MECHANISMS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND MULTI-TRACK DIPLOMACY IN PEACE PROCESSES

Lessons from Northern Ireland

EPNK

Understanding conflict. Building peace.

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Abbreviations

ANIA	Americans for a New Irish Agenda
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
INC	Irish National Caucus
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LVF	Loyalist Volunteer Force
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDP	Ulster Democratic Party
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UFF	Ulster Freedom Fighters
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force

Introduction

International Alert has been engaged in conflict transformation in the South Caucasus since the mid-1990s. In the Nagorny Karabakh conflict context, we have sought to empower different sectors of society to build trust across the divide, explore alternative narratives on the conflict and advocate for peace among policymakers. As part of the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK), Alert has brought together a group of experts from the conflict region to carry out comparative analysis of other conflict contexts.

Conflicts can be studied on different levels and with different aims – from understanding the causes, dynamics and driving forces of conflict to studying the positions of the conflicting sides and specific solutions. This project does not focus on any of these aims. Instead, we approach the analysis of other conflicts from the perspective of civil peacebuilding. In particular, we seek to study the participation of civil society and the role of multi-track diplomacy in peace processes and efforts to transform conflicts using specific mechanisms and institutions that do not have direct political leverage or resources. Another important part of the project consists of stimulating broad debate with diverse sectors of the population based on new ideas and perspectives on transforming the conflict, and developing new approaches through direct dialogue with the societies.

The first initiative of the expert group was to analyse perceptions of peacebuilding efforts among civil society from their own conflict context to date. This research formed the basis of their joint publication – 'Advancing the Prospects for Peace: 20 years of civil peacebuilding in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict context' – an innovative attempt to collectively reflect on 20 years of peacebuilding efforts by civil society.

Taking their first joint publication as a starting point for subsequent comparative research into other conflict contexts, the group studied mechanisms of public participation and multi-track diplomacy in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process. The experts carried out a deep theoretical analysis of the conflict and travelled to Belfast, Dublin and London to meet with a wide range of experts, civil society leaders, representatives of Catholic and Protestant communities, people who had taken part in the armed conflict, politicians involved in the negotiations and current members of parliament. The results of this work form the basis of this study.

International Alert would like to extend its thanks to the participants of the expert group, as well as to all those who contributed to the research in Belfast, Dublin and London – in particular, Clem McCartney who generously shared his knowledge and time throughout the programme.

How did we get here?

Clem McCartney

A personal view

Most conflicts are hard for those outside to understand. The parties to the conflict shift and change, and at first glance they often seem indistinguishable from each other. The issues often seem trivial and not worth fighting over. Even the terms they use shift and change, and they become a source of conflict. 'Why can't they just grow up and learn to live together?' we feel like saying. In this respect, the conflict in Northern Ireland is no different from other conflicts.

Even the parties to the conflict can have difficulty in analysing and explaining it at times. They construct a narrative of the conflict and its history that represents their preferred understanding of the conflict and that provides them with support for their current actions and proposed solution. Such narratives do not generally deny the facts, but the meanings they give to the facts can differ markedly from each other. Fritz Glasl,[1] an Austrian conflict specialist, explains in his nine-stage model of conflict escalation that at an early stage the parties go from arguing over the issues to arguing about what the issues are. In this way, they compete to assert their own narrative, as this will lead to the outcome they desire if it is accepted. At the same time, it keeps the other party or parties off balance logically and emotionally.

In Northern Ireland, John Whyte,[2] a former professor of politics from Belfast, identified the main analyses in the academic literature at that time. The narratives that have been adopted by the various political actors have been based on class, identity or colonial/post-colonial theories – and, of course, sometimes elements of all three.

Parties continue to change their narrative depending on the audience and the perceived benefits they will get for their cause from a particular interpretation. If the parties to the conflict simplify things in this way, it is not surprising that it is difficult for outsiders to understand. They too may latch on to a defining concept that does not accurately capture the key features of the situation.

Peter Wallensteen,[3] a Swedish professor of peace and conflict research, adapted a model from Johann Galtung to identify three elements in a conflict and their counterparts in peacebuilding: conflict formation (or, its converse, peace formation), which introduces the concept of parties and their relation to each other; incompatibilities (or compatibilities) of the issues that are in contention; and behaviours, destructive or constructive, of the parties. One can think of these as the three legs of a stool. If one is missing, the stool or the conflict collapses. However, the concept of conflict is more dynamic: if one leg is removed and the other two elements remain, a new leg will grow to keep the conflict alive. If the current issues are resolved but the conflictual relationship between the parties remains and the behaviours are still hostile, then new issues will emerge.

Applying these perspectives to the Irish situation, latterly the Northern Ireland conflict, we can more easily understand the shifting patterns and how they contributed to 'the Troubles' from 1969.

1   F. Glasl (1999). *Confronting conflict*. Bristol: Hawthorn Press.
2   J. Whyte (1991). *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3   P. Wallensteen (1988). 'Understanding conflict resolution: A framework', in P. Wallensteen *Peace research: Achievements and challenges*. London: Westview Press.

Perhaps it is easiest to understand in terms of the way in which each interested party looked after its own interests as it saw them. The following is a personal assessment of the parties, their interests and their actions to further and protect those interests. As such, it does not replicate any specific narrative of the conflict.

The historical background to the conflict

The main parties to the conflict are the original Gaelic or Celtic people of Ireland, the British state and the settlers from England and Scotland. These groups can be further subdivided, depending on their origin, their particular variety of Christianity, and their economic and political position. The advancement of those interests was often at the expense of the interests of other groups, although there may not have been a conscious intent to do so. Actions were often taken out of fear or for convenience, with little or no thought by the parties as to how such actions would impact on others. However, the perception, and often the reality, was that the interests of each group were competing in a zero-sum relationship – creating resentment and hostility.

Up to the Plantation of Ulster

The current conflict can trace its roots back to the conquest of Ireland by Anglo-Norman barons in 1169. They had settled in England following the Norman Conquest of 1066, in which they won the crown. The king was interested in extending his kingdom, and in 1155 the Pope issued a Papal Bull, *Laudabiliter*, which gave the king authority to occupy Ireland, although the Bull was not immediately acted upon. The barons were interested in acquiring land and wealth with as little interference as possible in their fiefdoms by the crown. When the exiled Irish chieftain Dermot MacMurrough sought their help to support his struggle with his fellow chieftains, they willingly agreed. They were immediately successful, but the king, concerned that they might establish their own separate power, quickly went to Ireland and soon the lordship of Ireland was vested in the English monarch.

Subsequently, many Anglo-Normans acquired land and settled in Ireland at the expense of local chieftains. For the majority of the people, their head landlord was simply replaced by another, with little impact on their situation. While England was becoming a centralised state under a strong king, Ireland was still a disparate assortment of fiefdoms and tribal alliances, with little sense of a national identity. The Anglo-Normans, far from the English court, merged with the local Irish population, adopted Irish customs, spoke the Irish language and paid no heed to the English crown. They were said to have become more Irish than the Irish.

Soon the English crown could exercise its authority over only a small area around Dublin, known as the Pale – hence the expression 'beyond the Pale'. This situation was unsatisfactory for the king, who was gaining very little revenue from Ireland and the Pale was always under threat from neighbouring clans. The crown made a number of attempts to colonise parts of the country by confiscating lands and planting people on those lands – resulting in the plantations of Leinster in Kings County (now Offaly) and Queens County (now Laois) in 1556, followed by Munster from 1586 and Ulster from 1606.

From the Plantation to the 1798 Rebellion

The plantations in Leinster and Munster were based on the award of land to undertakers from the landed class, who were expected to bring tenant farmers from England. However, they were unsuccessful, perhaps because of lack of commitment. In the end, a new stratum of landed gentry was created, but the rest of the population was unchanged. As a result, the Plantation of Ulster was established on a different basis. The awards of land were made to the merchant classes through the Guilds of the City of London as a business proposition. They had a stronger interest in establishing an economically successful plantation and therefore were committed to changing the economy of the region and bringing in tenants who would implement their plans.

In addition, the new planters were Protestants, following the Reformation in England, and as such had another marker of difference from the indigenous Catholic population. They were far less likely to integrate with the indigenous population as the Anglo-Norman barons had done. Moreover, while in Munster and Leinster the new landed gentry and professional classes were English Protestants who became known over time as Anglo-Irish, in Ulster not only was the ruling class Protestant, but many of the farmers and artisans were also Protestants.

An additional element was the presence of Scots settlers. The northeast of Ireland was within sight of Scotland, and there had been interchange between the peoples of both areas for many centuries. Increasing numbers of Scots now arrived and settled in the northeast of Ireland. They were also Protestants, but the Reformation in Scotland had taken a different form, the dissenting tradition. These settlers also had different customs and social systems (more egalitarian). The earlier settlers spoke Scots Gaelic, while the plantation era settlers were from the lowlands of Scotland speaking a dialect known as 'Lallans'. Therefore, they were culturally distinct from both the English settlers and the original Irish inhabitants.

The traditional Celtic clan-based structures could not survive against the introduced systems, but the Irish remained as a distinct community. Some tried to integrate into the new system and move with the times, and the castles of clan chiefs and the fortified farms of undertakers existed side by side. However, few of the traditional chiefs survived the changes, often losing out to English landlords who were already wealthier and had closer ties to those now in authority. Many of the Irish peasant farmers were pushed out to poor bog and moorland, where it was difficult to make a living. The landlords viewed their success as based on their Protestant ethic of hard work and thrift rather than the political privilege they enjoyed. In contrast, the Irish in Ulster became much more aware of the injustice of the situation, and resentment grew. A number of rebellions took place during the 17th century, which have become part of the opposing narratives of oppressive English on the one side and treacherous Irish on the other.

Both the English rulers and the established (officially recognised) Anglican Church had an interest in emphasising the religion differences. The Church was concerned about what it saw as the errors of the Catholic Church, and was motivated by the desire not to tarnish its reputation and lose its authority. It was also suspicious of the dissenting tradition of the Scots settlers who rejected the authority of the Anglican Church. The state saw the established Church and Protestantism as a way to maintain the loyalty of the settlers. The authorities also feared the possibility of further Irish rebellions and wanted to limit the challenge from the Catholic Irish population. They introduced laws designed to privilege Anglicans over other religious groups. In the 17th century, it was forbidden to practise the Catholic religion and mass was held in secret at a mass rock hidden in the forest or hills. Even when this ban was lifted at the beginning of the 18th century, priests had to be registered with the authorities and a new set of economic and political restrictions, known as the Penal Laws, were introduced. Catholics and 'Dissenters' were barred from many public offices, from taking part in elections and from education. They were also limited in their ownership of land, and faced many other economic and commercial restrictions. The laws were not always applied rigorously, but they severely limited opportunities and caused great resentment.

The Penal Laws also forged a common position among Catholics and Dissenters, and at the end of the 18th century a new radical, non-conformist tradition emerged among those of Scottish descent. They were concerned about their own interests being restricted under English rule, but they also had higher ideals allied to their compatriots who, in the face of the restrictions, had emigrated to North America and were actively involved in the War of Independence there. In fact, the original draft of the American Declaration of Independence was drawn up by Charles Thomson, Secretary of the First Continental Congress, and printed by John Dunlap, both of Scottish origin. The first European newspaper to publish the full text of the American Declaration of Independence was the *Belfast News Letter* in its edition of 23–27 August 1776, less than three weeks after it was signed. The newspaper had been founded by the same radicals who were also influenced by the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity of the French Revolution.

The Protestant Ulster-Scots were at the heart of the 1798 Rebellion in the north of Ireland, while their Catholic brothers were active in Wexford and other parts of the south of Ireland. The rebellion was defeated, and by then the penal law restrictions were being lifted and the Ulster-Scots turned to commercial activities and away from rebellion.

The impact of industrialisation

The Industrial Revolution was now gaining momentum, and the north of Ireland for various reasons was better placed to take advantage of the opportunities. There was large-scale migration from the rural areas to the towns, where Catholics and Protestants lived in neighbouring areas. They tended to settle near family and friends from their own place of origin and near their churches, resulting in the patchwork of Protestant and Catholic areas that remains today.

In the latter part of the 18th century militant Protestant and Catholic gangs had emerged in the rural areas and clashes between them were common. After one of these in 1796, a new Protestant group was formed to protect and further Protestant interests. Known as the Orange Order, over the next 200 years it would become a powerful force for mobilising the Protestant community and a resented symbol of Protestant domination for Catholics. The rural tensions moved with the migrants into the towns, and skirmishes and riots developed periodically.

While Protestants had been relieved of the Penal Laws, Catholics still did not have the vote. This became a major issue during the first part of the 19th century because it was believed that, without the vote and greater influence in society, the Catholic population could not have its grievances resolved. The leader of the Catholic Emancipation Movement, Daniel O'Connell, realised that the Catholic Church offered a good way to mobilise people, as almost all church members went to mass every week and this provided a good opportunity to communicate with them. Protestants might well not have been involved in Catholic emancipation anyway, but this approach of mobilising people through the churches meant that they were not aware of what was happening and even less likely to be involved. The distance between the communities widened.

Catholic Emancipation was achieved by 1829. However, 15 years later, the community was hit by the Great Famine caused by potato blight from 1845, which gradually eased from 1848. As a result of the Famine, about one million people died and one million emigrated, mainly to the US, the diaspora forming another party to the conflict. While the blight was a natural disaster, structural factors meant that it impacted heavily on the Irish peasant population. Moreover, the state and many of the landed gentry did little to help the starving, building new resentment both in Ireland and in the diaspora.

Brief reference has already been made to the Ulster-Scots, who emigrated in the 18th century, estimated at a quarter of a million. That flow has continued not only to the US but also to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These emigrants have tended to become completely integrated into the local population and have shown little interest in the ongoing conflict in Ireland. From the 1840s the emigrants were mostly Catholics, who were poor and excluded and tended to stick together. They also felt that they had been forced to leave their native land and carried that resentment down through the generations. Eventually, many of them became prosperous, some very much so, and have become a powerful political lobby in the US. Because of their family experience, they tended to be strongly nationalist, and some very militant, supporting national liberation movements from the Fenians in the 19th century to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the more recent 'Troubles'. There are now estimated to be 40 million people of Irish descent in the US, probably equally divided between those from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

20th century onwards

Towards the end of the 19th century, the issue of national identity began to come to the fore. Various movements, which became collectively known as the Gaelic Revival, promoted different aspects of Irish culture – sport, literature, music and dance, the visual arts, history, folklore and mythology, language and so on. It is noteworthy that many of those active in these movements were Protestants who had the education and time to devote to writing and research. The Gaelic Revival aimed to restore pride in being Irish and, while not necessarily political, it connected to the sense of Irish nationalism, which was influenced by the growing nationalism throughout Europe. This changed the nature of relations between Ireland and the British government, and the demand was now for Irish autonomy and self-government, or Home Rule as it was called.

A new Irish Nationalist League, later the Irish Parliamentary Party, emerged with strong support from the Catholic hierarchy. The party soon won most of the parliamentary seats in Ireland, apart from the northeast. The northeastern part of Ireland was now settled and prosperous. Therefore, the erstwhile radical dissenters and the existing establishment, which was mainly from the Anglican community, now shared a common concern about what was happening in the rest of Ireland, as it threatened to undermine the stability on which their prosperity depended. They also feared that Home Rule would lead to domination by Catholic Ireland, and their economic interests conversely favoured close links with Britain and the British Empire. As a result, they formed the Irish Unionist Party. The northern economy was based on manufacturing and trade, needing the open markets of the British Empire. The rest of Ireland was basically a subsistence farming economy and feared cheap food imports from the Empire. Thus, the interests of the Protestants and Catholics diverged even further, expressed in the terms 'nationalism' and 'unionism'. At this stage, there was no talk of secession or partition of the island, but for 'home rulers' it would be a self-governing entity within the United Kingdom, while for 'unionists' it would be fully integrated within the Union. The Liberal Party in the British parliament, supported by the Irish Parliamentary Party, attempted on three occasions to pass a Home Rule Act for Ireland; however, it was repeatedly defeated by the Conservative Party supported by the unionists. Eventually, events were interrupted by the First World War, and nationalists and unionists alike enrolled in the British Army. Along with all the other nations fighting in Flanders, both groups suffered severe losses.

Although there was still little interest in independence among the Irish population as a whole, a small group of determined advocates of an independent republic initiated a rising at Easter 1916. It seems that the leaders had no expectation of success, but they hoped that their sacrifice would galvanise the Irish people in support of an independent republic. The Rising was quickly quashed, but the consequences far surpassed the hopes of its organisers. The British population was outraged that anyone would attack Britain when it was at war and considered the Rising an act of treason. The leaders were executed and the Irish population, which had treated the rebels as an irrelevance, was in turn outraged by the executions. And so republicanism was born, and in elections two years

later the Irish Parliamentary Party was swept away from the political arena, with Sinn Féin winning almost all the seats, apart from the northeast where unionist candidates were successful. Sinn Féin refused to take their seats in the British parliament and the War of Independence began, culminating in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. The Treaty led to the formation of the Irish Free State, as it was known. It also provided Northern Ireland, made up of the six northeastern counties, with the option to opt out of the Irish Free State, which it exercised – resulting in its partition from the rest of Ireland.

From this point for 50 years, the UK government took little interest in Irish affairs, although during the Second World War Ireland became strategically important in the Battle of the Atlantic. The Irish Free State was notionally part of the British Commonwealth, and a Council of Ireland, representing both parts of the island, had been proposed. However, the southern part of Ireland essentially became an independent republic, which was finally recognised in the new Irish Constitution of 1939, and so a new interested party in the conflict had emerged. But it was preoccupied with establishing the new state and was mainly concerned with demonstrating its independence from the UK.

The Republic did not recognise the legitimacy of the partition of Ireland but was not in a position to do anything about it. The colonial history continued to dominate relationships between the sides. At the extremes, the English displayed an underlying sense of superiority towards the Irish, who in turn struggled to overcome a sense of inferiority and impotence at their inability to prevent the partition of the island. To some degree, these attitudes persisted until the 1980s and only began to change to mutual respect when Ireland was able to take its full role in the global family of nations. In particular, it was an equal to the UK in the European Community and often seen to play a more constructive role than its neighbour. This change was one of the bases on which the new settlement could be negotiated.

Northern Ireland was also preoccupied with internal matters – in particular, with bolstering itself against the threat of republicanism and potential attempts to reunite the island, even though there were no serious attempts to do so. One third of Northern Ireland's population was Catholic and broadly supportive of a united Ireland. They were seen as a threat, and the unionists set about limiting Catholic influence and discriminating against them. Edward Carson, the leader of the movement to maintain the union of Ireland and Britain, was disillusioned with partition and took no further part in Irish affairs. However, his parting comment to the new Northern Ireland administration was that they should ensure that "the Catholic minority have nothing to fear from the Protestant majority". In spite of this appeal from Carson, the First Minister of Northern Ireland remarked, "In the South they boasted of a Catholic State. They still boast of Southern Ireland being a Catholic State. All I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament and Protestant State." This sentiment was generally remembered by subsequent generations as 'a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'. It is not surprising that these words fuelled continuing resentment.

In the 1960s a new educated group of Catholics, with some Protestants, formed a new civil rights movement. This group comprised children of the welfare state, and were inspired by the civil rights campaign in the US as well as by the student protests in Paris and elsewhere in 1968. They were campaigning for basic human rights and against discrimination, without reference to the constitutional question. However, their campaign unleashed the fear and hostility of the Protestant community towards radicalism, protest, republicanism and Catholicism, as well as the resentment of the Catholic population against the discrimination that they had experienced. The traditional conflictual behaviours, which Ireland had experienced through the centuries, escalated from hostility through street protests to rioting and armed violence.

Northern Ireland's 'double minority'

It would be easy to give the impression that relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland are strained and hostile, overlooking the reality that many Protestants and Catholics work together and support each other. Farmers help their neighbours regardless of religion; Protestants and Catholics can be found in adjacent beds in hospitals tended to by Protestant and Catholic nurses and doctors; trade unionists, down the years, have made common cause in defence of their interests; as noted already, both communities have fought on the same side in the First and Second World Wars. However, even when the different communities interact in these ways, they avoid topics such as the constitutional position of Northern Ireland or relations between the communities, lest they cause friction and a rupture in relations. As a song by Colum Sands goes, "Whatever you say, say nothing". The overt violence has been fairly localised, but awareness of the conflict is never far below the surface, even among those who have not directly experienced violence or unrest.

The people in the north of Ireland have a vivid awareness of history, as it has been handed down to them and as they have experienced it themselves. Encouraged by a common fear of cultural assimilation, the communities have developed their sense of identity in opposition to each other, stressing those aspects that are different. They fear that the attitudes and behaviours of the other community will lead to cultural assimilation as well as political dominance and that they will continue in the future. Perhaps the concept of a 'double minority' may give the best insight into why the conflict has persisted. Nationalists have long been a marginalised minority in Northern Ireland, while Protestants are aware that they are a minority within Ireland as a whole. It is important to understand these perceptions and the relationships that have built up over the years in order to comprehend the process and mechanisms that were needed to allow the parties to negotiate the Good Friday Agreement (or Belfast Agreement, as it is also known). They are also crucial in explaining the continuing hesitation and opposition to completing the process of building a new future.

Building and maintaining support

Because relationships have traditionally been conflictual, all interested parties have tried to build solidarity within the group, albeit also involving sympathetic external actors, and excluding those who would not be supportive. The organs of civil society often have had a more important role in ensuring conformity and compliance with the dominant attitudes in their identity group than in promoting dissent and alternative visions or positive relations with other groups. We have noted how, at different times, the Anglican Church allied with the state and the Catholic Church with the opposition because of shared interests. They have both worked to maintain the religious identity of their communities and in doing so have reinforced the divisions – even though the biggest threat to all the Churches may be the secularisation of society.

The press

The print media has also more often represented its community than challenged it. As Gandhi[4] said, "A journalist's peculiar function is to read the mind of the country and to give definite and fearless expression to that mind." In Ireland, the mind of the community has often been exclusive and in opposition to others. Newspapers have reinforced these attitudes, for both ideological and commercial reasons. *The Irish Times*, published in Dublin, is an excellent example of this in Ireland. It was formed as a Protestant nationalist paper, but within 20 years had become the voice of Irish unionism. Since independence, it has come to represent the establishment in independent

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4   M. Gandhi (1996). Collected works of *Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXVI. Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India. p. 369.

Ireland and effortlessly shifted its political stance, but still remains a sound and impartial source of information. Mention was made of the *Belfast News Letter*, which has the distinction of being the oldest continuously published newspaper in the world. It was founded by dissenters who were part of the radical tradition in Belfast in the late 18th century; however, as that community became successful and part of the establishment, fearful of instability, the paper moved to reflect those views and eventually became the organ of unionism. On the other side, *The Irish News* was founded in 1891 by the Bishop to oppose the leader of the Home Rule movement because of a scandal in that politician's private life, and it has carried information of interest to Catholics who were not catered for by other papers and in time came to articulate nationalist sentiment. There was also an evening newspaper, *The Belfast Telegraph*, now also published in the morning, which for commercial reasons has attempted to cater for the whole community. In addition to the commercial press, parties to the conflict have produced their own newspapers. For example, the republican movement publishes *An Phoblacht*, to get their message across, and the Irish language community encouraged the development of an Irish language paper, *Lá*. The local communities have also developed a tradition of wall murals to influence local attitudes. At the same time, in Northern Ireland many more copies of local editions of London-based papers, such as *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Mirror*, are sold than the local papers.

Radio and television

The situation of the broadcast media has been different as the BBC and Radío Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) were established by the British and Irish states respectively. Because they were state owned, they had a charter that required them to report impartially. This has often been taken to mean balance, so that every effort is made to ensure that all sides of an issue are broadcast. When independent television was introduced in Northern Ireland, Ulster Television also had a responsibility for impartial coverage. Censorship was more common in the Republic of Ireland, as the threat from republicanism was seen to be a bigger threat to the state, and its leaders were banned from speaking publicly. From 1988 to 1994 the British government banned supporters of paramilitary groups on both sides from speaking on British television and radio, and the broadcasters responded by having their words read by actors.

RTÉ radio previously had good coverage over most of Northern Ireland, but when television was introduced reception of events by radio became rather patchy. This has meant that, throughout the period of the Troubles, the whole community relied on the BBC and independent television and so watched and listened to the same news and heard the opinions and views of the leaders from all sides.

Outside parties

Unlike many other conflict situations, there has been little involvement in the Northern Ireland conflict by outside interests, partly because Ireland is a peripheral region of little strategic importance. However, its perceived strategic importance has often been the argument used to explain British interests. It is true that Britain did not want instability or foreign influence in the neighbouring island. It was only during the Second World War, and to a lesser extent during the Cold War, that the North Atlantic was a strategically important battleground. During the recent Troubles, both the European Union and the US have been interested in offering help to resolve the problems, while countries such as Libya under Colonel Gaddafi were willing to support insurgents. The nationalist lobby in the US sought to get the US government involved in resolving the conflict and tried to set the terms for the approach that should be taken. Mindful of the significance of the Irish lobby in internal US politics, the US administration has tried to satisfy their demands, while not always agreeing with their analysis or strategies.

Nationalists and unionists have been keen to get any external support they could. However, the UK has seen even the most benign interest as interference in its internal affairs and has been powerful enough to limit support to encouragement, financial aid and expertise. Ultimately, the UK and Ireland have taken the steps to improve relations while outside bodies could not make it happen. Equally, the unionists and nationalists took the steps to improve relations independently. While they had outside help in the process, neither Britain nor Ireland nor the other interested external parties were able to achieve any success in the peace process until the internal parties themselves decided they were ready for those steps.

1. From bombs to ballots: political institutions and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland

Mikayel Zolyan

How might an exploration of the conflict in Northern Ireland contribute to the search for a resolution to other conflicts? Leo Tolstoy famously wrote that each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. This observation can also be applied to ethno-political conflicts – each of which is unique. Moreover, it is important to remember that, by virtue of the differing historical contexts, there are fundamental differences between conflicts in the post-Soviet states and those in Western Europe. The many differences between the Northern Ireland conflict and conflicts in post-Soviet states mean that any attempt to transfer specific models of political conflict resolution from one context to another would be largely pointless. Efforts to draw structural analogies in relation to the configuration of the conflict and the positions taken by the sides involved (along the lines of 'the principle of self-determination is more important to one side while the other side places greater importance on the principle of territorial integrity') do not translate in practice. Thus, we can immediately set aside any ideas of taking and applying specific formulae from the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. Nevertheless, an exploration of the Northern Ireland conflict, regardless of the structural differences (or perhaps owing to them), allows the identification of a number of principles that must lie at the heart of a peace process if it is to have any chance of success.

Democracy in action: political institutions as a means of conflict transformation

In a room at Stormont Parliament Buildings, on the outskirts of Belfast, a meeting is taking place between researchers from the South Caucasus and members of Northern Ireland's legislative body, known as the Legislative Assembly. From their very first words, it is immediately clear which communities and even which parties they represent. One of them, a man of medium height with a dark complexion, dark hair and an intent gaze, begins to speak about colonialism and occupation: "Around 800 years ago the British conquerors landed in Ireland and that's when our troubles began." There is a play on words in this phrase – he uses the word 'troubles', which came to be used to denote the conflict in Northern Ireland and so his words can be taken to mean that the conflict has lasted for 800 years. Another Assembly member, a big, fair-haired man with blue eyes and a round face, responds with a slightly ironic smile: "There now, you've managed to encapsulate 800 years of history in one sentence."

Then the first speaker, a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Sinn Féin, recounts that he was a combatant and spent 18 years in a British prison. His colleague, a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), has a no less turbulent past: he was a volunteer in the British army and his wife served in the police force in Ulster and was wounded in a clash with republicans. Yet, now they are sitting together in a room at the Northern Ireland Assembly, drinking tea and eating scones and jam. One of the group, clearly not for the first time, utters a statement about the colonial policy of the British regime, and another, also evidently not for the first time, pokes fun at the Irish Republic, which, in his opinion, fought so long for independence from London only to surrender it to Brussels. They appear to hold directly opposing political positions. Moreover, it is entirely possible that these men, who 20 years ago might have been at war with each other, continue deep down to see each other as enemies. However, it is impossible to imagine that these respectable middle-aged men, dressed in expensive suits, once hid in alleyways with machine guns and lay in wait for the enemy.

What is happening in this room at Stormont serves as a metaphor for what has been occurring in Northern Irish politics over the last decade. The conflict has not gone anywhere: the community remains divided and many people on both sides continue to see each other as enemies; each side has its own narrative of the past, which is incompatible with the viewpoint of the other side. The ideas about how the Northern Ireland problem should therefore be resolved are almost equally incompatible. As one of the meeting participants says, the majority of Catholics continue to believe that at some point the North will be united with the South, while, for the majority of Protestants, this prospect continues to be seen as something akin to the end of the world. However, in contrast to the situation 20 or 30 years ago, the state no longer sees enemies in those who identify themselves with Ireland and they, for their part, no longer see the state machine and those who serve it in that way either.

It should be noted that the system of government in Northern Ireland is fairly cumbersome and can hardly be seen as an ideal model of effective government. However, it has been clearly effective in the most important respect: explosions and exchanges of gunfire are extremely rare in Northern Ireland today. While it would be totally premature to describe the problem of political violence in the region as having been resolved, the level of political violence in Northern Ireland today cannot be compared to the situation before the Good Friday Agreement (or 'Belfast Agreement', as it is also known). Of course, there are still occasional violent incidents and these sometimes extend to acts of terrorism, perpetrated by organisations that have not recognised the peace agreement (so-called 'dissidents'). Periodically, there are also outbreaks of mass disorder, as was the case in the spring of 2013. However, on the whole, the level of violence in Northern Ireland is not that different from any other region in Europe.

The legislative body in Northern Ireland today, the Legislative Assembly, still meets at Stormont, the seat of the legislative body from the 1920s. However, the Stormont of today is very different from the regime that existed for decades from the creation of Northern Ireland until the introduction of direct rule from London in 1972 (legislative bodies are customarily known by the names of their seats, as in 'Westminster' for the British parliament). Stormont today, with its complex system of power sharing between Catholics and Protestants, is the result of decades of conflict and the peace process, which lasted almost as long.

Many people in Northern Ireland today are not happy with the way the democratic institutions are working. The system of government is seen as unwieldy and cumbersome, and the ruling parties are criticised for monopolising power in Northern Ireland, marginalising other smaller parties from both communities. Many people are unhappy about the fact that the new political system has allowed former combatants, including people who have served prison sentences for murder and other serious crimes, the opportunity to become respectable politicians. Finally, some people criticise the system of government in Northern Ireland for the fact that it replicates and preserves the division of society along sectarian lines. This dissatisfaction is understandable. However, even if one recognises that these institutions are not sufficiently effective in the administration of government, one cannot fail to recognise that they are quite effective as a means of transforming the conflict. So how was the transition from political violence to democratic party politics possible in the Northern Ireland conflict?

Who's who: the principal actors in the conflict and their positions

It is well known that the population in Northern Ireland is divided into communities not only along religious lines but also in terms of political positions. The majority identify themselves as Protestants and are mainly in favour of preserving the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. This position is usually known as 'unionism' and its supporters as 'unionists' (as in union with the UK) or loyalists (as in loyal to the crown). The majority of Protestant unionists traditionally voted for the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). During the course of the conflict, there

emerged a number of other unionist political organisations that differed from one another chiefly in terms of their degree of radicalism. One of them, the Democratic Unionist Party, led by Ian Paisley, eventually overtook the UUP in terms of popularity and is currently the main political force representing the unionist community.

Apart from the political parties, there are also other more or less formal structures that unite Protestants. Of these, a distinctive position is occupied by the Orange Order. The influence of the Order is founded on its age-old traditions and on the fact that it brought together representatives of very different Protestant organisations, from political parties to paramilitary groups. Finally, a specific role was played in the conflict by the loyalist paramilitary organisations, among the most well known being the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

While most Protestants adhere to unionist political ideology, the majority of those who consider themselves Catholics are 'nationalists' – that is, supporters of the union of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland.[5] Among Catholics, there is a split between supporters of legal ('constitutional') methods of political struggle and supporters of armed struggle. The main Catholic party, which confined itself to the legal route, was the Nationalist Party, which existed virtually from the outset of Northern Ireland's existence up until the 1960s, but which had minimal influence on the administration. In the late 1960s its place was taken by the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), which was active in the civil rights movement.

As the conflict escalated, the paramilitary groups became increasingly influential. Of these, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) soon became the most powerful. In the early 1970s, this group split into two wings: the Official IRA, which ceased military operations, and the Provisional IRA, which continued to fight using terrorist methods. The Provisional IRA gradually became one of the main actors in the conflict, while the influence of the Official IRA faded. Generally, when the IRA is mentioned in descriptions of events from the mid-1970s onwards, this actually refers to the Provisional IRA. Subsequently, as the paramilitary organisations made the transition to using political methods, the party of Sinn Féin, which was linked to the IRA, became more influential. Among Sinn Féin's leaders, the most well known are Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness.[6]

Most of the political parties were strongly linked to a particular community. The only exception was the liberal Alliance Party, which brought together Catholics and Protestants who sought to break out of the framework of communal politics. The British parties – the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats – played a comparatively limited role in Northern Ireland. The majority of people in Northern Ireland do not vote for 'left' or 'right', but for 'green' (i.e. supporters of a united Ireland) or 'orange' (i.e. the unionists). Generally speaking, the 'green' parties position themselves on the left of the political spectrum, while the 'orange' parties identify more with the right wing. However, the parties' positions on socio-economic issues were never seen by voters as being as important as their position on the status of Northern Ireland.

In addition to the local actors, one of the sides in the conflict was the UK government itself. In spite of the obvious correlation between the positions of London and the loyalists, the British government sought to remain neutral. London officially asserted that it would accord Northern Ireland the right to self-determination and was prepared to accept the result of a democratic declaration of will by the population of the region. The sympathies of London also changed, depending on which party was in power at Westminster. The Conservatives were considered to be more inclined to support the unionists, while Labour sought to be neutral and even, to some extent, sympathised with moderate nationalists, although this model did not by any means always apply. The attempts by London to maintain a balance between the two communities was

5   The term 'nationalist' in the Irish context does not have the same undertone of radicalism as it does in the post-Soviet context; a 'nationalist' in the Irish sense of the word may well have relatively moderate views.

6   The names Sinn Féin and the IRA duplicate the names of similar organisations that existed at the beginning of the 20th century with which they have no direct genealogical link, although they see themselves as their ideological successors.

not unequivocally seen as such in Northern Ireland itself. Many nationalists continued to see the British government as the enemy and viewed these attempts as deceit and hypocrisy, while many unionists saw London's efforts to maintain a balance as cowardice or betrayal.

As far as the Irish government is concerned, it cannot really be described as one of the sides in the conflict. It is true that throughout most of the 20th century Dublin did not hesitate to describe the partition of Ireland as a historic injustice that should be righted sooner or later, and this view was even enshrined in the Constitution of the Irish Republic. However, no concrete steps towards union were ever taken and everyone knew that Ireland was not going to enter into an armed conflict. Ireland's assistance to the Catholics of the North was largely limited to moral support and humanitarian aid. While paramilitary organisations were active in the Republic of Ireland, this was not officially endorsed by Dublin. On the contrary, Dublin, although it supported the peaceful, 'constitutional' nationalists of Northern Ireland, such as the SDLP, unequivocally condemned the terrorist methods of groups like the IRA. Nevertheless, the Irish government was certainly one of the most important actors in the Northern Ireland peace process and without its contribution the resolution of the conflict would have been impossible.

Perhaps one of the main differences between the conflict in Northern Ireland and many other conflicts is the absence in Northern Ireland of the same complex web of geopolitical interests of global and regional powers, which are often seen almost as an integral part of ethno-political conflict. Its geographical location in Western Europe meant that the people of Northern Ireland were spared the prospect of becoming hostages in the geopolitical standoffs between the major powers, both during the Cold War and subsequently. Of the world's superpowers, only the United States took an active interest in the situation in Northern Ireland, due to two factors: namely, the good relations between the US and the UK; and the presence of an Irish diaspora of many millions of people in the US. In addition, these two factors, which to some extent counterbalanced each other, helped the US to maintain neutrality in the conflict and made it an ideal mediator. The participation of an American mediator, George Mitchell, and the visit to Northern Ireland by the then US President Bill Clinton in 1995 contributed to the fact that the peace process in Northern Ireland eventually led to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

How it all began: history and identity in a divided society

A song by the well-known Irish band The Cranberries contains the line "It's the same old theme since nineteen-sixteen. In your head, in your head they're still fighting." These lyrics will not have meant much to the teenagers around the world who were listening to the song in the early 1990s (including the author of this paper). However, for those listening to The Cranberries in Ireland itself, the meaning would have been abundantly clear: on Easter Monday 1916, the Easter Rising began in Dublin. This marked the beginning of the process of Ireland gaining independence. The uprising, unsurprisingly, suffered defeat. Nevertheless, the fact that the British government executed the leaders of the uprising had the opposite effect to that intended – the military defeat was turned into a 'moral victory' and the executed leaders of the uprising became heroes; thus, the armed struggle for an independent Ireland received a powerful boost.

Many Protestants view these events from a different perspective. They see an important contrast between the 'heroic wartime deeds' of thousands of Protestants on the front in the First World War and the republican betrayal at home. Instead, the year 1690 has particular resonance in the Protestant calendar, marking the Battle of the Boyne, when the Protestant King William III was victorious over his predecessor, the Catholic King James II. Strictly speaking, the battle formed part of the struggle for power in England. Nevertheless, many Protestants see it as an episode from their heroic past, while many Catholics associate it with tragedy. In any case, if you live in Northern Ireland, you are not likely to forget these dates. Northern Irish author Feargal Cochrane

tells of the Northern Irish professor who used 1690 as the PIN for his bank card because he was so sure that he would never forget this combination of numbers.[7]

The consolidation of a Protestant dynasty on the throne in London meant that, over a period of several centuries, the Protestants enjoyed a range of benefits, while the Catholics, even though they made up the majority of the population in Ireland, endured discrimination. Nevertheless, the correlation between nationalists and Catholics and unionists and Protestants was not always as straightforward and clear-cut as it became in the second half of the last century. Thus, discriminatory laws did not apply only to Catholics; they also affected those who belonged to Protestant denominations that were not part of the official Anglican Church. Overall, the Catholics were certainly largely opposed to London and the majority of Protestants supported British rule. However, despite the social and religious differences between the two groups, some Protestants played a major part in the national movement in Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, both Protestants and Catholics took part in the 1798 Rebellion against British rule. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, there were Protestants among the supporters of Irish independence. One of Ireland's most famous poets, W.B. Yeats, was a Protestant, but this did not stop him from supporting the nationalist movement.[8]

However, within the context of Irish nationalism, a tendency gradually emerged for an ethno-cultural and religious interpretation of national identity. In the newly formed Republic, Catholicism and the Irish language came to be seen as the main pillars of national identity, neither of which could form the basis of uniting the Irish of different denominations, particularly since this interpretation of Irish identity was viewed with some ambivalence even among many Irish Catholics. Writer on Irish nationalism Richard English describes how attempts to revive Irish and the emphasis on Catholic identity further discouraged the Protestants, who in any case did not feel particularly comfortable in the southern part of the island of Ireland.[9]

In turn, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries the majority of Protestants did not see themselves as part of an autonomous, let alone an independent, Ireland. As the movement for independence for Ireland became increasingly formalised and aggressive in nature, the Ulster Protestants also began to marshal their forces. They made it very clear to the British government that, if Ireland became an autonomous or independent state, they were not willing to be part of it and were prepared to take up arms to defend this position. As a result of these processes, the leaders of Ulster's Protestant unionists gained almost full control of the political institutions in the newly formed Northern Ireland.

This control by one community persisted for decades until the end of the 1960s, when, due to the escalating conflict, it became clear that this political system was no longer working. Attempts to replace it with a more open and inclusive system that would reflect the interests of both communities proved unsuccessful, however, and direct rule from London was introduced in Northern Ireland. In fact, it was only following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 that a political system that reflected the interests of all the communities living in Northern Ireland began to be established there.

The peace process: a first attempt

The peace process, which successfully led to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, was not the first attempt to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. A similar endeavour had been undertaken in the early 1970s: the Sunningdale Agreement of 1974 included some of the same principles that underpinned the Good Friday Agreement. However, the Sunningdale Agreement failed and the conflict continued for almost another quarter of a century.

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7   F. Cochrane (2013). *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 7.

8   R. English (2007). *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland*. London: Pan Books. p. 237.

9   Ibid.

Even before Sunningdale, efforts had been made in Northern Ireland to develop a form of government that would work for both communities. In fact, the escalation of the conflict in the late 1960s actually came in the wake of attempted reforms by the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (and UUP leader), Terence O'Neill. He realised that the system that virtually deprived Catholics of the possibility of influencing the process of government was hopelessly outdated. However, his own Protestant voters were afraid that the planned concessions to the Catholics were nothing short of a first step towards union with the Republic of Ireland. The reforms collapsed, in turn leading to a corresponding reaction in the Catholic camp: moderate nationalists, advocates of the legal political struggle, began to lose support in Catholic neighbourhoods. The resulting vacuum began to be filled by paramilitary organisations, in the first instance the IRA. The Protestants, seeing this radicalisation among the Catholics, also took up arms, especially since the loyalist paramilitary groups had already been in existence for some time. Northern Ireland began to resemble a powder keg. Slowly but surely, a spiral of political violence developed.

The Sunningdale Agreement was an attempt once and for all to resolve the problem O'Neill had been unable to solve: how to ensure that the Catholic community had equal rights in the government of Northern Ireland. The unionists agreed to the establishment of a coalition government with the SDLP. Provision was also made for the involvement of the Republic of Ireland, described as the 'Irish dimension'. A Council of Ireland was set up, which had a consultative function and within which the governments of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and their legislative bodies were represented. At the heart of the Sunningdale Agreement were the same principles that later formed the foundations for the Good Friday Agreement: the representation of both communities and consensus decision-making. However, in contrast to the Good Friday Agreement – which, although it contained many problematic aspects, nevertheless formed the basis of an effective transformation of the conflict – the Sunningdale Agreement failed.

One of the main shortcomings of the Sunningdale Agreement was the fact that it did not involve all the actors in the conflict: the participants comprised the governments of the UK and Ireland, the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party. The radical and paramilitary organisations on both sides did not take part in the peace process and did not recognise its outcome. Many unionists were dissatisfied with the Agreement, in particular regarding the 'Irish dimension'. Even though the Council of Ireland basically had a consultative function, many unionists were unhappy about the fact that the government of the South had the right to play a role in the government of the North. The Catholic community, with the exception of the radicals, was largely satisfied with the Agreement, but in the unionist camp discontent was brewing. The leader of the unionists, Brian Faulkner, evidently made more concessions than his voters were prepared to allow for. In the end, the dissatisfied unionist trade unions called a strike, which was supported by paramilitary groups. The British government was not prepared for this turn of events and the strike organisers were able to bring the whole of Northern Ireland to the brink of collapse. The Sunningdale Agreement broke down and direct rule from London was once again introduced in Northern Ireland.

Why did the Sunningdale Agreement fail when the Good Friday Agreement, albeit with difficulties, has stood the test of time? To some extent, the failure of Sunningdale was due to situational and subjective factors. It is possible that, in the early 1970s, the sides were simply too deeply locked into the logic of violence and retaliatory violence to be prepared to accept difficult compromises. Nevertheless, the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement was to a considerable extent due to the structural shortcomings of the peace process – in particular, the fact that only the 'constitutional' parties were involved in it rather than all the actors with influence. As a result, the paramilitary organisations were not represented and did not feel connected to the Agreement. The decision not to engage 'terrorists' in the talks made it easier to reach an agreement but, in the end, condemned it to failure. Furthermore, the leaders of the sides entered into a compromise without ensuring that there was backing for it among their supporters.

Another reason for the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement was the lack of support for it among voters. No provision was made for a voting procedure on the Agreement and its fate depended on support from the voters of the parties that concluded it. Yet, at the Westminster elections that followed Sunningdale, the Agreement's supporters suffered a resounding defeat. Consequently, the Agreement lacked democratic legitimacy and was therefore short-lived.

The peace process: a second attempt

According to John Alderdice, former speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Northern Ireland and now a member of the UK's House of Lords:

"The mistake made by many politicians is that they think people act on the basis of a rational understanding of their interests, especially their socio-economic interests. There are things which people view as sacred and which cannot be the subject of negotiations, especially if it is suggested that they give them up in exchange for material benefits … if you suggest that people give up their demands in exchange for material assistance and you are greeted with anger, offer more money and you will be greeted with more anger. But say that the other side would be prepared to accept an apology for violence perpetrated and they will say, 'That could form the basis of negotiations'. Whenever there is a terrorist campaign, there will be a group of people who feel hurt and humiliated – and often both sides feel hurt and humiliated. In order for the resolution of the conflict to become possible, it was important for each side to stop seeing each other in the context of clichés and stereotypes and to start to some extent to understand the motivations of the other side."[10]

Thus, in the case of the unionists, in order for them to accept the peace process, they had to stop seeing the republicans purely as 'terrorists' or 'criminals'. They had to understand that what they considered (often entirely justifiably) to be terrorism was the consequence of many years of discrimination against Catholics. As David Trimble, leader of the UUP, acknowledged in his Nobel lecture: "Ulster unionists … built a solid house, but it was a cold house for Catholics." (Trimble and John Hume, leader of the Catholic SDLP, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their role in the Good Friday Agreement.) Catholics did not just feel humiliated, they also saw no way to change their situation by legal methods – the 'constitutional' parties were doomed to ineffectiveness by the circumstances of the Stormont system. Consequently, what they termed 'armed struggle' was perceived by them to be the only effective means of achieving political objectives. In addition, a precedent had already been set demonstrating the effectiveness of violence or threats: the creation of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland itself had, to a considerable degree, resulted from violence (or the threat of violence). Moreover, the leaders of the paramilitary groups of the early 20th century in time became respectable politicians and statespeople – republicans in the South and unionists in the North.

For their part, the Catholics also had to abandon their clichés and stereotypes. For years, republicans had believed that the source of all their problems was British imperialism. The armed struggle was meant to lead to the British government abandoning its claims to Northern Ireland, thereby resolving the issue of the union of Ireland. The obvious but rather awkward question of what would then happen to the Protestant community was carefully avoided. The assumption was that sooner or later the unionists would come to terms with the situation. The unionists were not recognised as being real parties to the conflict – if an agreement was to be made with anyone, it would be with London and not with its 'lackeys'.

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10   Interview, John Alderdice, London, 21 June 2013.

Many people associate the change in attitudes to the conflict in the nationalist camp with the actions of the SDLP leader John Hume, who played a particular role in ensuring that both the IRA leadership and the government of Ireland were involved in the peace process. Persuading respectable politicians to sit round the negotiating table with the leaders of a terrorist organisation was not easy. However, there was an even greater challenge to come: engaging the IRA in talks with the British government and unionists from Northern Ireland itself seemed to be completely impossible. Yet, in the end, this did actually happen during the Northern Ireland peace process.

With so many different actors taking part, the peace process had to be structured. Thus, there were three strands of engagement: between the Republic of Ireland and the central UK government; between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and between the communities of Northern Ireland itself. The most difficult of these were the talks held between the different organisations from Northern Ireland. Some loyalists refused to take part in the talks if they were going to be attended by representatives of the IRA. The fact that the IRA actually sat down at the negotiating table was a significant achievement. As mentioned above, one of the reasons for the failure of the first peace process attempt was the non-participation by paramilitary groups.

In the 1970s the IRA, or more accurately the 'Provisional' IRA, was not willing to take part in the political process, although communication with the British government did take place. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a major shift in the IRA's position. It was a long process in which a key role had been played by well-known IRA hunger strikers in prison in the early 1980s. Technically, the hunger strikers, whose aim was to gain special category status for republican prisoners, did not achieve their objective: the British government, led by Margaret Thatcher, insisted that the republicans in British prisons were not political prisoners but ordinary criminals. However, their defeat was turned into political gain when, at the height of the hunger strike, republican prisoner and hunger striker Bobby Sands was elected a member of the British parliament. Sands did not take up his seat and died soon afterwards without having broken his hunger strike, like several other prisoners. As a result of this, in the eyes of many people all over the world, the IRA had transformed itself from a terrorist organisation responsible for the deaths of innocent people into a symbol of resistance to imperialism.

The response generated by the hunger strike showed the IRA leadership that the use of political methods in the struggle might be more effective than violence. Nonetheless, the transition from armed struggle to politics was a difficult process. There was a risk that IRA supporters would not accept this change of strategy and that there would be a new split, as had already happened to the organisation in the past, which would lead to a continuation of the violence. Once the IRA announced its ceasefire, much time passed before the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and the truce was repeatedly broken. However, a new split in the IRA did not happen and the majority of its supporters accepted the renunciation of violence. Admittedly, there are still groups today that have broken away from the IRA and that have not abandoned their terrorist methods, but they are marginal in character.

Another significant factor for the success of the peace process was the change in position among some of the loyalist paramilitary organisations. During the years of the conflict, many loyalist paramilitaries had been behind bars. Some of them went to prison as young radicals and came out having learnt from their experience and being fully convinced that the issue had to be solved by peaceful means. The fact that the UK, for whom in their opinion they had been 'fighting', treated them like criminals forced many of them to critically reconsider the political tenets of unionism. At the same time, the years they had spent behind bars conferred on them a moral authority among loyalists and gave them immunity from accusations of weakness or betrayal. When, during the negotiations, Ian Paisley called a press conference to accuse the leader of the loyalists of excessive compliance, he was interrupted by several former loyalist prisoners with cries of 'Where are you taking us, Ian?' and 'Where's your number, Ian?' Such statements were alluding to the fact that, despite his radical rhetoric, Paisley had never taken part in armed clashes

or been imprisoned and so, unlike them, he could not boast of his own personal prisoner number. The incident was immediately broadcast by the media and was a PR disaster for the unionists who did not accept the peace process.[11]

The peace process: winners and losers

Eventually, the talks, which had been repeatedly at risk of breaking down, ended with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. With regard to numerous issues in the Agreement, an approach known as 'creative ambiguity' was adopted, helping the sides to secure support for the Agreement within their own communities. Under this approach, some issues were not resolved at all and it was decided to postpone them for the future. Despite these efforts, Ian Paisley's DUP refused to accept the document and was at the forefront of Protestant opposition to it. In general, Catholics were happy with the document, although Sinn Féin expressed reservations in its support for the Agreement.

Under the terms of the Agreement, a system of power sharing has been introduced for the administration of Northern Ireland. The executive is headed by the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister. Ministerial posts are shared between the parties in the Legislative Assembly that receive the most votes, in accordance with a proportional system, so that the government comprises representatives from both communities. Voting on the most important issues must be decided using the principle of consensus between the communities, meaning a majority of each community is required for a decision to be passed. In practice, this means that responsibility for governing Northern Ireland is shared between unionists and republicans. A number of other bodies have also been established, most of them with a consultative function, with the aim of ensuring communication between the two parts of Ireland and between them and London.

As mentioned above, one of the reasons for the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement was that it was not supported by the voters. This time, the lessons of history were heeded and it was decided to hold a referendum in both parts of Ireland: in the North, the subject of the referendum was the Agreement itself; in the South, it was the changes to the Irish Constitution that would remove the territorial claims to Northern Ireland. Civil society in Northern Ireland organised a non-partisan campaign of support for the referendum, which played an important role in its success. In Northern Ireland, 71% of the electorate voted in favour of the Good Friday Agreement, with a turnout of 81%.[12] Bearing in mind that the political parties were, to put it mildly, not particularly active in their support for the Agreement, these results can be seen as largely the achievement of civil society.

The results of the referendum were nevertheless a cause for concern. Sociological research showed that, although almost 99% of Catholics supported the Agreement, the majority among Protestants was much smaller at 57%.[13] This was bad news for the peace process but even worse news for David Trimble's UUP. At the elections in 2003, his party suffered defeat: the majority of Protestants voted for Paisley's DUP, which was against the Agreement. Talks between the DUP and Sinn Féin on forming a coalition cabinet did not produce results.

It seemed as though history was repeating itself. However, the dynamics of the situation in Northern Ireland had changed. In the end, in 2006 an agreement was signed at St Andrews, enabling the formation of a new Sinn Féin–DUP cabinet and also resolving a number of issues that had not been covered by the Good Friday Agreement (for instance, on police reforms in Northern Ireland). Many people were astonished that Paisley, the most uncompromising unionist politician (one of his most famous slogans was "Ulster says 'No'!"), ultimately agreed to share power with Sinn Féin. In reality, the new executive was headed by two people who in the past had not simply

11   F. Cochrane (2013). Op. cit. pp. 181–2.
12   Ibid. p. 198.
13   Ibid. p. 201.

been the bitterest of enemies, but had also been symbols of two conflicting ideologies: unionist Ian Paisley and republican Martin McGuinness (the elderly Paisley was soon replaced in his post by fellow DUP member Peter Robinson).

On the whole, all sides gained from the peace agreement in Northern Ireland. However, purely in terms of political consequences, for some political actors the Agreement was disappointing. Catholic voters did not rate the efforts of Hume's SDLP in achieving peace as highly as might have been expected. Even at the elections in 2001, Sinn Féin proved more popular, despite its obvious links with the IRA (or perhaps because of them). As mentioned, Trimble's party suffered defeat at the hands of the more radical DUP. In fact, a process whereby the more moderate party conceded ground to more radical forces took place within both communities. Not even the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to Trimble and Hume, could help. Thus, if the choice made by the Catholic community can be seen as an expression of approval of the shift by the IRA towards peaceful political campaigning, the electoral success of the DUP was a reward for the party's more radical position (which it abandoned after the elections).

This illustrates how participation in a peace process is associated with serious political risk for those who take compromise decisions: voters often punish politicians for moderation and reward them for radicalism. It is therefore of great importance that the political fate of the peace agreement has as little connection as possible to the political fate of particular politicians or parties. It is also why support from civil society for peace initiatives is so important. This is another lesson to be learnt from the Northern Ireland experience.

Conclusions and recommendations

A review of the dynamics of the Northern Ireland conflict points to a number of factors that might contribute to the success of conflict transformation elsewhere.

- Of considerable significance is the non-intervention by third countries or consensus between them in relation to the resolution of the conflict. In Northern Ireland, global and regional powers with conflicting interests were almost nonexistent. The only superpower involved in the process was the US, which was committed to resolving the conflict and took its mediation role very seriously.
- An important factor in resolving the conflict was (at least in theory) the shared democratic, cultural and political values, such as human rights, democracy and freedom of conscience. Of course, in practice, almost all the sides in the conflict flouted these values at times. However, on the whole, there was a common ideological landscape, based on the traditions of Western European democracy, which prevented the conflict from going beyond certain limits.
- The resolution of the conflict was facilitated by the existence of democratic institutions comprising politicians who were answerable to their communities – meaning that they acted in the interests of their communities and not in their own narrow interests. Although, in Northern Ireland's case, the functioning of the democratic institutions was interrupted due to the introduction of direct rule from London, this situation was viewed as temporary and abnormal by all the actors, who each in their own way sought to ensure that the normal democratic institutions were restored (even though they had different ideas about them) and did not lose touch with their communities.

In addition to these general observations, a review of the Northern Ireland peace process allows a number of recommendations, which could be useful in other peace processes, to be made.

- An essential element is an acknowledgement of the character of the different groups involved in the conflict. Although the sides in the conflict may be perceived by outside observers as monolithic entities, in fact within each side there can be different groups, with different perceptions and different interests. Acknowledging the existence of such diverse groups with unique approaches is a necessary condition for the success of the peace process.
- Each side must stop seeing the other side in the context of clichés and stereotypes. An understanding of the motivations of the other side is essential. This does not mean that they must recognise this motivation as justified: this is by definition impossible; otherwise there would be no conflict. However, there should be an understanding of the other side's way of thinking, allowing a better and more realistic perception of the issues in the negotiating process. It is also important to understand that the other side's motivation is based not on a rational calculation, but on considerations that may appear 'irrational' from a purely pragmatic perspective.
- Another essential condition for success is the inclusiveness of the peace process to ensure the participation of all the groups and actors involved in the conflict. However, inclusiveness also demands flexibility in the format of the peace process. If involving all the groups might jeopardise the peace process (for example, where group X refuses to take part in talks if group Y is participating), a way around the problem must be found. One possible solution in this instance is to hold parallel talks at different levels.
- In order to ensure the democratic legitimacy of the agreement, plans must be made for an effective democratic voting procedure. Obviously, an agreement that does not have democratic legitimacy has no chance of surviving. In concrete terms, this means different types of referenda, although alternative options also exist.
- In developing mechanisms to ensure the democratic legitimacy of an agreement, it is important that it is not associated with the electoral prospects of the political powers who signed the agreement. As illustrated by the example of Northern Ireland, the population may support the agreement but not the political entities that concluded it.
- Support for peace initiatives by civil society may be decisive, in particular at the democratic approval stage of the agreement, as was the case with the referendum in Northern Ireland.

Finally, it should be remembered that the different perspectives on the essence of the conflict, its history and the ideal solution to it generally still persist, even after a successfully concluded peace process. A peace process cannot eliminate the clashes between the different views of reality that exist on the different sides of the conflict. However, as the experience in Northern Ireland shows, a peace process can facilitate the establishment of democratic formats within which the conflict between different interpretations of the past can remain a conflict of perceptions of the world, instead of leading to violent confrontation.

2. The role of official diplomacy and external actors in the Northern Ireland peace process

Gulshan Pashayeva

Introduction

The Northern Ireland conflict is one of the most prolonged ethno-territorial conflicts in Europe and has had a destabilising effect for decades on relations between Britain and Ireland.

In December 1922, on the basis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement,[14] the Irish Free State was established within the boundaries of the 26 counties in the southern part of the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland – comprising the remaining six counties (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry (Derry) and Tyrone) situated in the northeast of Ireland's historical province of Ulster – remained within the United Kingdom.

The nationalists in Northern Ireland, whose principal goal was to unite Ireland to form a single state, did not accept this decision and believed that the partition of Ireland was effected not only to protect the unionists (mainly Protestant supporters of preserving the union with the UK), but also to safeguard Britain's economic and strategic interests.[15] Their claims were supported by subsequent governments and the majority of parties in the Republic of Ireland. The irredentist (territorial) claims of the Republic of Ireland in relation to Britain were even included in its 1937 Constitution, in which Articles 2 and 3 state that the whole island of Ireland constitutes a single "national territory".[16] On the other hand: "The partition of Ireland was not the unionists' desired outcome. They would have preferred Ireland to remain in the United Kingdom. But if there was going to be a separate Ireland they wanted no part of it".[17]

Thus, in the years that followed, the unionists were wary both of a hostile Irish state, because of its territorial claims on Northern Ireland, and of their nationalist neighbours, who represented the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. At the same time, the Protestants did not trust the British government, believing that, if it proved necessary, it would sacrifice the interests of their community. Until the 1980s the central government in London viewed the conflict as an internal issue and only took unilateral steps towards resolving it. As for the Irish government, it was only after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985 that it acquired a formal consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland and was engaged in the negotiating process.

The conflict, which existed in a latent form for around 50 years, went through a period of armed hostilities beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This stage, known historically as 'the Troubles', lasted for 30 years and came to an end with the signing of the Belfast Agreement (Good Friday Agreement), which laid the foundations for a process of political settlement of the Northern Ireland conflict.

This paper seeks to explore the contribution made by the British and Irish governments – as well as a number of external actors, in particular the EU and the US – in the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict.

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14   Excerpts of Articles of the Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, as signed in London, 6 December 1921, in *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*, Volume I, 1919–1922, available at www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/anglo_irish/dfaexhib2.html

15   S. Farren (2011). 'The Northern Ireland experience. Does changing the question make agreement more possible?', in *Caucasus International*, Volume 1, No. 1, Summer 2011, p. 156.

16   Ibid. See also the Constitution of Ireland (1937), available at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Ireland_(original_text)

17   J. Powell (2008). *Great Hatred, Little Room. Making Peace in Northern Ireland*. London: The Bodley Head. p. 53.

The engagement of the British and Irish governments in the negotiating process

Until 1972, Northern Ireland was ruled by the United Kingdom, in accordance with the Government of Ireland Act 1920.[18] It had a local parliament (Stormont), comprising the Senate and the House of Commons, and the British monarch was represented by the Governor.

The Protestant population had the most political weight in Northern Ireland, since representatives of the Catholic community did not participate in the work of the elected institutions as they did not view them as legitimate. The unionists dominated the Parliament and local government, as well as the justice system and the local police forces, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Ulster Special Constabulary ('B-specials'). However, perceiving themselves as a minority on the island of Ireland as a whole and wary of assimilation by the Catholics and irredentism from the Republic of Ireland, the Protestant population subjected the Catholic minority to discrimination in the socio-political sphere, as well as in the economic and education sectors and beyond.

This state of affairs contributed to growing dissatisfaction among nationalists. In 1967 activists from the Catholic Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association organised a series of peaceful demonstrations, the main demand of which was for equal civil rights for Catholics and Protestants. These demonstrations led to retaliatory street demonstrations by Protestants.

"Rally and counter rally led to minor violence and the confrontations were joined by more militant sections of each community. In trying to control the situation, the police force and its reserves, the 'B-specials', were not impartial. Largely Protestant themselves, they tended to sympathise with unionist opinion and to act more harshly against the civil rights campaigners."[19]

In order to cope with the situation, the local administration had to seek assistance from the British government, which in August 1969 deployed regular troops to Northern Ireland. From 1970 the British army's Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), chiefly consisting of Protestants, replaced the local police reserves (the 'B-specials').

However, the deployment of troops served to further escalate the conflict and to exacerbate inter-denominational antagonism.

"For republicans the presence and activities of British troops in their communities focused attention on the role of Britain in supporting the unionist system and encouraged the arguments for armed struggle against the British and their unionist 'surrogates'."[20]

Meanwhile, the loyalists felt that they had to move outside the rule of law and form self-defence groups, "even though the state had special powers and were using army forces to deal with the civilian population".[21]

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18 Government of Ireland Act, 23 December 1920, 10 & 11 George 5 Ch. 67, available at www.bailii.org/nie/legis/num_act/1920/192000067.html

19 C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). *Striking a Balance. The Northern Ireland Peace Process.* London: Conciliation Resources. p. 17. Available at www.c-r.org/sites/c-r.org/files/08_Northern%20Ireland_1999_ENG_F_0.pdf

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

Elsewhere, the split in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) exacerbated the situation in Northern Ireland and facilitated the formation of a new, more hardline wing within the organisation, known as the 'Provisional IRA'. This wing started a partisan struggle against the British troops in Northern Ireland. In response to the practice of mass internment without trial, used by the British government in August 1971, as well as the unjustified use of force by the British army and the local police, support for the activities of the IRA increased, both from the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and from the civilian population in the Republic of Ireland. On what became known as Bloody Sunday,[22] on 30 January 1972, British troops opened fire on a demonstration by local residents during a Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association march in Derry, resulting in the deaths of 14 unarmed demonstrators. After this, the clashes between the IRA and the regular British troops escalated.

Appreciating the complexity of the situation and given the inability of the Stormont parliament to take action, in March 1972 a decision was made by Edward Heath's government to temporarily suspend the Stormont parliament and introduce direct rule to Northern Ireland. Accordingly, Northern Ireland's legislative powers were to be transferred to the British parliament and its executive powers to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Thus, on 28 March 1972 Northern Ireland's parliament sat for the last time and the government of Brian Faulkner resigned, ending a 50-year history of unionist rule in Northern Ireland.[23]

The British government realised it would have to take a series of political steps to deal with the crisis. This would include taking into account the demands from the Irish government to ensure an adequate level of protection of civil and human rights and to review the decision-making process in Northern Ireland so that representatives of the nationalists could be involved in the political processes.[24]

Thus, in the conflict-resolution initiatives undertaken in Northern Ireland in the years that followed, the British government focused in particular on achieving two related objectives: a) the establishment of a Northern Irish government on the basis of proportional representation in which both unionists and nationalists would also be represented; and b) the placation of nationalism by allowing the Republic of Ireland to be involved in the affairs of Northern Ireland (the 'Irish dimension'). However, the real situation was such that "Unionists might accept some form of the first, but wholly rejected the second; while nationalists were deeply suspicious of the first without the second".[25]

Moreover, the establishment of a Northern Ireland government on the basis of proportional representation proved to be an extremely difficult task, since the unionists considered the British system for forming a government more democratic, based on the majority principle (i.e. the party with the largest number of seats in parliament forms the government). Therefore, they opposed any other system. In particular, the unionists were against the formation of a government on the basis of proportional representation (i.e. including parties representing different communities), believing that this was undemocratic and would only produce weak governments.[26]

22   The results of the first inquiry into these events placed responsibility on the demonstrators, which led to protests by the relatives of those who were killed and injured. It was only after the second inquiry, which lasted for 12 years (1998–2010), that it was acknowledged that there was no legal basis for the shooting on the demonstrators. On 15 June 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron made an official apology for Bloody Sunday on behalf of the British government.

23   'Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention – Background Information', available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/convention/back.htm

24   S. Farren (2011). Op. cit. p. 159.

25   D. Bloomfield (1998). 'Case study: Northern Ireland', in P. Harris and B. Reilly (eds.) *Democracy and Deep-rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators*, Handbook Series 3, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). p. 126.

26   S. Farren (2011). Op. cit. p. 159.

With the aim of achieving consensus on all the above-mentioned issues, the British government developed a Green Paper entitled 'The future of Northern Ireland: A paper for discussion'.[27] This document was passed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, William Whitelaw, in October 1972 to representatives of the UUP, the Alliance Party and the Northern Ireland Labour Party for their consideration. These were the three parties, of the seven represented in the Parliament of Northern Ireland, that had accepted his invitation to take part in a three-day conference organised in September 1972 to discuss the future direction of constitutional reforms in Northern Ireland.[28] The discussion paper contained proposals from the different political parties in Northern Ireland on its future development, as well as on issues around the establishment of a future Northern Ireland Assembly and local government, power sharing between the UK and Northern Ireland, and the 'Irish dimension' regarding the possibility of involvement by the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland's affairs.

It should be mentioned that, in 1949,[29] after Ireland declared itself a republic and left the Commonwealth, the British parliament passed the Ireland Act 1949, defining relations between the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Under this Act, Northern Ireland remained a dominion of the crown and of the UK, and it was confirmed that under no circumstances would Northern Ireland or any part of it cease to be a dominion of the crown and the UK without the consent of the Northern Ireland parliament. However, when Edward Heath's government temporarily suspended the Stormont parliament in 1972, it was necessary to find some way to confirm the status of Northern Ireland. Thus, it was decided to hold a referendum on the issue on 8 March 1973.[30] In the referendum,[31] the people of Northern Ireland gave their say on the question of whether Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK or become part of the Republic of Ireland. In view of the fact that the referendum was boycotted by Catholics, the overwhelming majority of votes (98.92% with a turnout of 58.66%) were cast in favour of Northern Ireland remaining within the UK. However, despite the fact that the referendum confirmed the status of Northern Ireland, the crisis continued.

Soon afterwards, on 20 March 1973, the British government published its 'Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals (White Paper)',[32] which had been developed on the basis of the above-mentioned discussion paper of October 1972. This document proposed the establishment of a Council of Ireland and a new Northern Ireland Assembly to be elected by proportional representation and to replace the Stormont parliament. On the basis of these proposals, a Northern Ireland Assembly was established by the British government on 3 May 1973. On 28 June 1973 elections were held and on 31 July 1973 the Assembly met for the first time.

On 18 July 1973 the Northern Ireland Constitution Act[33] came into force. This Act confirmed that Northern Ireland would not be separated from the UK without the consent of a majority of the population and that a referendum on the issue could not be held more than once every 10 years.[34] The Act also stipulated the establishment of a Northern Ireland Assembly on the basis of proportional representation and a Council of Ireland, which would comprise representatives of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The previous parliament and the post of Governor were abolished, and on 21 November 1973[35] an executive body was established with proportional representation.

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27 'The future of Northern Ireland: A paper for discussion' (Green Paper; 1972), available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/nio1972.htm
28 S. Wolff (2001). 'Context and content: Sunningdale and Belfast compared', in R. Wilford (ed.) *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, Oxford University Press, available at www.stefanwolff.com/files/sunningdaletobelfast.pdf
29 Ireland Act, 1949, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/irelandact1949org.pdf
30 V. Bogdanor (1994). 'Western Europe', in D. Butler and A. Ranney (eds.) *Referendums Around the World: The Growing Use of Direct Democracy*, AEI Press, pp. 37–8.
31 Results of the 1973 referendum held in Northern Ireland on 8 March 1973, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/ref1973.htm
32 Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals (White Paper; 1973), available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/cmd5259.htm
33 Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/nica1973.htm
34 However, no referendum was held in 1983 or in subsequent decades.
35 A Chronology of the Conflict – 1973, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch73.htm

Between 6 and 9 December 1973 a tripartite conference was held at Sunningdale (England),[36] with the aim of resolving the remaining difficulties concerning the establishment of an executive body on the basis of proportional representation. The conference was attended by British Prime Minister Edward Heath, the Prime Minister (*Taoiseach*) of the Republic of Ireland, Liam Cosgrave, and ministers and representatives of the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland.

The participants discussed a range of issues, but the main debate revolved around the question of the so-called 'Irish dimension' in any future Northern Ireland government. The Council of Ireland was to be made up of two parts – a Council of Ministers and a Consultative Assembly. The Council of Ministers was to fulfil an executive and coordinating function and be comprised of seven members of the Northern Ireland Executive and seven members of the Irish government. The Consultative Assembly would have a consultative and auditing role, and would comprise 30 members from the Northern Ireland Assembly and 30 members from the lower house of parliament of the Republic of Ireland. At the conference's closing, on 9 December, a communiqué was issued.[37]

However, the majority of the UUP's members were opposed to the agreement, which ultimately led to a split in the party and the resignation of its leader, Brian Faulkner. On 15 May 1974, just one day after the Northern Ireland Assembly had approved measures for the establishment of a Council of Ireland, a protest strike was called by the Ulster Workers' Council. As a result, on 28 May 1974 the executive body based on proportional representation had to resign and two days later the functioning of the Northern Ireland Assembly was also suspended.[38]

The Constitutional Convention, which was elected in May 1975, was also unsuccessful. Since its work did not enjoy broad support from the public, on 9 March 1976[39] the British government dissolved it and announced an indefinite extension to the period of direct rule.

Despite these failures, the British and Irish governments were fully resolved to continue their joint efforts to settle the Northern Ireland conflict in the years that followed. In this context, the Anglo-Irish Agreement,[40] signed at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985 by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Irish Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald, was one of the most important documents.

According to the first section of this Agreement, the two governments:

- *Affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland;*
- *Recognise that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland;*
- *Declare that, if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments' legislation to give effect to that wish.[41]*

On the basis of this Agreement, it was proposed to set up an inter-governmental conference, where Irish and British officials could discuss political and other issues relating to Northern Ireland, with the Irish government representing the issues of Northern Irish Catholics.

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36   The Sunningdale Agreement (December 1973), available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/sunningdale/agreement.htm
37   Ibid.
38   A Chronology of the Conflict – 1974, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch74.htm
39   Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention – A Chronology of Main Events, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/convention/chron.htm
40   Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985 between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the UK, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm
41   Ibid.

The Agreement laid firm foundations for future successful cooperation between the UK and the Republic of Ireland governments. By according a formal consultative role to the Irish government in the affairs of Northern Ireland, the British government acknowledged that the conflict in Northern Ireland was not only an internal issue for the UK, but it also had a profound impact on the Republic of Ireland. At the same time, the Irish government acknowledged the fact that, without the consent of the majority of people in Northern Ireland, it would not be possible to change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the UK.[42]

Nevertheless, this document also met with opposition from unionists and representatives of the IRA. Unionists did not accept the Irish government being granted a specific role in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, while the IRA perceived the cooperation between the governments of Britain and the Republic of Ireland as a threat.[43] In fact, the reaction of the unionists to the document was so negative that for a time they ceased cooperation with the British government. However, they later agreed to take part, together with the other parties in Northern Ireland, in talks initiated by the British government in 1991 on three measures concerning: relations between the political structures within Northern Ireland; relations within the whole island of Ireland – between North and South; and also relations between Britain and the Republic of Ireland. At the time, these talks did not result in positive outcomes, but the ideas that were discussed were later included in the Belfast Agreement of 1998.

Over the years, the UK increasingly sought to achieve neutrality. Remarkably, successive British governments continued to adhere firmly to the "key concept of consent – that Northern Ireland should determine its own destiny. Furthermore, the idea that the British government should become a 'persuader' to edge unionists towards Irish unity was never accepted".[44]

Meanwhile, in the Republic of Ireland, the IRA was considered to be an illegal organisation, and this also facilitated a convergence of the positions of the Irish and British governments. They had a shared adversary and this factor played an important role in the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. In contrast to the early 1980s – when in 1980–81, following the deaths of 10 IRA prisoners on hunger strike in the Maze prison, the nationalists supported their actions – in the years that followed public concern about security issues grew both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

> *"Fianna Fáil, the party in government in the Republic, in parallel, ancillary and largely exploratory but secret talks with Sinn Féin leaders sought to convey to them the unacceptability of violence to the people of the South. Violence not only divided national opinion in the North but also created divisions between nationalists north and south of the border, and among Irish Americans."[45]*

In July 1989 Peter Brooke was appointed as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and Britain began to come forward with a series of important peace initiatives. Notably, Brooke did not rule out the possibility of holding direct talks with Sinn Féin, if the violence ceased. Moreover, in 1990 "he authorised the re-opening of an informal channel of communication between Michael Oatley, an intelligence officer and Denis Bradley, a Derry priest in the confidence of Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness".[46]

42   S. Farren (2011). Op. cit. p. 164.
43   C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit. p. 18.
44   Ibid. p. 34.
45   Ibid. p. 22.
46   Ibid. p. 23.

Within a year, Brooke also announced that Britain had no "selfish strategic or economic interests" in Northern Ireland and was prepared to agree to the union of Ireland if it had the consent of the people.[47] This was a very significant statement, which removed from the agenda one of the main issues of contention between the SDLP and Sinn Féin. Peter Brooke also facilitated the initiation of political negotiations between the constitutional parties on the whole complex of relationships.[48]

In October 1991 the British and Irish governments began to develop a draft joint declaration, which was eventually signed on 15 December 1993 by the prime ministers of the two countries, John Major and Albert Reynolds. This declaration – known as the Downing Street Declaration[49] – was one of the seminal documents in the achievement of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. In terms of its content, it largely repeated agreements between the leaders of the SDLP and Sinn Féin, and was intended to persuade the IRA to renounce violence and make the transition to political methods.

By supporting this declaration, Sinn Féin rejected violence, and in August 1994 the IRA announced a unilateral ceasefire. In October of that year the leading Protestant paramilitary groups also announced a ceasefire.

One of the most challenging tasks during this period was the issue of decommissioning by the paramilitary groups, as it was believed that this needed to be resolved before the groups could be admitted to the talks. The British government initially insisted that a significant quantity of illegal weapons and explosives be surrendered before Sinn Féin could enter the talks.[50] However, not all the groups agreed with this, and so the issue remained a major stumbling block on the road to political dialogue between Irish republicans and the British government.

On 22 February 1995 the British and Irish governments published a new Framework document[51] for consideration. One of the positive developments that emerged from this joint initiative was the system devised by the two governments for three strands of institutions: a) within Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Assembly); b) within the island of Ireland (North South Ministerial Council); and c) for relations between Britain and the Republic of Ireland (British-Irish Council; British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference).

Finally, on 28 November 1995 the Irish and British prime ministers at that time, John Bruton and John Major, issued a joint Anglo-Irish Communiqué,[52] which announced the establishment of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, chaired by George Mitchell. The document outlined a twin-track process, by means of which decommissioning and multi-party talks would take place in parallel. Thus, with the establishment of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, the conflict became internationalised.

In 1997 the British Labour Party, led by Tony Blair, came to power, as did Fianna Fáil, led by Bertie Ahern, in the Republic of Ireland. This development led to significant changes in the Northern Ireland peace process. The political will and strategic vision of these leaders made a huge contribution to the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. During the 10 years they were in office (1997–2007), two very important documents were signed: the Belfast and the St Andrews Agreement.

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47   Ibid.
48   Ibid.
49   Joint Declaration on Peace: The Downing Street Declaration, 15 December 1993, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/dsd151293.htm
50   C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit. p. 28.
51   The Framework Documents, 22 February 1995 – A New Framework for Agreement, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/fd22295.htm
52   British and Irish Governments, Joint Communiqué, 28 November 1995, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/com281195.htm

The contribution of external actors to the Northern Ireland peace process

The accession of the UK and the Republic of Ireland to the European Economic Community in 1973 marked a new stage in the two countries' development. Over the ensuing 40 years, the EC actively helped both countries and "provided generous financial aid to try to improve living conditions and create a greater sense of normality in Northern Ireland".[53] Thus, for example, the EC was one of the principal donors to the independent International Fund for Ireland (IFI), set up jointly by the British and Irish governments in 1986 as a means of distributing foreign financial aid. Between 1989 and 2010 the European Union contributed €15 million per year to the Fund[54] for inter-community and cross-border projects to encourage the peace process and support sustainable development and social cohesion in the region.[55]

In addition, in 1995 the EU set up a special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, which was implemented in Northern Ireland and the border region in the Republic of Ireland. The aim of the Programme was to strengthen progress in the development of a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation in the region. The majority of this funding was implemented by local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which encouraged people divided by the conflict to work together at community level. The resources allocated for the implementation of the second phase of this programme (2000–04) amounted to €708 million.[56]

Overall, the total resources received from the US, the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand for the IFI[57] amounted to €890 million. Over 5,800 projects have been funded by the organisation, which concentrates its efforts on Northern Ireland and also the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo in the Republic of Ireland.

The accession of the UK and the Republic of Ireland to the EC also facilitated further improvements and greater balance in their bilateral relations. Through frequent visits and regular contacts between officials and their participation at different joint events and meetings within the framework of the EC, the context of Anglo-Irish relations changed. As working relationships developed, mutual respect also grew.[58] This, in turn, had a positive effect on the course of the negotiation process for resolving the Northern Ireland conflict.

The US is another external actor that has actively contributed to the Northern Ireland peace process. In particular, since 1986 when the IFI was set up, the US has donated US$500 million to the fund, which represents half of the organisation's overall budget.[59] The US has also made major investments in the economy of Northern Ireland. Specifically, between 2002 and 2007 American companies invested over US$1.1 billion and created over 4,000 jobs in Northern Ireland. Between 2009 and 2011 a special US Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland facilitated the development of economic ties between the US and Northern Ireland, also supporting the peace process by contributing to economic prosperity in the region. In October 2010 an economic conference was held in Washington, with the aim of attracting major American investment to Northern Ireland.[60]

53   C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit. p. 12.
54   The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Risks, rights and respect – Essential elements of the Irish peace process' given by Lord John Alderdice, 24 September 2008, p. 12.
55   Community Transformation – Strategic Framework for Action 2012–2015, International Fund for Ireland, available at www.internationalfundforireland.com/images/stories/documents/Strategic_Framework/ifi_strategic_framework_for_action.pdf
56   The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Risks, rights and respect – Essential elements of the Irish peace process' given by Lord John Alderdice, 24 September 2008, p. 12.
57   Background on the International Fund for Ireland, available at www.internationalfundforireland.com/background/47-background
58   The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Risks, rights and respect – Essential elements of the Irish peace process' given by Lord John Alderdice, 24 September 2008, p. 6.
59   US Department of State, Background Note: Ireland, November 2011; the Anglo-Irish Agreement Support Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-415) authorises US contributions to the IFI.
60   K. Archick (2013). Northern Ireland: The Peace Process, Congressional Research Service, p. 14.

In the words of Northern Ireland politician Lord John Alderdice, the US provided economic assistance, expertise and mediation. Visits were organised for Northern Ireland politicians to different parts of the world so they could learn from the experience of conflict resolution in similar circumstances.[61]

The personal contribution of former US President Bill Clinton to the Northern Ireland peace process should also be mentioned. He was the first American president to visit Northern Ireland. On 30 November 1995 he spoke at Belfast's City Hall about the benefit and significance of the Northern Ireland peace process. During his speech, he described the terrorists as "yesterday's men".[62] It is notable that, by issuing a US entry visa in 1994 to Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, the political wing of the IRA, Clinton to some degree contributed to the unilateral ceasefire declared by the IRA in August 1994. It also helped to increase the recognition of Sinn Féin in the eyes of the global community as a political party rather than a terrorist organisation.

The day before Clinton's visit to the UK, on 28 November 1995, the British and Irish governments issued an Anglo-Irish Communiqué announcing the establishment of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning to be chaired by former American senator George Mitchell. The role of the Commission was to conduct research and give recommendations on the issue by the middle of January 1996. This initiative was supported by Clinton, who subsequently appointed George Mitchell as US Special Envoy for Northern Ireland. Mitchell, together with two other members of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (former Finnish prime minister Harri Holkeri and Canadian General John de Chastelain), published a report in January 1996 in which they recommended an approach whereby paramilitary groups would decommission their illegal weapons in parallel with multi-party negotiations.[63]

At the same time, the recommendation was made that elections should be held for a Northern Ireland political forum. The intention was that the sides in the conflict would select delegates from among those elected to represent them at the multi-party talks. The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning also proposed the following six principles (known as the 'Mitchell Principles'), to which all participants in the negotiations would have to give their commitment:

- *To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;*
- *To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations;*
- *To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;*
- *To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;*
- *To agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree;*
- *To urge that 'punishment' killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.*[64]

All the proposals of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning were accepted by the British government and subsequently implemented.

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61   The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Risks, rights and respect – Essential elements of the Irish peace process' given by Lord John Alderdice, 24 September 2008, p. 7.

62   'Bill Clinton and the Northern Ireland peace process', *Presidential History Geeks*, available at http://potus-geeks.livejournal.com/294798.html

63   C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit. p. 33.

64   Ibid. p. 35.

On 10 June 1996 George Mitchell, as the senior independent co-chair, together with Harri Holkeri and John de Chastelain, began to lead an official negotiating process, with the participation of 10 parties and the British and Irish governments. The negotiations were successfully concluded on 10 April 1998 with the signing by Irish and British prime ministers Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair of the Belfast Agreement[65] on the peaceful settlement of the Northern Ireland conflict. The Agreement was supported by the majority of political parties in Northern Ireland (the only party that came out against the Agreement was the DUP led by Ian Paisley).

"The Agreement laid the foundations for the establishment of new institutions of government in Northern Ireland, including a legislative Assembly and cross-party executive body. The Agreement also made provision for the creation of joint institutions with membership from the administrations of Northern Ireland and the government of the Irish Republic."[66]

The Belfast Agreement reaffirmed the fact that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland could only be changed with the consent of the majority of the population. It also made provision for the introduction of special amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland in relation to the territorial claims on Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland Act 1920, which restricted the powers of the local self-government institutions in Northern Ireland.

One of the most significant aspects of the implementation of the Belfast Agreement was the two referenda that were held on 22 May 1998. In Northern Ireland, 71.1% supported the results of the Belfast Agreement (with a turnout of 81.1%).[67] In the Republic of Ireland, the introduction of changes to the Constitution in accordance with the Agreement was supported by 94.39% (with a turnout of 56.26%).[68] The referendum in the Republic of Ireland therefore led to the removal from the Constitution of the claim that Northern Ireland was part of the territory of Ireland.

However, in practice, the implementation of the Belfast Agreement encountered a number of issues that took several years to resolve. The most problematic of these was the matter of the disarmament of illegal paramilitary groups, in particular the IRA, as well as the process of reforming policing and justice. Although the intention of the Belfast Agreement was that the decommissioning of illegal paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland should be completed within two years of the referendum, in practice the process took considerably longer and full disarmament of these groups (including the IRA) was only completed in 2005.

A positive role was also played in this process by the administration of George Bush, which, after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, initiated a large-scale campaign to combat international terrorism. During this period, the US became increasingly interested in a speedy resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict.[69] Each of the US Special Envoys for Northern Ireland appointed after George Mitchell (Richard Haass (2001–03), Mitchell Reiss (2003–07), Paula Dobriansky (2007–09) and Declan Kelly (2009–11)) made their own contribution to the Northern Ireland peace process, advancing decommissioning by the IRA and other paramilitary groups, as well as establishing the power balance between unionists and republicans.[70]

65   Agreement reached in the multi-party negotiations (10 April 1998), available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm

66   C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit. p. 4 (Russian version only).

67   Details of the 1998 Referendums, available at www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fref98.htm

68   'Referendum on the Nineteenth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 1998 (British-Irish Agreement)', in Referendum Results 1937–2012, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Dublin, p. 59, available at www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/Voting/Referenda/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownLoad,1894,en.pdf

69   D.W. Brady and C. Volden (2006). *Revolving Gridlock. Politics and Policy from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush.* Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press. p. 191.

70   M.-A. Clancy (2007). 'The United States and post-Agreement Northern Ireland 2001–6', in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Volume 18, p. 173.

In March 2007 new elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly were held – made possible by the St Andrews Agreement.[71] This Agreement was drafted during talks held in Scotland from 11 to 13 October 2006 between the Irish and British prime ministers, Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair, as well as all the political parties of Northern Ireland, including the DUP and Sinn Féin. Thus, on 8 May 2007, after a five-year hiatus, the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly resumed, a new Northern Ireland Executive was formed, and the reform of the policing and justice systems in Northern Ireland was supported by Sinn Féin.

The next Irish and British governments, led by Brian Cowen (Ireland) and Gordon Brown (Britain), built on the achievements made and continued the work of implementing the second stage of transferring power to Northern Ireland law enforcement and justice institutions. However, in March 2009 a series of terrorist attacks were carried out by breakaway IRA groups, aggravating the situation in Northern Ireland.[72]

Perceiving the severity of the situation for the Northern Ireland peace process, the US sought to prevent potential negative consequences. On 17 March 2009, St Patrick's Day, US President Barack Obama had meetings at the White House with Ireland's Prime Minister, Brian Cowen, Northern Ireland's First Minister, Peter Robinson, and his Deputy, Martin McGuinness. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also met Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams. During the meetings, President Obama urged support for peace in Northern Ireland, despite the violent incidents that had taken place.[73]

Difficult negotiations on the transfer of policing and justice powers to Northern Ireland institutions, which had continued for over a decade,[74] were finally concluded with the signing of the Hillsborough Agreement of 5 February 2010.[75] Subsequently, on 9 February 2010 the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), the 'official' IRA and the South East Antrim Ulster Defence Association (UDA) announced that they had decommissioned their weapons.[76]

In accordance with Section 1 of the Hillsborough Agreement, the devolution of policing and justice powers would be put to a cross-community vote in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 9 March 2010. This resolution was successfully implemented, and on 12 April 2010 policing and justice powers were transferred to the jurisdiction of Belfast. On the same day a cross-community vote was held in the Northern Ireland Assembly to elect a new minister of justice.

In this way, the joint and successive efforts of the two governments of Britain and the Republic of Ireland to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict, undertaken over the last few decades in close cooperation with the US administration and the EU, led to a political resolution of this conflict.

Conclusion

Despite all the difficulties in finding a comprehensive political solution to the prolonged ethno-territorial conflict in Northern Ireland, on the whole there is reason to believe that the fundamental issues are a thing of the past.

71 Agreement at St Andrews, available at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136651/st_andrews_agreement-2.pdf
72 'Real IRA claims murder of soldiers in Northern Ireland', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2009, available at www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/mar/08/northern-ireland-soldiers-killed-antrim
73 'Obama to meet Irish leaders, emphasize peace', USA Today, 17 March 2009, available at http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-03-17-obama-st-patricks-day_N.htm
74 'Timeline: Devolution of policing and justice', *BBC News*, 5 February 2010, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/8457650.stm
75 Agreement at Hillsborough Castle, 5 February 2010, available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/castle_final_agreement15__2_-3.pdf
76 The Hillsborough Agreement, February 2010, available at www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05350.pdf

Nonetheless, as Lord John Alderdice is justified in noting:

"It took six years of diplomatic activity to get political representatives of the two sides in Northern Ireland to sit around a table to talk, and even then the parties with terrorist involvement were not present – that took a further five years. During all of this period, whatever Prime Minister or party was in power in London or in Dublin, the Peace Process held firm. Margaret Thatcher, Charles Haughey, Garret FitzGerald, Albert Reynolds, John Major, John Bruton, Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern all led different governments in London and Dublin during this period, but all in their own way regarded the Peace Process as something that was a national commitment and interest that transcended party politics." [77]

In this context, the state visit made by Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland from 17 to 20 May 2011 on the invitation of President Mary McAleese was also of considerable symbolic significance. [78] During her visit, the Queen laid wreaths both at the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin, dedicated to the memory of those who died in the course of the struggle for Irish independence from Britain, and at the Island Bridge memorial in Dublin, where Irish people who fought alongside Britain in the First World War are buried.

At a state dinner at Dublin Castle, the Queen gave a speech in which she referred to the complexity of the history of relations between Ireland and Britain, acknowledging that both countries had experienced "heartache, turbulence and loss". [79] Even though representatives of certain political entities opposed the visit, many people believe that the first visit by a British monarch to Ireland since it gained independence in 1922 was a success and was one of the watershed moments in the complex history of British-Irish relations.

To summarise, an evaluation of the contributions made by the British and Irish governments as well as external actors to the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict must include the following conclusions:

- The accession of the UK and the Republic of Ireland to the EC facilitated greater balance in their bilateral relations.
- A major role in the peace process was played by the British and Irish governments declaring that they were willing to abide by the wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland, also respecting each other's national interests and territorial integrity.
- The US, as an independent and objective mediator, was able to assist the conflicting sides in negotiating practical difficulties at numerous stages in the process, especially in relation to decommissioning by the paramilitary groups.
- The financial assistance provided by the US and the EU contributed to the removal of socio-economic inequalities in the conflict zone and the implementation of humanitarian projects aimed at developing an atmosphere of trust between the parties to the conflict.

77   The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture on the topic 'Risks, rights and respect – Essential elements of the Irish peace process', speech by Lord John Alderdice, 24 September 2008, p. 7.

78   'Ireland "will remember Queen's symbolic visit"', *BBC News*, 20 May 2011, available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13473379

79   'Queen's Ireland state banquet speech', *BBC News*, 18 May 2011, available to watch at www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13450099

3. The role of the diaspora in Northern Ireland and mechanisms for engaging it in the transformation of the conflict

Masis Mayilian

Introduction

It is an interesting exercise to explore the role of the diaspora during active phases of a conflict in its historical homeland and its contribution to peaceful resolution through the example of the Northern Ireland conflict. What role does the diaspora actually play? Is it a force that supports the peace process or is it a factor that impedes the peaceful resolution of the conflict?

It is generally believed that diaspora groups tend to hold more extreme views and pursue radical agendas. The writer Benedict Anderson coined the phrase "long-distance nationalism" to emphasise "the political irresponsibility of diaspora groups who dabble in the identity politics without paying the price of violent conflict that might result". In his view, such groups "can fuel the tension and repeat the old platitudes intrinsic to established conflict positions", but "put less effort into seeking a mutually acceptable peaceful solution".[80]

William Safran is well known for his research on the phenomenon of the diaspora and developed a typology to differentiate between diaspora and emigré communities:

> *"The members of a diaspora, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'centre' to one or more 'peripheral', or foreign regions; they have retained a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements; they believe that they are not – and cannot be – fully accepted by their 'host' society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return, when conditions are appropriate; they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; they continue to relate, personally or through collective identity, to that homeland and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship."[81]*

According to Valery Tishkov:

> *"The diasporas of today are powerful historical actors who can instigate and influence events of the highest order, such as wars, conflicts, the creation or dissolution of states and associated cultural production. Diasporas have meant politics and even geopolitics throughout the course of history and this is especially true today."[82]*

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80   B. Anderson (1992). 'The new world disorder', *New Left Review*, 193, p. 13.

81   W. Safran (1991). 'Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return', in K. Tololyan (ed.) *Diaspora*, 1, pp. 83–99.

82   V. Tishkov (2000) 'Mekhanizm i dinamika diaspory' ['The mechanism and dynamics of the diaspora'], available in Russian at http://valerytishkov.ru/cntnt/publikacii3/lekcii2/lekcii/n44_mehaniz.html

Tishkov believes that:

"Diasporas are united and preserved by nothing more than their cultural distinctiveness. A culture may disappear but the diaspora remains because, as a political project and a way of life, it has a specific mission distinct from ethnicity. It is a political mission of service, resistance, struggle and revenge. In an ethno-cultural sense, Irish Americans have long ceased to be any more Irish than the rest of the population of the US that comes together to celebrate St Patrick's Day. Yet in relation to political and other involvement in the situation in Ulster, they very clearly act as the Irish diaspora."[83]

The example of the Northern Ireland conflict shows an effective mechanism for engaging the diaspora in peaceful transformation and for using its potential to bring an influential mediator (the US) into the peace process.

Reasons for the emergence of the Irish diaspora[84]

The historical reasons for migration have an important bearing on the framework within which contemporary diaspora organisations operate. There are large Irish communities in England and Scotland, as well as in Australia, Canada and a number of other countries. Many British citizens have Irish roots; they are the descendants of people who left Ireland to make a living and settle in Britain. Many of them have become assimilated. During the active phase of the conflict between 1969 and 1994, Irish people in Britain found themselves in a difficult position and were afraid to go out on the streets of some British towns, especially in the wake of bomb attacks by the IRA.[85]

The largest overseas Irish community is in the US and is estimated to be over seven times greater than the population of the Republic of Ireland (2010 data).[86] Irish Catholics began to emigrate to the US as early as the beginning of the 18th century, seeking refuge from persecution by the Protestant rulers of Britain. Irish Presbyterians also started to seek refuge overseas.[87] During this period, Protestant Ulster-Scots began to emigrate as well, arriving in North America, Australia and New Zealand.[88]

A significant influx of Irish people to the US was recorded at the beginning of the 18th century: in the century after 1820, five million Irish immigrants came to the US. The Irish made up almost half of all immigrants in the US in the 1840s and one third in the 1850s. These figures are remarkable given that the population of Ireland has never exceeded 8.5 million people. Today, according to some sources, around 44 million Americans believe they have Irish heritage.[89]

A seminal moment in Irish history was the Famine of the 1840s.

"Between 1846 and 1855, due to repeated massive failures of the potato crop [the most important local food crop], the Irish population declined by one-third.[90] More than 1 million people died of starvation and famine-related diseases and another 1.5 million fled to the United States. Many Irish immigrants believed the famine could have been

83   Ibid.

84   The term 'Irish diaspora' refers predominantly to the Irish community in the US. The Irish-American community, as the largest and most influential group, played a key role in transforming the conflict in Northern Ireland. The mechanism for engaging the Irish diaspora in the peace process forms the focus of this paper.

85   Interview, former Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern, 24 June 2013, Dublin.

86   Data from the US Department of Commerce, US Census Bureau, available at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb12-ff03.html

87   O. Smirnova (2002). 'SSHA–Irlandiia: nasledie i spory' ['USA–Ireland: heritage and disagreements'], BBC News, 13 March 2002, available in Russian at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/news/newsid_1870000/1870613.stm

88   Online interview, Clem McCartney, independent consultant on conflict and community issues in Northern Ireland, 10 November 2013.

89   I. Titova (2013). 'Zachem amerikanskim prezidentam irlandskie korni' ['Why American presidents have Irish roots'], *Moskovskie Novosti*, available in Russian at http://www.mn.ru/world/20110427/301461117.html

90   The crops failed in the years 1845–48 (interview, Clem McCartney).

avoided. 'The almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight,' the Irish nationalist and political exile John Mitchel wrote, 'but the English created the famine.' At the heart of Irish-American identity thereafter was a sense of banishment and exile."[91]

The Irish Potato Famine or the Great Hunger (An Gorta Mór) had less of an impact in the northern part of Ireland,[92] where the population had a large proportion of English and Scottish migrants.

According to Northern Ireland Assembly member for Sinn Féin Pat Sheehan, ever since the British came to Ireland 800 years ago, there has been no end to the troubles on the island.[93] The historically difficult relationship between Britain and Ireland, which had tragic consequences for the Irish people and became the main reason for the emergence of the diaspora,[94] has to a great extent defined the attitudes and behaviour of the Irish immigrants and their descendants.

Past grievances served to radicalise the approach of the diaspora to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Conflict analyst Terrence Lyons believes that diasporas that come into existence in the wake of conflict and political processes in their homeland, where people are forced across borders by conflict or repression, form networks with "a specific set of traumatic memories and hence retain highly salient symbolic ties to the homeland".[95] Traumatic memories can act as a mobilising force in collective identity.

Diaspora support for the conflicting sides

The assistance received from the diaspora by the conflicting sides in the Northern Ireland conflict – the republicans and the unionists – is incommensurable. The unionists received considerably less external assistance than the financial and political support provided by the Irish diaspora to the republicans. This is explained by the comparatively small number of Ulster Protestants living abroad. In the 18th century 250,000 Ulster Protestants emigrated to America, but the vast majority assimilated and had little interest in the politics of their former homeland.[96] Furthermore, the Protestant diaspora's ties to and identification with the communities in its country of origin were weaker.[97] At the same time, in the opinion of representatives of the Catholic community, the unionists, as supporters of maintaining the status quo, came under the protection of Britain, since Ulster unionists and the British government had shared interests in maintaining Northern Ireland as part of the UK. Yet, on 15 November 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed at Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland, and contained certain provisions that the unionists found unacceptable.[98] By signing this document, London indicated that it would not always support the Protestant community.[99]

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91   K. Kenny (2008). 'Irish Immigrants in the United States', in *Immigrants Joining the Mainstream*, US Department of State, eJournalUSA, February 2008/Volume 13, No. 2, available at http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/EJ-immigrants-mainstream-0208.pdf

92   Interview, Rob Fairmichael, Community Faiths' Forum, 22 June 2013, Belfast.

93   Interview, Pat Sheehan, 25 June 2013, Stormont, Belfast.

94   The Famine was indirectly responsible but, even disregarding it, Ireland was an overpopulated country of impoverished peasants and in such circumstances members of peasant communities tend to migrate (interview, Clem McCartney).

95   T. Lyons (2007). 'Diasporas and transnational politics in Ethiopia', in *Diasporas, Armed Conflicts and Peacebuilding in their Homelands*, Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research Report, No. 79, p. 32. See also: T. Lyons (2004). 'Diasporas and homeland conflict', Paper presented to the DC Area Workshop on Contentious Politics, available at www.gvpt.umd.edu/davenport/dcawcp/paper/mar0304.pdf

96   A.J. Wilson (2000). 'The Billy Boys meet Slick Willy: The Ulster Unionist Party and the American dimension to the Northern Ireland Peace Process, 1994–9', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Volume 11, pp. 121–36.

97   Interview, Clem McCartney.

98   In 1985, despite the tense situation, Margaret Thatcher signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in which, for the first time in history, the British government gave the Irish Republic a consultative role in the government of Northern Ireland. The signing of the Agreement sparked sharp criticism from unionists, who predominantly represented the interests of the Protestant population and advocated in favour of Ulster remaining within the UK and against the involvement of Ireland in Northern Ireland's affairs. According to Clem McCartney, republicans were also unhappy with the 1985 Agreement, since it indicated that they did not have the support of the Irish government.

99   Interview, author and journalist Deaglán de Bréadún, 24 June 2013, Dublin.

Nevertheless, during the conflict the unionists received some informal and non-institutionalised support from the 'white' community in South Africa,[100] as well as Canada and the US.[101] Loyalists sought arms deals with various people in other countries, as did the IRA.[102]

Vigorous support was provided to the republican movement in Northern Ireland by strong Irish diaspora organisations in the US. Kevin Kenny notes that:

"Initially the Irish emigrants were mostly unskilled, worked for low wages and were often used as substitute labour to break strikes … the Irish never encountered racism comparable to that inflicted on African Americans and Asians, who were excluded from citizenship or restricted from entering the United States.

Because they spoke English and were the first Catholic group to arrive in the United States in large numbers, the Irish quickly took control of the American Catholic Church. As a popular saying put it, the Church in the United States was, 'One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic – and Irish'. Catholicism became the single most important ingredient of Irish-American identity. Turning their Catholic identity to their advantage and pursuing political opportunities unavailable in Ireland, the Irish moved steadily upward in American society."[103]

Cochrane, Swain and Baser write that:

"A tight network of Irish-Americans was established in the US which became influential in government and within civil society, not just within the police force and the construction industry, but increasingly within major business enterprises, non-governmental organisations and the public sector. They enjoyed equal, if not stronger, positions in labour unions and dominated the Democratic Party in the towns and cities. One example of this dominance is the activity of the political organisation Tammany Hall in New York. Irish-Americans formed their own political and cultural support mechanisms, such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)."[104]

"The Catholic Church functioned as another element of the social glue that allowed Irish-Americans to connect and reinforce one another."[105]

In the opinion of Olga Smirnova of the BBC:

"To employ contemporary terminology, these were 'economic' migrants, but they reached the top both in politics and in the military: there were 20 Irish generals in George Washington's army … and Washington himself had ancestors who were immigrants from the Emerald Isle. Presidents Ronald Reagan, John Kennedy and Bill Clinton were all proud of their Irish ancestry."[106]

Barack Obama is the 22nd US President with Irish ancestors. For American political and public figures, the existence of Irish roots is politically advantageous. In the opinion of historian John Robert Greene, the main reason for this love of Ireland is America's Catholic electorate.[107]

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100 M. O'Doherty (2013). 'Piece by peace', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 June 2013.
101 Interview, Claire Hackett, 27 June 2013, Belfast.
102 Interview, Clem McCartney.
103 K. Kenny (2008). Op. cit.
104 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain, 'Home Thoughts from Abroad: The Variable Impacts of Diasporas on Peace-Building', available at http://citation.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/5/1/7/4/pages251748/p251748-7.php. p.7.
105 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit.
106 O. Smirnova (2002). Op. cit.
107 T. Geoghegan (2011). 'Why are US presidents so keen to be Irish?', *BBC News*, 26 April 2011, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13166265

The Irish diaspora's interest in the Northern Ireland conflict has fluctuated and depends on the level of tension at the time between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland itself.[108] Irish diaspora organisations in the US have provided support to republicans who advocate Northern Ireland leaving the UK and becoming part of the Republic of Ireland. Some organisations provided financial assistance to the IRA, and it was donations from the US that facilitated the expansion of the IRA in the 1970s.[109]

Until recently, there were still Irish people living in the US who had taken part in the Irish War of Independence during the last century.

> *"And they saw it as their patriotic duty to help what they describe as the 'guys from the IRA'. In answer to the question as to the difference between Al-Qaeda combatants and IRA combatants, they said that there was no resemblance whatsoever between them. They pointed out that there are no Irish suicide bombers and, in fact, they are not insurgents at all, but freedom fighters."[110]*

In January 2002 the US government ordered American financial institutions to freeze the assets of five Northern Irish groups).

> *"During the 1970s and 1980s, the latent interest in the conflict in Northern Ireland led to the formation of several Irish-American NGOs and a flow of money into militant republican groups within Northern Ireland. The Irish Northern Aid Committee (Noraid), formed in 1970, supported the aims and methods of republican paramilitaries in Northern Ireland. Between 1970 and 1991, Noraid officially remitted around 3.5 million US dollars to Ireland."[111]*

The funds were used by charitable organisations controlled by Sinn Féin to provide support to the families of Republican prisoners.[112] While this was not an enormous sum, this support was accompanied by vigorous international PR work for the republican cause. During the conflict in Northern Ireland, Noraid played the role expected of it by the section of the diaspora who, according to a number of writers (Benedict Anderson, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler), were predisposed to fomenting militant violence and political radicalism in the homeland.[113]

US diaspora organisations provided both financial assistance and political support to republicans in Northern Ireland. During the conflict, Noraid was not the only organisation representing the Irish-American community.

> *"The Irish National Caucus (INC), formed in 1974, was a constant critic of British government policy in Northern Ireland, highlighting human rights violations carried out by the British security forces. The relative success of the INC as a Washington-based activist group illustrates the capacity of diaspora communities to play more of a role than simply fundraising.*
>
> *The AOH and the INC took an active interest in the political conflict in Northern Ireland but emphasised non-violent methods.[114] Their central focus was on the*

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108 Interview, Claire Hackett, 27 June 2013, Belfast.

109 'Irlandiia – Kolumbiia – dalee vezde?' ['Ireland – Colombia – tomorrow the world?'], *BBC News*, 15 August 2001, available in Russian at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/uk/newsid_1492000/1492885.stm

110 O. Smirnova (2002). Op. cit.

111 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 689.

112 A. Guelke (1998). 'Northern Ireland: International and North/South issues', in W. Crotty and D. Schmitt (eds.) *Ireland and the Politics of Change*. London: Longman. p. 203.

113 P. Collier and A. Hoeffler (2004). 'Greed and grievance in civil war', Oxford Economic Papers, 56(4), pp. 563–95.

114 The INC was accused of having close links with the IRA, despite the fact that the organisation focused first and foremost on diplomatic activities (interview, Clem McCartney).

discrimination against the Catholic nationalist community and perceived human rights abuses being carried out by the British government. At a more general level, these NGOs campaigned against the British presence in Ireland and lobbied for the political goal of Irish unity.

In the early 1970s, influential Irish-American politicians, such as Senator Edward Kennedy and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill, frequently adopted public positions critical of the British government, which failed to offer options for resolving the problems which were attractive to US politicians policymakers."[115]

In 1971 Senator Kennedy "introduced a Senate Resolution that called for a 'united Ireland' and the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. In addition, the New York Congressman (and later Governor) Hugh Carey called the British army 'thugs'".[116] Feargal Cochrane and his colleagues believe that: "These two examples demonstrate the 'political temperature' of the times. While interventions like these found little purchase in US policy circles, they were nevertheless an important source of political support for the Irish republican community in Northern Ireland."[117]

The INC advanced a non-violent agenda and highlighted the labour discrimination that was one of the key issues of the political conflict and a source of grievance among Northern Ireland's Catholic community. During the 1980s, the INC lobbied for the MacBride Principles.[118] These were designed to promote fair employment in Northern Ireland and specifically targeted US investment.

"Despite opposition to the MacBride Principles from unionists and the UK government, several states in the United States adopted them during the 1980s and passed legislation requiring US companies to comply. This forced the British government to bring forward new legislation of its own, in the form of the Fair Employment Act of 1989 and a Fair Employment Commission to tackle discrimination in Northern Ireland."[119]

In 1992, during the presidential election campaign, Bill Clinton also expressed his support for the MacBride Principles.

The role of the Irish-American diaspora in engaging the US as a mediator in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict

Involving the US administration as a mediator in the Northern Ireland peace process was a key moment in the transformation of the conflict. An important role was played in this respect by the Irish diaspora organisations and the pro-Irish lobby in the US.

Nevertheless, the impetus that had led to the possibility of a peaceful transformation of the conflict came from Belfast. By 1994 the republicans and the unionists had announced a ceasefire. The two sides had lost more than 3,500 people by this point. The British army had reached the conclusion that it would not succeed in defeating the paramilitary groups, and the IRA had already realised that it would not be possible to create a united Ireland through the use of force. The conflicting sides had reached a state of what William Zartman describes as a "hurting stalemate"[120] and were now ready for talks to be initiated.

115 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 692.

116 R. Finnegan (2002). 'Irish-American relations', in W. Crotty and D. Schmitt (eds.) *Ireland on the World Stage*. London: Pearson. p. 99.

117 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 692.

118 Seán MacBride (1904–88) was an Irish public and political figure, lawyer and expert in international affairs. He was also a founder (1946) and leader of the Irish Republican Party, Clann na Plobachta. From 1948 to 1951 MacBride was Minister for Foreign Affairs, and between 1974 and 1976 he served as United Nations Commissioner for Namibia. In 1974 MacBride was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

119 A. Guelke (1998). Op. cit. p. 204.

120 W. Zartman (2001). 'Negotiating internal conflict: Incentives and intractability', *International Negotiation*, Volume 6, No. 3, p. 298.

The founder and leader of the SDLP, John Hume, seized the moment and started talks with all the parties and groups representing the two sides.[121] Once it became clear that, owing to the position of the unionists, it was not going to be possible to find a solution from within Northern Ireland, the decision was taken to involve external actors in the negotiation process – in particular, Britain and the EU. However, the most important external sponsor was the US.

John Hume, who was a Member of the European Parliament between 1979 and 2004, worked actively to involve the EU in the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. He developed good relationships with a number of heads of European countries and leaders of socialist parties. In March 1982, with support from MEP colleagues, he managed to achieve the appointment of Niels Haagerup as European Parliament rapporteur on Northern Ireland.[122] The appointment of a rapporteur and the fact that Northern Ireland was being debated in the European Parliament provoked an angry reaction from the British Prime Minister at that time, Margaret Thatcher.[123] This meant that the issue of Northern Ireland was no longer an internal matter for Britain and facilitated the involvement of other external actors in the Northern Ireland process, particularly the US.

The involvement of the US administration in the Northern Ireland peace process went through several stages. As early as the 1970s John Hume had developed relationships of trust with American politicians of Irish descent and had influence with them.

> *"Together with Irish Ambassador to Washington, Seán Donlon, John Hume convinced the Irish-American elite of the importance of separating out constitutional nationalism, as represented by the SDLP and the Irish government, from the militant Irish republicanism of Sinn Féin and the IRA."*[124]

Hume and Donlon were able to convince American politicians that, by supporting achievable reformist objectives and by helping to reduce support for militant republicans in Northern Ireland, Irish America would have a better chance of changing British policy. This strategy was assisted by a moderate and well-networked NGO, the Friends of Ireland. It formed the basis for a connection between constitutional nationalism in Ireland, the Washington political elite and British policy in Northern Ireland.

A defining role in the shift of strategy by the Irish diaspora in the US was played by the Republic of Ireland government, which held regular meetings with active representatives of the diaspora. In addition, work to this end with diaspora groups was undertaken every year when Irish ministers travelled to the US for St Patrick's Day.[125]

> *"Networks such as the Friends of Ireland were an important ingredient in the political evolution of Northern Ireland and subsequent reforms such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. Through close cooperation with the SDLP and Irish government, the Friends of Ireland played an important role in the Anglo-Irish Agreement."*[126]

121 Interview, like-minded colleagues of John Hume, Seán Farren and Denis Haughey, 27 June 2013, Belfast.
122 N.J. Haagerup (1984). 'Report drawn up on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee on the situation in Northern Ireland', *European Parliament Working Documents 1-1526/83*, 19 March 1984.
123 Interview, Seán Farren and Denis Haughey.
124 R.J. Briand (2002). 'Bush, Clinton, Irish America and the Irish Peace Process', *Political Quarterly*, Volume 73, No. 4, April–June 2002, p. 174.
125 Interview, former Taoiseach of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, 24 June 2013, Dublin.
126 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op cit. p. 692.

It should be noted that the governments of the countries that were signatories to the Agreement had compelling reasons for concluding this agreement.[127] "Pressure and influence from these Irish-American political leaders was, at certain stages, an integral factor in bringing the Agreement to fruition."[128]

"On the day the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, Ronald Reagan and [Speaker of the US Congress House of Representatives] Tip O'Neill held a press reception in the Oval Office. They praised the signing of the [agreement between Ireland and Britain and promised] that the United States would provide financial aid to the embryonic International Fund for Ireland (IFI)."[129]

This step demonstrated the central role played by the Irish diaspora – and the ensuing work of the IFI, as an economic clearinghouse – in delivering 'peace dividends' during the course of the negotiating process in the 1990s. Irish lobbying in the US essentially attained a new level and the work of the IFI received lavish financial support from the administration.[130] According to the Irish Consul General in New York, Niall Burgess:

"Something happened with the US engagement in Ireland around the mid-1980s. This change in the mindset of elite actors within the Irish Diaspora led directly to the next phase of [US] involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process."[131]

In the 1990s the diaspora organisation Americans for a New Irish Agenda (ANIA) played a significant role in the political process around Northern Ireland. Established in 1992, ANIA worked with Bill Clinton, informing him about the political situation in Northern Ireland before he was elected president.

"ANIA was a coalition of influential Irish-Americans including journalists, lawyers, labour and corporate business leaders. [This potent and well-funded organisation became a mouthpiece of Irish-American opinion. It was] geared towards constitutional nationalism, concerned that Washington should abandon the traditional non-involvement, and also prepared to woo moderate loyalists. [ANIA] focused on process, rather than outcome, and presented Clinton with practical policy options rather than a platform that would embarrass the [British] government."[132]

Adrian Guelke notes that ANIA moved away from the traditional demands of the diaspora for a united Ireland and highlighted the need for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.[133] As Cochrane et al write:

"This was not the sort of 'long-distance nationalism' Benedict Anderson had warned of, but rather pragmatic thinking designed to engage with the [Clinton Administration] rather than confront it.

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127 Interview, Clem McCartney.

128 A.J. Wilson (1995). 'The Congressional Friends of Ireland and the Anglo-Irish Agreement', in Irish-America and the Ulster Conflict 1968–1995, Chapter 9, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/wilson95.htm#chap9

129 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 692.

130 Clem McCartney believes that the most significant factor in lobbying reaching a higher level was probably the ability of lobbying groups to convey to the US administration the idea that they had won over the combatants, who might therefore be persuaded to declare a ceasefire, and that this could easily be achieved if the administration could somehow provide the combatants with some encouragement. Their success was possible because of the involvement of new individuals who had good relations with Irish republicans. This illustrates the fact that lobbying groups have the greatest influence when their interests coincide with those of the government they are lobbying.

131 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. pp. 692–3.

132 Ibid.

133 A. Guelke (2002). 'Northern Ireland and the international system', in W. Crotty and D. Schmitt (eds.) Ireland on the World Stage. London: Pearson. p. 136.

This [new] strategy paid dividends when ANIA helped secure Clinton's decision to grant a 48-hour visa for Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams to attend a conference on Northern Ireland in the United States."[134]

This was before the IRA ceasefire[135] (August 1994) and went against advice from the State Department, the Department of Justice and the CIA, provoking an angry reaction from the British government.

"The Irish-American diaspora played a critical role in interceding between militant Irish republicanism and the [administration of Bill Clinton], and without this intervention, the Northern Ireland peace process would have been much more problematic."[136]

William Hazleton suggests ANIA played a vital role in US engagement in the Northern Ireland peace process during the 1990s.

"Credit for bringing Northern Ireland to Clinton's attention and for securing his subsequent involvement belongs to a number of individuals, including Niall O'Dowd, publisher of the Irish Voice, former Congressman, Bruce Morrison, corporate executives, Chuck Feeney and William Flynn, and labour boss, Joe Jameson, who represent a new generation of Irish-American power brokers."[137]

The new generation was much closer to the IRA, which made the ANIA coalition more interesting in the eyes of the US Administration. The organisation's members played an even more important role in changing the IRA's position. According to Clem McCartney, this was one of the fundamental factors that led to the ceasefire and subsequent talks. These people were able to influence the mindset of the IRA because until then they had supported its aims and enjoyed its trust, and it believed they were acting in its interests. Once the IRA had changed its position, the coalition was able to pass on this information to the White House.[138]

Chuck Feeney, a prominent businessman and founder of the Atlantic Philanthropies organisation, maintained links with Irish paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland through a group of Irish-American business leaders. Feeney also had contacts with the US State Department. This conduit of informal contacts and positive influence on the process in Northern Ireland persisted until Senator George Mitchell was appointed as US Special Envoy of the President and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1995.[139] The establishment of Mitchell's mediation mission superseded the need for this sort of informal activity. Senator Mitchell was in favour of engaging a larger number of actors in the negotiating process, subject to their compliance with the principles he had developed.

Diasporas can thus be engaged in processes in their homeland in ways that are very similar to the activities of peacebuilding organisations.

"Diaspora organisations can demonstrate their positive potential, which is often ignored by those [who see destructive origins in it]. Irish-America actively sought to engage with militant Irish republicanism in order to convince it to adopt a peaceful democratic agenda. It did this through direct political dialogue with Sinn Féin and by opening up avenues of communication between Irish republicans and the Clinton administration, which played a major part in the choreography of the peace process in the 1990s."[140]

134 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 694.
135 Following the announcement of the IRA ceasefire, Clinton granted Adams another visa in March 1995 to attend St Patrick's Day celebrations in the US and to conduct fundraising activities for Sinn Féin.
136 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit.
137 W. Hazleton (2000). 'Encouragement from the sidelines: Clinton's role in the Good Friday Agreement', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 11, p. 104.
138 Interview, Clem McCartney.
139 Interview, Paul Murray, Atlantic Philanthropies, 26 June 2013, Belfast.
140 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit.

As George Mitchell recounts:

"Clinton subsequently pushed Northern Ireland to the top of the US foreign policy agenda and became personally involved in the multiparty talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement (or Belfast Agreement) in April 1998."[141]

Thus, Clinton fulfilled his pre-election promise made to the Irish diaspora in New York in April 1992 during the primaries.[142]

The involvement of diaspora organisations in transforming the conflict – work within both communities in Northern Ireland

While some organisations facilitated the escalation of the Northern Ireland conflict, other sections of the diaspora made a significant contribution to forging peace.

On the whole, until the 1990s, the population of Northern Ireland had a negative perception of the role of the diaspora. However, once it changed tactics and decided to pursue its objectives through non-violent means, attitudes towards it improved.[143]

"As a rule, [little] attention tends to be given to the financial assistance provided by Diaspora groups for non-violent objectives. In the Northern Ireland case, many more US dollars have been donated for peace than have ever been given for violent purposes. As an example, the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), established by the British and Irish governments in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, obtains a significant share of its funding from the United States [and other countries with large Irish populations]. The IFI focuses on cross-community development and reconciliation projects in both parts of Ireland, giving priority to initiatives that encourage cross-border co-operation."[144]

Since it was set up, the IFI has committed around €890 million to the implementation of 5,800 projects.[145] In the words of Feargal Cochrane and his colleagues: "This dwarfs the financial power of Noraid and other radical Irish-American groups … this was … a product of those within the Irish Diaspora who lobbied the US administration to help develop an economic 'peace dividend' in Northern Ireland."[146]

Significant financial support for peacebuilding projects in Northern Ireland has come from the aforementioned Atlantic Philanthropies.[147] Its founder, Chuck Feeney, was part of a new wave of Irish-American lobbyists who focused on US engagement in the process of conflict resolution.

The Atlantic Philanthropies foundation has provided assistance to nine universities, supported the alternative, shared education system in Northern Ireland (schools where children from both Catholic and Protestant families learn together), tackled the problems faced by former political prisoners (finding employment, political education and upgrading skills), funded projects in the third sector, including in human rights, and supported informal diplomatic links. Atlantic Philanthropies has also funded trips by politicians to former conflict zones and has invested in further professional development, with political training for local politicians.[148] In addition,

141 G. Mitchell (1999). *Making Peace*. London: Heinemann. p. 178.
142 C. O'Clery (1995). 'Clinton's journey to Lower Falls began with pledge in New York', *The Irish Times*, 27 November 1995.
143 Interview, Paul Murray, 26 June 2013, Belfast.
144 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 689.
145 IFI official website: www.internationalfundforireland.com/about-the-fund
146 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 689.
147 Atlantic Philanthropies – Northern Ireland programme: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/region/northern-ireland
148 Interview, Rob Fairmichael, 22 June 2013, Belfast.

support has been made available for projects that provide training for people delivering public services in the divided neighbourhoods of Belfast and other areas. Among the activists, there were many criminal elements who also engaged in violence while they were delivering public services, so it was important to engage them in education programmes. As Paul Murray highlights, those who are involved in violence must be given alternatives.[149] Through its Reconciliation and Human Rights programme alone, Atlantic Philanthropies awarded grants worth over US$15 million to Northern Ireland between 2004 and 2013.[150]

> *"[The activities] of corporate Irish-America provided an example of how a Diaspora's financial capital could be used to build peace rather than fuel violence."*[151]

Conclusions

This study of the diaspora's role in the Northern Ireland conflict and mechanisms for engaging it in the transformation of the conflict has shown the following:

- Diasporas, as powerful contemporary actors, can both support and hinder the peace process in their historical homeland. The Northern Ireland conflict illustrates the negative and positive potential that can be used by the diaspora to influence the peace process.
- The historical reasons behind the migration of populations are an important factor in how contemporary diaspora organisations operate. The historically complex relations between Britain and Ireland were the principal cause of the emergence of the Irish diaspora and largely defined the attitudes of Irish emigrants and their descendants.
- As a rule, the position taken by the diaspora is always more rigid than that of the society in conflict. Past grievances radicalise the attitudes of the diaspora to the conflict in their homeland and traumatic memories are a mobilising force in collective identity.
- Diaspora organisations can provide powerful political support as well as financial assistance.
- Diasporas are not static communities and can demonstrate flexibility as well as react appropriately to new situations.
- The reasoned position of politicians from Ireland changed the approaches and strategy of the American diaspora in relation to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The new strategy created an opportunity for the US to be involved in the peace process.
- The engagement of the US administration as a mediator in the Northern Ireland peace process was a key moment in the conflict's transformation. An important role was played in this by the Irish diaspora organisations and the pro-Irish lobby in the US.
- Irish-America reached out to militant Irish republicans to persuade them to take on a peaceful democratic agenda. This inclusive approach contributed significantly to the peace process during the 1990s.
- The actions of the Irish-American diaspora were critical to the success of the peace process. In particular, the diaspora's mediation between militant Irish republicans and Bill Clinton's administration played a crucial role.
- Until the 1990s, the population of Northern Ireland had a negative perception of the role of the diaspora. However, once it changed tactics and decided to pursue its objectives through non-violent means, attitudes towards the diaspora improved.
- Diasporas can be engaged in processes in their homeland in ways that are very similar to the activities of peacebuilding organisations.
- In the case of Northern Ireland, much more money was donated for peace than for violent purposes.

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149 Interview, Paul Murray, 26 June 2013, Belfast.
150 Atlantic Philanthropies – Reconciliation and Human Rights programme: www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/programme/reconciliation-human-rights
151 F. Cochrane, B. Baser and A. Swain (2009). Op. cit. p. 689.

- In the Northern Ireland conflict, representatives of the Irish diaspora in the US found a mechanism for working with both communities engaged in the conflict.
- The nature of the engagement of corporate Irish-America shows how a diaspora's financial capital can contribute to building peace as opposed to fuelling violence.

4. The role of the media in the Northern Ireland conflict

Gegham Baghdasaryan

Journalism and peacebuilding

I had an argument in Belfast with Brian Rowan, a journalist specialising in security issues, about the role of the media in long-running conflicts and, in particular, in the Northern Ireland conflict. During a conversation with the group of experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh, Rowan had lamented the fact that the media in Northern Ireland did not have a peacebuilding mission. I ventured to disagree with this interpretation or rather with the notion of endowing 'the fourth estate' with the additional function of peacebuilding. Recalling the traditional purpose of the media – to inform, educate and entertain – I insisted that, in conflict situations or prolonged and bloody disputes, the fundamental and perhaps only role of journalists is to conscientiously inform the public, so that people have access to objective and comprehensive information about the events taking place.

During his 26-year career with the BBC, Denis Murray extensively covered the peace process in Northern Ireland. In 1997 he was awarded an OBE in recognition of his services to broadcast journalism. In a paper entitled 'Reporting on negotiation, shaping public opinion: the Northern Ireland experience', Murray writes:

> *"It is my confirmed view that journalism … does not shape public opinion … Facts do that – and the role of the journalist is to report those facts. This may seem ludicrous now, but there was a body of opinion in Northern Ireland in the 1970s that firmly believed that 'there'd be no trouble if you boys weren't putting it on TV'. It was as though broadcasters and newspapers were doing the paramilitaries a favour by reporting bombings, shootings and so on. This sort of view reached its height with then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's 'oxygen of publicity' remark, which showed a fundamental misunderstanding of what motivated and sustained paramilitaries and ultimately led to 'broadcasting restrictions', in other words, effective censorship."[152]*

On the other hand, international expert in conflict analysis Clem McCartney points out that any argument about the communication of facts must define what 'the facts' are.[153] In his view:

> *"The majority of news agencies don't reflect society as a whole, but provide a mirror image of the section of society which buys a particular newspaper or which they would like to attract. They reinforce existing settled opinions and limit opportunities of encountering other points of view. Thus 'feedback loops are reinforced'. In addition to the issue of facts, the media must also ask questions about the reasons. In my opinion, it is easier for journalists to fulfil the expectation that they will cover the arguments comprehensively than that they will preserve neutrality."[154]*

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152 D. Murray (2012). 'Reporting on negotiation, shaping public opinion: the Northern Ireland experience', in *Preparing for Peace: Communications in Conflict Resolution*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), December 2012, p. 21, available at www.osce.org/networks/98116?download=true

153 Interview, Clem McCartney, 26 June 2013, Belfast.

154 Ibid.

The role of journalists during conflicts is a controversial issue. Many inter-governmental institutions and international journalism organisations have repeatedly emphasised in their declarations the important role of the media in the constructive coverage of conflicts and the prevention of inter-ethnic hatred (Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted by Resolution 5.61 of the General Conference of UNESCO of 16 November 1995;[155] Declaration of the UN General Assembly on a Culture of Peace).[156] Dusan Reljic devotes a separate chapter to this role, entitled 'Consensus (consociation) democracy and "constructive journalism"'. In it he writes:

"In an ideal world, the media should at least attempt to orient its reporting style towards the creation of peace, instead of intensifying prejudices that in turn heighten conflict. Such ideal journalism is a critical part of the consensus democracy concept, and represents the proper role of the media in conflict prevention and resolution … Nevertheless, it is too simplistic to expect the media as an entity to feel collectively obliged to actively promote the peace and development of civil societies."[157]

Where does journalistic neutrality end?

Discussions about the neutrality and impartiality of journalists are always relevant, but of varying significance, depending on the context of particular events. Veterans of the journalism profession believe that journalists and the media must always maintain impartiality. This approach places a huge burden of responsibility on the shoulders of journalists, obliging them to rise above their human and civic sympathies. It negates the fact that journalists are also people of flesh and blood and products of their own time and place.

It seems to me that the theory about journalistic neutrality and impartiality may work in ordinary, everyday situations, where there is really no room for compromise, but not in extreme circumstances. According to Clem McCartney, the factor that should determine a journalist's decision is what they can do better than anyone else:

"It is possible that publicising real-life stories is something which can only be done by journalists. For example, a lecturer is not in a position to apply their theoretical knowledge to a crisis situation and so it makes sense to involve journalists. It depends to a great extent on whether the journalist is the only person present at the scene. If someone else is there who can protect the individual being attacked or who can debate the issue at hand, then the journalist is free to decide whether or not to cover the story. However, if no one else is present, then there is a greater obligation for the journalist to get involved. Furthermore, there are situations where a journalist finds themselves alone against a large number of people and the only possible course of action is to try and record or film what is happening."[158]

Although Clem McCartney has a point, in my opinion, an even more important factor is public perception. How will the neutrality and 'civic inaction' of the journalist be perceived by public opinion? Depending on the situation, the journalist may consider it more important to fulfil their civic duty, without prejudice to their professionalism, because, even without them, the event is already receiving sufficient coverage and they would not, in essence, be able to change anything by simply duplicating something already placed on record by other media sources. However, many professionals believe that, by taking part in a civic action, a journalist no longer has the right to report the same event, because of the clear 'role conflict' or conflict of interests.

155 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (UNESCO) (1995): http://www.unesco.org/webworld/peace_library/UNESCO/HRIGHTS/124-129.HTM

156 UN Declaration on a Culture of Peace: http://www.un-documents.net/a53r243a.htm

157 D. Reljic (2004). 'The news media and the transformation of ethnopolitical conflicts', Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, p. 4, available at www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/reljic_handbook.pdf

158 Interview, Clem McCartney, 26 June 2013, Belfast.

This issue was also touched on by Denis Murray when he talked about his personal experience and neutrality:

"The Omagh bombing in 1998[159] is an instance where, if the reports by me and ITN Correspondent John Irvine were closely analysed, you would not find emotive language or personal opinions. However, I would presume that not even the most casual viewer would have been in any doubt as to what we felt, entirely from our tone of voice. I am frequently asked how it was possible to remain 'neutral' or 'unbiased'; to which the answer is always the same: staying politically neutral is not difficult. Ask anyone who's ever covered the Dáil (Irish parliament), or Westminster (UK parliament) or wherever, and you'll find that we all have people in every party that we like or respect, or both; and people in every party whom we dislike or disrespect. I found it much more difficult to remain neutral after acts of violence, especially after it should have been obvious to the paramilitaries that armed force was pointless … The very idea of neutrality is, I firmly believe, essential to public-service broadcasting in these islands. Reporters telling the truth, analysing the facts as best they can, and the trust that is implicit between a particular news programme and viewer are indispensable."[160]

In relation to this, Clem McCartney points out that the BBC, about which Murray is speaking, plays an unusual role in the British media landscape:

"The BBC Charter states that its broadcasting should be 'independent, impartial and honest'. BBC employees do not actually talk about 'neutrality'. Instead they use a different word: 'balance'. In contrast, most media outlets have an editorial line which means that they are not striving for balance. One argument is that, in order to reflect a multiplicity of points of view, there must be diversity of media outlets. Denis Murray also demonstrates that the majority of journalists are party to the mass consensus and are therefore not impartial. To some extent, the issue is that journalists themselves are not aware of their bias, which is often reflected not in decisions relating to the selection of facts, but in a single word or tone (I am not referring here to the comment by Denis Murray about his tone of voice in Omagh)."[161]

Evaluation and self-evaluation

Denis Murray also sought to identify the unique features of his Northern Ireland experience:

"If peace processes round the world have taught us anything, it is that they are all unique – there may be similarities, echoes and resonances between conflicts, but no single one is identical to any other. That is not to say that lessons cannot be learned from one situation to another. For instance, the Northern Ireland peace process has several elements that might be regarded as universal prerequisites: a desire on all sides to reach agreement, or at least to end conflict; international involvement, in the form of arbitrators; a preparedness to keep going; and at least some kind of media scrutiny."[162]

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159 This refers to a car bombing in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, in which 29 people were killed in August 1998. The bombing was carried out by the Real IRA, a splinter group of the IRA opposed to the Good Friday Agreement.
160 D. Murray (2012). Op. cit. p. 22.
161 Interview, Clem McCartney, 26 June 2013, Belfast.
162 D. Murray (2012). Op. cit. p. 21.

But does everyone agree with this assertion about media scrutiny? The journalists are certainly in agreement. For example, Brian Rowan describes how very few people managed to talk with all sides of the conflict:

> *"In 1994, when the republicans announced the ceasefire, they only invited two journalists. Many of these organisations were closed ones. But we didn't simply pass on their pronouncements – we checked them by various methods. Everyone wanted to use us and the politicians wanted to blow the results of the peace process out of all proportion, although it took them 18 months after Good Friday to form a government. Of course, we made mistakes too and had to issue apologies."*[163]

How are the activities of the media viewed by the public? Kate Turner, Director of the organisation 'Healing Through Remembering', an initiative promoting reconciliation with the past, talks about the indifferent attitude of the media to peacebuilding as a whole and the activities of her organisation in particular. For instance, she says that the media is not interested in her organisation's reports. Turner also talks about the different approaches taken by the media to the same incident and makes an interesting observation: "The same material appears on the front page of one paper but on page 18 of another."[164] In her opinion, the media narrowed the scope for compromise: "The media shouldn't have been used as a tool in the negotiating process. Mitchell was against the public disclosure of documents."[165]

Seán Farren, a member of the SDLP and negotiator in the peace process, notes that in a democratic society the media is accessible to all. He believes that the Church and the media are two nationalist institutions that were against violence. "The national media supported us," he says. "The responsible media reported the peacebuilding activities of our party properly, but the real problem was the tabloids whose main objective is blood and sensation."[166]

Dermot Ahern, former Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Ireland, argues that:

> *"Journalists treated the negotiating process with understanding. Admittedly, they wanted to squeeze more out of us, but at the same time they understood how important it was. The media worked well, with the exception of the tabloids. On the whole, the public was well informed."*[167]

Eamonn McCann, author of *The British Press and Northern Ireland*, laments the fact that the majority of journalists rely heavily on 'official' sources and says it explains why their coverage of a particular story is sometimes so strikingly similar. He cites a former employee of the *Mirror* newspaper:

> *"In a situation like Northern Ireland our people would have to keep in close touch with the Army Press Office. It would be more or less part of their job to get to know the army press officer as well as possible and that in itself would affect their judgement a bit. Then one of their biggest preoccupations is not to be scooped by a competition. No-one on the Mirror would be sacked because he didn't come up with a carefully authenticated and researched piece, written from local hard work. You do get sacked if the rival has a sensation about the IRA."*[168]

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163 Ibid.
164 Interview, Kate Turner, June 2013, Belfast.
165 Ibid.
166 Interview, Seán Farren, June 2013, Belfast.
167 Interview, former Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern, 24 June 2013, Dublin.
168 Cited in E. McCann (1972). *The British Press and Northern Ireland*, Northern Ireland Socialist Research Centre, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/mccann72.htm

Denis Murray agrees to some extent with this position and yet emphasises the journalist's right and opportunity to make choices:

"I had a really good working relationship with Tony Blair's Communications Director, the reputed 'king of spin', Alastair Campbell … but one night he was briefing me – him in Downing Street, me on the mobile phone at Castle Buildings, Stormont, where the talks leading to the Good Friday Agreement took place. At one point, he said, 'It would also be helpful if you said…'. 'Hold it right there Alastair – if you tell me 'the government policy is', or 'the prime minister thinks', or 'his personal spokesman says', then I'll report that, but I am absolutely not here to help.' He laughed and said I was touchy, and I said 'Damn right, I'm on a mobile phone in Northern Ireland!' 'OK', he said, 'the government view is…'. Now this is a harmless and mildly amusing anecdote, but it illustrates the point: I could report what Alastair said, but when required, would reach for the pinch of salt and analyse what he said in my own way."[169]

Following meetings and conversations with journalists and people active in the social and political spheres in Belfast, Dublin and London, I came to the conclusion that the public was adequately informed about the peace process and that people had an understanding of the work of journalists. The well-known independent journalist Fionnuala O'Connor also talked about this with us: "Journalists were very rarely threatened. Only one journalist was killed during the conflict."[170] On the whole, the journalists' work was judged on merit during the peace process. It is significant that, after Good Friday, senior negotiator Senator George Mitchell wrote a letter to all the correspondents who had covered the course of the negotiations, thanking them for their contribution to the peace process simply by reporting the facts.

This is worth noting – simply by reporting the facts. For their part, the public encouraged a serious, responsible attitude to the negotiations – there was a call to reject anything that might have a negative influence on the talks. Denis Murray writes: "I think the public has every right to be informed about talks as they progress, but in the interests of ending conflicts, those talks should not be held in completely open parliament-style forums."[171]

British and Irish standards

The Irish like to joke about how British newspapers boast of their high standards of journalism. According to the Irish, they encourage the British public to believe that their press is the best in the world, that it is the 'guardian of liberty'. Yet, at the same time, as Eamonn McCann writes in his book *The British Press and Northern Ireland*, while editors and higher executives whiled away the time in contemplation of their own ethical purity, the job went on of managing and mangling the news from Northern Ireland. McCann writes:

"Most British people have a distorted view of what is happening in Northern Ireland. This is because they believe what they read. There have been honourable exceptions. But examination of reports reveals a clear pattern of distortion. The news has systematically been presented, consciously or not, so as to justify the assumptions and prejudices of the British establishment and to serve the immediate political needs of British Governments."[172]

According to McCann, there was a clear tendency to blame the IRA immediately, without any kind of evidence, for every brutal outrage imaginable. The British press painted a picture of the

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169 D. Murray (2012). Op. cit.
170 Interview, Fionnuala O'Connor, June 2013, Belfast.
171 D. Murray (2012). Op. cit. p. 24.
172 E. McCann (1972). Op. cit.

IRA that was not based on any existing facts. This was due to the special relationship between the press and the army. McCann presents a series of examples, including the deaths of 17-month-old Angela Gallagher in Belfast and 14-year-old Annette McGavigan in Derry. Both wings of the IRA denied responsibility. The incident involving Angela Gallagher happened in a Catholic area and it is therefore logical to suspect (although no more than that) someone with republican sympathies, although additional facts were needed.

However, as McCann writes:

"Once 'the IRA' had been identified as the main enemy, all concern for fact melted marvellously away. The stories of IRA mass murders, IRA extortion and intimidation, IRA men training children to kill, etc. served to justify increasingly repressive measures to the British public. It was on this basis that The Guardian, self-appointed keeper of the British liberal conscience, was able plausibly to support internment. It was as a result of such stories that politically the British Government could operate the policy."[173]

But was the Irish media, which sympathised with the Catholics, irreproachable? Did the Irish media respond adequately to the fundamental issues of the times? Denis Haughey, a member of the SDLP, peace process negotiator and colleague of John Hume, the party's former leader, recounts a curious incident:

"At a critical point in the negotiating process, when John Hume had had a meeting with US President Bill Clinton, the Irish news devoted a couple of paragraphs on the inside pages to this hugely important meeting and used the front page for 'Bomb threat at Sinn Féin headquarters'. And all there was to this story was that one of Gerry Adams' bodyguards, Cleeky Clarke, had seen a suspicious car nearby."[174]

Before and during Good Friday

The 1960s were generally favourable in relation to the civil rights movement. Many media outlets sent correspondents to Belfast. In the Catholic areas, attitudes to reporters and photographers were good. The media supported Northern Ireland Prime Minister Terence O'Neill, whom they characterised as a 'cautious crusader', and there was almost no crude distortion of events. According to McCann, at one point the *Mirror* had 12 people in Derry. Few of them had any detailed knowledge of the real situation. Some of them wandered about the city, asking to be introduced to someone who had been a victim of discrimination or to an unemployed Catholic slum-dweller. McCann writes: "Despite the generally benevolent coverage of the Civil Rights campaign at this stage, one could discern already the tendency to blame 'the IRA' for any violence which occurred. It was assumed for example that the IRA was responsible for the explosions preceding O'Neill's resignation. But this was comparatively mild and tentative stuff."[175]

Clem McCartney points out that:

"The allegations of discrimination in Northern Ireland were aimed at the local administration and the British government was able to state, and did state, that these issues were devolved to the local authorities and were not within its remit. Thus, the London media didn't criticise its own government, although one might ask why the British government had allowed this situation to develop."[176]

173 Ibid.
174 Interview, Denis Haughey, 27 June 2013, Belfast.
175 E. McCann (1972). Op. cit.
176 Interview, Clem McCartney, 26 June 2013, Belfast.

Eamonn McCann maintains that:

"[T]he real, sustained and systematic distortion began when British soldiers came onto the streets, and by the middle of 1970, when the troops were in almost constant conflict with Catholic working-class neighbourhoods, most papers had in effect stopped carrying the news. They were vehicles for propaganda. Some incidents were ignored. Others were invented. Half-truths were presented as hard fact. As far as the British press was concerned, the soldiers could do no wrong, but the other side, 'the rioters', received very different treatment."[177]

McCann seeks to be as objective as possible:

"To say that the press distorted the situation beyond all recognition is not to say that those who came onto the streets to fight British soldiers behaved in a manner which liberal opinion would find admirable. Of course not … But the great majority of the British people, dependent on the press to tell them what is happening in the North of Ireland, are by now incapable of forming a judgement about it, so one-sided has the reporting been."[178]

In the wake of the emergence of the civil rights movement, the main focus of British government policy was on the 'democratisation' of Northern Ireland.

McCann writes:

"The increasing British investment in the Republic, the growing importance of the South of Ireland as a trading partner, made dangerously obsolete the traditional attitude of previous governments. For the first time in the history of Anglo-Irish relations, it suited the imperial power to balance between the Orange [Protestants] and the Green [Catholics]. This was automatically reflected in British policy towards the North. It was reflected too in the press. It offers an explanation of many pro-civil rights editorials, of the fact that the Catholic case received enormously more coverage than the Protestant case."[179]

Denis Murray recounts a very interesting anecdote about the Good Friday talks and how the peace process was reported:

"At Stormont, a media centre was eventually set up in a car park, cabins, portable loos and all. A decision had been taken to exclude the media from the talks, but not from the proximity of where they were taking place. Towards the end, it became rather ludicrous, with politicians emerging to talk to the cameras half an hour before bulletin time. One of the most regular of these serial 'spinners' was John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, who memorably remarked that he wouldn't touch the deal on offer with a 40-foot bargepole. This led to endless fun for the hacks, with cries of 'how long is your bargepole today, John?' Another important element was the phone (obvious but vital). Very quickly, journalists attending the talks on a more or less permanent basis got the direct-line numbers of the various delegations, and they had our mobile numbers, which meant no party or government could control the flow of information. This modus operandi continued throughout the talks that led to agreement, and then afterwards in other talks aimed at implementation.

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177 E. McCann (1972). Op. cit.
178 Ibid.
179 E. McCann (1972). Op. cit.

The only exception to this was at the US Ambassador's residence during the Mitchell Review of autumn 1999. George Mitchell, having chaired the Good Friday process, was invited back to break the deadlock which had followed. His residence was in Regent's Park in London and was very well protected. Here came the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP, at that time the main players in the political arena, and the media were practically left out on the street. One reporter who was there said it was the only time it was made clear that the media were not welcome and not tolerated."[180]

Murray again asks the question: should the media be kept at a distance, allowed nearby or involved?

"Much as I'm in favour of disclosure, talks in public are unlikely to work – who is going to negotiate in public? For instance, I once asked the post-apartheid ANC Deputy South African High Commissioner to London what they had done when even being seen to talk about something would have been political suicide. 'We went out in the bush', was the reply. Negotiators (one suspects it was the two chief negotiators) would simply vanish off somewhere, thrash out a deal and bring back a solution."[181]

The peacebuilding potential of different types of media

In the early 1960s the Northern Ireland conflict received extensive coverage on television. At this complex stage in its development, the extremely difficult relationship between the loyalists and the republicans was in the news headlines virtually every day. The drawback of this sort of coverage was that it generally only reflected the government position. The predominance of the government perspective came to an end with coverage of the 'other' Northern Ireland, reflecting the republican point of view and broadcast by the BBC. From that time onwards, all the efforts of the Irish were concentrated on combating the periodic introduction of censorship and on asserting their civil rights. In this way, a challenge was mounted to the main political forces, and television became the battlefield where each section of the population defended its rights. In the 1970s, in light of an even greater escalation of the conflict, the coverage of events in Northern Ireland was more restrained and cautious. There were also several instances of direct political pressure being put on television stations. Censorship was even stricter in the Republic of Ireland.

Nevertheless, reports on the lives of the peaceful population were widely broadcast, reflecting the full scope of the tragedy of the armed hostilities and their impact on the lives of ordinary people. For example, Peter Taylor, Paul Hamann and Arthur MacCaig presented contemporary 'views from within' on the conflict and the different sides. Over the next decade the topics of innocent people, political prisoners and peace in Northern Ireland came to the fore. A new form of television emerged in the shape of documentary films, which were widely broadcast in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1996 director Neil Jordan made a film called 'Michael Collins' about the 70th anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1921, which charted the whole history of the conflict during the 20th century. In the mid-1990s the central themes covered by the media were the temporary peace associated with the signing of the Downing Street Declaration and coverage of issues relating to peacebuilding, such as the disarmament of paramilitary organisations.

Turning to the role of radio, Walt Kilroy (Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction, Dublin City University) observes, "Radio played a more constructive role because it wasn't subject to the temptation to show bloody scenes. In addition, radio provided more opportunities for calm and engaged discussion."[182] Clem McCartney adds, "Politicians are very interested in how they and their messages are covered by the media, and they want to hear

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180 D. Murray (2012). Op. cit. p. 23.

181 Ibid. pp. 23–4.

182 Interview, Walt Kilroy, June 2013, Dublin.

what their opponents are saying. They can most easily do this by listening to the radio, but they also keep a close eye on TV."

It is only recently that the role of new media has begun to be studied. The main distinguishing feature of social networks is the possibility to reach people who do not watch television, listen to the radio or read newspapers. According to Paul Nolan, Director of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report, republicans opposed to the Good Friday Agreement are particularly active on the internet. Moreover, they target young people specifically – people who did not see the turbulence and disorder. It is a simple calculation – the emphasis is on the ignorance and romantic leanings of the younger generation.

In other words, the struggle has moved into the virtual sphere, into a range of internet forums and social networks, although the aim is to motivate people and take them beyond the confines of virtual debate. Jeffrey Donaldson, Member of Parliament and DUP member (formerly a member of the UUP at the time of the talks), suggests that social networks help to achieve agreement within society; they have a direct influence on people, but, if you are going to use them, you have to know what you are doing – otherwise, the same social networks can turn into minefields.

Three-strand dialogue instead of two monologues

Today, walls between Catholics and Protestants still stand in the streets of Belfast. However, this did not impede the dialogue because, having learnt from experience, the politicians did not begin by pulling down these real walls. Instead, they concentrated on the invisible barriers in people's heads and hearts, which were the source of the divisions. Besides, the politicians say that the local people are still against the walls being removed.

"It's always better to talk than to fight," Lord John Alderdice asserts in an article entitled 'Off the couch and round the conference table'. In his opinion, in a situation where communities are in violent conflict, they have virtually no capacity to listen to the other side and they only hear the things that confirm their prejudices and enable them to protect themselves. Alderdice writes:

> *"In the psychoanalytical world, we have no difficulty in giving value to talking and listening, but you will often hear people criticising parliaments as being 'just a talking shop', not fully appreciating that when the representatives of our communities in parliament are talking, they are in a very real sense exercising the alternative to violence.*
>
> *In stable, peaceful parts of the world, it is easy to forget why we have parliaments – places where representatives of the community talk (and also listen) to each other – and in violent communities, it is easy to dismiss talking in the face of the threat as an expression of weakness in contrast to decisive action. In Northern Ireland, we lived through 30 years during which political differences were expressed through violent actions rather than words; but while it is most obvious in those places where there are deep divisions, violence is in fact always an alternative to talking in any community. There are important questions about why such deep divisions exist in any community … What is beyond doubt is that when such divisions have led to serious, prolonged inter- and intra-communal violence, there is grave damage to the capacity to think, talk and engage in those group psychological relational processes we call politics. Politics is not so much the way that we agree across the gulf of our differences, but rather the way in which we can express our disagreements without killing each other."[183]*

183 J. Alderdice (2010). 'Off the couch and round the conference table', in A. Lemma and M. Patrick (eds.) *Off the Couch: Contemporary Psychoanalytic Applications.* Sussex and New York: Routledge.

However, Clem McCartney disagrees that over a 30-year period political differences in Northern Ireland were expressed through violent acts rather than words: "It wasn't just violent acts. Most politicians didn't take part in the violence and many loyalists and republicans talked with each other through community organisations. To some extent, they also talked to each other through the media." In other words, dialogue did exist.

In my opinion, it is dialogue – universal and unconditional – that is the key to success in the Northern Ireland peace process. When there was no dialogue, there was a clash between the monologues of the conflicting sides. Real dialogue is impossible without the support of the media and I shall explain why.

I would divide dialogue in Northern Ireland into three strands:

- internal dialogue;
- dialogue within society;
- dialogue between the conflicting sides.

Three-strand dialogue must begin with individuals engaging in dialogue with themselves (with their conscience or alter ego); they must then talk with others like themselves and, finally, with the other side. This 'three-strand' or 'three-entity dialogue' is the mainstay of peacebuilding. Without an internal state of readiness for dialogue, it is not possible for there to be debate within a community, much less with the opposite side.

The role of the media in all these dialogues was invaluable – in the internal dialogue, in the conversations within communities and in the discussions between the conflicting sides. For the first stage of dialogue, individuals had at the very least to be as well informed as possible; otherwise, all the hackneyed phrases and stereotypes could have replaced the ability to think analytically. The second stage required a space that was provided by a wide range of media. Above all, in the dialogue between the conflicting sides, the media was indispensable.

In her thesis – entitled 'The role of regional media in the development of ethno-political processes and bodies in Stavropol Krai' – Karine Rushanian correctly identified a new tendency:

"The media are becoming active participants in socio-political relations by virtue of the emergence of new resources. These resources are well-founded innovations of policy, law and government in which the media plays a role as facilitator of public debate and moderator of public opinion. The media is a legitimate participant in socio-political processes through its reflection of political, democratic transition, including the democratic transition of ethno-political institutions."[184]

The media and peacetime challenges

A sense of safety, equality, political progress and social cohesion – these are the new challenges and new indicators of the times, says Paul Nolan, Director of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. This means new topics for the media – topics that should each be routinely covered as there are plenty of issues to address.

Judge for yourselves. In 2012 there were 313 suicides in Northern Ireland (compared with 59 people who died in road traffic accidents in the same year). The economic conditions are barely

184 K. Rushanian (2009). 'Rol' regional'nykh SMI v razvitii etnopoliticheskikh protsessov i institutov v Stavropol'skom krae' ['The role of regional media in the development of ethno-political processes and bodies in Stavropol Krai'], available in Russian at www.dissercat.com/content/rol-regionalnykh-smi-v-razvitii-etnopoliticheskikh-protsessov-i-institutov-v-stavropolskom-k

relevant, because the timeline shows that the rise in suicide rates began during the years of economic growth. Moreover, these unfortunate people are by no means young and impulsive – the statistics indicate that they are mature individuals aged between 35 and 40. Media coverage is not enough here – proper systematic research is needed.

Another problem is the divide between the political elites and the communities. As one of the people we talked to in Belfast said, the political actors have divided the power between themselves but not with society as a whole. The journalist Brian Rowan believes that, although the political elites have come to an agreement, little has changed within society. In other words, there may no longer be walls in the political sphere, but they are still standing in the public sphere. Jeffrey Donaldson MP says that this is not an ideal world and that the peace process is not finished. However, the situation has been completely transformed, which gives reason for hope. In his view, "The conflict is not about territory – that is, it's not about mountain against mountain – it's about people. This is why we need to start by re-establishing normal human relationships."[185]

The conflict may be completely transformed, but this transformation is not itself the solution to the problem. In his study *Conflict transformation: A multi-dimensional task*, Hugh Miall draws attention to one very important point:

> *"Conflict transformation theorists argue that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. The very structure of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict. Conflict transformation is therefore a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict."[186]*

In his paper 'Ethnic conflict studies: The search for an academic paradigm', Viktor Avksent'ev is also sceptical about the complete resolution of the issue:

> *"As desirable as it may be, the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict will be difficult to accomplish in the near future. Its complexity, like the majority of ethno-political conflicts, lies in the fact that the majority of them, if not from the outset, then with the intensification of the conflict process, have traits of a conflict of values. Therefore, the most likely means of breaking the Northern Ireland deadlock may be a process that seeks to manage the conflict – that is, to effect its transition to a latent phase. This process will not eliminate the participants in or the substance of the conflict nor yet the fundamental differences. The main efforts of the conflicting sides will be focused on achieving constructive cooperation in changing attitudes around the substance of the conflict."[187]*

There is no one in Northern Ireland who has failed to gain something from the peace agreement, but there are a small minority who do not agree. These people have stood in various elections, but they do not have voter support and have not been elected. What should happen to them is another important issue for consideration. As former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern advised, "These people must not be isolated from society; they should have the right to express their opinion. Everyone should be able to be part of the peace and of political life. There must not be a vacuum. Armed people filled the vacuum with armed struggle."[188]

185 Interview, Jeffrey Donaldson, June 2013, Belfast.
186 H. Miall (2004). *Conflict transformation: A multi-dimensional task*, p. 4. Available at www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/miall_handbook.pdf
187 V. Avksent'ev (2001). 'Etnicheskaia konfliktologiia: v poiskakh nauchnoy paradigmy' ['Ethnic studies: The search for an academic paradigm'], Stavropol, p. 210 (in Russian).
188 Interview, former Taoiseach of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, 24 June 2013, Dublin.

Padraic Quirk, Country Director of Northern Ireland for the American NGO Atlantic Philanthropies, believes the most important challenges are to work on human rights, equal opportunities and restorative justice.

In conversation, Raymond Lavery, community worker, youth worker and loyalist activist, clearly outlined his view on the main issues: "We are part of the problem and we want to be part of the solution. We have to think not about who did live here but about who will live here."[189]

According to Billy Hutchinson, community worker, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), and former member of a loyalist paramilitary organisation and the Northern Ireland Assembly: "We need a decommissioning of mindsets as well. Arms as such are not a bad thing, as long as they don't fall into the wrong hands."[190]

Looking forward, this cannot be achieved without changes to the education system, so that the coming generation can live without walls. In an article for the Karabakh journal *The Analyticon*, exploring how education can support progress towards peace, Benjamin Mallon writes:

> *"First, there must be an honest assessment of the fact that education policy and practice contribute to the perpetuation of violence. The model used to establish the national curriculum is important in the light of the knowledge, skills and understanding advanced by it. Certain subjects which touch on historical and more recent conflicts must form the focus of the most assiduous attention in reforms of education systems … In the case of Northern Ireland, there are numerous examples of how initiatives or programmes for peacebuilding education are linked to elements of the official curriculum … Such educational programmes may vary in terms of methodology, but on the whole they are focused on the development of conflict resolution skills, strengthening social unity and promoting reconciliation. Some programmes concentrate on enhancing tolerance, while others focus on providing young people with opportunities for inter-community cohesion. In some cases, the aim is cross-border dialogue and organising meetings, often using information and communication technologies."[191]*

The Russian academic A. Matsnev, in his study on 'Ethno-political conflicts: Nature, typology and routes to resolution', looks at another very important point. In his view, a major role is played in a number of the socio-political reasons behind the Northern Ireland conflict by a sense of having experienced historical injustices and a feeling that the national achievements of the Irish nation have been trampled on. He shares the theory put forward by ethno-politics expert E. Kiss that "In the effort to reconcile nationalism and human rights, there is one key element which does not fit into the framework of political institutions. In essence, this is the need for an uncompromising, critical analysis of cultural and social issues."[192]

All this represents not only new challenges for our times, but also new topics for the media. New approaches are needed for reporting on these subjects, but this is perhaps not the most important thing. As one of the journalists we spoke to put it: "We need to cover the peace with the same diligence we devoted to the Troubles."

189 Interview, Raymond Lavery, June 2013, Belfast.
190 Interview, Billy Hutchinson, June 2013, Belfast.
191 B. Mallon (2013). 'Uroki konflikta i mira' ['Lessons in conflict and peace'], *The Analyticon*, available in Russian at http://theanalyticon. com/?p=3506&lang=ru#more-3506
192 A. Matsnev (1996). 'Etnopoliticheskie konflikty: priroda, tipologia i puti uregulirovania' ['Ethno-political conflicts: Nature, typology and routes to resolution'], in *Sotsial'no-politicheskiy zhurnal [Socio-political journal]*, M., 1996, No. 4, p. 53 (in Russian).

Conclusions

- The public must be well informed about the conflict and its resolution; media access during peace processes is not an impediment and the confidentiality of the negotiating process must be kept within reasonable limits.
- The media can be an effective mechanism in conflict resolution and can contribute to the peace process by reporting the facts. Some scrutiny of the peace process by the media is very important, but its main role is to inform the public efficiently and impartially.
- Special political, economic and other conditions are necessary for the media to be able to fulfil its role. The role of the media in preventing conflicts, contributing to their successful resolution and safeguarding the peace can be evaluated on the basis of a framework of general social conditions, which define the work of the media and are reflected by it. The existence of independent media institutions is very important. In order to fulfil its mission, the media must have economic independence and political freedom. Political diversity would be a guarantee of economic diversity, which, in turn, would enable a diversification of media resources.
- Without freedom of speech, the democratisation of society cannot happen – therefore, the media is an important element of democracy and must support it.
- Dialogue is an essential condition in conflict resolution and social development, and provides fertile ground for the media to fulfil its role. Dialogue can and should be carried out on multiple levels, and the role of the media is important and indispensable at any level of dialogue.
- The media can and should facilitate public debate and act as a moderator of public opinion.
- Different sectors of the information sphere play different roles and have their own specific part in the process of conflict resolution. In particular, the most influential tool, both for good and for ill, is television. Radio has greater potential for calm and constructive dialogue and discussion. The new media and social networks help, by the most democratic means, to ensure public participation, although this also involves many new challenges.
- As a moderator of public opinion, the media can and should assist in the elimination of divisions between political elites and society.

5. Civil society in Northern Ireland in the quest for peace

Avaz Hasanov

Studying the conflict in Northern Ireland, and meeting the different sides and people involved in it, confirms that the occurrence of conflict is not restricted to underdeveloped countries or societies with underdeveloped social relations. It has usually been assumed that conflict occurs in countries where there are problems of a social nature and where there is serious antagonism between ethnic groups. In Northern Ireland, even after the devastation of the Second World War, the standard of living was not poor. In terms of educational attainment, it ranked among the highest in Europe. Thus, the tendency towards conflict found in Northern Irish society comes as a surprise. Over time, conflicts in Europe have been resolved and none of them has served to exacerbate the discord between neighbouring communities and religious groups in the way that it did in Northern Ireland.

It is perhaps interesting to look at who exactly were the principal actors in helping to resolve the conflict. First, a major role in achieving peace was played by the state institutions, such as the British government and the Northern Ireland Office in Stormont (the parliament of Northern Ireland) along with the Northern Ireland Assembly.[193] Second, political parties and movements such as the DUP, the UUP, the SDLP and Sinn Féin played a significant part in shaping the political system and increasing the level of involvement by the population in resolving the conflict.[194] Third, terrorist and paramilitary organisations – such as the IRA, the INLA, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), the UVF and the UDA – are also parties in the conflict and at various times the course of political processes was dependent on their influence on relations between the two communities.[195]

The role of paramilitary groups and political parties in achieving peace

The tensions in relations between the people of Northern Ireland were heightened in the period after Ireland gained independence. However, it was the sectarian rather than party political differences that played a role in the emergence of these tensions. Sometimes, political parties are unable to act beyond the scope of the uncompromising position of the groups they represent and, fearing loss of support in their community, they pitch their position in accordance with communal interests.

Since the 1960s modernisation processes have taken place in Northern Ireland that have influenced the course of the bipartite negotiations, as well as relations between the two communities. As a result of the emergence of new political views and generations, the previously united Protestant community split into several political parties. In the Catholic community, parties were established that would 'acknowledge the constitutional status of Northern Ireland only in accordance with the law'.

The appearance in 1913 of the nationalist military organisation the Irish Volunteers (the precursor to the IRA) led to continual uprisings and protests. When a new uprising flared up in Ireland in 1916, the rebels declared an Irish Republic. The uprising was suppressed but in 1919 an Irish Republic was again declared, leading to the War of Independence. A ceasefire was eventually called in July 1921, and in December of the same year an agreement was reached by means of which the Irish Free State was established in 26 counties of the island of Ireland, with six counties remaining part of Britain. The partition of Ireland was not supported by the IRA, whose actions led to a split in Irish society.[196]

193 C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit.
194 'Partii Severnoy Irlandii' ['The parties of Northern Ireland'], *BBC News*, 14 March 2001, available in Russian at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/uk/newsid_1325000/1325141.stm
195 C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit.
196 'Istoriya Irlandskoy respublikanskoy armii' ['The history of the Irish Republican Army'], *AzGlobus.net*, available in Russian at http://www.azglobus.net/1151-istoriya-irlandskoy-respublikanskoy-armii.html

During the Troubles, many paramilitary organisations put heavy pressure on their communities. The Combined Loyalist Military Command, leading a campaign of terror against the nationalists, intimidated members of the community, alleging that they were sheltering members of the republican movement and combatants. However, understanding the importance of cooperation between different groups, the organisation agreed to a ceasefire.

The largest loyalist paramilitary organisation was the UDA. Its political views were represented by the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). Within the UDA, there was a more militant wing, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), which joined the ceasefire declared by the loyalists.

For the first time, the UDA, a combat group of Northern Ireland Protestants, officially laid down its arms. Classified by EU Member States and the US as a terrorist organisation, the UDA was involved in an estimated 400 murders. When the UDA was dismantling its military structures, it issued a statement: "The Ulster Defence Association believes that the war is over and we are now in a new democratic dispensation that will lead to permanent political stability." The second largest loyalist paramilitary group, the UVF, had also previously declared that it was giving up the armed struggle.

The decision by paramilitary groups to declare a ceasefire was influenced by the 1985 agreement reached at Hillsborough Castle (Northern Ireland) between Britain and the Irish Republic.[197] The Agreement gave the Irish Republic an advisory role in resolving the issues of Northern Ireland. A second round in the ongoing talks was concluded with the signing of the Downing Street Declaration[198] between Britain and Ireland on 14 December 1993, reinforcing the principles of the renunciation of violence and making provisions for the establishment of a parliament and government in Northern Ireland. However, the implementation of the Agreement was stalled due to a mortar attack on Heathrow Airport by the IRA.[199]

With the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement at Hillsborough Castle on 15 November 1985 – by Margaret Thatcher on the British side and Garret FitzGerald on the Irish side – it was resolved that the reunification of Ireland should take place if a majority of the population of Northern Ireland agreed. This Agreement facilitated the emergence of new political views and new young leaders who preferred to use constitutional methods to pursue independent policy.[200]

However, not all political leaders were immediately prepared to surrender their positions in order to attain peace in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin achieved recognition of its position in the conflict, while maintaining its links with paramilitary groups. Towards the end of the 1980s, as a symbol of protest against the campaign of violence mounted by the republican movement, constitutional nationalist leaders refused to support any contact with them. However, the initiation of peace talks by John Hume, leader of the SDLP, played a major role in the ceasefire. His decision to enter into direct talks with the IRA in the mid-1980s, following the bombing during the Protestant Remembrance Day march in Enniskillen on 8 November 1987, laid the foundations for the beginning of the peace process.

Despite the fact that the nationalists had the support of the population, their armed struggle lost its significance after Sinn Féin polled 10% of the vote at the Northern Ireland Assembly elections. Sinn Féin had to come out of political isolation. An important contribution to this process was also made by former US President Bill Clinton, who was the first American president to visit

197 Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985 between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the UK, available at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm

198 Joint Declaration of 15 December 1993 (Downing Street Declaration), Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland, available at https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/northernireland/peace-process--joint-declaration-1993.pdf

199 'Istoriya Irlandskoy respublikanskoy armii' ['The history of the Irish Republican Army'], Op. cit.

200 A. Branitskiy and P. Chupriko (2008). 'Osnovnye factory mirnogo protsessa v Severnoy Irlandii na sovremennom etape' ['Fundamental factors in the peace process today in Northern Ireland'], Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod (in Russian).

Northern Ireland. During his election campaign, in order to win the votes of the Irish community, he had promised to get involved in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict. Under pressure from the Irish community in the US, Clinton granted an American visa to Sinn Féin party president Gerry Adams, who visited the US in January 1994.[201] While he was there, Gerry Adams indicated that the IRA was prepared to renounce violence. Later that year, on 31 August 1994, the IRA declared an indefinite ceasefire. Following the announcement of the IRA ceasefire, a broadcasting ban that had been placed on the appearance of republicans and loyalists with paramilitary links was lifted. In October 1994 a loyalist paramilitary ceasefire was also announced.

Following the ceasefire, a large-scale campaign was undertaken to persuade armed groups to lay down their arms and the political parties that supported them to join the talks process. A major stumbling block was the issue of decommissioning of arms by paramilitary groups before any talks could begin. Despite the fact that Sinn Féin had contacts with senior government officials and ministers, the attempt to begin talks still failed. All hopes were vested in a statement by the US Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, George Mitchell.[202] Mitchell was aware that the talks process was in difficulty and advised that the decommissioning by the paramilitary organisations be carried out in parallel with the involvement of political parties in the talks process.

Each political party that expressed the desire to join the negotiating process had first to agree to the resolution of the conflict through negotiation and peaceful means and all military groups had to give up their arms and renounce the use of force.

Sinn Féin objected to the proposals by Mitchell and asserted that the report prepared by him would strike a blow to the negotiating process. In February 1996 the IRA carried out a bomb attack in which two people died. The public, which had waited so long for the negotiating process to start, saw this step as unacceptable and representatives of the organisation STOP-96 began a campaign against Sinn Féin, organising protests in different parts of the country. In May 1996 elections to the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue were held with the following results: UUP, 24.17%; SDLP, 21.37%; DUP, 18.8%; Sinn Féin, 15.47%; Alliance Party, 6.54%; UK Unionist Party (UKUP), 3.69%; PUP, 3.47%; and UDP, 2.22%.[203] After its success at the elections, Sinn Féin strengthened its position among Catholic voters. The party had received a mandate that allowed the republican movement to be represented in the peace negotiations.

In 1997 elections took place in Britain and Ireland. In the elections in Northern Ireland in May, Sinn Féin increased its share of the vote to 16%, becoming the third largest party in the region and winning two seats. Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were elected as MPs to the British parliament. In the June elections in the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Féin also gained one seat in the Irish parliament. Having gained support from nationalist voters, Sinn Féin began to work to enhance its popularity; at the same time, it undertook a major drive to take advantage of the Irish lobby in America as a source of funds.[204]

A statement by British Prime Minister Tony Blair that normalising relations with Northern Ireland and increasing efforts to resolve the conflict was going to be one of the main priorities of his government provided an important boost to the negotiating process. As a first step, Blair signed a document ordering an independent inquiry into the deaths of 14 people who were shot by British soldiers in January 1972 in the event known as 'Bloody Sunday'. After this, having visited Northern Ireland, he declared that the union of Britain and Northern Ireland was not and would not be detrimental to the security of the latter. Following Blair's announcement, the political parties had the task of campaigning within their communities to facilitate cooperation between them, in accordance with what had been agreed. However, it was not possible to secure

201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit.
204 Ibid.

the participation of the nationalists without Sinn Féin, which had been prevented from joining the negotiating process. In July 1997 the IRA declared a renewal of its original ceasefire. The following month the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam accepted the IRA ceasefire as genuine and invited Sinn Féin to the multi-party talks at Stormont.

Over two decades considerable progress was made in achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict: the Northern Ireland Assembly resumed its functions, and today both nationalist and unionist parties are involved in its work. There are not many political events that have instilled hope of a better life in the people of Northern Ireland, but the first elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, set up as a consequence of the Good Friday Agreement, were hugely significant. The elections took place on 25 June 1998. Using the single transferable vote system and with a voter turnout of 69.88%, 108 Assembly members were elected. The seats were allocated as follows: UUP (under the leadership of David Trimble), 28 seats; SDLP (John Hume), 24 seats; DUP (Ian Paisley), 20 seats; Sinn Féin (Gerry Adams), 18 seats; Alliance Party (John Alderdice), six seats; UKUP (Robert McCartney), five seats; and others, seven seats.[205]

Civil society peace initiatives

Representatives of civil society, together with those in the religious community and political parties, played a fundamental role in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict and engaging communities in the peace process. The actions of civil society – helping to ease tensions and prevent violence, to re-establish relationships that previously existed and to initiate new ones – enabled them to maintain influence within the communities. Although the people sometimes supported their initiatives, the political parties and the Church to which they belonged rejected them. Nevertheless, there were certain outstanding individuals whose membership of one religious community or the other was not an issue for the people, who understood the significance of the projects they were initiating.

One civil society initiative that stands out is the Community for Peace People initiative. In Belfast, in 1976 three children were killed when they were hit by a car driven by an IRA fugitive; the car went out of control after the driver had been shot dead by British soldiers. The incident sparked major protests in Northern Ireland and led to confrontations between the police and members of the public. Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, seeking to put an end to these confrontations, organised a petition for peace after the incident, seizing the initiative to find a way out of the conflict. They founded an organisation called the Community for Peace People, which urged people to refrain from violence and aimed to promote peace between the Protestant and Catholic communities. They set up a number of centres where people could join the initiative and also established a rapid response system to incidents of violence in Northern Ireland. In addition, they proposed a 'friendly towns' initiative for areas inhabited by mixed communities. As a result of their efforts, Williams and Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 and went on to share their experiences with other conflict regions. Both Williams and Corrigan are active members of the organisation Peace Jam,[206] which was set up by Nobel Peace Prize laureates, and continue their peacebuilding activity through this organisation.

Another active organisation, the Corrymeela Community, which works in the area of inter-community relations, urged Christian centres to promote reconciliation between communities and the renunciation of armed conflict during the Troubles. Since the organisation's work brought together mainly pacifists, its initiatives were sharply criticised by nationalist groups. Its headquarters were in an area of Belfast where Catholic and Protestant communities lived in close proximity. People living in neighbouring estates, especially young people and older people, members of mixed families and former combatants, were able to use the Corrymeela premises.

205 C. McCartney (ed.) (1999). Op. cit.
206 Learn About PeaceJam: www.peacejam.org/about.aspx

This helped people to believe in the possibility of working together, to become accustomed to such exchanges and to stop being apprehensive about contacts between the communities.[207] One of Corrymeela's more challenging projects was to organise camps for young people from neighbouring areas at which they learnt about developing inter-community relations. It is also noteworthy that the activities of this organisation have always focused on establishing dialogue with the political parties and on encouraging them to enhance the peacebuilding potential of civil society.

It is well known that in any conflict – as problems intensify and incidents of violence increase – the media tends to use this information to engage in myth creation while reporting such incidents to society. Thus, during the Northern Ireland conflict, the media's daily news bulletins and coverage of both armed and unarmed clashes intensified aggressive attitudes in different parts of Northern Ireland. However, after the 1980s people began to tire of reports about the conflict, especially relating to violence on the streets. People needed a space where they could listen to each other's problems and try to find solutions to them. The most popular places for such exchanges were those provided by civil society. However, it was difficult to predict when the conflict would flare up again and militant forces would resort to violence. Members of civil society who had begun peacebuilding activities did not know what to do during these periods of uncertainty. There was a significant need for analysis by academics and experts, who could put forward alternative perspectives aimed at reducing tensions between the communities and resolving armed conflict on the basis of rhetoric and debate. In this respect, the contributions of the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster in Derry,[208] which worked mainly with the academic community, were of particular significance. The centre put together and published valuable materials analysing the history and nature of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Particular mention should be made of the role of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in its support for peace initiatives. This organisation, founded by local activists, did not set out with the aim of talking about the peace process, for fear that its activities might be associated with particular political institutions. Its main aim is to create an environment for the exchange of opinions between Catholic and Protestant communities. As is true for all conflicts, at the stage of armed confrontations and mutual accusations, any peacebuilding initiatives occur outside the sphere of press attention because the activities of civil society are not covered by the media.[209] The projects funded by this organisation are by and large aimed at establishing political dialogue and encouraging active participation in political processes in Northern Ireland by representatives of the parties, municipal bodies and civil society. It should be noted that this organisation has also been involved in the South Caucasus. In addition, it is implementing a YouthBank programme in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, working with the Eurasia Foundation as its local partner organisation.

An examination of the role of organisations that have been active in the period since the conflict reveals that they are all doing what they can to study and share their experiences of the past, regardless of whether these experiences are positive or negative. One such organisation is Healing Through Remembering. Originally set up by people who had lost relatives as a result of armed attacks and paramilitary violence, the organisation has become popular through its establishment of a collection of artefacts reminding people of the conflict. It has also developed a museum in which to display these objects. People from the Catholic and Protestant communities who contribute items that remind them of the conflict write down the memories they associate with the objects and also take part in the process of cataloguing and exhibiting them in different cities and countries. The organisation also has a storytelling project, which brings together people who have suffered due to the conflict and participated in its resolution. The project has played a major role in helping people to deal with the legacy of the past and in establishing new perspectives.[210]

207 History of Corrymeela: http://www.corrymeela.org/about/our-history
208 Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html
209 Community Foundation for Northern Ireland: http://www.communityfoundationni.org/About-Us
210 Healing Through Remembering: www.healingthroughremembering.org/

It should be noted that there have been hundreds of community organisations and movements implementing peacebuilding initiatives in Northern Ireland that have already fulfilled their purpose. Their contributions to seeking ways to resolve the conflict are indisputable. One example is the organisation Witness for Peace,[211] set up by clergyman Joe Parker, who lost his youngest son in a bomb attack in Belfast in 1972. In a short period he collected over 8,000 signatures in a petition for peace. In addition, the organisation arranged for the placing of crosses on the graves of people killed during the conflict and for a plaque to be erected in the centre of Belfast listing the names of all those who had been killed. Even though Parker soon left for Canada and the Church did not approve of his activities, his work engendered sympathy among the people, enhanced by the fact that he treated all graves in the same way, irrespective of whether they were Catholic or Protestant graves.

During the 1980s representatives of the Catholic and Protestant Churches took part together in the funerals of innocent people killed during the armed hostilities, demonstrating that the Church made no distinction regarding the political or religious affiliations of the deceased. Sometimes, the leaders and representatives of political parties tried to take advantage of this mediatory role played by church leaders. Representatives of religious groups found common ground more easily with the armed groups and political parties in their communities, and were able to convey their messages to politicians and government representatives.

Another civil society group that made an important contribution was Initiative '92, which held 'citizens' inquiries'. The group set up a commission, which operated between 1992 and 1993 and comprised authoritative figures from Britain and Ireland. This commission put forward for discussion possible proposals for resolving the conflict and alternative options for coexistence in the future.

Sometimes, civil society representatives sought broad public support in order to influence political processes. They put forward candidates for election and sought to take part in the negotiating process. For example, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition took part in the 1996 elections and secured 1% of the vote. In addition, dozens of civil society representatives took part in the Civic Forum for Northern Ireland, which aimed to enhance political dialogue in Northern Ireland, in accordance with the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. The Forum sought to strengthen links between civil society and the political parties, and quickly became the basis for effective partnership between them.

Another group worth mentioning is the Falls Community Council (FCC), which has been operating for over 35 years and which has experienced significant suffering and persecution. Largely supported by loyalists and generally working in loyalist communities, the organisation has nevertheless managed to engage representatives of the communities in the peace process, independent of the results of the political conflict-resolution process.[212] Its initiatives include collecting and archiving people's stories through audio and video footage. The organisation also protects the rights of women and minority groups, making sure that their voices are heard in the community, despite the influence of the Church in more conservative areas. The FCC's main objective is to develop confidence in economic cooperation and to tackle socio-economic issues, as well as encouraging society to recognise that the barriers that divided people have lost their meaning.[213]

The particular role played by the EU should also be mentioned – especially its support for the development and greater sustainability of civil society initiatives. Projects supported by the EU have helped in the development of positive relations and to enhance the efforts of civil society.

211 See R. Fairmichael (1987). *The Peace People Experience*, p. 6, available at www.innatenonviolence.org/pamphlets/peacepeople1.pdf
212 Falls Community Council: www.fallscouncil.com
213 See R. Fairmichael (1987). Op. cit.

Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis and debate around the Northern Ireland conflict provides an interesting example for conflicts elsewhere that have yet to be resolved. It is worth examining some of the achievements of Northern Ireland in resolving the conflict and highlighting some significant conclusions.

- A key role in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict was played by representatives from the Catholic and Protestant Churches who lived in close proximity to one another. It enabled relationships to be restored and a deepening of the conflict to be prevented. Given that religious differences are a fundamental element of life in Northern Ireland, they can have a major influence on social groups. This sort of cooperation could improve relations in other conflicts.
- The tendency among the people of Northern Ireland towards integration helped the people living there to resolve the conflict between them in a relatively short time, while expanding the potential of this integration. A strong tendency towards integration in European institutions meant that the processes of resolving the conflict and democratisation took place in parallel in Northern Ireland.
- The commitment of political institutions and their ability to use their potential in elections strengthened them and led to a transition in the conflict from armed hostilities and clashes on the streets to talks in which representatives of political parties and civil society were actively involved. Where political parties are not engaged in this process, they will not feel any responsibility and will continue to make accusations against the governments who are trying to find a solution to the conflict. In the Northern Ireland conflict, the political parties and society were transformed into participants of this process.
- At various stages in the conflict, paramilitary groups declared ceasefires and a rejection of armed struggle, making it possible for talks to be initiated with them. Paramilitary groups that were not part of this process were boycotted by the public.
- The participation in elections by the majority of leading forces seeking representation in the Northern Ireland Forum gave them greater legitimacy within society and allowed them to develop the skills necessary for engaging in a more stable political struggle.
- After the British government decided to initiate talks, public trust was enhanced by its decision to launch inquiries into cases of criminal or terrorist acts perpetrated by the sides in the conflict.
- The coherence and sustainability of the steps taken by the British and Irish governments to achieve peace led to greater mutual trust in Northern Ireland, which, in turn, enabled decisions to be made more quickly.
- Civil society initiatives to restore relations at both political and third-sector level led to the emergence of many new ideas and approaches, which were bolstered by US interest in the Northern Ireland conflict.
- The opportunity for members of the diaspora to return home and share their experiences had a major influence on improving relations between people in the larger towns and cities of Northern Ireland, especially Belfast.
- The establishment of study programmes on conflict analysis and debate by academic institutions quickly became a focus of attention. Universities and research centres also sought ways to end the conflict through their research and analysis.

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