

Duncan
(early)

Background notes on principles and possible ways forward.

1. Some allowance must be made for the murky and unsatisfactory past of all institutions in Northern Ireland.
2. The principles of the Agreement need to be absolutely clear and unambiguous
3. The only way to bridge the problem of ideals and the contradictions of the past is not through unrealistic jumps but is by a series of measurable movements towards improvement. These measures need to be published and accepted widely.
4. Philosophically, Unionists are being asked to accept (de facto) that the Northern Irish past, no matter how formally democratic in their eyes, was politically unsatisfactory and could only function by taking leave of democratic norms in practice. The Agreement is about accepting the changes necessary to correct this and begrudging them is self-defeating. Republicans and other paramilitaries are being asked to affirm (de facto) that the new post-Agreement state is legitimate and can demand the right to exercise the monopoly of violence subject to the measurable and real enactment of equal citizenship and human rights norms. If we wish to secure each other, these recognitions can no longer be fudged.

We therefore propose:

1. The strengthening of the core principles of the Agreement
 - a. The purpose of the Agreement is to achieve universal democratic norms within Northern Ireland.
 - b. The absolute necessity in Northern Ireland is to ensure that political decisions in Northern Ireland in the future are made without hint of domination.
 - c. The democratic state has the monopoly of violence in all democracies.
 - d. The state in Northern Ireland until the Agreement has not enjoyed a satisfactory basis in popular legitimacy. The Agreement has given it that necessary legitimacy.
 - e. Force of argument replaces the argument of force and all change must be measurably and universally in this direction.
2. The need for detailed and practical parallel steps towards these goals
 - a. Disarmament and the non-paramilitary society will not happen overnight. Nonetheless there is an absolute necessity that all those who have used or threatened violence indicate measurable steps towards the ideal goals by which the quality of their activity could be measured: eg the Paramilitaries announce that they will no longer use killing as a weapon.
 - b. Policing should be revolutionised through clear incremental steps by which progress can be measured and acknowledged.
 - c. Incremental steps towards the core democratic and human rights goals should be identified and agreed.

Draft proposals on the political impasse over devolution and decommissioning.

1. The parties to the Belfast Agreement (hereinafter 'the parties') recognise the widespread desire, within Northern Ireland, throughout Ireland and Britain and internationally, for an urgent end to the impasse over arms decommissioning and the formation of the Executive, as envisaged in the Agreement.
2. The parties believe that the purpose of the Belfast Agreement which received overwhelming popular support in the referenda of 22 May 1998, is the achievement of a democracy which conforms fully with universal democratic norms, through institutions which are appropriate to the specific historic and political conditions which pertain and have pertained in Northern Ireland.
3. Through the Agreement, the parties recognise the need for any resolution to avoid being perceived in partisan terms as victory or defeat.
4. The parties agree that democracy is the replacement of the argument of force by the force of argument within a community of political equals. This entails that no party should appear to threaten to resort to force and that no grounds for suspicion remains that formal democratic procedures are a vehicle for exclusion.
5. The parties agree that all political dialogue in a democracy must take place without a hint or threat of domination. The history of Northern Ireland is such that people in many quarters believe that attempts to dominate them have been endemic. In recognition of this context, all parties reaffirm their commitment to the principle of consent as contained within the Belfast Agreement. Furthermore, they recognise the consensual decision-making procedures as outlined in the Agreement as the sole legitimate mechanisms for making political decisions in Northern Ireland.
6. The parties agree that the Agreement and the subsequent referenda establish and define the sole legitimate structures of state within Northern Ireland and its relationships within the United Kingdom and within the island of Ireland and the mechanisms by which these structures may be changed.
7. The parties agree that in democratic societies, the state exercises the monopoly of legitimate force. It may only apply such force as is absolutely necessary consistent with international human rights norms. The structures and exercise of both criminal justice and policing must be consistent with both conditions. The parties further agree that the use of violence to any ends outside these norms contradicts the spirit and intent of the Agreement.
8. The parties agree that all parties must demonstrate in deed as well as word, their commitment to these principles outlined in the Agreement. The parties reaffirm their endorsement of the provisions of the Belfast Agreement addressing policing, criminal justice and decommissioning. Without prejudice to the independent commissions, the parties agree that future policing arrangements in Northern Ireland must make visible progress towards full conformity with the democratic principles outlined above and with the principles of the Agreement. In recognition of the historic context of Northern Ireland, the parties agree that the establishment of a policing service which enjoys the confidence of

all citizens is a universal interest. The parties further endorse a vision of policing which is routinely unarmed.

9. The parties agree that it is incumbent on all those who threaten or have threatened the use of violence at any level, progressively and measurably to improve the quality of their adherence to the norms of non-violence to the satisfaction of all. In this context, the parties seek forthwith a declaration from all paramilitary groups on ceasefire, that their ceasefires will now include a renunciation of killing for any purpose whatsoever. The parties look forward to the disarmament of all paramilitary groups.

10. The parties are confident that such a genuinely peaceful scenario can be fully achieved under the Agreement. In the interim, all the institutions of democratic government are also established. These include the Executive Committee, the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council.

11. The parties recognise that restraining progress on either decommissioning or devolution, treating one as a bargaining chip against the other, can only perpetuate a stalemate in which neither is achieved and which the parties are determined to end. Both objectives are mutually reinforcing elements in the vision of peace and democracy to which the people of Ireland, north and south, have given their consent.