

2010

# Implementing The Good Friday Agreement: Overcoming Challenges and Obstacles

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**IMPLEMENTING THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT: OVERCOMING  
CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES**

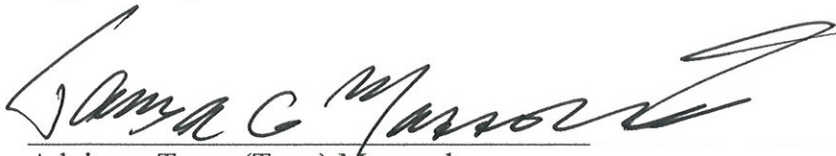
By

**Joseph M. Debraggio**

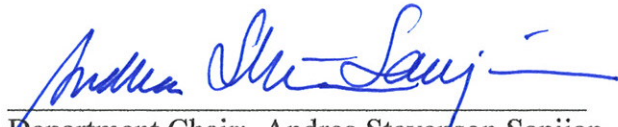
A Proposal Submitted to The Honors Council  
For Honors in Political Science

April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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I would like to thank my advisor Professor Massoud for his guidance and help on this project. Special thanks also goes out to Andrew Clarke and Patrick Selwood for keeping me honest and motivated throughout the whole experience.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	01
Chapter 1 – Peace Implementation Theory .....	05
Chapter 2 – History of the Conflict .....	23
Chapter 3 – The Good Friday Agreement .....	35
Chapter 4 – Implementing the Agreement (1998-2007) .....	49
Chapter 5 – Reviewing the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement .....	64
Conclusion .....	83
Bibliography .....	88

## **Introduction**

On April 10, 1998, history was made in Northern Ireland. Years of sectarian violence would end as the Belfast Agreement, known more popularly (and perhaps more fittingly due to the religious identities defining the two sides) as the Good Friday Agreement, was signed bringing peace to Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office, 2007). A new power-sharing government would turn a protracted ethno-national conflict into a stable and prosperous peace between the nationalists and the unionists (Ben-Porat 2008, 3). “The Troubles,” as people called the violent conflict on the ground, had been solved.

This line of thinking suffered from a fatal flaw however. While the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) did lead to a major decline in violence in Northern Ireland, peace did not reign supreme. In fact, the largest single death toll of the conflict, the Real IRA (RIRA) bombing of the town centre in Omagh, took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, just over four months after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (BBC, 2006). The cross-border institutions from the Good Friday Agreement have made great progress and despite the stop-start nature of the Assembly in Stormont, when in secession it has proved to be a step forward for Northern Ireland. Notwithstanding those positives, however, the two sides continued to distrust each other: the loyalist community wanted public disarmament of the IRA before working in a government with representatives from Sinn Fein, while the nationalists continued to struggle with issues of policing and their decades-long mistrust of the government. The issues that confronted the peace process in Northern Ireland help to showcase the need for policy makers to build on the young field of peace implementation.

Peace implementation theory has only been around since the 1990s. Before that time, the focus of academics was getting two sides to sign an agreement ending their particular conflict.

This view completely overlooks the importance of the stage that comes after the agreement is signed, the implementation. A peace accord may be well drafted and thought out, but if the proper resources are not dedicated to its implementation, it will fail. Factors such as third party involvement can help bring both sides to the table, but those third parties also play a major role in nurturing the peace that results from said negotiations. Power-sharing institutions can be detailed in an agreement, but it is during the implementation stage where they have to work effectively. A peace agreement is like a theory; it details in writing what should happen. Peace implementation is more practical, it deals with what actually takes place.

This paper will look at the Good Friday Agreement in detail. By analyzing the historical factors leading up to 1998, the Agreement itself, and the post-Agreement implementation stage, it is possible to pick out the relative successes and failures of the Agreement, and of its implementation. From the successes such as the Assembly and economic assistance to the failures of planning for the dual minority nature of Northern Ireland, this case gives interesting and unique insights into the importance of implementation. Without looking at implementation as a vital step in the peace process, the suspensions of the Assembly or the Omagh bombing would have no context. These are events that cannot be explained if analysis stops with the Agreement being signed.

This is an important topic to look into because more and more conflicts are ending in negotiated settlements. The ability to look at certain factors in the environment or history of the region and plan contingencies for those potential pitfalls helps to make sure that the peace formed in an agreement lasts. Keeping conflicts from bouncing back and forth between times of war and times of peace helps to save lives most importantly, provides stability for the region as a whole, and helps to reduce the burden on the international community. It is in almost everyone's

interest to make sure that peace, once found, remains in societies with a history of violence and conflict. Putting an emphasis on implementation is the best way to make sure that fragile peace agreements have room to grow and expand.

In the Northern Ireland case, multiple issues combined to complicate the implementation landscape. The power-sharing Assembly, put in place to provide protection for both groups, had the negative side effect of cementing group identities and made normal governance difficult. The British, as the major third party, were deeply involved in this peace process. This helped an Agreement come about, but the failsafe nature of their involvement allowed the two communities to avoid truly having to work with each other. In the security realm, not enough attention was paid to dispelling the fears of the unionist community which let issues like decommissioning hold the devolved government hostage.

This paper is organized in the following manner: The first chapter goes into the main points of peace implementation theory in order to set up a solid base from which to analyze Northern Ireland's particular case. Chapter two gives the background to the Agreement, looking into the origins of the conflict before moving to discuss the modern iteration of violence, which ran from the late 1960s to the 1990s. After that chapter, the third section of this paper talks about the Agreement itself and the various provisions contained within it from power-sharing to the principle of consent. The fourth chapter reviews the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement from 1998 until 2007 paying attention to all of the major positives and negatives that took place during those nine years. Chapter five takes the events that happened during the implementation phase and attempts to explain the successes and failures by using peace implementation theory. This chapter looks into actions such as the multiple suspensions of the Assembly and IRA reluctance to decommission and tries to answer why they occurred. Finally

the conclusion singles out the findings from chapter five's analysis and shows what can be added to the body of peace implementation theory from this particular case.



## Chapter 1 – Peace Implementation Theory

The first step in beginning to analyze the problems behind implementing the Good Friday Agreement is to understand peace implementation in the theoretical sense. After understanding common issues and concerns, it is easier to look at Northern Ireland and pick out what went right and what went wrong. Looking at case studies, authors have come up with various ideas and theories as to what are the most important aspects behind reaching and ultimately sustaining a viable peace. While it is true that every different situation is unique and new variables may render old observations obsolete, knowing the theory is the starting point for any study into failures of a particular peace agreement.

Academic focus on peace implementation is a relatively new phenomenon, truly being born in the 1990s. This is not to say that studies were not conducted about resolving conflicts before this time rather that was all those studies focused on. Getting two sides of a conflict to stop killing each other is huge. Having them sit down together to try and formulate a peace treaty or agreement is even better. If the implementation aspect of that agreement fails though, all of the progress in getting two sides to talk will be for nothing because the violence will come right back. Getting the sides to the table should not be the focus or considered the whole picture.

[W]e tend to attach to ‘agreement’ the idea that negotiations are over when in fact they are just beginning, and to continue they require a shift from a temporary effort to negotiate an agreement to a context-based, permanent, and dynamic platform capable of regenerating solutions to ongoing episodes of conflict (Ben-Porat 2008, 1).

That is part of the reason why this process is so difficult, you cannot just construct an agreement to stop the violence; it has to also address the underlying causes in order to ensure that the killing

and fighting remain a thing of the past and to allow the society to solve future problems in a non-violent manner.

The issues that can affect implementation are varied and display the wide array of factors that need to be taken into account in order to try and develop a lasting peace. Factors that play a key role in peace implementation range from the overarching strategies and the environment, to the support of third parties, power-sharing institutions, and mutual vulnerability. When an agreement is signed all avenues need to be covered in order to ensure that the two sides do not return to the violence that marked the pre-agreement stage. The rest of this chapter goes into major theories and lines of thought in the peace implementation field in an attempt to provide a background lens through which to view the successes and failures of the Good Friday Agreement.

### *General Peace Implementation Theory*

The first and most obvious impediment to putting a peace agreement in place is if the agreement itself is poor. An agreement that is not well designed and doesn't take particulars of the situation to heart can result in even the best attempts at implementation falling short. A half-hearted attempt to resolve a conflict, while potentially resulting in a temporary break from the fighting, will never be able to adequately move that society from war to a more permanent peace. An accord that doesn't help to redress some of the reasons that the violence started in the first place will not truly succeed. A poor and weak agreement, even if implemented perfectly, can only hope to result in a poor and weak peace.

There are two grand strategies that can be undertaken for peace implementation. The first is the more traditional strategy of confidence-building and the second is coercion. Confidence building, which gained prominence early on in the development of the field, relies on third parties to be impartial, neutral, and operates under a system of consent from both sides in the conflict before action can be taken. The strategy of coercion involves the use of military peacekeepers on the ground who impose the peace, focusing on pulling both sides through checkpoints laid out in a peace agreement. The problem with coercion is that it entails a greater risk to troop-supplying countries, while at the same time it is not as recognized due to past failures in difficult cases. Confidence-building is more popular due to successes in easier cases, but finds itself, “an inappropriate strategy against ethnic extremists who are willing to commit genocide, as in Rwanda, in order to undermine a peace agreement” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 62). Varying difficulties and challenges are faced depending on which strategy is chosen along with the different environments in which that overarching strategy is put to work.

### *Environmental Factors*

After reviewing and studying peace implementation literature and different case studies, Stephen Stedman and George Downs (2002) came up with eight different factors (focusing on the environment) that can drastically increase the difficulty of implementing an agreement: The number of warring factions; absence of a peace agreement signed by all major warring parties before intervention; spoilers; hostile neighboring states or networks; collapsed state; availability of disposable natural resources; number of combatants; and whether the conflict could be classified as a war of secession. “The more these indicators are present, the greater the difficulty

of bringing the conflict to an end” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 57). While some indicators are more important than others, they all help highlight the environmental difficulties that agreements must face.

The traditional view of a conflict has two warring factions fighting each other and so the traditional peace implementation efforts have followed suit and have been geared towards resolving a dual orientated conflict. That rosy picture is not always accurate however and with more factions comes greater difficulty. “Strategies become less predictable, balances of power become more tenuous, and alliances become more fluid” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 55). It is near impossible to juggle the interests and concerns of a poly-party conflict and that raises the risk of one faction feeling the only way to redress being cut out of the new arrangements is to return to violence.

Attempts by third parties to intervene before a peace agreement has been signed generally do not have great success. Agreements signal a desire by both sides to change the status quo. It also shows a very basic level of trust between the two sides. While that trust may be extremely small, it allows for the necessary steps to be taken during implementation to try and build up that relationship. If third parties try to impose a peace without the two sides coming to the table first, they do not have that initial small level of trust in each other and that will increase the implementation difficulties (Stedman and Downs 2002, 56).

Spoilers, as the name entails, will actively try to spoil and destroy any peace agreement. By their very purpose, they greatly complicate the success of an agreement. It is hard enough to foster and build trust between two sides when everyone is willing to give it a fair shot, but when there are actors who are doing all they can to sink the peace, it gets even more difficult. Linked to spoilers is the potential presence of hostile neighboring states.

The attitude of the surrounding states toward a peace agreement in a neighbor's civil war plays a key role in supporting or undermining the prospects of peace. Spoilers to a peace agreement, for example, are likely to be much stronger and more vocal if they are confident that they can count on neighboring states for sanctuary, guns, fuel, and capital (Stedman and Downs 2002, 57).

Sometimes it is not disenfranchised groups within the conflicted society who want the agreement to fail, but the neighboring states themselves. They see the continued violence across the border being in their best interests and will act as the spoilers to a peace agreement in their neighbor's backyard.

If the peace agreement is ending a conflict in a collapsed state, the implementers face an increased range of challenges. They have to undertake the basic peace implementation tasks while building the infrastructure of the state at the same time. The job of nurturing the fledgling peace is difficult enough but when there is no normal capacity, that difficulty is multiplied. The availability of disposable natural resources is another problem, especially when dealing with a collapsed state. Precious stones, timber, or any other such resource, "not only provide armies with a means for continued fighting, they also become the reward against which they weigh the benefits of peace" (Stedman and Downs 2002, 57). If the state structures are in place, they can help diffuse some of the conflict that may result from these resources, but if the state is non-existent, then it is easier for conflicts over these resources to derail the peace agreement.

A large number of combatants is also not something that is favorable for peace implementation. More soldiers pose, "greater demands for verification and monitoring and, hence, a greater potential for successful cheating. Moreover, greater numbers of soldiers require more personnel for monitoring and more resources for demobilization" (Stedman and Downs 2002, 56). There is also the problem of what to do with all of the ex-combatants. As discussed

later on in this chapter, they all need to be provided with some way of supporting their families and the more jobs that need to be found, the more complicated the implementation.

Wars of secession are among the most difficult to resolve. It is not easy to get the two sides to come to the table and sign an agreement let alone actually implement that agreement. “Such conflicts often revert to all-or-nothing struggles that make the job of would-be implementers more difficult than in cases where warring parties share a common identity and at least agree on a unitary future for their country” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 57). If factions are fighting to create their own new state, there is very little incentive for them to come to terms with their current state, since they don’t believe in it to begin with. A peace agreement implemented fully and properly, would still result in one side being part of a state that they have no interest in belonging to. In a few cases, issues that may have pushed secession to the fore can be resolved and that group may reconsider its desire to form its own entity, but if it is a true war of secession there is not much incentive to come to an agreement, let alone implement one.

### *Third Parties*

Outside of the environmental factors implementers need to be aware of and ready to deal with, there are other aspects that have to be taken into account in order to have an implementation either be a success or a failure. “International willingness is also crucial; low degrees of interest and commitment lead either to no intervention or, alternatively, to an intervention with an extremely limited strategy set” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 57). Third parties have proven vital to not just bringing about a peace, but making it last as well. International willingness can be divided into three major indicators, the interest of a major or

regional power towards peace, the resources commitment to the implementation, and the acceptance of potential risk against a third party's soldiers and personal (Stedman and Downs 58).

If a major power is truly interested in resolving the conflict, and sees the resolution of the conflict as important for its own security interests, that is a great help towards making sure that the peace will be supported throughout its implementation. "The more remote a mission is from a powerful state's vital security interests, the more likely it is being undertaken for symbolic reasons that are unlikely to inspire the outlay of more than a very modest amount of resources" (Stedman and Downs 2002, 58). Making sure that the proper resources that are needed are deployed to the theater is important as well. Having the right resources is one less potential pitfall that implementers need to be aware of because it allows for a wide range of confidence-building to take place and doesn't make implementers throw out certain options due to funding issues. Finally, if a country promises support in the shape of its armed forces, but will pull them at the first causality, that is a useless gesture. If a third party accepts the risk to their soldiers, and stays invested in the process, the peace has a greater chance of surviving.

Third parties play a vital role in assisting former combatants to feel secure in the new peace. After coming out of a period of violence where each group provided for their own security, provisions that requires them to lay down their defenses against the other group are difficult ones to implement. "Combatants must overcome the much higher hurdle of designing enforceable and credible guarantees on the terms of the agreement – something that is very difficult for the combatants to do without outside assistance" (Walter 1999, 39). Third parties are able to remain above the fray and give the initial security guarantees that each side needs. They are like referees that provide a security blanket until the situation on the ground changes enough

for the two groups to have some trust in each other. Third parties can also assume the role of judge, verifying that each side undertakes the actions they promised to in the agreement (Walter 1999, 39). This requires a high level of organization for any third party.

Coordination throughout the entire process, especially for third parties tasked with facilitating the peace implementation, is absolutely vital to making sure that the peace lasts; a fractured effort will only result in a fractured peace. This issue is one that Bruce D. Jones goes into detail discussing.

Their efforts to end civil wars suffer from an inconsistency in conflict management strategies across different phases of the peace process; those who mediate agreements sometimes fail to coordinate with those who must implement them. All too often, different actors pursue divergent strategies... or, when they do agree on a strategy, their efforts to operationalize it are at times diffuse and contradictory (Jones 2002, 89).

The spaces that form when a strategy is not coherent and coordinated allows for the natural mistrust between the two sides to come to the fore and disrupt the process. The cracks in strategy also give spoilers a prominent chance to operate and ultimately succeed in their goal to destroy the agreement and go back to violence. Issues with strategic coordination can be overcome using, “mechanisms such as Friends groups or by major powers taking a lead role in conflict management” (Jones 2002, 89). The problem is striking the right balance though because too many actors, “with overlapping mandates, competitive relations, and minimal accountability for performance” (Jones 2002, 90) can complicate the process too much and destroy proper coordination.

Part of the problem is the rise in the number of organizations and states that get involved in any given conflict resolution situation. The coordination needs to come top down, from the



headquarters or capitals involved all the way down to the people on the ground. This ensures that everyone on the same page and pulling in the same direction.

Ideally strategic coordination should establish clear lead actors in the mediation and implementation of peace agreements. It should allow those lead actors to set priorities, to ensure that those priorities are pursued by all the third-party actors involved, and to provide consistency across phases of a political process, such that implementation efforts are grounded in the realities of the negotiating process (Jones 2002, 111).

Unfortunately this ideal doesn't always get reached, and it is the fragile peace agreement that takes the blow. Without proper coordination, third parties run the risk of providing improper and ineffective support at best, and helping inadvertently destroy the peace they worked towards at worst.

### *Security Issues*

Donald Rothchild looks towards stability in the post agreement society as being vital to give the peace fuel to grow stronger. If the new or rebuilt state cannot provide for the security of all of its citizens, groups that feel unsafe may revert back to their own security measures in order to feel secure. The flip side of that is if everyone feels that the state is actively looking out for their safety and well-being they are more likely to give the agreement a chance to succeed. "During implementation, the acute fears that arise from short-term military security-building (such as concerns over "cheating" or surprise attack) are partially superseded by the diffuse uncertainties of institution-building" (Rothchild 2002, 117). Whereas during the conflict, the lines were more or less clearly delineated, in the post agreement state the two sides have to find a

way to reintegrate to form a working state. “Effective short-term implementation is often required to lay the foundation for a long-term development of state norms and institution building” (Rothchild 2002, 117). When issues such as verifying the cease-fire, disarmament, demobilization, and efforts to reintegrate combatants back into society have been tackled, the tougher, and longer tasks of rebuilding institutions, the economy, and the state can be devoted all necessary importance.

One problem with the relationship between short and long-term goals is that they often do not line up. While it is almost necessary to achieve the short-term goals before moving on to the long-term, the issues and concerns in the short-term can actually hamper the potential successes and progress in the long-term.

During negotiations, weaker parties, fearing vulnerability in a reintegrated political order, often attempt to exchange cooperation for terms of agreement that provide an element of political certainty about the future. Thus, weaker parties often seek long-term constitutional mechanisms that provide them with an assured share of political power and an access to a fair allotment of public resources, regardless of which set of political elites assumes office. But this effort to achieve political certainty can create problems of state-craft that may defy solution (Rothchild 2002, 118).

Ideas such as provisions written into the constitution to ensure power-sharing based along group identities, is helpful in the short-term but can prove a stumbling block that just reinforces those same group identities in the long-term. It is tough balancing act to juggle between what is needed to reassure minorities in the immediate aftermath and what will provide space for the state to grow and develop.

Rothchild presents two grand strategies to deal with this balancing issue. Mediators of a conflict can either have political and security arrangements that stem from formal group rights or

have political and security systems that focus on individuals and their participation in the state (Rothchild 2002, 119). Each grand strategy has its pros and cons however. Formal group rights as a strategy tends to lend itself towards power-sharing in the government and institutions. This reassures minorities in the short-term but as mentioned above, makes it hard for the state to run normally in the long-term. Individual rights typically results in a unitary government where the focus is on the individual. This gives the government a better chance to operate, but it results in heavy concentration of power within the executive (Rothchild 2002, 128). There is also the issue of elections. Proponents of this approach tend to favor an initial election based on majoritarian principals (one man one vote), but a weak leader may not agree to this individual rights strategy due to fear of being frozen out of government. Post conflict security is exceedingly complicated partly because there is very little trust between the two sides. Short-term actions that can be taken to add trust make it harder for the state long-term. A successful peace agreement has to be able to find the proper balance between these two concerns while, “attempting to find a bridge between the political logics of the two grand strategies of intergroup relations” (Rothchild 2002, 135).

Avoiding the security dilemma is another factor that is important when implementing an agreement. The security dilemma is, “a situation in which each party’s efforts to increase its own security reduce the security of others” (Snyder and Jervis 1999, 15). In this zero-sum state, it is impossible for two groups to see anything as being beneficial to the country as a whole. If an action is seen as a positive for one group in making them feel more secure, it is automatically a negative for the other side. There are three options according to Snyder and Jervis (1999, 17-18) that can be used to overcome the security dilemma: have a very strong sovereign authority to enforce peace, allow for all the groups to take care of their own security, or contain the parties in

a power-sharing government. All three of those potential solutions are able to provide for the security of both groups and allow them to overcome the dilemma and work together.

Groups are more willing to work with each other and overcome differences in the peace implementation stage peacefully if there is trust between the two sides. Disarmament and demobilization help remove the immediate violent threat each side posed upon the other and is a large step towards kindling the trust needed for the state to operate in the future. “Effective disarmament and demobilization of warring factions contribute to the security necessary for the successful implementation of a civil war peace agreement” (Spear 2002, 141). Disarmament takes away the tools that were used to persecute the conflict while at the same time creating a semi-stable environment that allows for security and confidence building. It is important though for mediators to recognize the role of weapons in the society when organizing disarmament. In some societies having a weapon is a status symbol, a means of personal security, and can be the source of the owner’s livelihood. To demand that every last single weapon needs to be taken away can lead to a failure in this section of the agreement. This is not saying to just let all the weapons be; rather the knowledge of the normal level of armament needs to be applied to bring the society back to its traditional norms regarding weaponry (Spear 2002, 143).

As positive as disarmament is towards peace, it can destroy all of the progress made after an agreement if there is no verification of the disarmament. Verification is vital to make sure nothing refuels the security dilemmas that started the conflict and fighting in the first place. “First it is a determination of compliance or noncompliance. Second it is a deterrent to cheating... Third, it is an effort at confidence-building, enabling the parties to the agreement to demonstrate their compliance to each other” (Spear 2002, 142). Disarmament without verification is often seen as a hollow gesture since there is no proof that all the weapons have

actually been given up. No verification can actually foster more distrust that the other side is using the agreement and peace to leverage itself into a better position for when they decide to resume the conflict.

Demobilization of combatants proves to be more complicated than the issues that accompany disarmament. While disarmament just takes away weapons, demobilization has to break up the groups of people who used those weapons and figure out what to do with them. “For success in the medium to long term, demobilization should include efforts to assist former combatants to reintegrate into society” (Spear 2002, 145). That can prove difficult, especially in countries with more modern economies. The skill set that the former combatants need to succeed and provide for their families in such a society are not there. Peace agreements need to devote time and resources to trying to provide these individuals with meaningful employment so they will realize they have more to gain in peace than potentially returning to violence.

Another facet that demobilization needs to take into account is the status bestowed upon members of the warring factions. “Membership in a fighting force confers a certain status in society; losing that status in a peace agreement may be profoundly threatening to combatants” (Spear 2002, 145). In order to try and rectify this situation, former combatants either need to be reintegrated into positions that mirrored the status of being the defender of their community, or they need to be positively recognized for, “the role they played in the conflict” (Spear 2002, 145). This can be difficult due to the above mentioned lack of economic skills among the fighters, and the fact that praising their role in the fighting only antagonizes the other side who see them as villains.

The two major fears among those in the society that accompany demobilization are the individual level of fear by former victims towards the reintegrating combatants and the fear of

the state that it will be overthrown by all of these former soldiers with nothing worthwhile to do. Those fears highlight the importance of the security structures in the new state. Outside monitors and third parties, an integrated police force to protect the civilian population, and full integration in bodies such as the new military can go a long ways towards calming those fears. Disarmament and demobilization, when implemented properly, take away the weapons and split up the combatants while helping them adjust to being back in society. A complete and well organized disarmament and demobilization can go a long way towards building trust and keeping an agreement working.

The idea of mutual vulnerability is one that ties into the motivations behind disarmament and demobilization. Looking into three case studies from the African Continent, Dorina Bekoe theorizes that progress is made in peace implementation when both sides feel exposed to the other. Mutual vulnerability does not mean both sides have a knife to the other's throat, instead it's the idea that, "concurrent actions must be taken that make it politically or militarily costly to renege, hence rendering one party vulnerable to the other. In this way, the party keeping its promises gives the other party tool to use against it should it renege" (Bekoe 2008, 9). Progress in peace implementation is piece-meal. It is a process with little steps building upon little steps. "As the parties advance through the implementation stage, they evaluate the credibility of the other's promise to reform through the mutual political and military vulnerabilities that are created with each step" (Bekoe 2008, 10). It is unrealistic to think that after years and sometimes decades of ethnic conflict or civil war the two sides would be able to trust each other as soon as the ink dries on the agreement. If one side examines the implementation process and feels that they are the only side giving anything up, or that their contribution is much greater than the other side, the potential for the two sides to revert back to violence is increased. "When this balance

[mutual vulnerability] is upset or is asymmetrical – for instance, one party may take actions to diminish its vulnerability – there is a breakdown in the peace process” (Bekoe 2008, 12).

Mutual vulnerability is dependent on a few things, ranging from timing to the leaders in charge of each faction. The timing of actions needs to be concurrent to ensure that one side doesn't feel vulnerable in light of the other side (Bekoe 2008, 15). Players do not look toward the end goal in order to feel safe, they look towards the last concession made by the other side, so making sure that the concessions follow one another closely and are similar in nature can help keep the mutual vulnerability strong. In order to make sure that there is an incentive to cooperate there needs to be punishment for renegeing or failing to follow through on a provision of the agreement. This is a place where third parties and the international community can step in. By leveraging financial and diplomatic pressures and resources, third parties can make defections into a harsh penalty for the renegeing side, which keeps both sides in order in the long run. Mutual vulnerability is easier when each fraction is unified within itself and has a leader that follows through on promises (Bekoe 2008, 21). Cohesive sides eliminate the possibility of splinter groups playing the spoiler role and having a leader that follows through allows the other side to have a bit more faith. If a situation of mutual vulnerability is able to be crafted, the probability of the peace agreement stalling, or the two sides reverting back to violence, is diminished.

### *Power-Sharing Institutions*

Power-sharing institutions were partially born out of the consociation work by Arend Lijphart. He theorized that in order for societies that are divided to operate peacefully, “segmental leaders should share power within the state's central government” (McGarry and

O’Leary 2008, 75). Contained with this view are the ideas of proportionality in the central government and group vetoes for both sides (Lijphart, 1977). This enables all groups to be included in the governing process while the vetoes provide security against a possible tyranny of the majority. Lijphart’s influence can be seen throughout power-sharing literature, including works by Caroline A Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie.

Hartzell and Hoddie bring up the importance of institutions in peace implementation. For Hartzell and Hoddie, institutions play three major roles in organizing peace after a civil war. Institutions can first be crafted to confront concerns from each side as to who has power and the limits of using that power. The second role is that institutions built into an agreement help to signal the commitment of both sides towards the peace and making the peace work since they both have invested into the post-violence institutions. Finally, these institutions, “define the means by which social conflict is to be managed in the postwar state. Domestic order is reconstructed following a civil war on the basis of these institutions” (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007, 4).

Tied into institutions is power-sharing. If the conflict did not result in a clear victory for one side, the institutions designed for the post-conflict environment have to have power-sharing mechanisms in place to ensure both sides feel safe and secure.

Groups seek to design institutions that will provide them with guarantees that the coercive power of the state will not be employed to their disadvantage once they lay down their arms and lack the capacity to provide for their own safety (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007, 12).



Trust building takes a long time and when one group has seen the mechanisms of the state used against them in the past; it is only natural that they would distrust those mechanisms in the future. Giving both sides a say in the institutions allows for people to begin developing trust in each other. Although people may not believe in faction A, they know that their faction B leaders, who are in the same institution, would never let them down.

The scope of institutions is also a valid concern. Just because there is power-sharing in one ministry does not mean that the weaker group will feel better right away. “In the face of such insecurities, groups may be hesitant to commit to a lasting peace unless they feel that all avenues through which their collectivity might be threatened are addressed within the settlement” (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007, 15). Having many power-sharing institutions that cover a wide swatch of society gives another signal of the commitment of each side toward trying to make the peace work. The greater the number of power-dividing and power-sharing institutions in four major government spheres: political, military, territorial, and economic, the greater the likelihood of the peace agreement holding up (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007, 64). A wide range of these institutions gives both sides the feeling that they have a chance to benefit from peace while at the same time extracting real costs from their adversaries that shows that they are committed to the process as well.

### *Summary*

Peace implementation is a relatively young field that is extremely important. With the trend of the international community to try and intervene and find peace in the midst of fighting or civil wars, studies looking into why certain agreements succeed where others fail only serves

to help future attempts. From the eight environmental factors brought up in Stedman and Downs (2002) to the coordination needed amongst third parties, preparing the international community towards the challenges that it needs to face, and the pitfalls it needs to avoid only add to the success rate of future peace accords. Whether it is disarmament and demobilization or the new power-sharing institutions that help to build trust among the former factions, and whether it is the need for security or mutual vulnerability that keeps the process moving; all are important issues that need to be considered and planned for when formulating and carrying out a peace agreement.

Theory is well and good, but things change between what is written in a book and what happens on the ground. Armed with the proper theory, the next step towards analyzing the Good Friday Agreement is looking into the history of the conflict itself. Seeing why the conflict started, the past attempts to solve it, and events immediately leading up to the Agreement provide the second lens that when combined with the first allow for true analysis to happen.

## Chapter 2 – History of the Conflict

It is impossible to look into the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and see what went right and what went wrong without knowing the background of the conflict. Without the setting, the provisions in that Agreement make little sense. There is no context to show why the two sides are at odds with each other, the underlying reasons the conflict occurred, or what needed to be included in a final document to rectify those causes. The only analysis that can take place by starting the clock at 1998 is superficial and can lead to misinformed conclusions as to the relative failures of the Good Friday Agreement.

The conflict in Northern Ireland has its roots stretching back longer than the modern iteration of the violence, popularly referred to as ‘The Troubles’, which ran from the late sixties into the new millennium. Tensions and violence existed between the Protestant unionist community and the Catholic nationalist community since before the partition of Ireland into the Free State and Northern Ireland. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, English and Scotch Protestants were encouraged by the British Crown to immigrate into the overwhelmingly Catholic Ireland in order to help the English solidify their rule over the rebellious island. There was also the worry at the time that with wars being fought in Europe over religion, having a Catholic country poised at England’s back was not a desirable scenario (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 2). The English ruled over Ireland and in that capacity, the Protestants who were used to help dilute the Catholic population were the recipients of land and favor from London. “The two communities, especially in the north-east, continued down through the years to regard themselves as largely separate entities. The Protestant settler community enjoyed political and economic ascendancy” (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 3). Those divisions and lines, while established centuries before the modern ‘Troubles’ started, remained entrenched in the society and fabric of Northern Ireland.

The two communities never really moved beyond an uneasy peace between each other, punctuated by periods of Irish peasant revolts and uprisings, which all failed. There were also times when the politics of England spilled across the Irish Sea. The Battle of the Boyne was one such event. The Catholic King James who was attempting to regain the English throne fought against the Protestant King William (of Orange) at the Boyne River in 1690. William scored a decisive victory which had the effect of securing the religion of the English monarchy as Protestant. This event, while seemingly innocuous, is still a source of major pride for the unionists in Northern Ireland and is looked upon with disdain by the nationalists. The fact that a battle that took place almost one hundred years before the existence of the United States is still a contentious and dividing issue speaks to the prominent role that history and the past have in the struggle.

It is not just the Protestant side that claims certain dates as part of an almost mythical back-story. The Catholics also have their revolts and heroes. The Easter Rising in 1916 is an event that has served to provide inspiration to nationalists ever since. Irish republicans staged an uprising in 1916 in Dublin. Led by now infamous names such as James Connolly and Patrick (Pádraic) Pearse, these republicans took over various key locations in Dublin in an attempt to inspire a mass revolt and free Ireland from the English. Their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful and they were captured and then executed by the English. Their deaths turned them into martyrs for the Irish cause and sparked men such as Michael Collins and Eamon De Valera to later help Ireland fight and ultimately gain their freedom from the British. 1916 is a huge year for the nationalists that has continued resonance today and even into the future. Not only is the Easter Rising a rallying symbol for nationalists, it also marks the beginning of an unofficial yet popularly thought of time-line. There is a worry amongst loyalists that nationalists such as Gerry

Adams (President of Sinn Fein) have marked Easter 2016, one hundred years after the rising, to be the mythical date when Ireland is finally unified (Breakingnews.ie: McGuinness predicts 'united Ireland by 2016', 2003). Despite the current peace, there is worry that the lead up to this date will bring back violence as nationalists make a final push towards one Irish state.

The IRA fought a campaign against the British occupation in 1918. Using guerrilla warfare tactics, the Irish were able to force the government in London to pass the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 4). This act established Northern Ireland as separate from the rest of Ireland and ensured that there was an option for the north to opt out of the Irish home rule being proposed. In a separate round of negotiations in 1921, the IRA sent Michael Collins, as well as a few other high ranking officials in order to represent the Irish. When it was all said and done, the British established the Irish Free State, which was an autonomous state still semi-under British influence. This decision led to a civil war in the new Irish state as half of the IRA felt that the negotiators failed to get all that they could. Added to this turmoil was the decision of Northern Ireland to leave the Free State and become its own entity in 1922. The conflict over the status of the north was born out of that moment. Northern Ireland was created during a period of violence and upheaval so it should come as no surprise that violence would remain a facet of Northern Irish life, especially during the 'Troubles'.

'The Troubles' refers to the conflict and fighting that took place from the late 60s (1968 is a commonly referred to starting point) until 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement. Due to its modernity, level of casualties, and duration this segment of violence has tended to get a large amount of press and focus. The 'Troubles' started off as a civil rights movement among the poor, mainly in (but not limited to) the Catholic community. The Protestant majority had complete control over government which meant that Catholics (and some poor Protestants) were often

overlooked for executive positions in both the public and private sector and faced discrimination in fields such as housing and electoral procedures. One issue in particular that the Catholic community wanted was one man – one vote. Due to intense gerrymandering processes, the Catholics were marginalized even more than their population level should have indicated. Drawing inspiration from the American Civil Rights Movement, the vast majority of Catholic demonstrations in the beginning were peaceful, but that would quickly change.

Small scale riots and demonstrations began to snowball in August of 1969 in (London)Derry (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 30). The Apprentice Boys of Derry, a Protestant organization, wanted to march in remembrance of when apprentices closed the gates of (London)Derry to protect it from the Catholic forces of King James a year before he was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne. Despite fears over a clash, authorities allowed the march to take place and Protestants and Catholics began to find themselves in small scale clashes. These skirmishes turned into the Battle of the Bogside, basically a full scale uprising of the Catholic community of the same name.

It took the form of pitched battles between police and local men and youths using petrol bombs, bricks and any other missiles they could find to prevent the RUC [Royal Ulster Constabulary] from entering the district. Police replied with tear gas and by throwing stones back at the rioters. Fierce rioting went on for days with many injuries on both sides (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 54).

Eventually the police were able to break through the makeshift barricades and they stormed into the Bogside with Protestants inadvertently following them resulting in destroyed homes and property within the community. While all of this was taking place, Belfast erupted with Catholics hoping to take pressure off their co-religionists in (London)Derry by stirring up trouble. The diversions quickly turned violent with the Catholics, Protestants, and the RUC all armed and

series of running street battles, rioting, and police retaliation took place. The result of all of this violence was a formal request by James Chichester-Clark, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland at the time, for London to send in the British military, which was promptly granted. Initially, the military was welcomed by the Catholic community who saw the soldiers as protection against the Protestants and the corrupt police force, but that honeymoon did not last for long.

Sporadic violence continued into 1970-71 with men from both sides of the divide beginning to trickle into vigilante and paramilitary groups. Gun battles between the IRA and loyalist supporters continued, which helped the IRA regain its credibility in Catholic neighborhoods who felt that organization had failed them during the violence in the late 60s. With the death toll mounting, the pressure was on Chichester-Clark, and his successor Brian Faulkner, to come up with a solution to end the violence. In a desperate last-ditch attempt to stave off direct rule by the British government, a policy of internment was launched. “ So it was that in the early hours of 9 August 1971 a large-scale arrest operation, codenamed Operation Demetrius was launched, with thousands of troops and police dispatched to round up the IRA” (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 67). Internment failed horribly with the majority of people being wrongly arrested and detained. That coupled with the harsh methods used by the authorities actually resulted in an upsurge of violence as opposed to the desired minimizing. It did not help for the Catholic and nationalist communities to see that not a single Protestant was interned in the first iteration which showed this move to be a weapon directed against a particular populace (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 34). Internment drove the Catholics deeper into their own communities and further radicalized the people of Northern Ireland.

If internment started to poison the good faith the military initially received, Bloody Sunday completed the job. A civil rights march was fired upon by British paratroopers resulting

in the death of 14 people, many of them young, and wounded 12 others (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 76). The official account is that the soldiers returned fire after being assaulted and that they only fired upon armed opponents but this account has been deemed a cover-up by the eye witnesses on the scene. The tragedy of this event helped the IRA with recruitment as Catholic youths flocked to the organization.

Father Daly said later: 'A lot of the younger people in Derry who may have been more pacifist became quite militant as a result of it. People who were there on that day and who saw what happened were absolutely enraged by it and just wanted to seek some kind of revenge for it. In later years many young people I visited in prison told me quite explicitly that they would have never become involved in the IRA but for what they witnessed, and heard of happening, on Bloody Sunday (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 77).

Bloody Sunday took place in late January, but it served as an appropriate marker for the entire year of 1972 which would have the highest death toll of any one year at close to five hundred. 1972 would also mark the last year for Stormont which was suspended, ending the government in March. London took over the security arrangements and basic governmental functions in Northern Ireland to mixed feelings among the residents. The loyalist community saw Stormont as a bulwark against the nationalists and resented it being taken away from them. Despite being proud members of the United Kingdom, there was a mistrust that the government in London would sell them down the river in order to reach an agreement with the nationalist community (London had pushed for the idea of a power sharing government multiple times). Those fears were not enough to stop direct rule however and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) was formed in order to try and solve the conflict.

After the British government dissolved Stormont and took control of the day to day running of Northern Ireland, certain peace initiatives began to come about. While they ultimately



failed in stopping the violence, these various talks and accords did help set the stage for the talks in the mid to late 1990s that culminated in the Good Friday Agreement. In 1973, a government white paper, *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals* showcased the feelings of London at the time. Proportional representation with a devolved government made up of major parties from both sides, would complement the newly proposed north-south links while London reaffirmed Northern Ireland's status in the UK and kept security issues for themselves (McKittrick and McVea, 2002, 91). This white paper represented the direction that the British intended on moving with Northern Ireland and led to the election of the new assembly and power-sharing executive that would ultimately take office on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974.

The momentum from the white paper and the election of the assembly helped to lead into the Sunningdale talks which were held in late 1973. "The principal tasks of the gathering were to agree on the Council of Ireland's composition and functions, to deal with the subject of greater north-south security co-operation, and to attempt to settle the constitutional status of Northern Ireland" (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 95). Progress was made on certain issues, such as the makeup of the Council of Ireland (which was a cause for concern for unionists), but on other issues the two sides were unable to see eye to eye. Dublin did not change the part of their constitution staking a claim on the territory Northern Ireland and cross-border security co-operation was not up to the level the unionists would have wanted, so in return the south only received a cosmetic oversight over the RUC.

In the end both sides were able to go back to their constituents and claim a success with the unionists highlighting "a reassuring Irish declaration on Northern Ireland's status, a law commission to tackle cross-border security problems and a Council of Ireland which they argued was largely toothless" (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 97). For the nationalists represented by the

Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), they pointed to the fact that they had a role at the top level of government and the institutions created at Sunningdale had the potential to grow and improve. While not a conclusive negotiation, Sunningdale helped to set a base to build off of. Unfortunately, the assembly failed and was dissolved, an IRA cease-fire was a failure, and the violence continued.

The next major event on the peace process timeline was the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in 1985. Building off of Sunningdale, this accord showed progress starting with the opening negotiations that began in 1984. “The agreement recognized the necessity of greater involvement by the Irish government in matters other than law-and-order issues that locked both governments into a political working relationship” (Byrne 2001, 336). Approved by both British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Irish leader Garret FitzGerald, the talks involved civil servants from both governments as they spent long hours trying to work through the contentious issues that marked the conflict.

The process of negotiation was itself important in that key figures in London and Dublin developed relationships of trust and friendship... the mid-1980s represented an important turning point in that Dublin, and important figures in London, came to see the Northern Ireland question as a common problem which was best managed jointly (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 162).

Instead of viewing the conflict in terms of who was ultimately going to have control over Northern Ireland, the two sides started to view the central issue as establishing peace. That shift in focus helped the two major governments see past differences and realize that they had a collective stake in the problem and should work together to reach a suitable answer. The result of this new found common purpose was the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The first provision in the agreement was a combined statement by both governments (with Sunningdale they issued separate statements) that the only way a change in Northern Ireland's status could happen is with the clear consent of the majority of the population. The rest of the agreement spelled out some new mechanisms with the most important being the intergovernmental conference which was jointly chaired by ministers from each country. "The Irish Government, through the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and Maryfield Secretariat, was provided with a consultative role in the administration of Northern Ireland for the first time" (CAIN: Events: Anglo-Irish Agreement). This new role for the Republic angered the loyalist and Protestant communities who saw this as another step towards the British government cutting them out and giving their country to the Irish. "Unionists saw the agreement as a victory for constitutional nationalism, and constitutional nationalism agreed with them" (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 164). Originally the unionists had decided to not partake in the talks believing that their lack of presence would kill anything from being decided upon, but this Agreement was a wake-up call that they had to be involved or risk being bypassed.

The great success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was not in stopping the conflict and creating a peaceful society in its place. This accord had the opposite approach and the angry loyalist paramilitaries and their IRA counterparts made sure the violence didn't abate. Instead the common threads running through Sunningdale and now the Anglo-Irish Agreement were the foundations being laid for later. Any attempt at true negotiations helps each side learn more about the other and potentially gives each side a view as to the issues that they will and won't concede on. It also gives everyone involved a way to make progress for next time. Instead of having to start every issue from scratch, a series of negotiations where there are some successes

allows for the negotiators to cover new ground and eventually put everything together in order to get a comprehensive agreement.

While the parties on the ground in Northern Ireland were not deeply involved in this accord, the two state governments were. “The Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference has provided a vital channel of communication between the two sovereign powers that has produced increased understanding and promoted a bi-partisan approach to the Northern Ireland conflict” (CAIN: Events: Anglo-Irish Agreement). Echoes of the success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement can be seen in the Good Friday Agreement. It is easy to see where the negotiations that took place more than ten years before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement helped to facilitate progress and stopped negotiators from starting at point zero.

The next stage on the evolution that culminated in the Good Friday Agreement was the peace process which ran during the 1990s until it climaxed in April of 1998. To some this peace process began in 1988 with John Hume of the SDLP meeting with and having talks with Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein while others peg the date at 1990 when, “the Northern Ireland Secretary of State Sir Peter Brooke [authorized] secret contact with the IRA in order to find the conditions under which republicans would consider calling a ceasefire” (Darby, 2003). The result of all of these secretive talks was a draft declaration written by Hume in 1991 (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 187). This draft declaration later became the Downing Street Declaration published jointly by the British and Irish governments in 1993.

In a key line, the Declaration noted that ‘the British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish.’ In what the British government

regarded as a major coup, the Irish government reiterated its support for the principle of consent and promised, in the context of an overall settlement, to amend the Irish Constitution to enshrine the consent principle in law (Darby, 2003).

This was an absolutely vital moment for the reason given above. The British were telling the nationalists that if the majority of people in Northern Ireland want to join the Republic, they will not stand in their way. From the unionist side, the Irish government “stipulated that articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, laying claim to the territory of Northern Ireland (article 21), would be modified to assuage the fears of Northern Unionists” (Byrne 2001, 337). These were concessions from both governments that illustrated their commitment to peacefully resolving the conflict.

In August of 1994, after an upsurge in violence, the main faction of the IRA unilaterally declared a ceasefire. This move was soon followed by a loyalist group. With the ceasefire in the background, the Framework for the Future document was jointly published by the two state governments. This document would prove to be a piece that future negotiations would work from with its view on a three strand approach as well as the two governments stressing consent (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 203). The actual peace discussions had to wait though because an adequate solution to decommissioning, in particular the IRA’s weapons, couldn’t be found. It took until November 1995 before a three-man body was formed to report on decommissioning chaired by former US Senator George Mitchell. Mitchell’s body proposed parallel political talks with decommissioning but this was refused by the British (Darby, 2003) who wanted either prior decommissioning or an election (which would take time to organize).

This led to the IRA lifting their ceasefire and they launched a major bombing attack in London resulting in more violence and a general lack of progress. Mitchell had moved from decommissioning to chair the talks themselves but that was not enough to cause a breakthrough.

Hume tried to work with Adams to get another ceasefire but their joint document was rejected by British Prime Minister John Major who was looking ahead to a general British election. This election saw Tony Blair become the new Prime Minister and in Northern Ireland, the election highlighted the growing population and in turn, political clout of the nationalist movement. Blair dropped the decommissioning as a precondition for entering into talks with Sinn Fein and announced new talks that Sinn Fein could enter when a new IRA ceasefire was in place, which happened in June 1997 (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 217). The new peace process talks began again yet they would continue to be marred by upswings in violence at various points.

“Throughout the negotiations Unionists refused to engage directly with Sinn Féin, converting them into Dayton-like proximity talks” (Darby, 2003). Despite all of those potential pitfalls, the politicians and leaders were kept on task and on Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup> 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed by the British and Irish governments along with the majority of political parties in Northern Ireland. Finally, peace would come to this troubled and fractured land.

## Chapter 3 – The Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement was the culmination of fractured talks and failed initiatives stretching back decades. Evidence of the talks at Sunningdale and the Anglo-Irish Agreement were littered throughout the Agreement signed on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1998, showing how the politicians and negotiators worked on saving previous successes from failed earlier attempts. A lot can be learned from the agreement and the subsequent events that followed it by combining a look at the history (Chapter 2) with details about the negotiations themselves.

### *Negotiations – Good Friday Agreement*

At the beginning of 1998, the talks were stalled and in danger of falling apart completely. In order to try and give the talks a helpful push, a ‘Heads of Agreement’ paper was developed between Tony Blair, the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, and David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), a political party in Northern Ireland. This document included a power-sharing assembly, a British-Irish intergovernmental council and a North-South council (Hennessey 2009, 39). Trimble saw this document as steps in the right direction considering the merely consultative role of the North-South council, rather than the similar council fused with actual executive powers as envisioned in Sunningdale.

It was with this ‘Heads of Agreement’ paper that the involved parties tried to hammer out a deal during the last week of talks, Holy Week 1998. Unfortunately the talks did not really go anywhere until the final few days. “In essence, until the three days before the Belfast Agreement was secured, the talks process at Castle Buildings was a charade” (Hennessey 2009, 54). The

biggest concern for the talks, a view that the British government especially took to heart, was to make sure that the Unionists did not back out of the agreement. Convincing them that this agreement was in their interest and that it was the right move took a lot of political maneuvering that almost cost the agreement itself.

The negotiations were functioning under three strands, the first involving the government in Northern Ireland, the second dealing with relations between the North and the South, and the third dealt with East-West relations between Britain and Ireland. During the final days of negotiation, the major issues revolved around the unionists and their objections to the second strand dealing with North-South relations.

Together with an outline of the envisaged North-South Ministerial Council the document contained a series of annexes outlining the areas in which the Council would decide common North-South policies... The Council's authority and functions were to be derived directly from London and Dublin. Effectively, the Northern Ireland Assembly was by-passed (Hennessey 2009, 42).

This was not acceptable to Trimble, and it sparked the initial concerns about the unionists backing out of the agreement. There was a worry from Trimble's side that the council as envisaged by the blueprint document would form a skeleton all-Ireland government. While it would not be that in name, it would have many of the same characteristics and would act as writing on the wall to the end goal of a united Ireland. The unionists wanted to make sure that this body did not come about in its proposed form.

Blair and the British government realized after meeting with Trimble that they may have pushed his position a little too far for his community to rally behind the agreement and so Blair re-opened negotiations with the Irish government on strand two, trying to reach a compromise that Trimble would be able to work with. After leaning on the Irish government and threatening



to publicly blame them if the talks broke down, the negotiations were re-opened and the Unionists ended up with a much better position. “The number of ‘annexes’ detailing north-south co-operation was reduced from three to one, while the number of designated areas for potential cross-border co-operation fell from 49 to 12 (of which only six were eventually enacted)” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 145). This was a huge success for Trimble, but in Northern Ireland, a success for one community is typically a failure for the other.

The nationalists, in particular Sinn Fein, thought that all of the changes and revisions were going against them and there were worries that they would end up sinking the agreement. On Good Friday itself, Sinn Fein came up with a list of 78 points of concern that they presented to the two governments. One of the major issues was prisoners, with Sinn Fein wanting them released within a year and the British government holding on to the original three-year timeline. After much deliberation, and a few calls from US President Bill Clinton to Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein was given private reassurances that as long as they agreed to the deal, the release would be moved up to one year (Hennessey 2009, 50). This compromise was explained to the unionist delegation and they seemed to be onboard. The agreement as a whole looked to be on solid ground but then new text was distributed to all parties; which sparked an uproar.

In strand one, relating to the power-sharing government that was to be put in place in Northern Ireland itself, there was no specific provision dealing with decommissioning as a prerequisite to participating in the Assembly. Originally the British had linked decommissioning to service in the Assembly but when Sinn Fein said that this was not workable for them; a compromise was reached that did not make one dependent on the other. As long as the IRA agreed to decommission as part of the overall process they would be able to serve in the

Assembly and in the Executive. This was an issue of huge contention to the UUP who now balked at the agreement.

For the British government at this point, decommissioning was viewed as something of a side issue. Accordingly, the Prime Minister urged unionists to accept the above formulation on the basis that all their 'principal objectives' had been achieved; in the words of one close observer, he urged them to 'concentrate on the big picture'. Nevertheless... it became clear that David Trimble and his party would not endorse the Agreement unless the strictures on weapons decommissioning were strengthened" (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 147).

In one last push, Blair wrote a letter to Trimble essentially saying that he shared Trimble's vision on how the agreement should play out in actuality and that he would support the decommissioning efforts. This personal sidebar assurance from Blair was enough for Trimble and he was able to persuade the majority of the unionist delegation to accept the agreement.

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1998, Good Friday. Around 5pm George Mitchell made a public address to the media in which he said a phrase people had longed to hear, "I'm pleased to announce that the two governments and the political parties of Northern Ireland have reached agreement" (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 148). After decades of violence and years of slow process, the Good Friday Agreement and its three strand approach was put forth as the solution for Northern Ireland. The first strand was focused within Northern Ireland itself. In that vein, it detailed the power-sharing Assembly and Executive that would take over and govern Northern Ireland after London devolved power back to the Northern Irish. Strand two was all about relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The North-South Ministerial Council, revised after Trimble's concerns, was tasked with developing relationships and co-operation between the two states on the island. The third and final strand of the Good Friday Agreement saw the creation of

the British-Irish Council. This Council, similar to the North-South Ministerial Council, was supposed to improve relations between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

### *Principal of Consent*

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Good Friday Agreement was enshrining the principal of consent. An issue that had proven contentious for decades was the Republic of Ireland's constitutional claim over the North. In Articles two and three of the Republic's constitution, there was text that established a goal for the Republic to be the uniting of the entire island under one Irish government. Understandably, this issue caused concern on behalf of the unionists in Northern Ireland since whenever there was involvement by the Republic, it was seen as involvement by a country that had the absorbing of the Northern Irish state as a founding belief. In a major move, the Irish and British governments decided to reform legal claims over Northern Ireland and instead instill the principal of consent.

While not technically an institution set up to help in the post-Agreement landscape, the idea of consent is what transformed the conflict and helped both communities see that their future could be protected without violence. Consent basically meant that it is up to the people to decide what state they would like to belong to, either the Republic or the United Kingdom. If a majority of people in Northern Ireland decided that they want to become part of the Republic via a vote, then the United Kingdom cannot stop them from leaving. A majority of the people in the Republic do have to vote to unify though for it to take place. Both major governments had to make concessions for this valuable milestone. The Irish government, "ended its territorial claim, contained in Articles 2 and 3 of its 1937 Constitution" (Morgan 2009, 88). The Irish also

recognized that Northern Ireland was legally part of the United Kingdom and would remain so unless the people voted differently. In return, the British removed acts that would bar Northern Ireland from ever joining the republic and the British also agreed to abide by the consent of the people and would transfer Northern Ireland to the Republic if the people voted that way.

This move contained pluses for both sides, but the biggest winner was the unionist community. While the nationalists had received a plan in place to achieve their goal of a united Ireland, and changes in British law to reflect such a plan, it was the unionists who gained more.

In return, Irish nationalism explicitly accepted that the 'consent principal' would govern the future of Northern Ireland. Unlike Sunningdale or the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Irish state was also seen to have made significant concessions to secure a settlement. Articles two and three of the Irish constitution, which laid claim to Northern Ireland were thus altered to reflect these new realities, while northern nationalists promised to operate within the political framework of the province. Irish nationalism as a whole was *de facto* and *de jure* accepting the democratic legitimacy of partition and the existence of the Northern Irish state (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 148.)

It is hard to underestimate how important this acceptance of Northern Ireland's status was to the unionist community. The progress that they received however was a double edged sword since it did set up the potential for a referendum years down the road which the nationalist would carry. With consent marking the opening salvos of the agreement, the next step is to go through the strands themselves.

*Strand One: The Assembly*

Strand One negotiations involved in the political parties in Northern Ireland, with the SDLP taking center stage for the nationalists, the UUP for the unionists, and the British government as chair. “The main issue in strand one was to create democratic institutions for Northern Ireland based on power-sharing” (Kuusisto-Arponen 2001, 125). This was a facet that had been brought up during the Anglo-Irish Agreement but ultimately was not able to be implemented until 1998. The UUP wanted the government to work as a series of legislative committees rather than ministries, but during the last day of negotiations, they accepted the SDLP argument that when dealing with foreign governments, the title of minister carries more cache with it than that of committee chair.

When the dust settled on the negotiations, Northern Ireland found itself with a 108 member Assembly, which elected members by proportional representation using the single transferable vote. In order for the Assembly to legislate, it needs a majority, except in cases, “where a cross-community basis is required. In these instances “parallel consent” is necessary, that is, a majority of support from representatives of both communities... this supermajority requirement results in a de facto minority veto” (Williams and Jesse 2001, 590). What this provision also entailed was that every member of the new Assembly must declare themselves a member of a certain community, either nationalist or unionist. This was to the detriment of cross-community parties such as the Alliance party which struggled to maintain a presence in the aftermath of the Agreement. The Executive would be made up of a First Minister and Deputy First Minister who would basically be equals in power (whichever party holds the most seats in the Assembly get the First Minister position, with the leader of the rival community getting Deputy First Minister). “The choice of the d’Hondt principle for the appointment of individual ministers to the executive was required to ensure cross-communal representation without

excluding any of the major parties in each communal party bloc” (Wolff 2005, 51). The d’Hondt principle is one that allocates seats based on a mathematical formula that tends to favor larger parties. The rest of the Executive would be made up of eight Ministers (along with the First and Deputy First Ministers) who would be assigned to fields ranging from agriculture to education.

The Agreement formally provides for safeguards to ensure that all sections of the community can participate and work together successfully in the operation of the Assembly and Executive, including arrangements to ensure key decisions are taken with cross-community support (Department of Foreign Affairs – Strand I, 2009).

There is a strong flavor of consociational or guaranteed group involvement, in the agreement with all the assurances to the different groups that they will not be shut-out of the governing process and the general power-sharing shape the government was molded into.

Not only was there a step forward with the new Assembly and Executive being power-sharing in nature, but the very idea of having those institutions was extremely important. Due to the nature of the conflict and the troubles that had arisen due to poor governance, the British decided to take direct control over the day to day governing of Northern Ireland. Having the power and authority stem completely from London distanced those making policies from the people themselves. There was a disconnect between London and the streets of Belfast and (London)Derry. The new Assembly would remedy this by once again allowing the Northern Irish to elect those who would pass laws and govern on their behalf.

A power-sharing Assembly able to exercise executive and legislative authority was long awaited reform in Northern Irish politics. Its power was to be devolved from Westminster. This new governmental arrangement filled a crucial gap in the governing of Northern Ireland, as the real political future now lay in the hands

of local politicians in a manner similar to Scotland and Wales (Kuusisto-Arponen 2001, 125).

This was a major victory for the Northern Irish as a whole and it also fit into the larger movement that Blair was attempting for the United Kingdom by proposing devolved assemblies for the other nations comprising the UK. In general, strand one was driven from the home front. The desire for an assembly and a power-sharing government came from the Northern Irish themselves. “As an official of the Northern Ireland Office remarked, the British government cared only that the parties agreed; for the most part, it did not care what they agreed to” (Horowitz 2002, 200). The same attitude cannot be said about strand two.

#### *Strand Two: North-South Ministerial Council*

Strand two was a more dividing strand and as mentioned above, came close to sinking the talks as a whole. The initial view of the North-South Ministerial Council saw it as more pervasive and stronger than the version that made it into the Agreement. Once Trimble’s concerns sparked the British to reopen the negotiations with the Irish government, a council was developed that was more in line with unionist views.

Thus the North/South Ministerial Council was ‘established to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish government, to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland on matters of mutual interest within the competence of Administrations’ (The Belfast Agreement 1998)” (Kuusisto-Arponen 2001, 125).

The council was to serve as a forum where ministers from the Republic and from Northern Ireland could discuss shared policies and develop similar tactics on certain topics. Due to

Trimble's objections, the Northern Ireland Assembly would select the members that it sent to the cross-border bodies on its behalf. Ultimately six implementation bodies were set up encompassing issues ranging from food safety and language and cultural protections to tourism. To help manage the North-South Ministerial Council, a joint secretariat was put into place in Armagh to provide logistics for the Council (Department of Foreign Affairs – Strand II, 2009). This council was happily received by the nationalist community. While the links were not as prevalent or as numerous as they were originally planned to be (before Trimble and his negotiations), they still institutionalized linkages between the government in the Republic with the devolved government in the North. After the establishment of an Assembly, and a council dedicated to North-South relations, the third and final strand concerned itself with the last relationship left, east-west between Britain and Ireland.

*Strand Three: British-Irish Council*

The creation of the British-Irish Council was the focus for strand three of the Good Friday Agreement. This council sought to increase dialogue between the state governments, and as such did not have a profound effect on the day-to-day life of those in Northern Ireland. Along with the creation of the British-Irish Council which incorporated multiple devolved governments, there was also a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference set-up.

Strand III of the Good Friday Agreement provided for the establishment of a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference to promote bilateral co-operation between the Irish and British Governments... Meetings of the Conference are held at regular intervals in Dublin, London and Belfast. Meetings can take place at either Summit (Prime Minister and Taoiseach) or Ministerial



level. Ministerial level meetings are usually co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Conference provides a useful framework for discussions on issues of mutual concern in relation to Northern Ireland including the ongoing implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (Department of Foreign Affairs – Strand III, 2009).

This step was important because it enshrined in a document the importance of each major government working together in order to ensure the peace. It is one thing for the two governments to come together in an attempt to get an agreement, but to make sure that they are on the same page to preserve the agreement requires a forum for them to talk on regular basis and that is what this body facilitated.

The British-Irish Council was seen by unionists as a positive move. Not only did this enshrine continual British presence in Northern Ireland, and give them a counterweight to the North-South Ministerial Council, but this strand also helped to further link Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom. The Northern Irish government as a result of this strand found itself within the Council of the Isles, which contained the government in London, along with the devolved governments in Scotland and Wales. The fact that this council existed helped to reassure unionists that the British saw Northern Ireland as continuing to be a vital part of the United Kingdom as a whole. “It thus carries a distinct notion of strengthening the links between Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom” (Wolff 2005, 51). This Council of the Isles reassured the unionists in a similar vein to how the North-South Ministerial Council excited the nationalists.

*Secondary Provisions of the Good Friday Agreement*

The Good Friday Agreement also comprised some important provisions on security, policing, and general rights. One such right that was laid out was citizenship. Due to the unique nature of the legality of Northern Ireland and the potential that it could switch from the United Kingdom to the Republic via a vote, provisions were put into the Good Friday Agreement that would allow the citizens to basically decide whether they wanted to hold Irish citizenship. The people of Northern Ireland were able to decide if they were Irish or British and they could hold dual citizenship (that would be unaffected by any change in the legality of Northern Ireland) if they so desired.

Along with the citizenship issue, human rights were also touched upon by the Agreement. The modern version of ‘The Troubles’ was born partially out of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, so it makes sense that human rights would filter into the agreement at some point.

The Agreement included new and enhanced provisions on Human Rights and Equality Issues with steps to be taken, North and South, including the establishment of Human Rights Commissions, and a range of commitments on economic, social and cultural issues, including on the promotion and use of the Irish language in Northern Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs – Human Rights and Equality Issues, 2009).

Along with protections guaranteed to the Irish language, there were also assurances offered for the protection of the Ulster-Scot language and culture. Making sure that both communities had their respective languages and cultural heritage recognized by the other was another important move that this part of the agreement achieved.

It would not be Northern Ireland if there was not a focus dedicated to security measures considering the violence that was such a facet of the society for close to four decades. The first

part of the security section would be about decommissioning. A contentious issue for the unionists, it was ultimately decided that decommissioning would not be a necessary precondition for parties (read Sinn Fein) to serve in the new power-sharing Assembly and Executive. This did not mean that decommissioning was completely absent from the agreement as a whole. “The Good Friday Agreement saw all participants reaffirm their commitment to total disarmament of all paramilitary groups and their commitment to use any influence they might have to achieve full decommissioning” (Department of Foreign Affairs – Decommissioning, 2009). This essentially meant that the parties took the obligation of pushing disarmament upon any paramilitary groups that may be affiliated with them. A tentative date of May 22, 2000 was set for the total decommissioning of all paramilitary groups (Morgan 2009, 94). In order to meet this date, both sides had to trust that the new Northern Ireland would be safe enough for them to give up the means to protect themselves.

Policing and Justice reforms were vital to helping the communities believe that this agreement had actual promise for succeeding, and was not just talk and bluster. A major concern of the nationalist and Catholic communities was the unfair treatment that they felt they received from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). Due to the ethnic makeup of the police force, it at times acted like an arm of the unionist movement and so the Catholic community did not trust the police in small day-to-day matters, let alone larger issues. For a regular peaceful society to develop in Northern Ireland all groups have to trust that the police were there to protect everyone, not just one segment of the population. Taking into account the conflicted history of policing in Northern Ireland, “it was therefore agreed to set up an independent commission to make recommendations on new policing arrangements which would have the confidence of all parts of the community” (Department of Foreign Affairs – Policing and Justice, 2009). The

commission would be headed by Chris Patten and was tentatively scheduled to report in September 1999. Reforms to the justice system were also addressed. A general review on criminal justice in Northern Ireland was issued that would analyze the state of the justice system and make sure of its fairness post-Agreement (Department of Foreign Affairs – Policing and Justice, 2009). Ideally these two reforms would enable Catholics to put their trust in the system which helps a sense of normality develop in Northern Ireland while at the same time replacing one role that paramilitaries had filled for local communities.

### *Conclusion*

The Good Friday Agreement was a huge step forward for Northern Ireland. The citizens of the nation had the ability to decide which state they would like to belong to. There would be a power-sharing Assembly comprising members from both communities. The Assembly and the Executive would have real power to deal with Northern Irish issues thanks to Westminster devolving powers. For inter-Irish relations, a North-South Ministerial Council was developed that would allow the two Ireland's to cooperate across a spectrum of topics to help each country. The British-Irish Council accomplishes a similar task but with the focus on the UK and the Republic; promoting relations between the two countries while giving them a forum to make sure that peace continued in the North. Also contained within the Good Friday Agreement were provisions on citizenship, human rights, policing, and justice. On paper, this was a strong agreement, but the real world where implementation happens is a different matter.

## Chapter 4 – Implementing the Agreement (1998-2007)

Shortly after the announcement by Mitchell about the end of the negotiations and the culminating agreement that resulted, the various parties went to work. “Within hours of the talks’ conclusion, the Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams had begun the process by which republicans would claim ‘ownership’ of the settlement” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 149). Sinn Fein as a party was not one of the parties that truly helped in crafting the Agreement; that would be the SDLP for the Catholic side and the UUP for the Protestants. In fact, Sinn Fein actively threatened to leave the talks after the concessions were made to Trimble on strand two, so it is almost humorous that Sinn Fein would attempt this political move.

It was a remarkable piece of political gymnastics. Adams and his party worked rapidly to establish themselves as the most ardent supporters of the Agreement, calling at every turn for its implementation and safeguarding against unionist regression. In the zero-sum world of Northern Irish politics, one effect of republican enthusiasm for the Agreement was to foster unionist suspicion (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 149).

That dynamic would be a major part of the post-agreement landscape in Northern Ireland. For the most part, the republican community was behind the GFA while the unionists were skeptical and worried that this was just an intermediary step on the way to a united Ireland. This is especially true considering that it was Sinn Fein, the so called political arm of the IRA that was the loudest champion for the Good Friday Agreement. If Sinn Fein, and by extension, the majority of the IRA was for this, then to unionists this was something to, at the very least doubt and at the most fear.

*Referendum: 1998*

Before the Good Friday Agreement could take place, it had to pass a referendum in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. Despite the changes needed to the Republic's constitution and the removal of any claim to the north of Ireland, the Agreement was very popular. The referendum took place on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1998 and the votes in favor of the Agreement totaled over 90% in the Republic (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 221). The true test would come from the referendum that was held in Northern Ireland on the same day. Just like in the south, northern nationalists were strongly behind the Agreement, "with over 96% of people supporting the deal as a whole" (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 149). That level of support did not translate over to the unionist community however. Only a small majority, 53%, voted in favor of the deal and all that it would entail.

Still, when combined with the results for nationalists in Northern Ireland it meant that the Agreement had been endorsed by some 71% of the province's electorate. This confirmed that this was an accord forged on the political centre-ground that enjoyed the approval of a democratic majority within Northern Ireland (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 149).

Such a strong pro-Agreement vote, gave the implementers of the Good Friday Agreement a strong mandate to go out and make sure that the provisions were put into place. The most important number to look at from the referendum though is not the 71% overall that voted in favor, but the fact that the unionist community was only able to obtain a small, 6 percentage point majority. "The outcome contained an imbalance in that the 71 per cent was made up of virtually 100 per cent of nationalists voters but only half of Unionism" (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 222). That split represented a danger to the progress going forward. It took an initial

intervention by Blair during the lead up to the referendum to ensure that the unionist community would end up supporting the Agreement because a unionist rejection would spell disaster for the fragile peace. The nature of the Agreement gave group vetoes and if the anti-Agreement Unionists were able to democratically assume the majority for that community, it could harm the implementation and success of the Good Friday Agreement.

### *Elections: 1998*

The next major step after the Agreement had been passed was to hold elections for the Assembly. “Polling day was 25 June 1998 when the 1,177,969 eligible electors had the opportunity to elect 108 members for the Northern Ireland Assembly” (Elliott 2009, 107). For the unionists, this election saw a similar campaign as the one for the referendum. There were two parties running on a platform of anti-Agreement, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP lead by the Revered Ian Paisley) and the UKUP, and one party, the UUP that generally speaking supported the agreement. This election would serve as a barometer for the unionists to see if either side gained any traction since the referendum. Overall, the elections returned a healthy pro-agreement majority with the two largest winners being the two most involved in the Agreement, the SDLP and the UUP. Sinn Fein also had a strong election, and was comfortably the second largest nationalist party after the SDLP in terms of Assembly seats. The picture was not entirely rosy on the unionist side however. “The party [UUP] won the largest number of seats but its lowest-ever share of the vote, with Paisley and other anti-agreement elements only 3 per cent behind Trimble” (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 222-223). Regardless of the lower margin of victory, the UUP still had 28 seats to the SDLP’s 24 which meant that a UUP member would

assume the First Minister position while the SDLP would place their member into the office of Deputy First Minister. “The Assembly met for the first time on 1 July... and elected David Trimble (UUP) as First Minister and Seamus Mallon (SDLP) as Deputy First Minister” (Elliott 2009, 109). There were a few warning signs that the unionist community may not be as content with this new status quo, but the overall mood in mid-1998 was a positive one. There was a feeling that a corner had been turned and while disputes may still happen, they would be solved in a peaceful manner. That would change by the summer’s end.

#### *Summer Flare-ups: 1998*

The summer was always a period of heightened tensions in Northern Ireland due to the annual marches that would take place. In various towns and cities, the Orange Order would parade to mark solidarity with their Protestant past and to commemorate important dates, such as the 12<sup>th</sup> of July (Battle of the Boyne). Seeing as many of these marches were celebration of victories over the Catholic community, it is easy to see how they could and historically did act as flashpoints. That was precisely what happened in Drumcree. The Parades Commission, which was a newly formed independent group that decided the legality of parades, decided to re-route the parade from its traditional path so that it avoided a heavily Catholic neighborhood. This decision sparked a massive protest among the Protestant community. There was an armed standoff between marchers and the police who had barricaded the road into the Catholic area. As this massive protest continued (reaching upwards of 10,000 people at one point) violence started to spread across Northern Ireland with the Catholic community bearing the brunt of the petrol bombs and damaged property (CAIN: Issues: Parades: Drumcree developments, 2009). Violence



continued to escalate into the July 12<sup>th</sup> weekend when a petrol bomb in county Antrim claimed the lives of three Catholic children, ages 11, 9, and 7 (BBC News: Northern Ireland). This tragedy took some of the steam out of the Drumcree standoff with the numbers dropping drastically although the Orange Order voted to continue the official protest.

The optimism that the violence was behind Northern Ireland was shaken by the events surrounding Drumcree, but almost destroyed by Omagh. The RIRA or the Real IRA (a dissent republican group) exploded a bomb in the Omagh town centre on August 15<sup>th</sup> (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). The bomb claimed the lives of twenty nine people and two unborn babies while the total casualties numbered in the hundreds. This bombing was the single largest loss of life in one incident in Northern Ireland. All of the various groups in Northern Ireland, on both sides of the divide, condemned the bombing singling a desire to leave the violence behind.

Gerry Adams, then President of Sinn Féin (SF), said that he was totally horrified by the Omagh bomb and condemned it without equivocation. [This was the first time any member of SF has used the word "condemnation" in connection with any act of Republican violence]" (CAIN: Events: The Omagh Bomb, 2009).

For violence of this scale to be taking place *after* the Good Friday Agreement points to the complexity of the society and how there was still quite a bit of work to be done in order to have a truly peaceful Northern Ireland. The only positive was the fact that all of the parties were united in disgust and denunciation which at least showed their commitment to the new peace.

*Delays in Starting the Agreement and the Pattern Commission*

The rest of 1998 was relatively subdued with the highlights being the first prisoners being released and the reduction of security installations and checkpoints. Unfortunately that progress did not transfer over to the political realm. The Assembly members had been elected, and the top two positions of the Executive assigned, but power-sharing was stalled. “The delay was due to unionist opposition to forming a devolved government which included Sinn Féin without decommissioning IRA weapons” (Gudgin 2009, 59). This general theme would play over and over again in the years after 1998 and the Good Friday Agreement. The unionists had a strong objection to allowing parties with paramilitary ties (Sinn Fein) into the government without guarantees that all of those weapons are gone. For Sinn Fein, this was a pipe dream on behalf of the unionists. The IRA would not completely decommission until they were sure that this peace process was going to work and that the new policing reforms would render their arms unnecessary for protection of the community.

During the whole process of getting the Assembly up and running, the Pattern Commission report on policing came out in September of 1999. This commission was tasked with trying to resolve the issues that surrounded the RUC and the fact that the nationalist community had zero faith in that institution. The results of this commission were 175 recommendations, which stretched from a name change for the force to making sure the oath and badges were acceptable to both communities. The RUC’s old emblem, with a crown (British symbol) over a harp (Irish symbol), was seen by Catholics as being slightly offensive and so it would be changed for the new police force. Not all recommendations were as cosmetic though:

The force as a whole would be answerable to a board carefully balanced between both communities and linked to the power-sharing assembly. The report also demanded 50-50 recruiting of

Protestants and Catholics (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006).

These provisions would go a long way towards turning this force from being viewed as a tool of oppression to a group that would protect and serve all communities. The new name that would eventually be decided upon for when the reforms would take place (2001) was the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

### *Beginning of the Assembly in 1999 and Initial Suspension*

A few months after the Pattern report came out there was some movement between the unionists and forming the Assembly. “Following lengthy rounds of negotiation during both 1998 and 1999, Trimble himself was persuaded to support the creation of the power-sharing executive on the proviso that this be followed, within a short-time frame, by IRA decommissioning” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 152). This view by Trimble coincided with an IRA announcement that it would talk to the international arms decommissioning chief as long as the Executive took office. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1999, the Assembly met and Executive ministers were selected as power-sharing officially began in Northern Ireland (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). Trimble put a failsafe into the mix by drafting his resignation, to take place after a period of time, from the Executive if decommissioning did not take place. Since Trimble was the First Minister, his resignation would have the effect of collapsing the entire government. Despite the fact that the Assembly was off the ground and running, it was still evident that the decommissioning issue would continue to complicate the full implementation of the Agreement.

The Assembly barely had time to operate before it was suspended by the Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson. The Assembly was started, “on the understanding that decommissioning would soon follow. It did not, and the devolved bodies were suspended in February 2000 to the annoyance of nationalists North and South” (Gudgin 2009, 65). This decision was also criticized by the United States government, but to the British it was the only move that they could make. The Northern Ireland Act of 2000 allowed the institutions formed in the Agreement to be suspended but not disbanded.

Rather than see Trimble resign (with the danger that he would not secure enough unionist votes to be re-elected as First Minister), the government opted to place everything into ‘cold storage’ in the hope that a new accommodation could be reached that would bring full implementation of the Agreement (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 152).

London saw that their hands were tied. They did not want to lose Trimble but he promised to resign if decommissioning did not take place, which it didn't. This was yet another blow to the Good Friday Agreement as the power-sharing Assembly was supposed to be one of the major accomplishments and it barely lasted three months before it had to be frozen.

### *Second Iteration of the Assembly*

It took until May for the Assembly to begin to come back to life. In early May the IRA announced that it would allow some weapons caches to be inspected, “but any IRA action would, it appeared to be dependent on British movement on policing reform and demilitarization” (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). This promise prompted the unionists to return to Stormont and the Assembly as long as the weapons were being dealt with at the same time. “In

May 2000, Trimble re-entered government, having extracted a promise from the IRA that it would allow the inspection and regular monitoring of its arms dumps by independent observers” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 152). The arms inspectors confirmed in June that they were able to view some weapons dumps and that the facilities and weapons themselves were secure. This news gave faith to the unionists that the IRA may finally be giving up their weapons despite a few dissident republican attacks in London during 2000 and 2001. The next major event in Northern Ireland was the general elections that were held in June.

#### *Elections in 2001 and Second and Third Suspension of the Assembly*

In the first elections held back in 1998, the two parties most involved in the agreement, the SDLP and the UUP were the big winners, showing how the support for the Good Friday Agreement itself carried over into the Assembly elections. Three years passed since then however and progress was agonizingly slow. Not only did the violence fail to disappear from the scene, but the Assembly itself had barely been in operation. This dissatisfaction in the status quo was a major part of the lead up to the Westminster general election in June of 2001. Trimble’s UUP party took a major hit while the rival unionist party, Ian Paisley’s DUP, had a successful election by gaining a few seats. This trend towards the more extreme party was mirrored on the nationalist side with the SDLP losing seats to Sinn Fein (McKittrick and McVea 2002, 229). The two parties on each side who made the biggest gains were the more extreme parties rather than the more moderate party from each community. It was an interesting development that the electorate would move outwards instead of towards the center but looking at the events that took place from the Good Friday Agreement to the 2001 elections it was not entirely surprising

(especially with the unionists since the UUP was not as strong in comparison to its rivals to begin with).

In the lead-up to the election Trimble promised that he would step-down if the IRA did not make large steps towards decommissioning within one month of the general elections. Predictably, there was not the movement on the issue that Trimble was hoping for and so on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July he resigned (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). Since Trimble was the First Minister, his resignation had the effect of again suspending the Assembly. Once again, the lack of evidence of decommissioning by the IRA interrupted with the running of the government. The unionist community was restless on the topic of the IRA and their weapons, but on the flip side there had been no movement on the policing reforms necessary for the IRA to feel secure enough to relinquish their arms. This led to the third suspension of the Assembly which took place in September, once again over decommissioning. This impasse would last until the end of October when progress with arms freed up the logjam everywhere.

#### *Partial IRA Decommissioning and Fourth Suspension of the Assembly*

For the first time, the IRA allowed an arms chief to witness the decommissioning of weapons on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The timing of this move was interesting seeing as it came on the heels on the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks on the United States. The IRA had always enjoyed a certain level of support from the Irish-American population in the states, but in the wake of the attacks, a terrorist group refusing to relinquish their arms for a chance at peace would not sit well in the US. Officially however, the, “IRA’s statement said the onus was on every party to make the deal work – but it had implemented the arms decommissioning plan to “save the peace

process” and as a gesture of its “genuine intentions”” (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). Regardless of the true motive behind the move, the fact that the decommissioning was taking place allowed Trimble to return to his First Minister post and allowed the Assembly to start working again.

Although publically beginning to decommission, the IRA remained a thorn in the side of those trying to make the new power-sharing government work. Two major events happened in 2002 that highlight the negative effects the IRA were having on the process as a whole. “Suspicion of IRA involvement in a raid on Special Branch Headquarters at Castlereagh in Belfast in March 2002; and the exposure of an alleged IRA spy-ring operating at the heart of Stormont in October 2002” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 154). The first incident was damaging, but the second was damning. The allegedly fact that the IRA was using Sinn Fein offices in Stormont to spy on other parties and gather intelligence destroyed those parties trust in Sinn Fein itself. For the unionists this was basically a confirmation of their worst fears. The link between the IRA and Sinn Fein was apparently as strong as ever, and the terrorists were using the cover of peace and politics to build their capabilities. Soon after the news broke on the spy-ring, devolution was suspended in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Secretary at the time, John Reid (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006).

Despite a speech in which Blair called out the commitment of the IRA to the peace process, and the best efforts of London and Dublin, the parties could not come to an agreement in order to restart the power-sharing government. The malaise continued into May which meant that Blair had to postpone the Assembly elections that were scheduled to take place. It took until the 1<sup>st</sup> of October before all sides were ready to try to return to the devolved government (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). The IRA subjected itself to a third round of decommissioning

under the supervision of the arms chief, but the process was not deemed open enough for the unionist's liking so the power-sharing was unable to make a return.

### *Elections of 2003 and Attempts to Restart the Assembly*

Elections for the Assembly which had been moved back from May, finally took place towards the end of November. Continuing the trend from the general elections of 2001, Sinn Fein continued their electoral victories and they saw their principal opponents on the other side switch from the UUP to the DUP. "Inside the five years of the Assembly Sinn Fein had turned the tables on SDLP in terms of seats and votes" (Elliott 2009, 113). This swing towards the extreme in the nationalist community was matched on the other side of the peace wall with unionists throwing their support more directly behind two parties, the UUP and the DUP with the DUP holding the majority of seats in the total Assembly. This meant that the DUP and Sinn Fein would be given the top two positions in the government when it restarted. The DUP had long held a stance that they would not sit in a government with a party that had weapons and Sinn Fein itself had no love lost for this particular unionist party.

It wasn't until September that talks were able to start up again. Held at Leeds Castle, these talks saw the IRA put a decommissioning offer on the table in an attempt to once again use the removal of arms as an incentive to reboot the power-sharing Assembly. The IRA offer did not contain the one thing the DUP were adamant about though, publicity and visible disarmament. The DUP wanted photographic evidence to document the IRA weapons being put out of commission before they would be ready to sit in the Executive with Sinn Fein.



The refusal of Sinn Fein to accede to this ‘Kodak Moment’ led to the collapse of the talks in early December, despite a putative offer from the IRA that it would end all its activities, complete decommissioning in the presence of two clergy witnesses and move thereafter into a ‘new mode’ (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 160).

The main concern for the IRA with the potential plan for photographic evidence is the use of said photos for propaganda purposes. The weapons were a source of pride for the IRA and they were not prepared for the unionists to use those pictures to embarrass them. After the IRA was later accused of being behind the murder of Robert McCartney (an act that deeply hurt the public opinion of the republican movement) and a bank robbery, the group decided that the offer for total decommissioning was off the table. This stance combined with the criminal actions that the general population saw the IRA perpetrating hurt Sinn Fein in the general election in 2005.

The pain inflicted by that election helped to drive home the importance for Sinn Fein to distance itself from the IRA and call for the use of peaceful means by every party involved. Gen. John de Chastelain, who was the head of an independent decommissioning body announced in September of 2005 that his organization believed that the IRA’s arms were now beyond use (BBC: Northern Ireland, Timeline, 2006). This was supposed to put the decommissioning issue to rest, but the lack of photographic evidence led the DUP to drag its heels and continue to distance itself from trying to form an executive with Sinn Fein. Finally in April of 2006, the British government decided to set up a deadline of November 24<sup>th</sup> to get the executive running. “They confirmed the assembly will be recalled on 15 May with parties being given six weeks to elect an executive. If that fails, the 108 members get a further 12 weeks to try to form a multi-party devolved government. If that attempt fails, salaries will stop” (BBC: Northern Ireland,

Timeline, 2006). The major result of this announcement was that an assembly of sorts sat for the first time since the true Assembly was suspended in 2002.

In October 2006, the two governments unveiled a new ‘road-map’ towards the restoration of the Agreement’s institutions. The product of three days of intensive talks in Scotland, the ‘St Andrews Agreement’ gave a new target date of 26 March 2007 for the return of devolved government to Northern Ireland. A ‘transitional assembly’ was to come into being on 24 November 2006, with an election held in advance of the creation of a new executive on 7 March 2007 (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 163).

The British government was working hard in trying to force the issue between the two parties by setting up deadlines and installing the transitional assembly to bring the whole thing to its head.

One final stumbling block that had to be overcome was the republican position on policing. In the past it was just assumed that Sinn Fein wouldn’t support policing but due to IRA activity over the previous couple of years, the policing issue was being used to gauge how serious Sinn Fein was about this process. At a party meeting for Sinn Fein the issue of whether the party leadership would have the mandate of the party in order to back the police was put on the table. “Over 90% backed the position taken by the Adams leadership, which has already given notice that it would endorse the PSNI if allowed to do so” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 165). The overwhelming mandate allowed the final hurdle to be cleared, but there was a stipulation put on Sinn Fein’s position. The party would put its support behind policing and justice when devolution was returned and when the authority for policing and justice lies not with London, but with the Assembly.

### *Return of the Assembly*

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, Assembly elections were held in order to fill up the 108 seats. “The extremes prevailed further over the centre parties. The DUP was returned with 36 seats and Sinn Fein with 28: a majority of the Assembly” (Morgan 2009, 101). After the election the DUP and Sinn Fein held a meeting where they agreed to work together in order to bring power-sharing back to Northern Ireland. With that historical breakthrough, the only thing left to do was get back to business. “On 8 May 2007, Ian Paisley was sworn in as the new First Minister of Northern Ireland, with Martin McGuinness as his Deputy – from which point the two men apparently struck up a genuine rapport, to widespread bewilderment” (Bew, Frampton, and Gurruchaga 2009, 165). Despite the fact that they were not centrist or moderate parties, they overcame the historical intransigent characteristics of their communities in order to bring devolution and a new optimism back.

#### *Post-2007*

After the Assembly came back in 2007, there were still issues that the parties needed to work through with the main problem being the transfer of policing and justice powers from London to the Assembly. This issue proved to be a decisive one with the Assembly again threatened with suspension, but that fate was thankfully able to be avoided. Sporadic violence also continued with events such as the bombing of a Catholic policeman’s car in 2010, but again the parties held firm to the peace and worked together in order to make sure the progress they had won would not disappear.

## **Chapter 5 - Analyzing the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement**

The Good Friday Agreement was a huge step forward for Northern Ireland. The major parties and two governments had come together in order to craft a settlement that the vast majority of the people in both countries on the emerald isle voted in support of. Looking at the Northern Irish landscape in the years since 1998 however, it is obvious that the Agreement did not completely remedy all of the underlying problems. Successes such as the Assembly and police reform were offset by the repeated suspension of devolution and increased tension regarding decommissioning. Taking key issues and analyzing them can help to shed more light and understanding as to why the implementation travelled (and is still at times traveling) a rocky road.

### *Power-sharing Institutions*

The first major positive event brought about by the Good Friday Agreement was the referendum held in order to ratify the Agreement among the general population. “The referendum held in Northern Ireland on the Agreement on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1998 saw a 71 per cent “Yes” vote” (Wolff 2005, 52). In the Republic the vote carried with over 90% supporting the referendum. That was vital because it showed that this was something the people themselves wanted to happen. While the support was higher in the nationalist community than in the unionist, the fact that it passed both of them is evidence that there were large numbers of people who were looking to move beyond the conflict. Holding the referendum also helped to establish a base level of trust between the governments and the people. “By fulfilling its obligations, a

group demonstrates its credible commitment to an agreement” (Williams and Jesse 2001, 575). The British and the Irish government proved that they were listening to the people and were dedicated to the agreement by making sure the referendums were held promptly and correctly.

The principle of consent was another plus that resulted from the Agreement. Contained within the referendums held in 1998 was the new idea that Northern Ireland would be able to decide which state it belonged to on the basis of a vote. If the majority of people in Northern Ireland wanted to join the Republic, then the two countries would be joined, if the majority wanted to stay within the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland would stay as is. Along with this consent was the fact that the Republic voted to change its constitution to remove the claim over Northern Ireland in the document. Consent helped to remove some of the powder from the keg. Once again the shift from violence to democracy was evident because this was the main contentious issue that had defined the conflict; the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The fact that both sides agreed to continue this dispute in peace is a defining positive from the Agreement.

One large positive of the Good Friday Agreement was the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. It is hard to underestimate how important it was for the people of Northern Ireland to have their own representatives and governing body. For decades the ability of local people to effect local polices was basically non-existent. Northern Ireland was governed from London and that was that. Having a devolved government in which the representation would be local helps to establish a sense of normalcy to Northern Ireland.

The Agreement was described as creating a new structure, a new set of politics, and as “our Magna Carta” – all references to a break with past structures and the creation of new structures by which the two communities could govern themselves and interact peacefully (Hancock 2005, 80).

The power-sharing assembly gave the two communities a different venue in which to express their differences without the need for petrol bombs or Armalites. The size of the Assembly at 108 members for a relatively small population in Northern Ireland (slightly over 1.5 million people) guarantees that the districts are smaller and thus more personal. This new venue would be one untainted by the prejudices of the past where newly elected officials could come together and solve problems. As far as the two groups went, the nationalists were more excited about finally being able to have a say in the governing of Northern Ireland and being able to help their community. The unionists had traditionally enjoyed the power in Northern Ireland so that was not as important to them. Rather they favored the ability to enact local policies because while they wanted to remain linked to Great Britain, they did not agree with everything that London thought best for Belfast. Besides the continual worry of being betrayed and sold down the river by the British, some unionists also disagreed on less important matters, such as agriculture and education. Being able to govern themselves would give the Northern Irish a chance to create their own solutions using their own insights and experiences.

Unfortunately, the Assembly and power-sharing was not all positive. The most glaring example of how the implementation of the Assembly failed was the fact that it spent the majority of time between 1998 and 2007 suspended. On four separate occasions, the Assembly had to be suspended, including the 2002 to 2007 suspension of devolution and a return to rule from London. The fact that the British had to step in so many times and during the last one, for such an extended period of time does not paint an encouraging picture of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. The major issue, as discussed during the post-Agreement Northern Ireland section, was security based with the unionist parties' reluctance to govern without total

and public decommissioning and the IRA via its affiliated political party Sinn Fein refusing such a measure. The unionists with Trimble would start to form a government, on the belief that the IRA would decommission, the IRA's efforts would not be satisfactory to the unionists, and the Assembly would be suspended. The suspensions were as much a reflection on the security environment in Northern Ireland than anything else, but the structure of the Assembly itself also helped to complicate matters during the implementation phase.

The Assembly needed a cross-community majority in order to pass any legislation that involved both groups. While this set-up prompted the initial trust that was important in order to get the minority group, in this case the nationalists, to feel secure in power, it was not ideal for day to day governing. The fact that important decisions needed both groups to agree, and historically, they did not agree on much, meant that the Assembly was able to handle smaller issues, but was poorly equipped for the larger ones. This set the stage for problems, such as decommissioning, to derail everything. Vetoes preventing normal governance held true with the cross-community majority as well as with the Executive itself. "The weakness of the d'Hondt arrangement was that serious differences between parties brought down not just the government, as in more democracies, but the whole system of government" (Gudgin 2009, 63). The First and Deputy First Minister were relatively weak positions which contributed to the insecurity that led Trimble to believe that collapsing the government was a safer option than keeping the Assembly running while pursuing IRA decommissioning. Everything hinged on the Assembly and Executive and the way those two bodies were set up positioned them for failures.

The power-sharing nature itself of the Assembly, also contributed to the implementation problems. The initial elections held for the Assembly in 1998, put the UUP and the SDLP in first and second respectively (both first in their respective blocks). These were the two parties that

had worked the most on getting to an agreement and they were the more centrist parties. During subsequent elections however, those two parties lost support to their more extremist counterparts, the DUP for the unionists and Sinn Fein for the nationalists.

Elections of 2003 and 2005 tilted toward the hard line, the extremes. Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) outpolled the moderate Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) on the loyalist side of the divide, and SF gained more seats than the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) among republicans, the net result a threat to power-sharing given the relatively rigid position of both victors (Reilly 2009, 70).

While those two parties were able to come together to restart power-sharing in 2007, their very nature helped to increase the delays. The DUP had been against the Agreement from the very beginning, refusing to participate in any government with a party that still had guns (Sinn Fein). For Sinn Fein, this devolution was just supposed to be a stepping stone until a fully united Ireland. The voting push to the wings definitely resulted in delays in the successful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

The fact that the structure of the Executive guaranteed the same parties a role in government helped to keep divisions within the new institution. "By effectively guaranteeing the same four parties a place in government for the foreseeable future, sectarian divisions in the institutions, and by extension in society, have been entrenched rather than broken down" (Wolff 2005, 60). Along with that entrenchment was the fact that the zero-sum attitude still had yet to be overcome. There was a feeling amongst those in power that if the unionists were receiving something that benefited their community, it was at the same time detrimental towards the nationalists and vice versa. "With the dominant view being that there are too few chances to attract voters from the other side, election campaigns become intra-community events and lead to



increasing polarization and radicalization, essentially strengthening hardliners” (Wolff 2005, 53). That move to the more hard line parties reinforces the zero-sum mentality and makes it almost impossible to govern normally seeing as normal governance attempts to improve conditions for both communities. There was a need for the people to re-learn priorities so that a success for the nationalists could also be a success for the unionists.

The power-sharing government (when in operation) can be linked back to some of the peace implementation theories of different authors. Stedman and Downs talk about the third parties (The British and Irish governments) and how the peace agreement was signed without forceful coercion and Hartzell and Hoddie talk about the idea of power-sharing institutions themselves as being important to resolving a conflict. The fact that a peace agreement was in place is a major step for Stedman and Downs. Without it, there is the implication of “a lack of problem solving and trust- and confidence-building among the warring factions, thus producing a more difficult implementation environment” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 56). For the Northern Irish however, the factions were at the table working towards a solution. While there was encouragement from the two governments there, they were working to reach a document that would be acceptable by the parties, not something that they would unilaterally impose. Having those two governments working with people who wanted to have progress helped make the implementation of the power-sharing Assembly a success (at times).

The very fact that Northern Ireland established a power-sharing Assembly is a success for the implementation of the Agreement. Having power-sharing institutions in place allows for the two groups to feel more secure in governing with each other. “Rival groups will be more likely to commit to peace if assured that some group will not be able to seize power and use it at the expense of others” (Hartzell and Hoddie 2007, 3). Power-sharing forces the two sides to solve

problems together which helps foster a sense of normalcy that is needed in order for the society as a whole to progress from one geared towards conflict to one focused on peace. Institutions such as the Assembly, give the nationalist and the unionist a chance to protect their interests using votes and legislation instead of paramilitaries. That being said, Rothchild highlighted the potential problems that Northern Ireland would experience when trying to turn an institution based on divisions, into something that can transcend group identities and govern effectively (Rothchild 2002, 118).

There was the problem of the number of parties involved in the situation. Stedman and Downs talked about how the difficulty of implementation increased with each additional party over two. In Northern Ireland, while there were two major sides to the conflict, there were multiple groups. On the one side there were the nationalists with the SDLP, the more hard-core republicans with Sinn Fein, and the Republic itself not to mention groups such as the IRA. On the other side were the unionists (UUP), the loyalists (closer to DUP) and their various paramilitary groups. This conflict had the veneer of being simply split between two sides, but the multiple divisions within each side made implementing the Agreement more difficult.

Overall, the Assembly should be classified as a success. It is a process that is turning the society from one that relied on violence to one that is using politics to fix problems. The negatives, while hindering normal governance, were mostly necessary to get the Assembly in the first place and can be phased out down the road as stability become the norm.

### *Third Parties*

The British and Irish governments, along with the top politicians on the ground had to make sure that they were all singing from the same song-sheet after the Agreement was signed. In order to make sure the referendums were held and that the provisions laid out in the Good Friday Agreement were carried out (including the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council) there needed to be coordination between all of the groups involved. Bruce Jones writes about how failure to have a clear leader can harm the implementation stage of a peace agreement because it can lean to many overlapping third parties and a vague understanding of what is supposed to be happening (Jones 2002, 90). Thanks to forums such as the British-Irish Council this was avoided in the post-Good Friday Northern Ireland landscape. The two governments were able to coordinate and make sure that they were pulling in the same direction. The British took the lead role and helped to make sure that the confusion that can result following an agreement being signed did not occur. The involvement of the Republic was a surprisingly huge benefit to the British. The lens for viewing the conflict changed from just a purely Northern Ireland focus, to one that encompasses the island as a whole. “No longer will Northern Protestants and Catholics blame the British government for a breakdown in peace” (Williams and Jesse 2001, 572). By linking the Republic into the Agreement, the British have helped ensure that some of the responsibility falls on the Irish which lessens the burden and the worry for London.

Third parties played a big role in providing economic incentives to Northern Ireland in an attempt to give further motivations for continued peace. Northern Ireland experienced a general economic boom in the late 90s, early 2000s that helped to lessen the allure of the conflict in a few ways. For one, the paramilitary groups often drew from the poor who had no real other options. Jobs and better economic times help to take away that reason to join in the first place.

They also help to keep former combatants out of the fray. If you now have a job and are providing for your family, it is a much harder decision to give all of that up to go back and kill people.

Outside of the boom, there was a dedicated effort from third parties led by the two major governments and the European Union to build capacities as a buffer to going back to violence. The two major initiatives were, “the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), established by Britain and the Republic of Ireland in 1986, and the European Union’s (EUs) Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland, or Peace I” (Byrne 2009, 15). The EU’s program is a three stage effort that started in 1994 geared towards protecting the peace through development. The goal of the program is to try and build local capabilities and provide incentives for peace. With the British, the Republic, and the EU all pouring money into Northern Ireland, it sets up opportunities such as the ones mentioned in the paragraph above for former paramilitaries. These peace funds have provisions that help local communities grow and leave the conflict behind them. “The current changing political and socioeconomic context within NI reflects that a process of peace building has begun and that external economic assistance is a cornerstone of that process” (Byrne 2009, 17). Not only does economic assistance help the individuals on the ground, but it can be used to promote sections of the Good Friday Agreement itself.

The Agreement has a focus on linkages between the two communities both within Northern Ireland with its focus on the importance, “of targeting marginalized communities for economic assistance from both the IFI and the EU Peace I Fund to promote self-esteem and empowerment, capacity building, and reconciliation across the bicomunal divide” (Byrne 2009, 22). Cross-border development is also high on the list of priorities for the peace funds. What all of these different bodies (IFI, Peace I, etc) show is the role that third parties play in

economic development. Stedman and Downs (2002) mention the importance of third parties being involved and committing resources in order to help implement a peace agreement. This view is evident in Northern Ireland where these two funds, along with other smaller programs used economic incentives to try and bring communities together in an attempt to resolve the underlying tensions in the state.

The involvement of third parties, while vital in the initial stages, was not necessarily all positive during the implementation. “The major criticism that must be leveled at the British government and its partners in Dublin and Washington is that they have absolved the parties in Northern Ireland from taking responsibility for their actions, either individually or collectively” (Wolff 2005, 58). The inclusion of the Irish government, helped the British shift blame for failure, but the presence of the British themselves removed the need for the Northern Irish parties to be self-reliant. Instead of working with each other in order to overcome problems that came up in the immediate post-Agreement Northern Ireland, the various parties would complain to the British to try and get what they wanted. As Wolff (2005, 58) argues:

This tactic worked quite well at first, but it also reinforced the behavior pattern of seeking individual reward for specific parties rather than for collective bodies, such as the executive. By engaging individually with the political parties, the British government undermined any sense of collective responsibility among those sitting together in the executive.

In order to reach a society with normal governance the parties needed to learn how to work together and compromise. It is a very similar picture to that of a child (Northern Ireland) with a doting parent (the British). Instead of that child working to get what he wants, the kid just complains to the parent and gets his reward. This is not a mature or normal way of operating and that was reflected in the difficulties the Northern Irish faced.

In that same vein is the hold that the British have over the Assembly. The suspension in 1999 being a prime example: There was an issue (decommissioning) that caused concern amongst the politicians, and the British suspended the Assembly citing a crisis. This trip-switch prevents politicians from bridging the divide and working together to save their common positions which would have the long-term effect of making the politicians more comfortable working together on future, more normal government issues.

The existence of this fail-safe device has perhaps not focused the minds of politicians in Northern Ireland hard enough on making the institutions work... and has "allowed the creation of crises in which one could prove that one remained a true believer in the cause, Republican or Unionist (Wolff 2005, 59).

Evidence of this mindset is again seen in the 1999 example. Rather than work together, the two sides were confident in British intervention if things got too far so the nationalists felt comfortable delaying their decommissioning and the unionists felt comfortable refusing to sit until the British did something. There was never the true pressure of failure to motivate the politicians to get together to solve the problem. They were able to satisfy their respective camps and continue to squabble, safe in the knowledge that the 'parent' would set everything right without them needing to do a thing.

Typically, peace implementation theory sees the involvement of a third party as a positive. Stedman and Downs (2002, 58) talk about how the greater the commitment of a major power in both resources and troops, the greater the chance of success of a negotiated agreement. The fact that the strategic coordination between the British government and the various other groups involved, from the Irish to the parties themselves, was solid should result in a higher

chance of successful implementation according to theory. In reality however, there was almost too much interest from the third party, and while helping make sure that the Agreement did not dissolve completely, the British also stymied any progress on behalf of the parties. The British did not fit into the traditional view of third parties since they technically had authority and sovereignty over Northern Ireland and that may have been the reason that they appeared overbearing and almost counter-productive while that same level of commitment from third parties in other cases would have been extremely welcome. Regardless of the theory though, the simple fact is that the British helped to organize and secure the peace but their presence retarded the need for the rival political parties to problem solve with each other. The British influence and help was instrumental in getting an agreement through, but less helpful during the implementation phase.

### *Security Issues*

In the security realm, the Good Friday Agreement was successful in regards to the reduction in violence and policing reform. Unfortunately, those two successes were offset by the failures with proper decommissioning and spoilers. The fact that there were security issues goes a long way to explaining why the implementation of the Agreement was not smooth and flawless.

Before getting into the specifics of the good brought about by the Good Friday Agreement, the fact that violence dropped off is potentially the most important. The parties, including those with ties to paramilitary groups signed on to the Agreement which almost signaled a change in tactics for these groups. For the nationalists, they saw that their ultimate

goal could be achieved through the ballot box. If they were in government, they could work from inside the system to enact changes that would help them and their community, a move unavailable to the IRA. Many loyalist paramilitary groups also saw the benefit of putting down their arms and giving this new peace a chance. While there were spoilers such as the RIRA and flare ups of violence such as the Drumcree March, the overall drop in violence is not something to be overlooked when pointing out the positives of the Good Friday Agreement.

The police reforms were a significant step post-1998. While the suggested changes came out of the Pattern Commission instead of the Good Friday Agreement itself, the idea for police reform was one that was enshrined in the Agreement. Before Good Friday, the police were seen as oppressors to the nationalist community and protectors to the unionists, helping work against those who desired a united Ireland.

The Pattern Commission, mandated by the Agreement to reform the police, recognized this, explaining that the “main” problem facing police was the political divide between unionists and nationalists and the fact that the latter associated the “police with unionism and the British state.” It recommended, therefore, that the names and symbols of the police be freed from “any association with either the British or Irish states.” (Ben-Porat 2008, 81-82).

After decades upon decades of the police basically serving only one community, these reforms made it so that the nationalist community could begin to trust in the police force. There was a push to transform the make-up of the force itself from almost entirely Protestant to about 50-50 between Protestants and Catholics. This would help the Catholic community see the police force as one that is solely there to provide for the security of the citizens and not as a tool of state oppression. The police were reformed so that they could do the job they were tasked with for all citizens. It was another sign of normalcy that had been missing in Northern Ireland, having a



population who trust in the police to protect them (regardless of religion or ethnic group). Donald Rothchild sees implementation efforts such as the police reform that took place in Northern Ireland as helping people cast aside their old groups. If a state cannot provide for the security of its citizens, “group members can remain, for the purposes of their security, ensconced in the apparent safe sanctuary of their ethnic or other identity-group confines” (Rothchild 2002, 121). The dangers of this fade if the state is able to prove to the people that it can offer them protection from violence and a chance to live a normal life.

The major failure of the security segment of the Good Friday implementation was decommissioning of the IRA. This was *the* contentious issue that sparked the various suspensions of the Assembly and the failure to get it up and running again. The unionists wanted the decommissioning to be out in the open, with public documentation of the event. Predictably, the IRA was not fond of this idea and preferred to drag the decommissioning out, and while they would allow inspectors to monitor the process, no pictures were to be taken.

Decommissioning is a sticking point in normal implementations, but in this case, two unique factors compounded the problem; the attitude of unionists and the dual minority aspect of Northern Ireland. “For unionist politicians, history provided a sense of a ticking clock. In their view, the position of unionists was eroding. This erosion was a function of the sense of Ulster Protestants as a besieged group” (Horowitz 2002, 204). Unionists saw the British government making concessions to the nationalists, Sinn Fein claiming the Agreement as a huge success which meant that it had to be bad for the unionists, and higher birth rates for the Catholics which could nullify the consent principle which was a major success for them. The Catholic population in growing thanks to larger families which means that with the principle of consent, there is a real worry that if the Catholics become the numerical majority in the near future (currently

projected) they will just hold a vote and agree to join the Republic. “At the most basic level, many unionists are unwilling to embrace the Agreement because they believe it moves too far in a nationalist direction” (McGarry and O’Leary 2008, 83). They see this (as do many nationalists) as a stepping stone to a united Ireland and their supporter, Great Britain, has given them up. “Protestants make frequent appeals for security based on perceptions that Great Britain has become too responsive to the other side” (Reilly 2009, 96). All of those factors helped to create the siege mentality that Horowitz (2002) mentions. To the unionists, the concessions have gone too far and it is time to dig in their heels and stop the decline, partly due to fear of what may happen otherwise.

That fear is partially based on the fact that this conflict involves dual minorities. “Protestants in Northern Ireland were a majority that had the fears of a minority” (Horowitz 2002, 206). While it is true that the Protestant community is the majority in Northern Ireland, they are a minority when compared to the Catholic community on the island as a whole. Any potential unification with the Republic would see them going from a majority, with all the privileges that entails, to a small minority in a sea of Catholics. The Catholics to the south combined with the increased birth rates of the Catholics in the North help to convince Protestants that they are basically just keeping their head above a proverbial Catholic flood (Byrne 2009, 41). Traditionally, conflicts with dual or nested minorities are more prone to violence because there is a serious fear emanating from the original majority party.

The combination of the traditional unionist attitudes and their status as a dual minority helps to explain the decommissioning issue. Due to their fears as a community, the unionists wanted decommissioning to happen before governing. The nationalist, being the actual minority, wanted movement on police and justice reform with those two powers transferred to the

Assembly before giving up the means to protect themselves. The position of the IRA was a traditional one, but it caused problems because the unionists were not a traditional majority. Both communities were expecting concessions to ensure their position and protection. That made this a harder case than traditional implementation efforts. From the Assembly being suspended in 1999, to the fact that the Assembly was on ice for years, the give and take between the two communities over decommissioning was really the defining issue during the Good Friday implementation.

Peace implementation theory highlights how important disarmament and verification of that disarmament is to the successful implementation of an agreement (Spear 2002, 142). Proof that the tools used to persecute violence have been taken out of commission is a huge trust builder. It shows the commitment of the disarming side to the new peace process. The trouble with this is the one that Northern Ireland ran into; the decommissioning party did not feel entirely secure in giving up their arms especially under the conditions that the unionists wanted. There was also a catch-22 in the fact that the Assembly was suspended despite the “agreed view that the people of Ireland (in both jurisdictions) should determine their own future. These moves in turn help explain the IRA’s reluctance to decommission its weaponry” (McGarry and O’Leary 2008, 84). In a society where historical battles from the 1600s still provoke tempers and inspire political murals, the pictures of the IRA handing over the weapons, as they would had they been defeated, would be a propaganda hammer blow. The decommissioning eventually took place but it took a while, helping to show how the republicans almost wanted to try on this new peace, before fully committing and buying into it. The previous failed peace attempts illustrate why this approach is reasonable, but it had the negative side effect of destabilizing the unionists and in turn disrupting the power-sharing Assembly and devolution.

The final security issue to be brought up was the role spoilers played in the implementation. The reduction in violence after the Agreement was important and visible, but still holdouts remained from both sides. Sporadic violence flared up, including the massive Omagh bombing by the RIRA a group, like the Continuity IRA (CIRA), born out of the fact that the IRA was operating under a cease-fire due to the peace process. “The IRA with its various dissident branches is mirrored on the Protestant side by the Ulster Defense Association [UDA], the Ulster Volunteer Force [UVF], and lesser gangs” (Reilly 2009, 78). These splinter groups continued to use violence after the Good Friday Agreement was signed with less frequency than before, but incidents still took place. The murder of Robert McCartney in January of 2005 would be a prime example. There was even one category that actually saw a rise in violence after 1998: inter-community violence. “The number of non-fatal shootings and assaults has dramatically increased since 1998... the majority of these acts are directed at members of the paramilitaries’ own community or at rival paramilitary groups within it” (Wolff 2005, 54). One role that the paramilitary groups played during the conflict was to act as police for their respective communities. This especially held true for the catholic community which had an intense distrust of the RUC. Despite the police reforms and the Agreement, that aspect of the paramilitaries had not gone away. The non-fatal shootings and assaults were likely punishment for ‘anti-social’ behavior, such as dealing drugs or something along those lines.

In Northern Ireland paramilitary activities that have been undertaken in an attempt to impose order or control on their communities, such as the beating, shooting or exiling of people accused of criminal acts or anti-social behavior, have been widely categorized as resorting to vigilantism (Jarman 2008, 141).

Some of the groups were even accused of turning into criminal organizations themselves. The presence of these groups was a hurdle for implementing the Good Friday Agreement.

The presence of spoilers increases the difficulty of implementing a peace agreement. “Spoilers in peace agreements pose daunting challenges to implementation” (Stedman and Downs 2002, 56). The actual sectarian violence performed by the spoiler groups was low in volume, but it helped to contribute to the insecurity both communities felt after signing the Agreement. With the decommissioning issue already scaring the unionist community, the last thing they needed was violence by republicans that would point to the IRA keeping their weapons in order to use them offensively, not just for hypothetical security. On the other side of the divide, the IRA would be more reluctant to disarm if loyalist groups were launching attacks and bombings. The violence may have been light compared to previous decades, but its impact was just as strong.

An issue that the Good Friday Agreement did not address properly was replicating the position of the former combatants into the new society. Spear mentions this when talking about demobilization. The former combatants are the ones who would be returning to conflict if the agreement fails. If they feel marginalized and left out of the new society, then they may resort to violence in order to feel like they are contributing again.

If one’s social standing depends on the role as a defender of the society, symbolized by the possession of a gun, then giving up that gun implies marginalization. In situations such as Northern Ireland, this had led terrorists on both sides of the sectarian divide to seek to perpetuate their roles in society through “punishment beatings.” Although ostensibly a reflection of the community policing itself and dealing with joyriders and drug dealers, this can be seen as fighters seeking to establish for themselves a position of status in the post-conflict society (Spear 2002, 145).

It is hard to potentially go from being the protector of an entire community to an unemployed and basically useless man. The sense of importance and camaraderie fostered by the paramilitary groups can be a powerful pull so it is important for implementers to give former combatants a role that would make them reluctant to return to violence. This did not really happen in Northern Ireland on an organized scale, which is why there were cases of spoilers and non-fatal violence. Not enough focus was put on getting all former combatants into roles that would make them shy away from their former lives of violence and conflict.

### *Summary*

Despite the positives that came from the Good Friday Agreement, the implementation was plagued with issues that caused the process to be stop-start and difficult. The structure of the Assembly worked against regular governing by institutionalizing group identity in a power-sharing format. The prevalence of the British during the implementation helped at first, but then acted as too much of a safety blanket and prevented the parties from feeling a true need to work together. To top it all off, the insecurities and dual minority aspect of the unionist community made it so that the issue of decommissioning was able to derail the Assembly on multiple occasions.

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this paper was why the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement was so difficult. I tried to look into the situation in Northern Ireland and figure out why an Agreement that was heralded as a monumental step forward did not completely eradicate the violence in the society. After looking into the implementation phase, other questions arose, such as why the Assembly had trouble standing on its own? This paper is an attempt to shed some light on those questions by analyzing the Good Friday Agreement itself, and its implementation.

The Northern Ireland case is a unique one in the field of peace implementation. The long history leading up to the Agreement, with hostility if not outright conflict being the norm for centuries, combined with the unique community dynamics of the Protestants and Catholics gives the Northern Ireland situation a special feel yet complicates the implementation at the same time. The Good Friday Agreement was supposed to put an end to the violence and turn the state from regular violence into normalcy. Despite those intentions however factors both structural and otherwise effected the implementation of the Agreement. Instead of peace, there were instances of continued violence; instead of normal governance, the power-sharing government was suspended four times. By highlighting some of the important issues that kept the Good Friday Agreement from being fully implemented it is possible to understand why the progress was so slow.

The Agreement was signed in April of 1998, yet it took until November of the following year before devolution occurred and the power-sharing government was put into place. An initial delay is understandable considering the historic divide between two communities that would now be sharing power, but to then have the Assembly be suspended four times including a five year hiatus from 2002 to 2007 highlights the fact that the implementation of this Agreement was

marred by difficulties. In my opinion, the Agreement itself fell short in addressing the fears of the unionist community and the dual minority aspect of Northern Ireland which created a situation where both sides felt insecure and didn't trust each other. Those two main aspects combined with other small issues ensured the difficulty of the implementation phase.

As the technical minority, the nationalists were looking for concessions on policing and justice in this new state (which they eventually got) and representation in the Assembly *before* they would hand over the last of their weapons. The weapons were a sort of insurance policy that was in place to make sure that if this new peace failed, they would not be caught off guard. The unfortunate side effect of this thinking by nationalists and republicans was that it made the unionist community incredibly insecure. While a majority in Northern Ireland, on the whole of the landmass, the Protestants are a small minority, and this fact helped to create a siege-like mentality amongst the people. Popular unionist slogans such as 'No Surrender' highlight this way of thinking. When designing and implementing the Agreement, not enough impetus was placed on making sure the unionist community felt secure with the changes that were going on. Instead of provisions being institutionalized, it was left to the politicians who decided that they could not govern with anyone who had arms (directed at Sinn Fein). This debate over decommissioning was the factor that brought down the government so many times. The Assembly that came about in 2007, after the final round of decommissioning, has survived multiple scares intact, which is a positive step, but that evidence just adds to the relevance of unionist fears and decommissioning as the major sticking points.

That is not to say that some other factors did not complicate the post-1998 Northern Irish landscape. The presence of spoilers and former paramilitary members helped make sure that the violence, while greatly reduced, was not eliminated entirely. Less frequent sectarian violence



was accompanied by inter-community vigilantism as splinter groups and paramilitaries attempted to influence the peace and find their role in the new Northern Ireland respectively. The structure of the Assembly complicated normal governing practices and the presence of the British acted too much like a safety net for the parties to avoid working problems out on their own. All of those flaws however do not bare as much responsibility for the difficulty of implementation the Good Friday Agreement as decommissioning and group attitudes.

#### *Insight for Other Cases of Peace Implementation*

The Northern Ireland case does not fit neatly into the peace implementation literature and theory. Certain aspects of the conflict and subsequent agreement increase the difficulty during the implementation. The dual minority aspect of the conflict is one that cannot be overlooked for its importance on shaping attitudes and influencing how successful the implementation was. For any future conflict that involves dual minorities and sovereignty, special attention needs to be paid to giving security guarantees to the majority as well as the minority group. More so than other cases, dual minority conflicts need a heavier focus on security to get the two sides to work together meaningfully.

Another important lesson from Northern Ireland is that third parties cannot be overbearing. While seldom a problem in peace implementation, the fact the Northern Ireland was part of Britain made it so the British almost stifled the need for the parties to confront one another and resolve their issues. There was too much of a safety net; the parties involved on the

ground needed to be aware that it is up to them to secure the peace and solve the problems, not the 'parent' nation waiting in the wings.

A third and final point that can be taken from the Good Friday implementation is the importance on having a plan to move from power-sharing to a normal system of government. The power-sharing Assembly is a major positive and its guarantees and group vetoes ensure that the people feel confident that this new body will not lead to them being oppressed. That being said, it makes any actual governing extremely difficult and can create (as it did in Northern Ireland) a situation where the elected officials are not fighting for the state but for their own particular community and the voters are not electing based on anything besides ethnic group. The Assembly was a solid start, but it led to disillusionment among some, especially among the unionists who had already experienced being in power and were looking for the Assembly to actual govern. There needed to be a blueprint in place as to how the Assembly was going to morph into a body that was more suited to governing normally. Whereas it may work for other counties such as Belgium, the Northern Ireland case has shown the problems that can arise by reinforcing group identities. With normal governance, officials would not try and segregate their work to help only one community, but rather focus on what is best for the state as a whole.

After analyzing those major lessons, it is evident that the Northern Ireland case may be too unique to take specific measures and apply them to other cases of peace implementation. The presence of a dual minority is a factor that is not commonplace and when combined with a non-traditional third party that was technically a member to the conflict, the Northern Ireland case loses its ability to relate to the theoretical literature on an intimate level. That is not to say that general lessons cannot be learned and taken from the Good Friday Agreement implementation. In the security realm, stronger security guarantees are needed, especially to the majority in cases

that contain dual minority aspects. Third parties need to provide enough distance to make sure they do not smother the process by negating the players need to work together. Finally, this case shows the importance in having a detailed plan to move from an inclusive power-sharing government to one geared towards normal governance.

Those three lessons, greater security focus for majority in dual minority cases, the proper distance of third parties, and a blueprint for moving beyond the initial power-sharing institutions are the major ones that can be taken from the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and added to the growing volume of peace implementation literature. The two communities battled for years in Northern Ireland, and the post-Agreement decade, while containing much less violence, was still quite similar. The Good Friday Agreement implementation highlights the fact that just reaching an accord is not enough, it still has to be implemented, and there will be problems that will arise during that process. Although there were issues and failures along the way, the path blazed by those in Northern Ireland not only helped to add a bit to peace implementation theory, it brought peace to the country as a whole.

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