viewed as an option of last resort, and if redress can be sought through valid political means, then the probability of avoiding a violent conflict entirely is much higher. Therefore, an inclusive political system that presents a viable alternative for the advancement of the central tenets espoused by paramilitary groups can provide the basis for a paradigm shift in those groups' methods away from violence. A major motivation for the IRA's armed struggle was that Catholics were functionally excluded from the political process before the Good Friday Agreement. If early Stormont politics had presented an effective route for resolving Catholic concerns the IRA's "armed struggle" might have never occurred.

Moreover, the lack of a peaceful political process creates a vacuum that is often filled by paramilitary organizations. Northern Ireland's politics were stunted because talented, politically inclined leaders, who might have become politicians in a normal society, instead put their time and energy into paramilitary groups because they had no other option for protecting their community and acting on their political beliefs. Cochrane argues that this lack of a formal political structure in Northern Ireland "infantilized" politics in the region, and that "[paramilitary members] wanted to make a positive contribution to their community and to defend the cultural, political and civil rights of those within it; but some came to the conclusion during the 1970s that the best way of doing this was to kill people in the other community, which they regarded as threatening their interest."<sup>59</sup> Many of the members of paramilitary groups genuinely cared about doing the right thing for their community and could have been persuaded that their efforts were better spent in politics than they were in paramilitary organizations. Democratic politics act as a safety valve because they provide a way for the most motivated and passionate individuals to express their concerns and serve their communities without turning to violence.

### *3.2.3. Use participation in constitutional politics to change the conversation*

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<sup>58</sup> English 278.

<sup>59</sup> Cochrane 107.

When actors are no longer involved directly in the political process, it warps the political conversation that they are a part of. Instead of the nitty-gritty give and take of pedestrian politics, it focuses on issues of identity and ideology that neither side can compromise on. This change was vividly demonstrated by the success of the Good Friday Agreement which forced former members of paramilitary groups to sit down together and go through the motions of practical governance. Instead of sitting on the sidelines and taking pot shots at the other side, political leaders in Northern Ireland found that they had to “become managers, budget holders and bureaucrats.”<sup>60</sup> This change shifted the center of politics towards banal issues like budgeting or education funding that few people are willing to die over and away from ones like nationality and religion that thousands of years of human experience demonstrate that people will regularly lay down their lives for.

### **3.3. The international community has an important role to play**

“Clinton’s involvement was ultimately a reaction to the blossoming peace process and the conviction that the United States could play a catalytic role in advancing political dialogue.”

– *Andrew Wilson*

The international community should recognize its ability to play a role in shaping the dynamic of a conflict situation by bringing hesitant actors to the table. The international community has a unique position in foreign conflicts because actors are more likely to be willing to make concessions to a third party actor than their opponents. There are three principal factors that should motivate foreign intervention in aid of the resolution of sectarian conflicts. Firstly, the international community should intervene when the international environment and the conditions on the ground make the conflict ready for a resolution, and should attempt to act as consistently as possible despite the inevitable challenges posed by shifts in the structure of the international system. Secondly, the international community should exert its available leverage to close off the military options available to paramilitary groups while bringing them into legitimate political processes. Similarly, international actors should exert economic and diplomatic leverage over relevant states to encourage them to negotiate. Finally, international actors should be aware of the role Diasporas can play in the internal politics of their home countries and encourage these communities to work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict.

#### *3.3.1. The international community should intervene when conditions suggest the conflict is ready for resolution*

The structure of the international environment and exogenous shocks to the system affect the ability of the international community to intervene in a conflict. International actors should take advantage of conditions that are favorable to interventions on behalf of peace. For example, the end of the Cold War signaled an enormous structural change in the international system that left the United States in a position of overwhelming dominance over its adversaries. This new reality gave the United States a great deal of freedom to pursue its objectives without the fear of interference, but also meant that America did not have much to gain by acting in the international sphere. Clinton, thus, pursued a policy of selective engagement in foreign affairs, of which

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<sup>60</sup> Cochrane 227.

Northern Ireland is one example.<sup>61</sup> The end of the Cold War, also, meant that the United States did not need to rely on its “special relationship” with Britain to help counterbalance the Soviet Union. Once Clinton chose to engage in Northern Ireland, he had more freedom to act in ways that might not garner British support but would be instrumental in pushing the peace process along.<sup>62</sup> The structure of the international environment can dictate the ability of third party actors to intervene in a conflict, but the situation on the ground must also be ripe for resolution in order for the international community to intervene positively.

The international community is prone to intervene in foreign affairs when the conflict is at its worst. This instinct is intuitive—public attention becomes fixated on conflicts when the most people are dying and the situation is the most desperate. However, for all of the influence and legitimacy that third party actors can bring to the table, they do not have the ability to invent a peace process from scratch. It is the most productive for international actors to get involved only when the parties to the conflict are willing to take risks for peace and negotiate in good faith—in other words, when they want to reach an agreement but need help getting there.<sup>63</sup>

President Clinton made a number of promises during his campaign, including that he would appoint a special envoy to Northern Ireland and would grant travel visas to prominent republicans. However, his policies towards the conflict looked much like those of his predecessors until the Downing Street Declaration made conditions look more favorable to peace: “Clinton’s involvement was ultimately a reaction to the blossoming peace process and the conviction that the United States could play a catalytic role in advancing political dialogue.”<sup>64</sup> A third party actor without a direct stake in the conflict is unlikely to convince parties who remain committed to preserving the status quo of the merits of engaging in meaningful negotiations.<sup>65</sup> As the *Irish Echo* concluded a year and a half before the GFA, the United States “can nudge things along, but only if there is something to nudge.”<sup>66</sup>

### *3.3.2. The international community should help bring militant groups to the table and should concurrently exert available leverage to propel state actors towards negotiations*

The international community should work to deny paramilitary organizations the ability to utilize violence, and should simultaneously open up the avenue for these groups to defend their communities through political means instead. The United States applied significant pressure during the implementation of the GFA that had a significant role in persuading the IRA that they had no choice but to abandon any pretense of violent recourse and announce the dumping of their weapons and end their armed struggle in 2005.<sup>67</sup> The United States, also, played an instrumental role in providing Sinn Féin with the means to pursue their objectives through politics rather than

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<sup>61</sup> Walt, Stephen. “Two cheers for Clinton’s foreign policy.” *Foreign Affairs* (2000): 63-79.

<sup>62</sup> Wilson, Andrew. “From the Beltway to Belfast: The Clinton Administration, Sinn Féin, and the Northern Ireland Peace Process.”

<sup>63</sup> White, Timothy. “An Introduction” *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. Ed. Timothy White. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Wilson 24.

<sup>65</sup> Wilson. Also: Clancy, Mary-Alice. “The Lessons of Third Party Intervention?” *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. Ed. Timothy White. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. 173-179.

<sup>66</sup> Wilson 39.

<sup>67</sup> Cochrane.

violence. Indeed, Clinton's decision to grant Gerry Adams a visa in 1994 is widely credited with bestowing the legitimacy upon Sinn Féin that was critical in convincing members of the nationalist community that it had a future as a viable political entity, and thus enabled them to enter the negotiating process that would lead to the announcement of an IRA ceasefire seven months later.<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, international actors may similarly play a substantial role in driving relevant state actors towards resolving sectarian conflicts. Therefore, members of the international community should exert available leverage over relevant state actors in pursuit of peace, whether in the form of economic incentives, diplomatic pressure, or another mechanism. Many American observers at the time lamented what they saw as the betrayal of America's "special relationship" with Britain, but this relationship was instrumental to the peace process.<sup>69</sup> This unique relationship is what enabled the United States to act contrary to Britain's interests when necessary, and thus, also, allowed it to serve as a successful mediator to the broader conflict.<sup>70</sup> President Ronald Reagan, for example, pressured Thatcher to enter into the negotiations with Dublin that culminated in the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement.<sup>71</sup> Thatcher's decision to support the agreement was in part the result of a desire to ensure Reagan's support in stopping the flow of money and guns from Irish-America to the IRA.<sup>72</sup> The ability of international actors to utilize leverage over state actors in pursuit of conflict resolution is further evident at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—while the United States is seen as strong ally of Israel, it is also clear that it is the only state with enough potential leverage to even attempt to bring Israel into a legitimate peace negotiation.

### *3.3.3. Encourage Diasporas to play a constructive role in the peace process*

Diasporas are transnational communities that maintain a sense of attachment to their place of origin, and which subsequently are capable of serving as an important bridge between homelands and host countries. Conventional wisdom holds that Diasporas primarily serve as obstacles to conflict resolution in their native countries. Benedict Anderson coined the phrase "long-distance nationalist" in reference to the extremism and "political irresponsibility" practiced by Diaspora communities who take a hardline, nationalist approach to political issues in their home countries but are not exposed to the negative exigencies that might result from an unwillingness to compromise.<sup>73</sup> Political leaders and influential figures within a Diaspora community should utilize their leverage to direct the full force of long-distance nationalists in defense of peaceful conflict resolution.

In the case of Northern Ireland, Irish-American politicians played a transformative role in securing American involvement in the peace process and getting the Irish-American population behind a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Senator Ted Kennedy traditionally forwarded pro-republican proposals summarized in a 1973 edition of *Foreign Policy*: "In the long run, we

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<sup>68</sup> Wilson 31.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson 35.

<sup>70</sup> White 11.

<sup>71</sup> Wilson 23.

<sup>72</sup> Briand 178.

<sup>73</sup> Cochrane, Baser, and Swain. "Home Thoughts from Abroad: Diasporas and Peace-Building in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka."



should leave no doubt of our support for unification as the ultimate goal for Ireland.”<sup>74</sup> However, the “Four Horsemen,” as the leading Irish-American politicians of the time were known, became instrumental in the movement towards favoring peaceful resolution in the Irish-American community. Kennedy, Tip O’Neill, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan issued a statement on St. Patrick’s Day 1977 that was a “watershed for constitutional nationalism.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, American congressional leaders founded the Friends of Ireland in 1981, and were consequently in a position to more effectively lobby for a peaceful resolution to the Northern Ireland conflict. The role of the Irish-American Diaspora, therefore, serves as a perfect illustration of the manner in which Diasporas can have a beneficial, as well as significant, impact in leveraging their understanding of, and influence over, key players in the conflict to push all sides towards peace.

#### **4. GETTING TO PEACE**

There is no cookie-cutter approach to global conflict resolution, but it remains worthwhile to examine the lessons learned from a process that induced long-dominant paramilitaries to lay down their arms and turn definitively to politics over violence. Making peace is a difficult process marked by many setbacks and roadblocks, yet sharing insights from one conflict can hopefully make the process a little smoother in the next.

##### **4.1. Background on the peace process**

The Northern Ireland peace process seemed hopeless at times, with participants pontificating on their view of history for hours, insulting each other for weeks, and discussing the basic rules and agenda for months. Yet the participants were at the table because they had a desire to end the decades of violence that had marred their society. Despite – or, seen another way, because of – the chaos and conflict that arose throughout, the Northern Ireland peace process worked toward lofty goals of nonviolence and enduring peace.

In October 1997, substantive negotiations began in earnest. They were divided into three strands. Strand one, chaired by the British government, revolved around Northern Ireland’s internal political arrangement. Strand two, chaired by Senator Mitchell, concerned North-South relations. Strand three, conducted by the Irish and British governments, regarded relations between the two nations and was widely considered the easiest to resolve. Noting that the high tensions could lead participants to continue talks indefinitely or allow outside events to derail them, Mitchell set a hard deadline for Easter 1998.

A disagreement over word choice in strand two almost collapsed the agreement at the last minute.<sup>76</sup> The final document was to be written by British and Irish Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern, but the unionist parties found a draft unacceptable and asked for a rewrite of the document. This rewrite was agreed to and included a key compromise on the powers accorded to the North-South institutions and the Northern Ireland assembly. Instead of making one body clearly superior to the other, the two bodies were framed as “mutually interdependent” and equal. A last-minute dispute involved ambiguous language that yielded multiple interpretations, but Blair was able to alleviate these concerns without any rewrites by cleverly releasing a clarifying

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<sup>74</sup> Kennedy, Edward M. “Ulster is an International Issues.” *Foreign Policy*, Summer No. 11 (1973): pg. 57-71: 71.

<sup>75</sup> Briand 174.

<sup>76</sup> Mitchell, George. *Making Peace*. 176.

letter alongside the final document. With this, the final hurdle was cleared, and on April 10, 1998, the final document was released.

The Good Friday Agreement provided an outline for stable institutions within Northern Ireland and codified Belfast's complex relationships with Dublin and London. Its 11,000 words established an array of institutions and principles, though a number of concerns remained unaddressed.<sup>77</sup> First, the accord settled the issue of Northern Ireland's self-determination. Unlike the Sunningdale Agreement, the Good Friday Agreement stated that the people of Northern Ireland could decide whether to remain with Britain or a united Ireland. It accorded a "parity of esteem" to both views, recognizing each side's longstanding views as legitimate. Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution were revised so that Dublin no longer had a claim on Northern Ireland's six counties. In other words, only the people of Northern Ireland had a say in their fate. Second, the agreement created a 108-member assembly in Belfast. The Northern Ireland Assembly would have power over areas like education, health, and agriculture, while Westminster would retain lawmaking authority in the areas of defense and law and order. It was structured around cross-community representation – requiring politicians to register as nationalist, unionist or "other" – and power-sharing. The new government would have formal ties to Dublin, London, Wales, and Scotland.

Unresolved issues related to decommissioning and policing, however, left holes in the document. New commissions would review policing legislation, but the accord itself did not provide guidelines for reform. Decommissioning was emphasized as an important part of negotiations, but the accord did not have teeth to enforce it. Paramilitary prisoners would be released within two years, instigating questions about public reconciliation. Education reform and other social and cultural initiatives were beyond the scope of a document that sought primarily to end violence.

The public supported the Good Friday Agreement in an all-Ireland referendum – though this was truer of Catholics than Protestants – but it was difficult to implement. Following complaints over decommissioning on both sides, the British government reinstated direct rule during various stretches of time from 2000 to 2007, during which parliament remained dissolved. To resolve this unfinished business, Northern Irish, British and Irish government leaders met in St. Andrews, Scotland for a new round of talks. The resulting St. Andrews Agreement – negotiated in 2006 and implemented in 2007 – bestowed political and judicial legitimacy on the Northern Ireland Assembly. It also led to Sinn Féin's endorsement of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), a key gesture in restoring Catholic faith in Northern Ireland's predominantly Protestant police force. With this, the leaders solidified the Good Friday Agreement and secured the continuation of a peaceful and functioning Northern Ireland. Today, while the number of Northern Irish citizens who live in a mixed-religion community or attend an integrated school remains low, the number of violent incidents has shrunk dramatically, and Northern Ireland has a homicide rate comparable to Sweden's and Australia's.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> McKittrick and McVea 219.

<sup>78</sup> UTV Live News, Belfast Among UK's Most Violent Areas, <http://www.u.tv/News/Belfast-among-UKs-most-violent-areas/418d4a9b-a950-47a2-a507-bad3b0751b21>.

This section examines six key aspects of the peace process and its immediate aftermath that offer lessons for other conflicts: the methods and the leadership used at the negotiating table; the treatment of violence throughout the process; the violence-causing economic inequality; the consociational and cross-border institutions established in the GFA; and the balancing of peace and justice.

#### 4.2. Successful strategies require smart tactics

“Among the lessons I learned from this experience were the importance of having a plan and sticking to it while retaining the flexibility to make adjustments as circumstances change; the necessity of total commitment; and the needs for patience and perseverance to overcome the inevitable setbacks. These are not brilliant insights, but rather the kind of common sense that is often overwhelmed by panic at the first sign of adversity.”

– *Senator George Mitchell, on lessons learned in the Senate*<sup>79</sup>

The negotiations in the late 1990s, culminating in the GFA, cast light on the influence of the methods used at the negotiating table. While these methods can vary from conflict to conflict, George Mitchell proved in Northern Ireland that the form the negotiations take determines whether parties can reach agreement, and ultimately shapes the post-conflict society as well. During the negotiations, Mitchell separated tactics and strategies – the *how* vs. the *what*.

For example, Mitchell’s ultimate goal was for the negotiations to lead to a peaceful society. To achieve this, he created what became known as the Mitchell Principles, which required all parties at the table to commit to nonviolence.

“To draft [the principles] in a way that was practical and would advance the process; to gain widespread acceptance of and support for them; to get all of the parties to agree to them. These were strategic objectives,” Mitchell recalled. “How to accomplish these objectives, specifically the process by which I could persuade the parties to agree to them (e.g., making up

##### **The Mitchell Principles**

All involved in negotiations had to affirm their commitment:

- A. To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;
- B. To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations;
- C. To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;
- D. To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;
- E. To agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and,
- F. To urge that "punishment" killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.

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<sup>79</sup> Mitchell 8.

procedures), these were tactical.”<sup>80</sup> Overall, Mitchell’s strategies provided a vision and roadmap for the peace process, but the agreement would not have been feasible without the tactics he created to work through the negotiations.

It is important to note, however, that not all aspects of the peace process can be planned for in an orderly fashion. Tactics can be childish and farcical at times. On the first day of the negotiations, a British government representative had to sit in Mitchell’s chair until he arrived lest a DUP politician occupy it and refuse to budge – a rather high-stakes game of musical chairs. On the last day, facing a hard deadline, Mitchell “starved the groups out of the negotiating chamber, like house guests who had overstayed their welcome and kept drinking the whiskey.”<sup>81</sup> Without breakfast or coffee, he thought that their stomachs might push them to agreement when their minds had not. There was a certain amount of randomness as well. In the 1980s, Gerry Adams sent John Major a letter that was widely seen as opening up the possibility that Sinn Féin would be willing to end the violence, but it arrived at 10 Downing Street on Shankill Road, a heavily Loyalist area of Belfast. It eventually made its way to Major at London’s 10 Downing Street, but what if it had not? Additionally, Adams said the entire effort was based on “something I just read somewhere.”<sup>82</sup> With this caveat in mind, what follows are nine of the negotiations’ most influential – and least comedic – tactics.

#### *4.2.1. Negotiation tactics can mirror post-conflict processes*

At their best, tactics can mirror processes that will become essential in the post-conflict society, giving them a trial run. Power sharing between nationalists and unionists would be key in future Northern Irish politics, and Mitchell gave negotiators practice by requiring what he called “sufficient consensus” during the talks. Sufficient consensus dictated that a majority of unionists, majority of nationalists, majority overall, and approval by both the British and Irish governments was necessary to move the agreement beyond the negotiating table.<sup>83</sup> This gave parties the freedom to disagree with politically unfeasible points of the agreement and enabled them to appeal to their base while still acting as a “mechanism which ensured that any agreement reached in the talks would have broad support.”<sup>84</sup> Not only did this tactic ensure that all parties supported the GFA, but it prepared them to share power in the post-conflict political system.

#### *4.2.2. Too many preconditions will hurt, not help, the peace process*

Before getting to the table and establishing these tactics and strategies, however, it has often been demanded that groups meet certain preconditions. Yet any preconditions used must not overly penalize one party, avoiding the tendency to create a zero-sum game. Too many preconditions can act as disincentives, especially when they create winners and losers before negotiations even begin. Parties, especially those that are already reluctant to negotiate, will likely shy away from the negotiating table if preconditions aim to lock them in. Thus, leaders

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<sup>80</sup> Email sent from Mitchell to the authors, Oct. 22, 2014.

<sup>81</sup> Cochrane 185.

<sup>82</sup> Cochrane 123.

<sup>83</sup> Mitchell 62.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

should recognize when a precondition stands in the way of political progress and consider appointing a third-party organization to provide recommendations on getting past this roadblock.

In Northern Ireland, preconditions came in the form of a paramilitary ceasefire, which was deemed acceptable and necessary, and prior decommissioning of weapons, which created a deadlock. As former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said, “asking the IRA, who had fought a 30-year war, to surrender was just stupid.”<sup>85</sup> If negotiations didn’t work out, the IRA would have nothing to show for their years of struggle, he said.<sup>86</sup> The International Body on Decommissioning – a third-party group led by Mitchell, Holkeri and de Chastelain – made progress by suggesting parallel decommissioning. This involved paramilitary disarmament in conjunction with the talks, allowing all actors to save face without significantly compromising on their initial positions.

#### 4.2.3. Inclusivity around the table is key

In Northern Ireland and elsewhere, inclusivity is invaluable. For any formal agreement to hold, groups on all sides must be included in negotiations and must have a stake in them. Everyone

Women should also not be left out of negotiations. The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition played an instrumental role when they came to the table later in the peace process, because of their fresh perspective and willingness to ask questions that “the men thought were stupid,” as Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition founding member Avila Kilmurray said. Furthermore, they were, “the most sensible people in the place,” according to Bertie Ahern. Although the women were not welcomed at first, Mitchell said they earned their colleagues’ respect. Women will talk differences, they will discuss the impact of the peace process on families and children, and they will look for “points for commonality” rather than stick with the “us and them” mentality that men are prone to.

who is a part of the problem must be part of the solution. This was a thorny process in Northern Ireland given the region’s centuries of conflict, but a necessary one when it came to involving former extremists willing to lay down their arms in favor of peace. This conclusion seems logical, yet as former Prime Minister Tony Blair’s chief of staff Jonathan Powell notes, governments often fall victim to a “collective amnesia” that has them claiming they will never talk to terrorists. In a *Guardian* article provocatively titled “How to talk to terrorists,” Powell observes that “every time we confront a new terrorist group, we begin by insisting we will never talk to them. As Dick Cheney put it, ‘we don’t negotiate with evil; we defeat it’. In fact, history suggests we don’t usually defeat them and we nearly always end up talking to them.”<sup>87</sup> Despite sporadic violence throughout the process, the daily toll of civilian casualties significantly decreased because of paramilitaries’ engagement in the peace process. The parties’ rise in political power diverted the efforts of the militant wings away from violence and toward a focus on democratic reform and political representation – the ballot box, not the Armalite. As political

scientist Timothy White has asserted, “the Northern Irish case demonstrates that that it is always, or nearly always, a good idea to talk to the enemy, even if they are or have historically been seen as terrorists. After all, if those who are engaging in violence are not included in a peace process, is there any hope for peace?”<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Powell, Jonathan. "How to Talk to Terrorists." *The Guardian* 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 24 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/-sp-how-to-talk-to-terrorists-isis-al-qaida>>.

<sup>88</sup> White 7.

#### 4.2.4. Use backchannels to build relationships and trust

While it is essential to begin conversations with extremists, this can be difficult to do publicly for political reasons. Even when politicians get past their aversion to “talking to terrorists,” they may be unwilling to admit it. This challenge illustrates the importance of backchannels as a key aspect of any peace process. During the negotiations, secret meetings between participants gave way to public cooperation. As one scholar of conflict resolution put it, “backchannel communication was used to assemble a broad array of parties, who then reached an agreement on most of the critical issues in front-channel negotiation.”<sup>89</sup> Backchannels include any kind of secret – or sometimes even publicly acknowledged – communication between leaders of opposing nations and organizations. Meetings of this sort provide opportunities to speak without the pressure of publicity or any symbolic recognition of the adversary, and offer greater flexibility and political cover. They can “reduce stereotyping and increase trust, respect, positive feelings, and empathy between the participants, eroding the sense that nothing change because of demons on the other side.”<sup>90</sup>

Secret meetings between governments and paramilitaries were common throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 1997, Martin McGuinness contacted Jonathan Powell and asked to meet him in Derry, away from the British government, the media, and other politicians. Powell spent three hours with Adams by an open fire, eating tea and sandwiches and establishing a working relationship that would prove important during the negotiations. “We didn’t make any breakthroughs, but... the shared risks we took helped establish a relationship of trust, in which ideas could be explored informally and progress made,” Powell recalled.<sup>91</sup> All of these backchannels are credited to have improved relationships and information-sharing, ultimately and facilitating the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement and the GFA in 1998.<sup>92</sup>

Too many backchannels, however, pose a risk. During the formal negotiations, conflict resolution expert Feargal Cochrane said their prevalence meant that “nobody really knew for sure who was talking to whom, or whether anybody was actually listening in any case. This culture of secrecy pervaded the relationships of the formal political actors throughout the peace process, as politicians scuttled around having clandestine meetings with one another.”<sup>93</sup> While they are useful and important, negotiators should use backchannels only when necessary early on, and open conversations should be more common than secret ones once official talks begin.

#### 4.2.5. Do not fear: media leaks aren’t always bad

On the other end of the spectrum, extreme publicity also has its benefits during formal negotiations. George Mitchell recalls that “virtually every document prepared during the negotiations was immediately leaked to the media,” a fact that he initially resented and later

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<sup>89</sup> Pruitt, Dean G. "Back-channel communication in the settlement of conflict." *International Negotiation* 13.1 (2008): 51.

<sup>90</sup> Pruitt 42.

<sup>91</sup> Powell.

<sup>92</sup> O’Kane, Eamonn. "Learning from Northern Ireland? The uses and abuses of the Irish ‘model’." *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 12.2 (2010): 242.

<sup>93</sup> Cochrane 129.

came to appreciate.<sup>94</sup> The volume of leaks surprised Mitchell at first. Participants spent hours arguing over what had appeared in the day's newspapers, which Mitchell said "didn't just take up a lot of time, [but] poisoned the atmosphere, creating and exacerbating hostility among the participants."<sup>95</sup> Over time, however, Mitchell's attitude toward the leaks changed, and he called them an integral part of the process. Leaks created time for issues to diffuse and allowed negotiators to reassure their constituencies. Furthermore, the fact the chairmen of the negotiations were *not* leaking documents actually heightened their respect from parties around the table.

This view is somewhat unorthodox in conflict resolution, as the Camp David Accords are often cited as an example of the historic progress that can be made outside the public glare. With no media attention or access to the outside world, President Jimmy Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat spent 13 days negotiating a resolution between Israel and Egypt. While it is true that this approach also succeeded, the Northern Ireland negotiations show that, if nothing else, leaks can be overcome and even used as a political tool to help issues diffuse.

#### *4.2.6. Let it go: dramatic walkouts are not always bad*

Although inclusivity was an enduring ideal of the negotiations, it was not always feasible to keep two governments and 10 parties around the table at all times. Upon Mitchell's appointment as chairman of the negotiation, Ian Paisley stormed out of the room, followed not only by his delegates but also by the UK Unionist Party (UKUP) and its leader Robert McCartney. Despite an overwhelming sense of discomfort and his "fleeting urge to get up and go home," Mitchell came to the "realization that [he] and the peace process were being tested...[and if he] ran away now...this process might collapse."<sup>96</sup> Mitchell gathered his confidence and announced then and there that he would ask each remaining party to pledge allegiance to the Mitchell Principles. He created a procedure on the spot and the seven remaining parties, as well as the British secretary of state and Irish foreign ministers, played along. They accepted the Mitchell Principles unanimously.<sup>97</sup> Not only did Mitchell refuse to let the most extreme participants derail the negotiations, but he capitalized on an opportunity to move the process forward. Upon their return the next day, the DUP and UKUP also accepted the Mitchell Principles and were allowed to rejoin the negotiations. Only Sinn Féin remained excluded from the talks because of their broken ceasefire, which went against the Mitchell Principles' prohibition of violence.

The DUP and UKUP walked out again when Sinn Féin was accepted to the talks. This time, the loyalist parties refused to return while Sinn Féin remained. This episode showed that mid-negotiation walkouts have two main benefits: they proved the negotiations' durability and allowed those left behind the freedom to negotiate without the drama of the exiting groups. Though seemingly contradictory, Paisley's and his followers' theatrical walkout contributed to moving the negotiations forward by giving the parties still at the table – especially the UUP, which was his main competitor for unionist votes – a respite from their antagonism to the peace

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<sup>94</sup> Mitchell 75.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell 62.

<sup>96</sup> Mitchell 50.

<sup>97</sup> Mitchell 53.

process. The DUP's absence "freed the UUP from daily attacks at the negotiating table, and gave the party room to negotiate that it might not otherwise have had," Mitchell said. While "reaching an agreement without their presence was extremely difficult; it would have been impossible with them in the room."<sup>98</sup> Their absence gave its main unionist rivals space to make real concessions and take risks, thereby advancing the peace process. While walkouts can be disheartening, they are helpful and should not be stopped as long as those who participate are provided with an avenue to rejoin the process.

#### *4.2.7. Don't break too frequently*

Multi-year negotiations understandably warrant breaks from the talks, but as articulated by Bertie Ahern, there is a point at which the breaks do more harm than good. "We made one mistake," which was a lengthy break for Christmas in 1997, Ahern said.<sup>99</sup> Although it seemed like after 18 months of negotiations, the talks remained fraught with "insult, invective, and recrimination," Mitchell dismissed the negotiators for the holiday asking that they "make the next Christmas one of peace, political stability, and reconciliation in Northern Ireland."<sup>100</sup> What followed was tragic. "The already bad political situation deteriorated sharply" with the murder of LVF leader Billy Wright and subsequent threats from the group, Mitchell wrote.<sup>101</sup> Violence returned to the streets, shots were fired, lives were lost, a car bomb was found in Banbridge (thankfully before it detonated), and the momentum built up in the negotiations prior to the Christmas break was lost. The break nearly cost the negotiations.

#### *4.2.8. Hard deadlines may not ensure success, but their absence can prevent it*

Hard deadlines should be used to drive negotiators to an agreement and minimize unnecessary delays in the process. After 18 months of slow progress, Mitchell became "convinced that without such a deadline the process was doomed to fail."<sup>102</sup> He set the date at the negotiators' Easter break, after which talks would be called off in the absence of an agreement. The participants appreciated this concern and "they accepted the deadline because they were as eager as I was to get an agreement. It was that attitude, more than anything else, which gave me hope," Mitchell wrote.<sup>103</sup> Tensions heightened as the final deadline drew near, and the possibility of failure loomed. There remained large differences on important issues, but Mitchell said he became certain that if parties failed to meet the deadline it would be because of their beliefs and not their level of commitment. The hard deadline also proved effective in keeping talks on track despite violence, as "too much momentum had been generated. The finish line was in sight."<sup>104</sup>

Such tactics had proven effective before, particularly Tony Blair's ultimatum to Sinn Féin upon becoming Prime Minister in 1997. "The settlement train is leaving," he had told Sinn Féin. "I want you on that train. But it is leaving anyway and I will not allow it to wait for you. You

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<sup>98</sup> Mitchell 110.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Mitchell 126-127.

<sup>101</sup> Mitchell 129.

<sup>102</sup> Email sent from Mitchell to the authors, Oct. 22, 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Mitchell 146.

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell 173.



cannot hold the process to ransom any longer. So, end the violence now.”<sup>105</sup> Sinn Féin soon approached the negotiating table and was an active participant by the time Mitchell’s hard deadline approached. In Mitchell’s case, participants made the majority of compromises in the last two weeks before the deadline, and on Good Friday were ready to vote for a lasting agreement. One additional insight from the progress made that day is that “when you’ve got the votes, you vote. Delay can only hurt,” Mitchell said, reiterating a lesson he had learned as Senate majority leader.<sup>106</sup> So he held the vote on April 10, 1998, ending nearly three decades of sectarian conflict and two long years of negotiations.

#### *4.2.9. Ambiguity: A syntactic tactic that can get you to “Yes”*

Ambiguous language in peace agreements allows both sides to sell them to their audience. In the GFA, such language was essentially required. In some instances, parties would not agree to sign “unless the language was sufficiently elastic to allow it to be read differently by the opposing sides,” Mitchell said.<sup>107</sup> Each party needed to be able to sell the GFA to its base, so many leaders, Tony Blair included, were accepting of what they called this “constructive ambiguity.”<sup>108</sup> Yet a joke at the time went like this: “What do you get if you cross the peace process with the mafia? Answer: An offer that you can’t refuse, but can’t understand.”<sup>109</sup> On the controversial issue of decommissioning, for example, the text read that all participants “confirm their intention to continue to work constructively and in good faith...and to use any influence they may have, to achieve decommissioning of all paramilitary arms.”<sup>110</sup> The ambiguity that smoothed the peace process simply left the unanswered questions to be addressed later.<sup>111</sup> In the words of Bertie Ahern, “in the heat of the battle, [a] word or sentence means everything but when it comes to implementation in effect it means nothing.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, while ambiguity is useful in negotiations and can get to parties to “yes” in otherwise tricky circumstances, it should be seen as a Band-Aid approach and not a solution.

#### *4.2.10. “It’s Your Decision”: Include civilians in the peace process*

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<sup>105</sup> Mitchell 101.

<sup>106</sup> Mitchell 5.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> White 6.

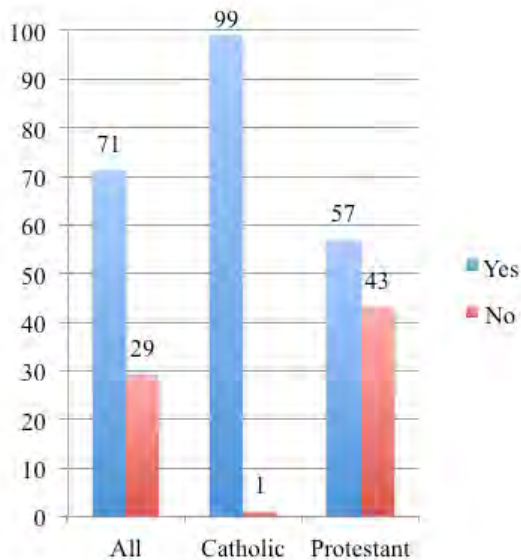
<sup>109</sup> Cochrane 184.

<sup>110</sup> Cochrane 184-185.

<sup>111</sup> Cochrane 184.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

**Referendum in Northern Ireland:** “Do you support the agreement reached in the multi-party talks on Northern Ireland and set out in Command Paper 3883 (the Good Friday Agreement)?”



Post-agreement referenda help validate the negotiations by demonstrating popular support for their outcome. This strengthens and solidifies the peace process by giving the conflict’s survivors a role in its resolution and in the future of their country. For the GFA, the final approval of the people of Ireland was required before it could go into effect. Campaigning was messy and contentious, but the outcome was a solid “yes” for the agreement. The DUP launched a “No” campaign, led by Ian Paisley. A complementary “Yes” campaign followed, though its success was due largely to an independent, civil society group as the Nationalist and Unionist parties could not collaborate to sell the agreement, and the UUP faced sharp internal division. Each household in Northern Ireland received a pamphlet containing the text of the agreement, with a cover reading “It’s Your Decision.”<sup>113</sup> The agreement was put to a vote in two separate referenda, one in Northern Ireland and one in the Republic of Ireland, where voters were also deciding whether to cede the country’s territorial claim to the north. Cochrane noted that “for two years, the people had sat back and watched the political elites negotiate the GFA. Now the baton was

passed to the wider community,” who, ultimately, would live with the decision’s results.<sup>114</sup> With 81 percent turnout, 676,966 Northern Irish voters said “yes” to the GFA and 274,879 said “no,” for a vote of 71 to 29 percent.<sup>115</sup> These numbers, however, belie a 42-point difference in Catholic and Protestant support for the of Ireland, where turnout was 55 and 5 percent said no.

Although polls taken in Northern reveal that less than half of vote “yes” if the referendum were showed that 71 percent of country had become a better place While the polls show that sectarian referenda legitimized the GFA and who had long watched the negotiations, unfold around them. monitored in the following years, what is most important in



Ireland in 2000 and 2003 Protestants said they would held again, a 2013 poll respondents thought the since the agreement.<sup>116</sup> divisions remain, the gave a voice to the people violence and, later, the Continued support should be but the initial “yes” vote is transitioning into a post-

<sup>113</sup> Cochrane 191.

<sup>114</sup> Cochrane 193.

<sup>115</sup> Cochrane 198.

<sup>116</sup> White 3 and "Northern Ireland 'better since Good Friday Agreement' Suggests Survey." BBC News. 23 May 2013. Web. 28 Nov. 2014.

conflict society. The referenda therefore provide a model for other countries seeking popular support for negotiated agreements and the shape of the country's future.

### **4.3. Effective leadership brings progress**

“It's about trust and respect.”

– *Former Irish Ambassador to the UK Dáithí O'Ceallaigh*

Leadership can be frustratingly difficult to define, but a review of sectarian conflicts shows that effective political leaders have a uniquely powerful opportunity to foster peace processes. Because political elites are the sector of society charged with constructing and approving a viable peace agreement, there is enormous responsibility on all sides to work together for the good of the country. While there is no one-size-fits all guide to successful leadership in conflict resolution, there are several generalizable insights to be gained from studying Northern Ireland.

First, it is nearly impossible for leaders to engage successfully in a peace process if they lack a strong, genuine desire for peace and commitment to achieving it. Leaders must be resilient and demonstrate profound patience in the face of personal insults and professional setbacks. Second, leaders must put themselves in the other parties' shoes in order to understand where they are coming from and what they hope to achieve. Third, trust and interpersonal relationships between leaders matter— and making connections around seemingly unrelated topics like opera or sports can bring huge benefits when it comes down to tough decisions around the negotiating table. Finally, active and intelligent communication is essential for leaders to acquire the support of the public for a peace agreement as well as maintain the electoral support of their constituencies moving forward. In regards to each of these recommendations it is important for leaders to recognize that strong leadership is an action that must be actively upheld, not an ingrained personal characteristic to rely upon.

#### *4.3.1. Personal motivation, patience, and commitment are fundamental*

A peace process cannot succeed if its key leaders are not strongly motivated to achieve peace, often on a deeply personal level. Throughout Northern Ireland's peace process, and especially at make-it-or-break-it moments along the way, this motivation inspired the extraordinary levels of patience and commitment that made the negotiations possible. Without these key traits, leaders would not have worked through months of dragging talks or pursued peace over personal goals.

Leaders John Hume of the moderate and nationalist SDLP and David Trimble of the moderate and unionist UUP were both so motivated to achieve peace that they pursued it at the cost of their future careers, though their efforts were vindicated with the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize. As former Irish Ambassador Daithí O'Ceallaigh said, “John Hume was fully aware of what he was doing and told me he would sacrifice the fate of the SDLP if it could bring peace to Northern Ireland,” which is exactly what he did. In his Nobel speech, Trimble also made clear his dedication to the gritty realities of the process and his patience for its less glamorous matters. “Some critics complain that I lack ‘the vision thing,’” he said. “But vision in its pure meaning is clear sight. That does not mean I have no dreams. I do. But I try to have them at night. By day I

am satisfied if I can see the furthest limit of what is possible.”<sup>117</sup> This strong and grounded leadership, focused on the greater good of Northern Ireland, was key to achieving a workable, lasting peace agreement.

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, another prominent participant, also displayed these qualities. He remained remarkably dedicated to the prospect of peace despite the skepticism of his colleagues and the death of his mother during the talks. Noting his 18-hour workdays, Ahern’s deputy Prime Minister Mary Harney recalled telling him, “You’re crazy. They are crazy people. We’re never going to get a deal. You’ll just wear yourself out.” Nevertheless, he continued to work toward an end to the conflict whose death tolls and bombings he had grown accustomed to watching on the nightly news. Ahern’s mother died at a key moment during the negotiations, just as the British and Irish governments had proposed final language on Strand Two of the talks. The unionists refused to accept the proposal as written, threatening to quit if they could not change the text. As he paced the streets of Dublin following his mother’s funeral, Ahern decided to encourage the parties to renegotiate. “It was a big decision by a big man,” Mitchell wrote, and “it made possible everything that followed.”<sup>118</sup>

George Mitchell’s dedication was also tested by personal hardships – including his brother’s death and wife’s miscarriage – as well as numerous moments when it appeared the talks would fall apart. Yet he continued to lead the negotiations, fueled by a deep personal motivation. His wife gave birth to a son later in the talks as Mitchell pressed on. On the day of his son’s birth, Mitchell asked a staffer for the number of babies born in Northern Ireland that day. It was 61. He asked himself, “shouldn’t those 61 children in Northern Ireland have the same chance in life that we wanted for our son?”<sup>119</sup> He is also the most outstanding example of the value of patience during negotiations. Mitchell displayed tremendous personal restraint throughout lengthy diatribes from both sides, personal insults, and unstable talks. As Feargal Cochrane says, “Mitchell’s approach to negotiation was akin to Muhammad Ali’s ‘rope-a-dope’ style of fighting, where he would let opponents pummel him furiously and tire themselves out, while he defended himself on the ropes and conserved his energy. Once they were exhausted, he would open up on them and win the fight.”<sup>120</sup> Like Ahern, Hume, and Trimble, Mitchell’s genuine dedication to the cause and deep reserve of patience were key to successful leadership.

Numerous other politicians invested heavily in the peace process. President Bill Clinton called participants at all hours of the night, while Prime Minister Tony Blair was said to have “spent as much time on the Northern Ireland issue as any other.”<sup>121</sup> The impact of these leaders’ motivation, patience, and commitment throughout the long and difficult process cannot be underestimated in ending the cycle of violence.

#### *4.3.2. Put yourself in their shoes*

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<sup>117</sup> Hume, David. “Nobel Lecture.” Oslo, Norway. 10 Dec. 1998. Lecture.  
[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1998/trimble-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1998/trimble-lecture.html)

<sup>118</sup> Mitchell 17.

<sup>119</sup> Mitchell 122.

<sup>120</sup> Cochrane 178.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

People living through sectarian conflict may develop “an insular view of their own reality” and a “‘deafness’ to other perspectives,” says Timothy Phillips of the Project of Justice in Times of Transition.<sup>122</sup> Each side often possesses a competing narrative of the relevant history and divergent ideas for the future. As negotiation expert Roger Fisher writes in his seminal work *Getting to Yes*, successful participants in a negotiation must realize that:

The ability to see the situation as the other side sees it, as difficult as it may be, is one of the most important skills a negotiator can possess. It is not enough to know that they see things differently. If you want to influence them, you also need to understand empathetically the power of their point of view and to feel the emotional force with which they believe in it.<sup>123</sup>

Fisher proceeds to recommend that participants do this by arguing the other parties’ positions out loud. While this did not happen explicitly in Northern Ireland, it was up to leaders to acknowledge and transcend the ethno-religious divides despite their own backgrounds.

Participants in the Northern Ireland talks exerted themselves to connect with their counterparts, including Progressive Unionist Party leader and former paramilitary David Ervine, who said “It can be difficult to transcend the mythology of one’s own ethnic group.”<sup>124</sup> Ahern echoed this sentiment by arguing that “the big thing is to always try and put yourself in their shoes, try to understand what it is that is making them tick. Why are they involved in the conflict and how do they see the conflict.” Fisher turns to the conflict in Northern Ireland himself, highlighting the key gaps in each side’s understanding of the other. Protestants, he says, did not adequately value Catholics’ need for acceptance and equality, while Catholics did not appreciate the sense of insecurity Protestants felt from being a minority on the island.<sup>125</sup> The basic ability to listen to and comprehend the other side was key to reaching a collective understanding and willingness to collaborate in the GFA proceedings.

#### *4.3.3. Build trust through personal relationships*

Understanding the other side is just a first step to a successful negotiation, and must be followed by a build-up of trust among leaders. This trust-building between opposing leaders takes place on both official and personal levels. From the short-lived collaboration between John Hume and the unionists in 1973 to the power-sharing between Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness decades later, both sides saw that working relationships could be made across a sectarian division. This was also key during the talks since, as Mitchell realized early on, “ultimately my ability to be effective would depend more upon my gaining the participants’ trust and confidence than on the formal description of my authority.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The Project on Justice in Times of Transition. *Beyond conflict, 20 years of putting experience to work for peace*, (Italy: Brideswell Books, 2013), 14-15.

<sup>123</sup> Fisher, Roger, and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Penguin, 1991. 16.

<sup>124</sup> Project on Justice in Times of Transition 17.

<sup>125</sup> Fisher 28.

<sup>126</sup> Mitchell 57.

On a personal level, remembering that negotiators are people too is key to building future trust, respect, and even camaraderie. While it is true that as Dáithí O’Ceallaigh said, “you don’t have to like a person, but at the end of the day you still have to work with them,” building personal rapport helps. Bertie Ahern recalled his efforts to relate to David Trimble by studying up on one of Trimble’s personal interests, opera, despite his lack of interest in the subject. A compact like the GFA is only as good as the word of the leaders who sign it, making this trust key both during and after the peace process.

#### *4.3.4. Strategic communication has benefits during and after negotiations*

Leaders engaged in peace talks must maintain tactful communication with their political support structure, with other negotiating parties, and perhaps most importantly with their constituencies. Leaders will necessarily compromise on their public platforms in order to reach agreement, yet they must be able to sell that final agreement. Maintaining a base level of public awareness regarding the talks’ progress, as well as a sense of prevailing concerns, therefore benefits public acceptance of the resulting agreement and the leaders’ future political success. A lack of communication during talks may mean that one or more groups do not feel ownership of the agreement, or even feel betrayed by their leaders.

During the GFA, media leaks helped participants inform the public, but more concerted efforts at communication were often lacking. For example, the UUP feared that overselling the agreement would spark reactionary republican violence, but its minimal communication with unionists led to the party’s subsequent decline. The resulting split within unionism over the GFA allowed Ian Paisley and the DUP to “cannibalize” the UUP, as one MLA we met put it. The SDLP’s decline can likewise be attributed to poor political engagement with the populace in subsequent years. Sinn Féin, on the other hand, is widely recognized as an effective communications machine. While nationalists never achieved their goal of a united Ireland, their narrative of fighting for equality has seen success, including alternative immigrant populations without a stake in sectarian politics. They have been able to regulate expressions of unionist culture like Orange parades and the flying of the British flag over government buildings, albeit with great resistance from unionists. This gives rise to the common saying “the unionists were too stupid to realize they’d won and the nationalists were too clever to admit they’d lost,” or that the unionists “won the war but lost the peace.” This more recent history shows that political leaders involved in peace talks should develop a strong public relations strategy that boosts both public acceptance of an agreement and continued electoral support. This has overarching benefits, as groups that feel included in the talks and agreement will be more likely to support a lasting peace.

#### **4.4. Manage the relationship between violence and the peace process**

“There was a broad consensus that if [the talks] ended without an agreement there would be an immediate resumption of sectarian violence, possibly on a scale more deadly than ever before...”  
– *George Mitchell*<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Mitchell 110.

The relationship between violence and a peace process can be mutually reinforcing, with the threat of one causing the other to strengthen its resolve, as happened in Northern Ireland. Continuing eruptions of violence often increased negotiators' determination to keep the peace process alive, while the increasing likelihood of a negotiated peace led republican and unionist hardliners, or "spoilers," to intensify their violence in the hopes of derailing the process. To be sure, some acts of extreme violence threatened to unravel the peace process altogether, but existing international and regional momentum kept the process moving forward despite setbacks.

That Northern Ireland's peace process proceeded despite violence shows the importance of leaders' and participants' resolve to keep talks on track. This section contains four recommendations for leaders seeking to address the impact of violence on the process of negotiating peace. First, negotiations' leaders need to support moderates and work with them to marginalize spoilers, as well as create the circumstances to bring spoilers into the peace process. Second, in deciding how to discipline negotiating parties accused of engaging in paramilitary violence, leaders should look to balance justice with political expediency. Third, state actors should ensure that paramilitaries receive pressure from local and international forces to decommission their weapons and turn definitively to politics over violence. Finally, state actors should look to gradually reform the internal security apparatus with the mediation of a third-party organization, extensive domestic dialogue among political and civil society organizations, and the demilitarization of the state. These last two recommendations address violence-related areas that must be addressed to achieve peace, but that can be resolved after negotiations end.

#### *4.4.2. Work with moderates to marginalize spoilers*

Peace negotiations can neither bring all parties in a conflict society together nor occur in a violence-free vacuum. Even when major parties resolve to participate, they cannot bring along all of their constituents, and radicals and splinter groups will emerge. International politics and conflict resolution expert Stephen John Stedman suggests in a seminal article that spoilers who feel threatened by peace and use violence to undermine it pose the greatest risk to a peace process.<sup>128</sup> These spoilers often act under the assumption that parties participating in the peace process have betrayed their cause and that they can achieve more through military victory. To prevent derailment of peace talks by spoiler violence, leaders should support and work with moderates who are willing to negotiate. Throughout the GFA negotiations, unionist and nationalist spoilers threatened to derail the peace process at several junctures, but were marginalized by skillful political elites and eventually brought into the fold with moderates. Three examples serve to illustrate how GFA negotiators tackled their spoiler problem.

First, the IRA broke its 1994 ceasefire declaration with a bomb explosion in London on February 9, prior to the start of GFA talks. Three weeks later, the British and Irish governments issued a joint communique that effectively maneuvered around this spoiler problem by pushing toward negotiations with moderates and undercutting the spoilers. It set the IRA's return to ceasefire as a precondition for Sinn Féin to enter negotiations – a clear and achievable objective given that the ceasefire was in force for 18 months prior to the attack and nonviolence was one of the Mitchell Principles. Furthermore, requiring a return to ceasefire empowered moderates in Sinn Féin to assert leadership and bring IRA spoilers into the fold, aligning the party's success with that of

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<sup>128</sup> Stedman, Stephen John. "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes." *International Security* 22.2 (1997): 5-53. Print.

the peace process. However, the timing of the joint announcement implied a causation between violence and political progress, which was a dangerous precedent to set.

Second, Northern Ireland nearly disintegrated into a state of sectarian war in summer 1996 during the annual “marching season,” which consists of unionist parades celebrating the Protestant military victory over Ireland in July 1690. At Stormont, the DUP and UKUP delegates walked out and declared that they would not return until the crisis was resolved.<sup>129</sup> Mitchell continued to hold negotiations in Stormont, but did not call for all-party talks until the DUP and UKUP returned on July 22. In allowing the two loyalist parties to leave the talks temporarily and not be excluded from negotiations, Mitchell strengthened the parties’ maneuverability in dealing with spoilers within their constituencies.

Finally, once the GFA was signed, spoilers again attempted to derail the peace process by exploding a bomb in Omagh on August 15, 1998. The bombing was linked to an IRA splinter group called the Real IRA, which emerged in response to the IRA being co-opted into the peace process through the inclusion of Sinn Féin. “In the past, a bombing of this magnitude might have blown any political initiative off course; but the Omagh bombing brought unionists and nationalists together in grief and emboldened the politicians to search harder for a way forward,” Feargal Cochrane asserts.<sup>130</sup> Though the GFA failed to put a stop to spoiler violence, it helped moderates that had invested in the peace process bridge the sectarian divide to fight for a common cause. Given the moderates’ resolve not to appease this new generation of spoilers, anti-agreement groups across Northern Ireland announced a ceasefire that, for the first time in 30 years, brought an end to paramilitary violence.

#### *4.4.3. Balance justice with political expediency when deciding whether to expel parties*

Inclusivity in negotiations, while still desirable, may entail the participation of parties with powerful ties to paramilitary organizations. Leaders must navigate cases of paramilitary violence linked to parties at the negotiating table and issue judgment about the party’s continued presence at the table. The judgment process should not have excessive rules and details, should prevent the success of false accusations, and should be flexible to the circumstances. A policy of flexibility allows neutral arbiters to balance political expediency and formal justice based on the circumstances. Arbiters should punish parties for external events they can control, but not for events they cannot, even if it is politically costly. Parties should also have a path for returning to the negotiating table. Short expulsions give the population a sense of justice without derailing the entire peace process.

During the talks, a pattern emerged for dealing with accused parties: the governments dismissed claims brought against parties by other parties, and expelled parties when evidence of culpability was overwhelming enough that the British government itself brought the claim. Four cases brought against political parties in Stormont demonstrate this pattern. First, in September 1996, delegates from the Alliance Party accused the DUP, UUP, PUP and UDP of violating the Mitchell Principles for having incited violence during the Drumcree crisis. Second, in September 1997, a bomb went off in the predominantly unionist town of Markethill that was linked to a

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<sup>129</sup> Mitchell 60.

<sup>130</sup> Cochrane 205.



breakaway republican group called the Continuity Army Council. Claiming the bombing represented another breach of the IRA ceasefire, the UUP demanded Sinn Féin's expulsion. In both cases, the British and Irish governments refused to expel the accused parties, saving the integrity and inclusivity of the peace process. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern explained that he and Tony Blair were aware of a tendency among parties to accuse each other of paramilitary violence as a way of "sorting out old scores."<sup>131</sup> In the first case, whether or not the accusations were founded, expelling four of five unionist parties, including the most moderate, would have erased any promise of inclusivity and ended the talks. The second case involved a spoiler group over which Sinn Féin had no realistic control.

Next, British Secretary of State to Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam brought two cases against parties whose connections to violence proved irrefutable. This was based on security assessments that were reviewed and judged unanimously by the two prime ministers.<sup>132</sup> In January 1998, with a breakthrough in negotiations, tit-for-tat violence worsened in the streets. One of the killings was traced to the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), a group associated with the UDP. Expelling the UDP meant compromising on inclusivity, but dismissing the violence would have meant abandoning the talks' moral basis. Since the UFF took public responsibility for the murder, the governments found it politically less costly to expel the UDP. One month later, Mowlam initiated an expulsion of Sinn Féin when evidence was discovered linking the IRA to a string of murders. In both expulsions, the governments gave the parties a path back to Stormont upon the cessation of violence. Both expulsions, though controversial, were based on irrefutable evidence. That the British government initiated them is critical, as this prevented parties from falsely accusing each other and ensured that expulsions were viewed as legitimate.

#### *4.4.4. Use a neutral third-party organization and allies to achieve decommissioning*

Disarmament of paramilitary organizations is an integral part of continued implementation of post-conflict peace. States looking to disarm paramilitaries should create neutral third-party organizations that develop rules for decommissioning and verify their implementation. Neutral third-parties have the potential to promote trust with paramilitaries to begin and accomplish decommissioning. However, as the case of Northern Ireland shows, a third-party organization lacks the power to implement its recommended procedures for decommissioning. Instead, pressure on paramilitary organizations from their domestic and international allies is crucial to making violence appear obsolete and providing a political alternative for continued progress.

IRA decommissioning was a point of contention from the beginning of GFA negotiations, and in the 10 years they were stalled, continued control of weapons became their "greatest card."<sup>133</sup> The IRA continually postponed the decommissioning timetable for three principle reasons: it sought to prevent splits in its own ranks, its political participation was not contingent on decommissioning, and it hoped to use decommissioning for greatest gain.<sup>134</sup> As implementation of the GFA was often precarious, the IRA also had an interest in maintaining its weapons in case the conflict reemerged. The GFA created an International Commission on Decommissioning

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<sup>131</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Cochrane 206-7.

under the leadership of John de Chastelain to develop rules of procedure for phased decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. However, as the commission lacked enforcement capacity, its role was limited to verifying the IRA's progress. The international commission was a confidence-building body that was meant to convince communities in Northern Ireland that IRA decommissioning had actually occurred.<sup>135</sup> Actual political pressure for disarmament came from domestic and international allies.

Domestically, Sinn Féin's post-1998 electoral rise put it in a position to deliver on IRA decommissioning. The republican movement's major political victory made the need for continued violence appear increasingly less justified. The international dimension also played an integral role in pressuring the IRA to decommission. American rhetoric and perspective on IRA violence changed dramatically following the attacks of 9/11. A series of scandals, including the IRA's robbery of the Northern Bank in Belfast and revelations that the IRA was training Colombian paramilitaries, further weakened relations between the U.S. and Irish republicans. Having lost a great deal of support from a key international ally and gaining Parliamentary ascendancy through its political arm, the IRA saw little possible gain from continued violence. Thus, increased pressure from Sinn Féin compelled the IRA to disarm in order to reap political benefits within the existing political system. By September 2005, the international commission verified that the IRA had decommissioned its weapons.

*4.4.5. Reform internal security with a third-party organization, domestic negotiations and removal of alternative sources of security*

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Paul Arthur, Professor of Politics at University of Ulster, on Dec. 17, 2014.

Sectarian conflicts arise and persist in large part due to a lack of a consolidated state security apparatus. Thus, internal security reform is integral to post-conflict transitions as a way to reconstitute states' capacity to police their territory and to renegotiate the relationship between the security apparatus and citizens. States should appoint a neutral third-party organization to make recommendations for future reforms and oversee their implementation. Because the

internal security apparatus has direct impact on the entire population, broad sectors of society should be included in negotiations over reforms. Finally, for the internal security apparatus to consolidate power, states should seek demilitarization. Since internal security reform in Northern Ireland was implemented to maintain peace and establish widespread trust among citizens for the police, extensive negotiations and broad involvement from various sectors of society was crucial to its political transition.

Because the internal security apparatus directly affects the entire population, broad sectors of society should be included in talks about reforms. Additionally, for the internal security apparatus to consolidate power, states should seek demilitarization. The relationship between Northern Ireland's security forces and citizens has differing narratives in each community. For unionists, the RUC and the British Army were their protectors during 30 years of republican terrorism. For nationalists, the largely Protestant security forces were perpetrators of violence and injustice. The challenge for elites in Northern Ireland and the GFA-formed international Independent Commission on Policing Reform was to reconcile the communities' divergent perspectives in making reforms that would be acceptable to both. Prior to crafting its recommendations, the commission held more than 40 public meetings to take account of community grievances and interests, as well as to build relationships with communities and political parties.

Chart 46: As a police force how would you describe the performance of the PSNI?



- Not Good
- Very Bad
- No Opinion
- Excellent
- Good
- Average

Source: Belfast Telegraph / Lucid Talk Poll, 24/9/13

This chart from the 2014 Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report shows improved opinion of the PSNI.

The commission's recommendations included symbolic reforms to the RUC's name to PSNI, uniforms and badges, as well as more substantive reforms such as an ombudsman to monitor police misconduct and an international oversight commission. The reforms further altered the PSNI's composition by creating quotas for Catholic participation, which was controversial among Protestant policemen but seen as a necessary step to an inclusive police force.<sup>136</sup> The international oversight commission became key when the British government cut many of the police reforms from its 2000 Police Bill and the commission worked with nationalist parties to convince the British to reintegrate many of the recommendations in a subsequent bill. The reform process took over a decade to implement and required the British government and Northern Ireland's political parties to negotiate over the commission's recommendations before they were finalized. Furthermore, reforms of the internal security apparatus were finalized only

<sup>136</sup> Nolan, Paul. "Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report." Number Three. Community Relations Council. March 2014. Graph. 47. The composition of the police force changed from 8 percent Catholic and 92 percent Protestant in 1999 to 31 percent Catholic and 67 percent Protestant in 2013.

after IRA decommissioning and British Army withdrawal. According to Queens University professor Peter Shirlow, the new PSNI is one of Northern Ireland's most "liberal institutions," with members aware of both social and security-related concerns.<sup>137</sup> It is seen as more accountable, professional and efficient than its predecessor.

#### 4.5. Address Economic Inequality to Address Violence

"It is frightfully hard to explain to Protestants that if you give Roman Catholics a good job and a good house they will live like Protestants because they will see neighbors with cars and television sets..."

– *Former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland Terence O'Neill*<sup>138</sup>

Although it is commonly assumed that general poverty causes paramilitary violence, Northern Ireland shows that, instead, economic discrimination is what precipitates violence. Recognizing this link should be a first step to bringing about peace, but part of maintaining peace also entails addressing disparate labor market outcomes that stoke grievances and identity clinging.

There is no demonstrable relationship between overall economic factors and the level of violence in Northern Ireland. Analyses of the relationship between economic well-being and the intensity of violence have failed to demonstrate any connection between the two variables.<sup>139</sup> As Cochrane notes, "poverty and unemployment are not a causal factor in the rise of dissident Republican violence."<sup>140</sup> Instead, there is a strong quantitative relationship between economic discrimination and the number of paramilitary attacks committed during the Troubles.<sup>141</sup> Pervasive discrimination towards Catholics in housing and hiring fueled discontent that republicanism rechanneled toward violence. Before the Troubles, Northern Ireland Prime Minister Brookeborough demonstrated the level of discrimination faced by Catholics when, in addressing a meeting of the Derry Unionist Association, he recommended that "those people who are Loyalists not ... employ Roman Catholics, 99 percent of whom are disloyal."<sup>142</sup> Catholic unemployment was nearly twice the level of Protestants for much of the '70s and '80s, when the amount of killing during the Troubles was at its peak. This suggests that when a country's economy is arranged in such a way that one community receives the bulk of the economic goods, the likelihood of intercommunity violence is greatest. The level of economic discrimination suffered by a minority group is a strong predictor of the level of terrorism across

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<sup>137</sup> Interview with Peter Shirlow, Deputy Director of the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queen's University Belfast, Dec. 15, 2014.

<sup>138</sup> McKittrick and McVea 51.

<sup>139</sup> Thompson, J.L.P. "Deprivation and Political Violence in Northern Ireland, 1922 -1985: A Time Series Analysis". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 33, No. 4 (Dec., 1989), pp. 676-699.

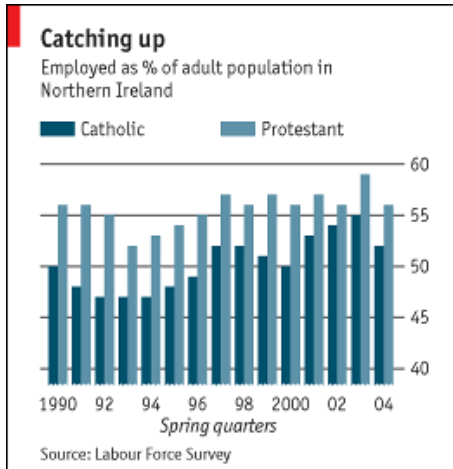
<sup>140</sup> Cochrane 267.

<sup>141</sup> Honaker, James. "Unemployment and Violence in Northern Ireland: a missing data model for ecological inference" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the The Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois, Apr 15, 2004.

<sup>142</sup> Cochrane 35.

both countries and years.<sup>143</sup> Cross-national studies also indicate a greater chance of violent conflict when there exist greater economic inequalities between ethnic groups.<sup>144</sup>

Northern Ireland also provides insights regarding how to reduce economic gaps. First, public sector jobs represent a promising avenue for reducing disparities in employment. Since the government has, by definition, complete control over hiring in these positions, it has a greater



ability to control who is hired for these positions. Northern Ireland's unusually large share of public sector employment made it possible for anti-discrimination legislation passed by parliament to have a rapid impact on the well-being of the Catholic minority.<sup>145</sup>

However, developing a heavy dependence on the public sector threatens to have its own destabilizing effects in the long term since jobs are tied to discretionary government spending. Second, Northern Ireland demonstrates that government policy can be used to improve the economic status of minority groups. Specifically, creating a formal review process for discrimination in hiring based on religion and banning certain interview questions have been effective tools in opening entire sectors of employment to the Catholic minority for the first time.<sup>146</sup> Government jobs since the

early 1990s have been required to be advertised in at least three newspapers to ensure that members of both religious groups are able to learn of the announcements.<sup>147</sup>

Finally, Northern Ireland shows that organic changes in the industrial organization of a country can tear down economic barriers without government intervention. In Northern Ireland, the heavily unionized industrial sector that formed the heart of the unionist blue collar working class collapsed in the 1980's. Since the labor unions of Northern Ireland were often closed to Catholic workers, the decline of this sector removed a major avenue for discrimination against Catholics. Nonetheless, the discrimination against Catholics combined with a strong parochial school network greatly incentivized educational attainment in a way that was not as prevalent among Protestants. De-industrialization and anti-discrimination policies then exposed the educational gap among younger generations, making way for the biggest winners of the transformed Northern Ireland, the Catholic middle class.<sup>148</sup> Massive educational inequality now exists between underprivileged Catholic and Protestant youth and has resulted in higher emigration and youth unemployment rates among Protestants than Catholics.<sup>149</sup> Structural economic changes both related and unrelated to the conflict can shape where the likely source for future sectarian violence may arise. Oddly enough in Northern Ireland it is the demoralized unionist working

<sup>143</sup> Piazza, James A. "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism." *Journal of Peace Research* 48.3 (2011): 339-353.

<sup>144</sup> Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils Weidmann, and Kristian Gleditsch. "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison," *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 105, No. 3 (August, 2011), pp. 478-495.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Mary Daly, President of the Royal Irish Academy, Dec. 10, 2014.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Cochrane 230.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Paul Nolan, author of Peace Monitoring Reports published by the Community Relations Council, Dec. 16, 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Nolan, Paul. "Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, Number Three." *Community Relations Council*. March 2014. Pg. 87, 97.

class that will pose the greatest threat for such a reemergence due to the intensified sense of loss they feel from the changing political economy.

#### **4.6. Stable post-conflict political structures must be inclusive, but be aware of transitional versus long-term needs**

*“On a rainy afternoon, we will drive to Stormont and sit quietly in the visitors' gallery in the Northern Assembly. There we will watch and listen as the members debate the ordinary issues of life in a democratic society: education, health care, tourism, and agriculture. There will be no talk of war, for the war will have long been over. There will be no talk of peace, for peace will be taken for granted.” – George Mitchell*

This section, on the value of inclusive political structures, and the next, on the need to balance peace and justice, address forward-looking aspects of a peace process that are necessary to its success. While the political structures discussed here were established in the years after the GFA, discussions about them during the negotiations were key to reassuring participants that they would be included in the resulting political structure and that their identities would be secure. As veteran peacemaker José María Argueta notes, “all conflict is driven by exclusion... [which] makes you feel vulnerable, and even threatened. That translates into fear. Once fear kicks in, your reaction is going to be violent because then it becomes an issue of survival.”<sup>150</sup> Political exclusion is often the driver of this type of violence around the globe, which points to the importance of building political structures that bring groups into the governing process and legitimize their identities.

In Northern Ireland, this was done by instituting a consociation system – a form of power-sharing that ensures representation from across a divided society – and cross-border institutions. However, the consociation structure is not without pitfalls, as its potential for stability and inclusion can come at the price of political stagnation and fossilization of sectarian divisions. While the structure is imperfect and should be temporary – allowing politics to transition from a focus on identity to a focus on policy – a political staffer noted during a visit to Stormont, “we are young.”<sup>151</sup>

##### *4.6.1. Post-conflict structures must protect minorities and be inclusive*

Before legislators can turn to bread-and-butter issues, they first have to know that they and their constituents will be represented legitimately in the political structure with guaranteed rights and protections. Power-sharing governments can accomplish this, but they require the right structure tailored to the region's sectarian context and tradition of governance. The 108 Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLAs, in Northern Ireland must self-identify as nationalist, unionist, or other, since major decisions require a majority of each community.<sup>152</sup> The Executive – the Assembly's administrative branch – is led by a dual premiership shared by members of the

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<sup>150</sup> The Project on Justice in Times of Transition.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Stephen Barr, Senior Press Officer at UUP, Dec. 11, 2014.

<sup>152</sup> Olga Skarlato, Eyob Fissuh, Sean Byrne, Peter Karari, and Kawser Ahmed. “Peacebuilding, Community Development, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland,” in *Lessons From The Northern Ireland Peace Process*. Ed. Timothy J. White. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. 202.

leading nationalist and unionist parties. Legislation must get both the First Minister's and deputy First Minister's signatures to become law. Both ministers receive the same salary, and one civil servant told us she saw 40 pages of emails discussing the fact that the "deputy" in deputy First Minister must be lowercase to avoid the appearance of a secondary position.

The two party leaders head a committee of 11 ministers. All but the Minister of Justice, who is appointed by a cross-community election, are allocated based on the number of each party's Assembly seats following a formula known as the d'Hondt apportionment system. Other cross-community checks include allowing ministers to call for a cross-communal vote within the Executive, and instituting committees to oversee each ministry that are led by an MLA of the opposite background. Additionally, the GFA chartered a Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission that monitors and advises all public bodies on human rights issues. While it might not be feasible or desirable to replicate these exact mechanisms in other post-conflict governments, they provide a useful model for achieving the goals of power-sharing and minority protection.

#### *4.6.2. Power-sharing can enshrine sectarian divisions and should be transitional*

Northern Ireland's consociation architecture has been called a "macabre parody of real democracy" that enshrines the very communal identities that created conflict in the first place.<sup>153</sup> Politics still run along unionist-nationalist lines. Parties are accused of trying to outflank one another within their own community, and voters are thought to be motivated primarily by a desire to keep the other side out.<sup>154</sup> Sectarianism has bred apathy among those with middle-of-the-road views, creating a sizeable non-voting bloc and further solidifying the headcount nature of elections. As Boston College professor Mike Cronin noted, "the problem in the north is that there are no swing voters."<sup>155</sup> This has given the main parties immunity to the repercussions of their antics and scandals. Cronin joked about Gerry Adams' inoculation to surfacing allegations related to past IRA involvement, stating that "the head of Sinn Féin could be a worm, a snail, a horse, a syphilitic 80-year-old. It doesn't matter."<sup>156</sup> While MLAs of different communities no longer refuse to be in the same room or elevator, sectarian flare-ups still occur.<sup>157</sup> Most recently, DUP MLA Gregory Campbell mocked Sinn Féin by turning a typical Gaelic phrase "go raibh maith agat, Ceann Comhairle," which means "thank you, speaker," into "curry my yoghurt can coca coalyer."<sup>158</sup> This identity-based politics undermines policy goals in areas like health, education, and economic development by diverting away attention and lowering the level of political discussion. Moreover, wasteful redundancies in resource allocation are reinforced by politicians simply looking to solidify their communal voting bases. Current Minister of Justice David Ford of the cross-community Alliance Party believes that the system has in fact given "too

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<sup>153</sup> John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. "Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland's Conflict, and its Agreement." *Government and Opposition*, Volume 1, Winter 2006, pp. 43-63. Pg. 46.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Avila Kilmurray, founding member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Dec. 12, 2014; Interview with Tom Roberts, Director of Ex-Prisoners Interpretive Project (EPIC), Dec. 16, 2014.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Mike Cronin, Academic Director, Boston College- Ireland, Dec. 10, 2014.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Bernie McCluskey, civil servant, Dec. 11, 2014.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Anne-Marie Fleming, Education Officer at Stormont, Dec. 11, 2014 and "'Curry My Yoghurt': 'Pure Ignorance' NI Assembly Clash over Irish Language." *BBC News*. 3 Nov. 2014. Web. 16 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-29886175>>.

little incentive for ministers to cooperate and almost every incentive to dig your heels in.<sup>159</sup> Magnifying the frustration is a feeling that Stormont is unwilling to self-govern – demonstrating an “Ulster neediness” that results in cries for the British, Irish, and American governments to swoop in and save the day.<sup>160</sup>

However, getting to peace requires a consociation structure precisely because ethnic divisions have been used historically as a basis for minority exclusion in a purely majoritarian system. In 1929, for example, Stormont switched from proportional representation to first-past-the-post voting, deepening unionists’ majority rule. Gerrymandering along religious lines was also a common tool of exclusion, similar to its implementation along racial lines in the American South. As minority rights are solidified, political identities and issues debated can expand beyond the existing nationalist-unionist binary. In fact, a less rigid political structure is emerging as a topic of discussion. Among the options are a weighted majority system that would require cross-community support without the need to deliver the entire community vote, and a modified voluntary coalition system that maintains minority checks.<sup>161</sup> These changes would foster greater collective responsibility and create incentives for policymakers to transcend the current binary, while posing with the risk of backsliding into exclusionary politics. Although this illustrates the difficult tradeoffs inherent to consociationalism, the system is best understood as a temporary phase in the transition from a conflict-ridden society to one in which political discourse is the weapon of choice.

#### *4.6.3. Stability should not be underrated*

Despite concerns about sectarianism and political paralysis, the power-sharing structure has brought historic stability. The 2007-11 administration was the first in 40 years to run a full parliamentary term. Given the history of conflict and still tenuous community relations, this is no small feat. Stormont has failed to address many of the challenges of governance, but its legitimacy is no longer a point of contention. After being brought into government with a mandate of cooperation, DUP and Sinn Féin have moderated their platforms to move closer to the electorate, even if both parties rely on communal allegiances. The parties now more closely resemble the UUP and the SDLP respectively, while hardliners like the Traditional Unionist Voice have gained little political traction.<sup>162</sup> Stability stops the killings, but it also brings repeated interaction among politicians, which can help improve working relationships and reduce the dominance of identity politics. Frustration with partisan politics is justified, and could undermine the system if it results in a failure to address fundamental issues of daily life, yet it is worth remembering that the only legislation to pass the old Stormont was the Wild Birds Act of 1932. Furthermore, partisan gridlock and voter apathy are issues faced across liberal democracies, even if the identity component is more prominent in Northern Ireland.

#### *4.6.4. Cross-border institutions foster cooperation, acceptance of bi-national identities*

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<sup>159</sup> Cochrane 246.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Mary Daly, President of the Royal Irish Academy, Dec. 10, 2014.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Stephen Barr, Senior Press Officer at UUP, Dec. 11, 2014.; Interview with Allan Leonard, Director of the Northern Ireland Foundation, Dec. 15, 2014.

<sup>162</sup> Cochrane 245.



Northern Ireland also illustrates the value of constructing cross-border institutions that recognize overlapping national allegiances and interests which, like consociation structures, help groups feel secure in their identities. The GFA created the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and the British-Irish Council (BIC), which aim to improve cross-border cooperation and communication. The NSMC addresses matters of mutual interest and has implementation bodies that work with topics like waterways, trade and business development, culture, and tourism.<sup>163</sup> Its Special EU Programs body uses international economic aid to fund peacebuilding projects in Northern Ireland and the border counties.<sup>164</sup> The BIC allows Northern Ireland to consult on relevant matters that remain under Britain's jurisdiction.

This was important during the talks, as constitutional nationalists in the SDLP insisted that the GFA include an oversight role for the Republic.<sup>165</sup> Although some unionists saw this as an encroachment on northern affairs, the cross-border institutions gave nationalists necessary guarantees of protection and an acknowledgement of Northern Ireland's ties to the south. Some give-and-take is necessary though, as the Republic's removal of its constitutional claim to the northern counties created limits on its involvement in Northern Ireland.<sup>166</sup>

For citizens, the cross-border institutions helped people on both sides feel that their bi-national identities were recognized and accepted. The GFA did this symbolically by including "parity of esteem" for both identities, but the cross-border institutions formalized this principle. Just as power-sharing was successful in guaranteeing that both communities had political representation, cross-border institutions ensured that neither community's international aspirations would be ignored. Allowing Northern Ireland citizens to hold a British passport, an Irish passport, or both also serves as a clever low-cost way to further reinforce the principle. Cross-border institutions like the NSMC can advance ground-level reconciliation between communities through economic aid and grassroots empowerment projects.

Cross-border institutions may not be part of all peace talks, especially because Northern Ireland's international ties are fairly idiosyncratic. Yet in negotiations over conflicts involving self-determination issues, proposing these types of institutions can give politicians and citizens key assurances about the recognition of their identities and aspirations in the post-conflict society.

#### **4.7. Balance peace and justice**

"If you want peace, work for justice." – *Pope John Paul VI*  
"If you want peace, work for peace." – *Joshua Goldstein*<sup>167</sup>

One final component of getting to peace requires balancing peace with justice doled out in the post-conflict society. In a peaceful and functioning society, justice is a given. Citizens expect that lawbreakers will be held accountable for their actions and punished in a way that reflects the degree of their wrongdoing. But in societies recovering from conflict, leaders often have to

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<sup>163</sup> McGarry and O'Leary 56.

<sup>164</sup> Skarlato et al. 203.

<sup>165</sup> McGarry and O'Leary 56.

<sup>166</sup> Skarlato et al. 202.

<sup>167</sup> Pinker 216.

compromise on justice in order to achieve peace and stability. This phenomenon, which many refer to as “transitional justice,” occurred in Northern Ireland and should be utilized in other conflicts.<sup>168</sup>

The GFA needed to address issues of justice in order to build public support from both sides, an objective it sought to accomplish in two main ways: prisoner release and short sentences for crimes perpetrated during the Troubles. But the process also required the cooperation of major leaders, so it granted de facto amnesty to political leaders with a paramilitary past. Such approaches did not address issues of reconciliation, but made it possible for negotiating parties to reach an agreement and end the violence that had led to 3,665 deaths between 1966 and 2001.<sup>169</sup> This was especially important in Northern Ireland due to the proximity of the violence to the average citizen. By 1998, one in seven had been a victim of violence, one in five had a family member killed or injured, and one in four had been involved in an explosion. Between 1972 and 1998, more than 18,000 people were charged with terrorism.<sup>170</sup> This violence bred mistrust between groups, and between its perpetrators and victims. Paramilitary members longed for recognition of their political motives and amnesty for their crimes, while victims wanted closure.

#### *4.7.1 Prisoner release offers closure, but also controversy*

One major component of the GFA was the early release of prisoners affiliated with paramilitary groups. Prisoner release was included to generate public support and allow leaders to bring their people along with them. Ahern said of negotiators across conflicts that “one thing they will never do is let down prisoners.”<sup>171</sup> In acknowledging prisoners’ political motives, leaders sought to maintain the support of those who had sacrificed the most for their cause. Not all prisoners convicted of paramilitary violence were eligible, however. Prisoners had to have been convicted prior to the agreement and had to belong to a paramilitary group that had observed the ceasefire, which excluded groups like the Real IRA and the Orange Volunteers.<sup>172</sup>

Though the prisoners’ release provided symbolic closure for some, it represented a failure of justice for others. The British and Irish governments were required to facilitate the accelerated release of prisoners, reviewing and setting release dates for those who qualified, but all eligible prisoners would be released by June 2000. Once released, prisoners could expect rehabilitation services provided by both governments to help them transition back into society.<sup>173</sup> Prisoner release was controversial, however. Men from the IRA, UDA, UFF, UVF, LVF, and INLA were released from the infamous “Maze” prison in a final push in July 2000. Most observers saw these men as victims of the Troubles, but a group of Protestants gathered outside of the prison to protest as 46 IRA members were freed.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> The Project on Justice in Times of Transition 9.

<sup>169</sup> English 379.

<sup>170</sup> English 381.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Bertie Ahern, Irish Taoiseach from 1997 to 2008, Dec. 9, 2014.

<sup>172</sup> “Prisoner Release,” *BBC News*,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/northern\\_ireland/understanding/themes/prisoner\\_release.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/northern_ireland/understanding/themes/prisoner_release.stm) (1999).

<sup>173</sup> Good Friday Agreement.

<sup>174</sup> “Maze emptied as terrorist prisoners walk free,” *The Guardian*,

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/jul/28/northernireland>, (July 28, 2000).

#### 4.7.2. Short sentences offer symbolic justice, real relief

The GFA also imposed a maximum two-year sentence for crimes committed during the Troubles. This limit was a compromise intended to acknowledge the crimes of the Troubles without emphasizing individual punishment. One woman described her emotions when her husband's killer was sentenced to two years in prison: "We needed to hear it, that he was guilty. We thanked God. And now we have closure."<sup>175</sup> Her testimony suggests that even a modest amount of justice can help victims find relief.

#### 4.7.3. Amnesty for leaders helps stability, but not reconciliation

Negotiators also granted de facto amnesty to leaders of major political parties that had been involved in the violence. This arrangement sparked controversy during and after the negotiations. Since Sinn Féin participated in talks prior to IRA decommissioning of weapons, many unionists were skeptical of the party's commitment to nonviolence. Mitchell recalls an incident when a UUP representative said to Gerry Adams, "I don't talk to fucking murderers."<sup>176</sup> But Sinn Féin's inclusion proved instrumental, and academics often cite Northern Ireland as an example of when to talk to terrorists.<sup>177</sup>

Although the suspension of justice for leaders has allowed for stable institutions, it has inhibited reconciliation. The violent pasts of leaders like Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams remain a source of controversy. McGuinness has openly admitted his ties to the IRA and still sits as deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.<sup>178</sup> Gerry Adams, currently the President of Sinn Féin, has repeatedly denied his IRA ties, but his paramilitary past is well known and one woman we met asserted that she would never vote Sinn Féin while he was its leader. In May 2014, he was arrested in connection to an unsolved murder from 1972. His arrest brought up questions of amnesty, since the conviction of a major political leader would likely cause instability.<sup>179</sup>

## 5. GETTING TO RECONCILIATION

"I hope the community in 10 years' time will come together and help each other, instead of fighting against each other."

– 16 year-old student from Northern Ireland, 2004<sup>180</sup>

The negotiations that led to the GFA were about ending violence, and Northern Ireland is indisputably better off now that people have stopped killing one another. However, sectarian

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<sup>175</sup> "Haunted by the Killers," *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21601856-northern-ireland-needs-deal-properly-crimes-committed-during-troubles-haunted>, (May 10, 2014).

<sup>176</sup> Mitchell 137.

<sup>177</sup> White 7.

<sup>178</sup> Kevin Cullen, "Ian Paisley, an unlikely peacemaker," <http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/09/12/ian-paisley-unlikely-peacemaker/osGxFSTy9SKt5jdErS662J/story.html>, (September 12, 2014).

<sup>179</sup> Katharine Q. Seelye, "A Heinous Secret, Secret Histories, and Sinn Féin Leader's Arrest," [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/world/europe/a-heinous-crime-secret-histories-and-a-sinn-Féin-leaders-arrest.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/02/world/europe/a-heinous-crime-secret-histories-and-a-sinn-Féin-leaders-arrest.html?_r=0), (May 1, 2014).

<sup>180</sup> Shirley Ewart & Dirk Schubotz, *Voices Behind the Statistics: Young People's Views of Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (London, UK: National Children's Bureau, 2004), 53, <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/voices.pdf>.

fault lines still exist in Northern Ireland, threatening to disrupt a fragile peace. Reconciliation is the final component of a long-term peace process, and requires not just stopping the violence but making it unthinkable.<sup>181</sup> This must occur across all levels of society, from Stormont to the streets. While grassroots reconciliation is challenging “if the politicians are slugging it out the way that they do,”<sup>182</sup> there are still meaningful steps that can and should be taken to achieve this base level of reconciliation. Building trust among communities will be key to empowering them to move forward together to achieve reconciliation. Society must address three major issues: the division between the two major communities, the unresolved legacy of the past, and the polarizing nature of the symbols that mark group identities. The following section offers recommendations for addressing these final barriers.

### **5.1. Promote cross-community contact**

“It’s not just that there are two sides to every dispute. It’s that each side sincerely believes its version of the story, namely that it is an innocent and long-suffering victim and the other side a malevolent and treacherous sadist. And each side has assembled a historical narrative and database of facts consistent with its sincere belief.”

– *Steven Pinker*<sup>183</sup>

Time and again in Northern Ireland and other post-conflict societies, the issues of individuals’ identities and which “side” they support have erected barriers to reconciliation. In this conflict in particular, the GFA led to peace but did not repair relationships between the two communities, “as each side continues to interpret the conflict through its own lens (i.e. history) and remains distrustful of its former enemies.”<sup>184</sup>

According to the 2011 census, 40 percent of the population self-identifies exclusively as British, 25 percent as Irish, and 21 percent as Northern Irish.<sup>185</sup> While the identification with a Northern Irish identity seems to be a promising alternative to the British/Irish binary, the data provides false hope. More recently, there appears to be a shift back to the more exclusive identities of British and Irish, particularly among Catholics. Moreover, it is concerning that only 9 percent of people identified with more than one nationality in the 2011 census, emphasizing the existing binary.<sup>186</sup> Before Northern Ireland can fully achieve reconciliation, these ongoing divisions over identity must be resolved, either in a way that subsumes these identities within a larger Northern Irish identity or allows both to exist in a less oppositional way.

How have such identities become so ingrained in society? A study of the relevant psychology yields explanations and answers. One explanation for these identities’ deep-seated nature is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by psychologist Henri Tajfel. This theory posits that individuals in a group categorize the world around them in ways that influence their behavior,

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<sup>181</sup> White 203.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Paul Nolan, author of Peace Monitoring Reports published by the Community Relations Council, Dec. 16, 2014.

<sup>183</sup> Pinker 492.

<sup>184</sup> White 227.

<sup>185</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, “Census 2011 Key Statistics Summary Report,” September 2014.

<sup>186</sup> Nolan 137-140.

including perceiving themselves and others as belonging to various social groups. Due to this categorization, an important part of one's identity becomes linked to the group with which one identifies, e.g. Catholic or Protestant. This association creates mental blockades between individuals and members of the "other" group, which perpetuates the cycle of conflict.<sup>187</sup> The Contact Hypothesis is one of the most prevalent theories about how to reduce this type of inter-group conflict. It proposes that increased contact and communication between the groups will allow each to discover that they share similar basic attitudes and values.<sup>188</sup>

A successful reconciliation process will thus focus on increasing the level of contact between opposing groups, allowing people to form meaningful relationships that bridge the existing divisions between them. Post-conflict societies must promote cross-community contact, and thereby reconciliation, in two principal ways: through civil society organizations and formal institutions.

#### *5.1.1. Leverage civil society organizations to promote meaningful contact*

A primary way that people interact is through civil society organizations,<sup>189</sup> including churches and sports clubs, as well as programs specifically designed around post-conflict reconciliation.<sup>190</sup> A robust civil society is also critical to ensuring that formal political institutions have the incentive to form around inclusive rather than exclusive constituencies, which is decidedly not the case in Northern Ireland. Strengthening civil society is therefore one of the most important aspects of a successful peace process, but also one of the most difficult.<sup>191</sup>

Community-based organizations in Northern Ireland are inherently sectarian and have varying degrees of influence over the communities they do serve. For example, churches are in decline – the scandal and secularization have lessened the Catholic Church's "moral authority" and the Protestant church also holds minimal influence over those likely to be involved in violence.<sup>192</sup> Sports organizations appear to have a more reliable following. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) has 800,000 members, capturing 12.4 percent of the entire Irish island, but its membership in the north is predominantly nationalist. British sports like rugby and soccer remain popular among loyalist communities. Attempts at holding cross-community sports programs do not generally result in much real mixing of populations. As Boston College in Dublin professor Mike Cronin said, "If you phoned the GAA and asked to see their Protestant member, they could probably drive around and pick him up."<sup>193</sup> In addition, civil society work on reconciliation has

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<sup>187</sup> Gallagher, A.M. (1987). Psychological approaches to the Northern Ireland conflict. *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 13(2): 21-32.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> While there is no universal definition of civil society, White argues: "Civil society entails voluntary, public action among autonomously organized groups that act on behalf of the public (as opposed to private) interest. They seek the betterment of society through protecting individuals, minorities, and property; developing tolerance and trust; dissolving sectarianism; serving as an intermediary between individuals and the state; and ensuring accountability of the government," (243).

<sup>190</sup> White 201.

<sup>191</sup> White 246.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Mike Cronin, Academic Director, Boston College- Ireland, Dec. 10, 2014.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

been frustrated by political paralysis and ineffective grants, largely from the EU, that create unsustainable organizational structures focused on short-term projects.<sup>194</sup>

Yet, just as civil society organizations in post-conflict societies can reinforce division, they can also encourage reconciliation and cross-community contact. Such organizations should be pressured or incentivized to create the will for reconciliation within their membership. They should then work toward this contact and reconciliation in a way that is appropriate for the social context.

### 5.1.2. Promote integration within schools

Divided societies often have divided education systems, which perpetuate separation and sectarianism. In Israel, there have been efforts to create integrated schools that respect the identities of Israeli and Palestinian children.<sup>195</sup> There has also been an integration effort in Zimbabwe, where schools tend to be segregated by race.<sup>196</sup> In Quebec, bilingual schools have emerged to respect the identities of both French and English speakers.<sup>197</sup> Reconciling segregated school systems is crucial in the aftermath of conflict, and Northern Ireland must work toward this end.

Calls to promote integration as a way of reducing prejudice have gained a lot of attention, since Northern Ireland's schools are highly segregated. In the 2012-13 school year, only 7 percent of students attended integrated schools.<sup>198</sup> In most schools, children practice different religions, read different books, and learn different histories.<sup>199</sup> As one 16-year-old put it, "I've learned most anything I know about sectarianism in school."<sup>200</sup> Most Catholic students attend schools run by the Catholic Church, while Protestant students attend de facto Protestant schools overseen by the main Protestant churches. Segregation becomes normalized, with sectarian beliefs confirmed in the schoolyard.<sup>201</sup> For many young people, their first contact with someone from the other community occurs in university or at work.<sup>202</sup> DUP MLA Sammy Douglas emphasized the impact that separation can have on children. He noted that if children do not know members from the other community, then "it's very easy for the godfathers to put a gun in your hand and say, 'they're bad people.'"<sup>203</sup> If children learned about members of the other community at a young age, they might hold more tolerant views.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Interview with Avila Kilmurray, founding member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Dec. 12, 2014.

<sup>195</sup> Caitlin Donnelly and Joanne Hughes, "Contact, Culture, and Context: Evidence from Mixed Faith Schools in Northern Ireland and Israel," *Comparative Education*, 42 no. 4: 493-513.

<sup>196</sup> David Wilson and Susu Lavelle, "Interracial Friendship in a Zimbabwean Primary School," *Journal of Social Psychology*, 130 no. 1: 111-113.

<sup>197</sup> F. Genessee and P. Gandara, "Bilingual education programmes: a cross-national perspective," *Journal of Social Issues*, 55 no. 4: 665-685.

<sup>198</sup> Department of Education of Northern Ireland (DENI). "Integrated Education".

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types\\_of\\_school-nischools\\_pg/16-schools-integratedschools\\_pg.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/16-schools-integratedschools_pg.htm), (2014).

<sup>199</sup> Hayes et al. 457.

<sup>200</sup> Ewart & Schubotz 31.

<sup>201</sup> Claire McGlynn, "Integrated and Faith-Based Schooling in Northern Ireland," *Irish Journal of Education* 36, no. 1 (2005): 49-50.

<sup>202</sup> Hayes et al. 456.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Sammy Douglas, East Belfast DUP MLA, Dec. 11, 2014.

<sup>204</sup> P. Connolly, "What now for the contact hypothesis? Towards a new research agenda," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 3 no. 2 (2000): 170.

Evidence from currently integrated schools is limited, but suggests positive outcomes. Of students in Northern Ireland's integrated schools, 93 percent viewed their experience positively. They also perceived themselves as more tolerant and understanding as a result.<sup>205</sup> Intercommunity friendships tended to be more prevalent and longer-lasting.<sup>206</sup> However, research has not shown whether integrated education has impacted students' sociopolitical identities.<sup>207</sup> Despite limited evidence, many politicians tend to believe integrated education is "better than what we've got now."<sup>208</sup> Given that contact has some demonstrable benefits, and schools are a crucial center where children develop their identities and learn about the world around them, governments should pursue efforts to integrate schools.

Integration of schools will take time and will encounter roadblocks, but mixing of young people is crucial for long-term reconciliation. In Northern Ireland, many politicians have paid lip-service to integrated education, but have cited parental choice as a barrier to drastic change.<sup>209</sup> Others have said the Catholic Church's opposition has made integration difficult.<sup>210</sup> Young people make up a large portion of Northern Ireland's population, with those under 16 comprising 24.7 percent.<sup>211</sup> As this cohort comes of age politically, economically, and socially, the government must create a context for them that reduces sectarian divisions.

### *5.1.3. Encourage mixing of neighborhoods and housing estates*

Populations in post-conflict societies often live in segregated communities, which prevent the two groups from mixing. As of April 2014, Belfast had 48 peace walls separating traditionally unionist communities from traditionally nationalist ones. In the late 1990s, there were only 18 peace walls in Belfast, but they increased in number after the GFA.<sup>212</sup> One of the most recent walls went up alongside an integrated school, an example of the two-steps-forward-one-step-back pattern that frequently characterizes progress in Northern Ireland. Roughly 90 percent of public housing estates are segregated, with 80 percent of occupants from only one community.<sup>213</sup> One member of an organization who tried to create a shared housing development said that the architect came back to him with plans for two separate buildings, not understanding that shared housing could truly mean placing families from both communities in one building.<sup>214</sup> The territorial divisions are obvious in rural areas too, with curbstones and other markers sending a

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<sup>205</sup> Claire McGlynn, "Education for Peace in Integrated Schools: A Priority for Northern Ireland?" *Child Care in Practice* 10, no. 2 (2004): 87.

<sup>206</sup> C. McClenahan, E. Cairns, S. Dunn, & V. Morgan, "Intergroup friendships: Integrated and desegregated schools in Northern Ireland," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 136, no. 5 (1996): 549.

<sup>207</sup> Hayes et al. 460.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Anne-Marie Fleming, Education Officer at Stormont, Dec. 11, 2014.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Avila Kilmurray, founding member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Dec. 12, 2014.

<sup>211</sup> 2011 Survey data. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.htm>.

<sup>212</sup> Rebecca Black, "David Cameron: Let's take down Northern Ireland's peace walls and build shared future," <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/david-cameron-lets-take-down-northern-ireland-peace-walls-and-build-shared-future-30178844.html>, (April 12, 2014).

<sup>213</sup> Anne Madden, "Call to Tackle Northern Ireland segregation with mixed housing estates," <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/call-to-tackle-northern-ireland-segregation-with-mixed-housing-estates-28538497.html> (May 28, 2010).

<sup>214</sup> Interview with members of Intercomm, Dec. 17, 2014.

message for the other group to “keep out.”<sup>215</sup> Given the separation of both communities and schools, many children do not regularly interact with members from the other community.

The government must promote integrated housing projects that allow communities to transition toward greater mixing. It would be impossible to take down all of Belfast’s peace walls or create a fictional city where Protestants and Catholics lived side-by-side in alternating houses. People living at interfaces often consider the walls important for their safety and, as Avila Kilmurray of the Women’s Coalition explained, “much of the impetus for taking down the walls has come from people not living in those communities.”<sup>216</sup> She cited the importance of small-scale integrated housing projects and of single-identity work within segregated communities.<sup>217</sup> Any impetus for change must take into account voices within the community. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has developed a Shared Neighbourhood Programme, which also emphasizes this twin-track approach. By building new neighborhoods with an integrated ethos and by working with existing communities to promote shared living spaces, the organization hopes to boost mixing in the long term.<sup>218</sup> Creating integrated housing after a conflict will be a slow process, but governments should support integration projects that serve a long-term goal of greater mixing while respecting current on-the-ground sentiment.

## 5.2. Develop a plan for dealing with the past

“How do you memorialize a loss? How do you name a loss? Is it a Catholic loss? Is it a Protestant loss? Is it an individual loss?”

– Jude Lal Fernando, *the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin*<sup>219</sup>

When transitioning to peace, societies must acknowledge the wrongdoings that occurred during the conflict. José Zalaquett Daher, a human rights lawyer in Chile, describes the importance of looking into past abuses. He argues that “truth is the initial step that opens the gate for further methods of reparation, of acknowledgment, and justice.”<sup>220</sup> Yet truth is complicated, because individuals experience the same conflict in many different ways. Communities in Northern Ireland have struggled to reach a common narrative about their past. This may be explained by the fact that much of the past remains unknown, with around 2,000 of the 3,665 Troubles deaths unsolved.<sup>221</sup> As time passes, the government must promote efforts that allow people to come to terms with the past and establish a shared history. Only then can Northern Ireland move toward a shared future.

### 5.2.1. Provide support services for victims and survivors

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<sup>215</sup> Interview with Liam Kennedy, Director of the Clinton Institute at University College Dublin, Dec. 9, 2014.

<sup>216</sup> Interview with Avila Kilmurray, founding member of Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, Dec. 12, 2014.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), “Shared future housing- about the Shared Neighbourhood Programme,” [http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/community/community\\_cohesion/shared\\_future\\_housing.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/community/community_cohesion/shared_future_housing.htm) (2014).

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Jude Lal Fernando, Assistant Professor at Irish School of Ecumenics, Dec. 8, 2014.

<sup>220</sup> The Project on Justice in Times of Transition 72.

<sup>221</sup> “Haunted by the Killers,” *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21601856-northern-ireland-needs-deal-properly-crimes-committed-during-troubles-haunted>, (May 10, 2014).



In the aftermath of conflict, governments must acknowledge the past by supporting those who have been harmed by violence. In his report, Richard Haass described how the Troubles have caused “physical disabilities, emotional harm, trauma, social anxiety, and other concerns,” which affect ordinary people every day.<sup>222</sup> As many as 500,000 people in Northern Ireland could qualify as victims, by the definition used in Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.<sup>223</sup> Survivors must have access to high-quality physical and mental health care, so that they can cope with the physical and emotional reminders of their past. They must also have choice over whether to seek treatment.<sup>224</sup> The government can help people move forward at an individual level by providing support services for victims and survivors.

### 5.2.2. *Establish a mechanism for openly dealing with the past*

Ideally, governments should establish a mechanism to uncover facts, administer justice when appropriate, and determine patterns that explain root causes of violence. As Zalaquett argues, leaders should pursue “all the truth, and as much justice as possible.”<sup>225</sup> There are four primary options on the truth and justice spectrum: amnesty for security-related crimes prior to the peace agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) similar to that of South Africa, a truth recovery process in which witnesses are given immunity, or a truth recovery process which allows prosecution.<sup>226</sup> A conflict’s context should determine which mechanism is most fitting.

In Northern Ireland, the government has not dealt with the past in a comprehensive manner. Most people hold “jaundiced” attitudes toward creating a TRC, either because they worry about re-traumatization, or because they believe that South Africa’s context was completely different.<sup>227</sup> The South African TRC involved conditional amnesty in exchange for full disclosure of facts, but many believe this mechanism only worked because much of the violence was carried out by the state.<sup>228</sup> This is not the case in Northern Ireland, where the majority of violence was committed by non-state actors.<sup>229</sup> Amnesty has also been very unpopular, and only the tiny political party NI21 showed any support for an amnesty program.<sup>230</sup> Northern Ireland has commissioned a number of investigations, like the Saville Report on Bloody Sunday, but these are expensive.<sup>231</sup> Northern Ireland requires some other form of truth recovery. Haass proposed parallel mechanisms: the Historical Investigations Unit, which would prosecute perpetrators of violence, and the Independent Commission for Information Retrieval, which

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<sup>222</sup> Northern Ireland Office. (Dec. 31, 2013). *An Agreement amongst the Parties of the Northern Ireland Executive on Parades, Select Commemorations and Related Protests; Flags and Emblems; and Dealing with the Past*. Belfast: NIO, 20.

<sup>223</sup> “NI talks issues explained: flags, parades, the past and welfare reform,” *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25429676>, (December 12, 2014).

<sup>224</sup> Northern Ireland Office 20.

<sup>225</sup> *The Project on Justice in Times of Transition* 72.

<sup>226</sup> Nolan 165.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Ronan Fanning, Professor Emeritus University College Dublin, Dec. 10, 2014.

<sup>228</sup> Cornell University Law School, “*South African Truth Commission*,” [http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/south\\_african\\_truth\\_commission](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/south_african_truth_commission).

<sup>229</sup> English 279.

<sup>230</sup> Nolan 164.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Glenn Jordan, former Director of the Skainos Center, Dec. 15, 2014.

would gather information while protecting contributors' anonymity and study the conflict's broader societal causes.<sup>232</sup>

Any truth recovery process must address the concerns of those who have been hurt most by the conflict. One major concern in Northern Ireland is that political leaders would not be held accountable for their crimes. Roughly half of Sinn Féin representatives have been convicted of IRA crimes, and McGuinness and Adams both played significant roles in the Troubles.<sup>233</sup> Ex-prisoners and ex-combatants worry that members of their community would not receive legal protection if they came forward with information.<sup>234</sup> As Kilmurray put it, "reconciliation has been put down on the people that have been hurt the most, and that's not fair."<sup>235</sup> In order for truth recovery to succeed, it must involve people at the apex of society, and it must recognize the societal conditions that turned people toward violence. Even if prosecution of major leaders remains impossible in Northern Ireland given concerns of stability, a truth recovery process should still aim for sincere acknowledgement and support from political leaders.

### *5.2.3. Bring together representatives of both communities to agree on a shared history*

Post-conflict societies should work to establish a shared history of violence in order to move forward. A mutual understanding of the past would allow future generations to grow up with similar notions of the conflict. This could reduce future prejudices and lead to societal healing. Haass proposes that the Northern Ireland Assembly create a Historical Timeline Group to develop a chronology of the conflict. He also suggests that a major archiving project should be undertaken to compile and preserve important documents, artifacts, and oral histories.<sup>236</sup>

## **5.3. Address divisive symbols and create shared ones for the long term**

"If Northern Ireland could not be taken out of Britain, then Britishness could as far as possible be taken out of Northern Ireland"

– John Lloyd, *the New Statesman* 2001

In post-conflict transitional societies, the challenge of redefining disparate sectarian symbols to create a shared identity can inhibit reconciliation. Successful integration of separate community symbols and images is an indication of progress, while a failure to address and integrate disparate symbols can unravel the peace process altogether. This project will likely be long, complicated, and contentious, but mechanisms should be implemented in the short term to ensure that divisive symbols permit nonthreatening self-expression within communities. The flying of national flags, which serves as a marker of sectarian identity, and loyalist parades have become the most contentious lingering issues that divide Northern Ireland and threaten its stability.

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<sup>232</sup> Northern Ireland Office 29-30, 32.

<sup>233</sup> "Haunted by the Killers," *The Economist*, <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21601856-northern-ireland-needs-deal-properly-crimes-committed-during-troubles-haunted>, (May 10, 2014).

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Tom Roberts, Director of Ex-Prisoners Interpretive Project (EPIC), Dec. 16, 2014.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Avila Kilmurray, founding member of Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Dec. 12, 2014.

<sup>236</sup> Northern Ireland Office 36, 38.

Flags are important symbols of identity, culture, language and nationality that represent unity. In Northern Ireland, however, flags are divisive representations of opposing communities with strong identity links to two different sovereign states, the UK and Ireland. The flags have also taken on a meaning that goes beyond simple nationalist ideology, and “people are exerting their social and community power” by flying them.<sup>237</sup> Flags are prevalent features of the landscape in each community, signaling to the other the extent of its territorial supremacy. Until December 2012, the Union Jack flew from City Hall year-round. That month, its presence was limited to 18 designated days per year to prevent the appearance of sectarianism.<sup>238</sup> Unionists and loyalists began major demonstrations at the end of 2012 and 2013 throughout Northern Ireland to protest what they saw as an attack on their cultural identity.<sup>239</sup> The disorder led to clashes between police and loyalist paramilitaries and death threats against members of the Alliance Party, who were instrumental in crafting a compromise on the flag issue.<sup>240</sup> The flag protests lasted for four months, involved nearly 10,000 protestors and cost approximately £32 million.<sup>241</sup>

Insights contained in the Haass report help illuminate various possible solutions to the issue of flags. Among solutions discussed, the Haass commission considered instituting a uniform policy under the regulation of local councils, restricting the use of the Irish and British flags, and launching a process to design a new flag for Northern Ireland. The Haass commission failed to reach agreement on a course of action. The report acknowledged the futility of recommending actionable steps “without a larger consensus on the place of Britishness and Irishness” in Northern Ireland.<sup>242</sup> In the absence of a complete solution, the report created a Commission on Identity, Culture, and Tradition to hold public discussions and issue recommendations to the Northern Ireland executive. While this recommendation postpones

### The Haass Talks

In 2013, U.S. Special Envoy Richard Haass chaired inclusive talks which proposed the following proposals on parades, flags and emblems, and the past:

- **Parades:** Establish a committee to oversee initial parade registration and a separate board to decide if contentious parades should go on as planned, alter their route, or cease altogether. Attendees should no longer wear paramilitary clothing and must adopt new regulations when marching past churches, war memorials, and burial grounds.
- **Flags/Emblems:** Establish a commission to further look into the issue.
- **The Past:** Support victims’ mental health, require guilty parties to acknowledge their role in the violence, and establish a new board to investigate alleged crimes. This includes mechanisms to allow citizens to avoid self-incrimination, though they can still be guilty if others supply evidence. The Report also established an oral archive of The Troubles.

The negotiations collapsed due to disagreement over flags. In 2014, Haass returned to Northern Ireland and resumed talks on the above issues and welfare reform. As of December, the talks had yet to produce a final agreement

<sup>237</sup> Interview with Brandon Hamber, Director of International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE), Dec. 17, 2014.

<sup>238</sup> “Violence in Belfast after council votes to change Union flag policy,” BBC News (Dec. 3, 2012). <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20587538>>.

<sup>239</sup> “Belfast flag protests: Loyalists clash with police after rally,” BBC News (Dec. 8, 2012) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20652968>>.

<sup>240</sup> “Q&A: Northern Ireland flag protests,” BBC News (Nov. 28, 2014) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20651163>>.

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Paul Nolan, author of Peace Monitoring Reports published by the Community Relations Council, Dec. 16, 2014.

<sup>242</sup> Northern Ireland Office 16.

decision-making to a future time and places it under the jurisdiction of new actors, it represents a viable step forward in empowering the two communities to work together toward a solution.

The annual unionist parades held each July are another contentious issue that has significant implications for the future of intercommunity relations. Historically, parades have created animosity and violence between Protestant and Catholic communities, as they are perceived as expressions of British colonialism in Ireland. In the period from 2002 to 2013, all parades, including loyalist and nationalist parades, increased from 3,250 to 4,400.<sup>243</sup> The largest Unionist parade on July 12 is especially contentious as it celebrates King William III's victory over the Catholic King James during the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. As late as 2013, riots broke out in Belfast when the city's Parades Commission<sup>244</sup> barred the parade from marching on a stretch of Crumlin Road that separates nationalist and unionist communities.<sup>245</sup> The same parade in 2014, however, occurred without major incident as unionist marchers heeded the commission's decision.<sup>246</sup>

The significant challenge to regulating parades throughout Northern Ireland will be to reconcile Protestant fears about their sociopolitical decline with the need to mitigate continuing clashes between Protestant and Catholic communities. Any viable solution will have to balance freedom of speech and assembly with establishing due respect for communities. The Haass report establishes a code of conduct for march participants, rejection of symbols or music that represent proscribed organizations, and avoidance of paramilitary clothing.<sup>247</sup>

As with the issue of flags, immediate action to tackle continuing conflicts surrounding parades will be to hold intercommunity dialogue that resolves specific instances of contentious use of symbols. In the long term, the solution to contentious symbols will require the resolution of underlying sectarian divisions. As described in the previous section, the two communities will need to grapple with their pasts and move toward a shared future with new or repurposed symbols. While Northern Ireland's plethora of flags and annual parades celebrating events of the 1600s are unique, these symbolic issues must be resolved in sectarian conflicts generally in order to prevent recurrent flare-ups of sectarian violence and work toward reconciliation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Resolving a sectarian conflict that dates back centuries may appear to be an insurmountable task, and it is indeed unrealistic to expect such a long history to be reversible. This seemed especially true of the violence in Northern Ireland, where groups' core identities stem from the events of the distant past and history comes roaring to life with surprising frequency— during parades every July, for example. Yet Northern Ireland was able to involve global superpowers and local paramilitaries alike in a peace process that ended the violence that had permeated daily life in that society for so long. Generalizable recommendations based on this success story make up the

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<sup>243</sup> Nolan 160.

<sup>244</sup> The Parades Commission was established by the British government as part of the 1998 GFA.

<sup>245</sup> "Belfast rioting: First Minister calls for an end to violence," BBC News (July 14, 2013) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-23305260>>.

<sup>246</sup> "Orange Order: Thousands take part in annual Twelfth parades," BBC News (July 12, 2014) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-28266902>>.

<sup>247</sup> Northern Ireland Office 14.

first two categories of this memorandum: “getting to the table” and “getting to peace.” The third, “getting to reconciliation,” is where Northern Ireland has the most work to be done, and its challenges can inform those looking to resolve other conflicts.

The stars must align to get all the necessary parties to the table, yet leaders can catalyze this process by incentivizing politics over violence, reducing the options available to paramilitary combatants, and involving the international community.

Once this has happened, getting to peace requires smart tactics and capable leadership during negotiations, as well as managing recurring violence and the economic inequality at its root. Looking beyond the negotiations themselves is also essential, as the relevant parties must have confidence in the post-conflict political structure and balance between peace and justice.

Arriving at a peace agreement that is acceptable to the negotiating parties and the citizens is an impressive feat, but this is not the end of the road. Reconciliation, particularly at the ground level, must occur in order for a society to truly move beyond its conflict and reap the rewards of its peace process. This should be done by increasing cross-community contact, dealing with the legacy of the past, and addressing the symbols that still spark sectarian divisions.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to international conflict resolution, and these recommendations are not a formula for a perfect society. However, taking them into account will help those looking to other conflicts to achieve the lasting peace that Northern Ireland has, and the reconciliation it has not.

On our last day in Northern Ireland, a cabdriver heard of our plans to head for the airport the next morning and said, “back to reality?” We chuckled uneasily, and he corrected himself: “back to normality at least?” It’s true that, as many both inside and out have observed, Northern Ireland’s conflict-marked past has resulted in more than a few oddities – like a fixation on the 1600s, universally known tricks for guessing someone’s religious affiliation, and a black humor that has led the world to label a vicious conflict mere “troubles.” Yet at the root of the conflict are the same desires felt by people the world over. Everyone wants their identity to be accepted, their opportunities to be equal, and their voice to matter in the nation’s governance. When this is denied and these grievances are passed down through the generations, people may turn to violence to pursue their goals. It is precisely because of the universality of these phenomena that lessons drawn from Northern Ireland can be used in resolving other conflicts. For if the roots of conflict are global, so too can be the solutions.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ANIA:** Americans For A New Irish Agenda  
**BIC:** British-Irish Council  
**CAC:** Continuity Army Council  
**DENI:** Department of Education of Northern Ireland  
**DUP:** Democratic Unionist Party  
**GAA:** Gaelic Athletic Association  
**GFA:** Good Friday Agreement  
**INC:** Irish National Caucus  
**INLA:** Irish National Liberation Army  
**IRA:** Provisional Irish Republican Army  
**IRB:** Irish Republican Brotherhood  
**LVF:** Loyalist Volunteer Force  
**NIHE:** Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
**Noraid:** Irish Northern Aid Committee  
**NSMC:** North-South Ministerial Council  
**PSNI:** Police Service of Northern Ireland  
**PUP:** Progressive Unionist Party  
**RIC:** Royal Irish Constabulary  
**RUC:** Royal Ulster Constabulary  
**SDLP:** Social Democratic and Labor Party  
**SIT:** Social Identity Theory  
**TRC:** South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
**UDA:** Ulster Defense Association  
**UDP:** Ulster Democratic Party  
**UFF:** Ulster Freedom Fighters  
**UVF:** Ulster Volunteer Force  
**UWC:** Ulster Workers Council  
**UUP:** Ulster Unionist Party  
**UVA:** Ulster Volunteer Army  
**UKUP:** United Kingdom Unionist Party