

CRS Issue Brief

Northern Ireland: The Peace Process

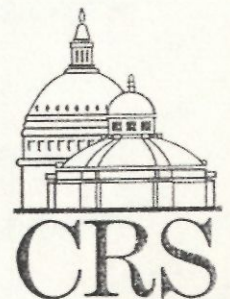
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Updated May 31, 1996

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LEGISLATION

On December 15, 1993, British Prime Minister Major and Irish Prime Minister Reynolds released a Joint Declaration which brought together in an international document a number of key principles regarding Northern Ireland. The British stated that they had no selfish, strategic, or economic interest in Northern Ireland. It was for the people of the island of Ireland alone, on the basis of consent in North and South, to decide on the future. The Irish also supported the principle of consent in the context of any change in Northern Ireland's status. The two leaders held out the option of participation for Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Provisional Irish

Republican Army (IRA), in multiparty negotiations on Northern Ireland's future, if Sinn Féin were to renounce violence.

The IRA announced a cease-fire on August 31, 1994, which was followed by a cease-fire announcement from the Protestant paramilitaries on October 13. The British and Irish Prime Ministers, John Major and John Bruton, launched a new initiative on November 22, 1995. The framework documents they presented are intended to serve as the basis for renewed multiparty talks about a durable political settlement. The proposals include a cross-border elected representatives, an end to constitutional claims to Northern Ireland, and a promise of separate referendums in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

On November 28, 1995, the two prime ministers launched the Twin Track Initiative and began preliminary political talks with Northern Ireland's political parties. An international panel studied how the paramilitaries could disarm. On January 24, 1996, the panel released its report, which stirred controversy.

The IRA ended its cease-fire on February 9, 1996, a large bomb exploded in London, killing two people and injuring one hundred. Since then, the IRA has planted five other bombs in London. On February 23, the British and Irish Prime Ministers announced that all-party negotiations would be convened on June 10. Elections to a non-executive forum, from which negotiating teams for the all-party talks will be selected, were held on May 30.

Many Members of Congress actively support the process of bringing peace to Northern Ireland. The United States provides aid to the region through the International Fund for Ireland.



Northern Ireland: The Peace Process

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of "the troubles" in 1969, over 3,100 deaths have resulted from political violence in Northern Ireland. The conflict reflects a struggle between different national, cultural, and religious identities. The Protestant majority (56%) defines itself as British and largely supports continued incorporation in the United Kingdom (unionists); the Catholic minority (42%) considers itself Irish and many Catholics desire a united Ireland (nationalists). Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and, since 1972, has been governed directly from London. Politicians from Northern Ireland have 17 seats in Britain's 651-member House of Commons. Local politicians have very circumscribed powers. The British and Irish governments have been seeking a formula which will facilitate a peaceful settlement. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 heralded an important political breakthrough by giving the Irish government a consultative voice in Northern Irish affairs. In 1991, the two governments facilitated a series of talks among the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, between those parties and the Republic of Ireland, and between Dublin and London. The talks broke down in November 1992.

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MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On May 30, elections were held for a 110-member peace forum, from which negotiators will be chosen for the all-party talks scheduled to begin on June 10. Final results showed that the UUP won 30 seats, the DUP, 24, the SDLP, 21, and Sinn Fein, 17; at 70%, voter turnout was unexpectedly high. On election day, President Clinton underscored "the need for the IRA to restore the cease-fire so that Sinn Fein can participate in the talks." On May 17, British Prime Minister Major wrote in *The Irish Times* that decommissioning paramilitary weapons should not block the all-party talks. President Clinton requested and the House Appropriations Committee recommended \$19.6 million for the International Fund for Ireland for FY1997.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom is at the heart of the conflict there. The ongoing peace process seeks ways to accommodate the competing identities of unionists (supporters of continued incorporation in the United Kingdom) and nationalists (supporters of a united Ireland). The British and Irish governments see it as their task to lead the search for a comprehensive political settlement capable of bringing lasting peace and stability. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 heralded a significant political breakthrough. It underscored the need to look at the conflict not just in the context of relationships within Northern Ireland, but also in the context of relations on the island of Ireland, and between Britain and Ireland. Unionists opposed the agreement, resenting any greater role for the Republic of Ireland in Northern Irish affairs. The political parties in Northern Ireland are key to bringing about any political settlement. They have consistently set the parameters of debate and established the limits of acceptable alternatives.

- The largest political party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), enjoys the support of most Protestants and favors the union with the United Kingdom. The UUP received 34.5% in the April 1992 general election in the United Kingdom, as compared to 37.5% in 1987. The UUP has nine representatives in the British House of Commons. The party leader is David Trimble.
- The smaller Protestant party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), favors the union with the United Kingdom. Less flexible than the UUP, it views virtually any compromise with Irish nationalists as a net loss for the unionists. The DUP received 13.1% of the vote in the 1992 election, as compared to 11.7% in 1987. The DUP holds three seats in the House of Commons. The party leader, the Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley, is a fiery, outspoken Unionist who heads the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster.
- Also on the unionist side is the Alliance Party, a non-sectarian, largely middle-class party which garners 50% of its support from Protestants and 40% from Catholics. It supports progressive political reform and favors power-sharing equally for Protestants and Catholics within the British state. The Alliance Party received 8.7% of the Northern Irish vote in 1992 U.K. election and has no seats in the House of Commons. The party's leader is Dr. John Alderdice.

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- The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) is the major Catholic party and supports a united Ireland achieved by consent. The SDLP grew out of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and is committed to reuniting Ireland through nonviolent means. The party received 23.5% of the Northern Irish vote in April 1992 in the U.K. general election, as compared to 21.1% in 1987. The SDLP has four representatives in the House of Commons. The party leader, John Hume, is a frequent visitor to Washington.
- Sinn Fein is the political wing of the outlawed Provisional Irish Republican Army. Historically, Sinn Fein (Gaelic for "ourselves alone") was the name of the Irish political party that seceded from the British parliament and formed a separate parliament at Dublin in 1919. The aim of the party is to establish a socialist republic in all 32 counties of Ireland; it voices strong opposition to the Roman Catholic Church and garners most support in heavily working class, Catholic neighborhoods. Sinn Fein received 10% of the Northern Irish vote in the 1992 general election and lost its one seat in the House of Commons to the SDLP. Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein, had never occupied the seat out of protest against British rule.

The Peace Process

Hume-Adams Discussions

In April 1993, SDLP leader John Hume and Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams made public ongoing, unprecedented discussions about a possible framework for achieving peace. This revelation came as a surprise to most and was interpreted by some as an attempt by Hume to bring Sinn Fein into the broader process of talks. In their joint statement of April 24, 1993, Hume and Adams agreed that "the exercise of self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland" and that "such a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on this island." On September 25, 1993, Hume and Adams announced that they were submitting a report to the Irish government on the progress of their talks, in which they agreed on a formula for peace in Northern Ireland. Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Reynolds subsequently discussed the outcome of the Hume-Adams dialogue with British Prime Minister Major. The plan was never made public.

Joint Declaration of December 15, 1993

On December 15, 1993, Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and British Prime Minister John Major announced their Joint Declaration at Downing Street. The Declaration is intended as a framework for a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement. It is largely a statement of principles, representing a codification in an international document of both governments' policies toward Northern Ireland. The two central principles of the Declaration are (1) the "self-determination" principle - a recognition by the British government of the Irish people's right to self-determination, and (2) the "consent" principle -- a recognition by the Irish government that this right can only be exercised with the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. Significantly, both leaders offered a message of reassurance in the document, with Major reaching out to the nationalist community and Reynolds to the unionists. The two governments also held out the possibility of

participation "in due course " in the talks process for Sinn Fein, if it were to commit itself to "exclusively peaceful methods." Major later said that exploratory talks with IRA supporters could begin within three months of a permanent cease-fire. Within Northern Ireland, the Declaration was accepted by the UUP, SDLP and the Alliance Party, and rejected by the DUP and Sinn Fein. It met with overwhelming support in the Republic of Ireland, Britain, and the United States.

IRA Cease-fire of August 31, 1994

Of the terrorist organizations active in Northern Ireland, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) is the most important in terms of its experience, resources, and propaganda skills. The Provisional IRA broke off from the Official IRA in 1970, after the Official IRA declared a cease-fire. Banned by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act of 1973 (EPA), the Provisional IRA is an illegal republican paramilitary organization. Members see themselves as freedom fighters, committed to forcing a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Between 1969 and February 1994, the IRA was responsible for the death of over 600 civilians. The Catholic Church has long condemned the IRA, but Church denunciations have done little to dampen the terrorists' belief in the justness of their cause. An estimated 300-400 guerrillas comprise the core of the IRA and most come from working-class families.

The hope of the Irish and British governments had been that the IRA would declare a permanent cessation of violence on the basis of the Joint Declaration, thus laying the foundation for the integration of Sinn Fein in the peace process. After seven months had passed, on August 31, the IRA declared an end to 25 years of armed struggle. The first paragraph of the IRA statement reads as follows: "Recognizing the potential of the current situation and in order to enhance the democratic process and underline our definitive commitment to its success, the leadership of the IRA have decided that as of midnight Wednesday August 31, there will be a complete cessation of military operations. All our units have been instructed accordingly." British Prime Minister Major said he was "greatly encouraged" by the statement, but sought clarity as to whether the IRA intended a "permanent renunciation of violence." A permanent end to violence is a precondition for Sinn Fein's participation in the talks process. The Irish and U.S. governments welcomed the cease-fire.

Protestant Paramilitaries' Cease-fire of October 13, 1994

The Ulster Defense Association (UDA) is the largest Protestant paramilitary group and has committed random murders of Catholics, as well as targeted killings of suspected IRA members. The UDA's military front organization is the Ulster Freedom Fighters; the UDA's primary ally is the much smaller Ulster Volunteer Force. Loyalist paramilitaries (more militant unionists who are willing to use physical force to achieve their goals) are neither as well-armed nor as well-trained as the IRA, but since 1992 they have been responsible for more fatalities than Catholic groups. In 1994, republican paramilitaries were responsible for 24 deaths; loyalist paramilitaries, for 36.

The initial loyalist response to the IRA cease-fire was hostile. Loyalists feared that the British government had made a secret deal with the IRA and was selling out unionist interests. The British immediately denied these charges. Loyalists responded positively to Prime Minister Major's promise of a referendum in Northern Ireland to decide on any changes in the status quo. Further, the loyalists were reassured when

Taoiseach Reynolds stated on September 18, 1994 that there would be no united Ireland for at least a generation and even then it would only come about as the result of a popular vote. On October 13, the Protestant paramilitaries announced a cease-fire. The duration of the cease-fire "will be completely dependent" on how long the IRA cease-fire lasts. The tone of the statement was conciliatory: "Let us firmly resolve to respect our differing views of freedom, culture and aspiration and never again permit our political circumstances to degenerate into bloody warfare."

Beyond the Cease-Fires: The British and Irish Governments Respond

In the wake of the cease-fire, the two governments took several steps to advance the peace process. On September 6, Taoiseach Reynolds met Gerry Adams in Dublin for the first time. To assuage Protestant fears, Reynolds announced on November 3 that, as part of an overall peace agreement, the Irish government intended to approve a constitutional amendment stipulating that there would be no change in the political status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority there. A week into the cease-fire, the British also eased their security presence in Northern Ireland: soldiers traded in their helmets for berets and the number of army patrols was reduced. On September 19, Prime Minister Major lifted a broadcast ban on Sinn Fein and promised a referendum in Northern Ireland on any negotiated political settlement.

A New Irish Government. Taoiseach Reynold's governing coalition collapsed on November 16 due to a controversial judicial appointment and he was forced to resign. A new government was formed on December 15 consisting of a coalition of the center-right Fine Gael party, the Labour party, and the radical Democratic Left. John Bruton of Fine Gael became prime minister; Dick Spring of the Labour Party continued as foreign minister. Bruton announced that his top priority would be the peace process. The Bruton government granted early release to nine IRA prisoners shortly before Christmas 1994; to five additional IRA prisoners on February 3, 1995; and to another seven prisoners on April 11. On February 7, Ireland's parliament lifted a 55-year-old anti-terrorism state of emergency, a move sponsored by the Taoiseach.

Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The only operational aspect of the Joint Declaration was the Irish government's proposal for the creation of a "Forum for Peace and Reconciliation." The Irish conceived of the Forum as a way to engage Sinn Fein in a political dialogue shortly after a cease-fire announcement and as a bridge to negotiations involving the British who were willing to negotiate with Sinn Fein only after three months of peace. The Forum convened for the first time on October 28, 1994. The political parties in the Republic of Ireland, as well as the nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, the SDLP and Sinn Fein, participate in the Forum. The major unionist parties, the UUP and the DUP, declined the invitation. The Alliance Party is the only unionist party involved in the Forum. With 35 members, Sinn Fein has three seats in the Forum; the SDLP, five; Alliance, two; and the remaining seats are divided among the political parties of the Republic of Ireland. Supporters of the Forum deem it a crucial means of integrating Sinn Fein in the democratic political process; critics call it a "pan-nationalist front." Issues for discussion in the Forum include security, policing, the administration of justice, political structures, and North/South cooperation. The Forum issued a report on February 2, 1996 which received the backing of all Irish political parties except Sinn Fein, which objected to the report's endorsement of the principle of majority consent for any future Northern Ireland

settlement. Following the breakdown of the IRA's cease-fire on February 9, 1996 and Dublin's ban on ministerial contact with Sinn Fein, Forum meetings were suspended.

The British Government's "Exploratory Dialogue." Many view the participation in the talks process of the two extremes, republican and loyalist, as vital to the success of any negotiated settlement. The British stated that negotiations with Sinn Fein would begin only after a permanent cease-fire had been in place for three months. On October 21, 1994, British Prime Minister Major declared that the British government was ready to "convene exploratory talks before this year is out." He further announced the opening of all border crossings between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; the lifting of exclusion orders on Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams and vice president Martin McGuinness, which had prevented them from travelling to Britain; and the convening of a large investment conference in Belfast in December. On February 17, 1995, the Major government lifted 10 additional exclusion orders; on March 8, another 16. About 40 exclusion orders remain in force.

On December 9, 1994, Sinn Fein met with British civil servants in Belfast for the first official meeting between the two sides since Ireland was partitioned in the 1920s. The session, which took place on the 100th day of the IRA cease-fire, was billed as an "exploratory dialogue" by the British government to discuss the possibility of Sinn Fein's participation in all-party talks. Ian Paisley, the outspoken leader of the Democratic Unionists, denounced this dialogue, saying the decision to talk to "the men of blood" was "highly resented by a vast majority of people" in Northern Ireland. The British began exploratory talks with loyalist political representatives on December 15.

Framework Documents of February 22, 1995

On February 22, 1995, British Prime Minister Major and Taoiseach Bruton released their Joint Framework Document, intended to serve as a basis for multi-party talks. *A New Framework for Agreement* -- the joint, London-Dublin component includes proposals covering relations on the island of Ireland, and between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. The British government simultaneously released *A Framework for Accountable Government in Northern Ireland* -- its devolution proposals to bring about an internal settlement. The two leaders have stressed that the framework documents are not a *blueprint* prescribed by the two governments for a durable political settlement in Northern Ireland, but rather represent strictly *proposals* for peace. The key proposals in the two framework documents include the following:

- A 90-member Northern Ireland Assembly to be elected by proportional representation with executive and legislative responsibilities.
- An all-Ireland body of elected representatives of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Irish Parliament with executive, consultative and harmonizing powers designated by the British and Irish governments.
- An end to the Irish constitutional claim to Northern Ireland.
- Increased cooperation between London and Dublin through a standing inter-governmental conference.
- Changes in British law to incorporate the principle of consent for the people of Northern Ireland with regard to their political future.
- A bill of rights for all living in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- Separate referendums in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The joint document strives for balance, giving equal weight to unionist and nationalist concerns, but it does embody the perspective that the problems of Northern Ireland can only be addressed by bringing the two parts of Ireland closer together. Unionists have been extremely sensitive to what they perceive as the nationalist tenor of the document, pointing to the many references to "the island of Ireland," among other things. The proposal to create cross-border institutions with executive powers has drawn the strongest negative reaction from unionists. UUP leader James Molyneaux, whose party has nine pivotal votes in the House of Commons, has stated his firm opposition to the creation of such all-Ireland bodies. Reportedly, unionists fear that a North-South institution will be a vehicle through which sovereignty, gradually but progressively, will be transferred to Dublin. Another UUP politician vehemently denounced the document, terming it "a dishonourable blueprint for an united Ireland." Prime Minister Major has tried to reassure unionists, stressing that there is "a triple safeguard against any proposals being imposed on Northern Ireland." This triple safeguard refers to the fact that any political settlement must receive the consent of Northern Ireland's political parties, the people of Northern Ireland, and the U.K. parliament. Both the Democratic Unionists and the Ulster Unionists have published their own proposals for a political settlement, a fact which many see as evidence of the pressure on them to participate in discussions. Notably, the political groups linked to loyalist paramilitaries have reacted pragmatically, welcoming anything to promote dialogue. On the nationalist side, the SDLP's John Hume and Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams praised the document. President Clinton and several Members of Congress also expressed support.

Beyond the Framework Documents

Security Situation. On March 14, 1995, the British announced the withdrawal of 400 of their 18,000 soldiers, the largest reduction of British troops in Northern Ireland in a decade. Ten days later, Britain ended all routine army patrols in Belfast for the first time in 25 years. The British had announced the end of day-time patrols in January and thus the March 24 announcement signalled the end of night-time patrols. On April 12, Britain announced a second reduction of 400 troops. On June 13, the British dismantled the first military border checkpoint since the cease-fires. These unilateral British steps represented both a response to the reduced security threat in Northern Ireland and an attempt to encourage the IRA to begin disarming.

On May 31, Prince Charles made a two-day visit to the Republic of Ireland, the first official visit by a member of the British royal family since Ireland won independence in the early 1920s. Prime Minister Major's May 3 visit to predominantly catholic Londonderry/Derry in Northern Ireland sparked violent clashes between Sinn Fein supporters and police. Riots erupted in Northern Ireland on July 3 following the early release of a British soldier, Lee Clegg, jailed for the 1990 killing of a teenager in Northern Ireland who was in a car that ran a security checkpoint. Observers claimed that Sinn Fein orchestrated the violence in order to put pressure on British Prime Minister Major to release IRA prisoners and to include Sinn Fein in all-party talks. Violence flared again when Protestants marched on July 12 to commemorate the Battle of the Boyne when Protestant King William of Orange defeated Catholic King James II in 1690. Sinn Fein held demonstrations in Belfast in late July.

Britain announced on August 4 that it was withdrawing a controversial paratroop regiment from Northern Ireland. The so-called "paras" have been hated by nationalists since 1972 when soldiers from that regiment shot 13 civilians in Londonderry/Derry on

what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday." The above-mentioned Lee Clegg was also a paratrooper. The "paras" will be replaced by a non-parachute regiment. On November 3, the British government announced the withdrawal of 600 more troops from Northern Ireland, leaving roughly 16,750 British troops there.

A key demand of the paramilitary groups has been the early release of IRA and loyalist prisoners in British and Irish jails. Since the IRA cease-fire, the Irish government has released a total of 36 prisoners from jail early. British policy had been to oppose any such early release. Patrick Mayhew, Britain's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, announced a policy change on August 25, 1995: prisoners convicted of terrorist crimes with terms of more than five years but less than life would be eligible for parole after serving half of their sentence rather than two-thirds. Thus, on November 17, Britain announced it would free 84 prisoners, equally divided between Catholics and Protestants; a total of 470 prisoners will be released within four years.

Britain's Ministerial-Level Dialogue with Sinn Fein. British officials said that their "exploratory dialogue" with the paramilitary groups could be stepped up to the ministerial level only if Sinn Fein and its loyalist counterparts evidence a readiness "to engage in a constructive discussion of the decommissioning of arms, and to join in an exploration of the ways by which this can be most effectively achieved." On March 22, 1995, a British government minister met for the first time with political representatives of loyalist paramilitaries from the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party, after receiving such assurances. After the meeting, the loyalists suggested to the press that they were not prepared to begin disarming before the IRA.

The Northern Ireland Minister, Michael Ancram, met with Sinn Fein representatives on May 10, 1995, the first official ministerial meeting between the two sides in 23 years (in 1972, secret negotiations were held in London between a senior cabinet member and an IRA delegation). The fundamental issue for the British remains the willingness of Sinn Fein to turn over at least some of its weapons. Sinn Fein repeated its call for equal treatment with the other parties, regardless of whether the IRA decommissions any arms. Prime Minister Major has said that Sinn Fein would be invited to multi-party talks, only once it has made "a commitment to progressive disarmament" and has begun "a verifiable process of decommissioning." Great resistance exists in the republican movement to any "surrender" of weapons. Ian Paisley, the DUP's leader, has characterized the ministerial meeting with Sinn Fein as "the latest item in the catalogue of capitulation" by the British government.

Northern Ireland Secretary Mayhew met Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, for informal talks on May 24 in Washington, where both men were attending the White House Trade and Investment Conference on Ireland. The half-hour meeting was the highest-level contact between Sinn Fein and the British government since the IRA's cease-fire, and proved to be the first of several meetings between the two men. Reportedly, Mayhew read a prepared statement to Adams calling on Sinn Fein to use its influence to bring about the decommissioning of IRA weapons. The leaders of the two largest unionist parties in Northern Ireland, James Molyneaux and Ian Paisley, decided not to attend the Washington conference after the announcement that Mayhew and Adams would meet. Other unionist party officials did attend, however.

Unionist Leadership Change. A new factor in the peace equation is David Trimble who was unexpectedly elected on September 8, 1995 as the new head of the UUP, the

largest Protestant party in Northern Ireland. Trimble, 50 years old, has been a Member of Parliament for five years. He replaces James Molyneaux who was accused by some of being too willing to compromise with nationalists and too soft-spoken. In contrast, Trimble is among the UUP's bitterest critics of Sinn Fein and of a peace process he fears may result in a British sellout of Northern Ireland. He has called for the British government to set a date for local elections to a Northern Ireland Assembly. However, Trimble travelled to Dublin for a meeting with John Bruton on October 2, representing the first time a unionist leader has met with an Irish Prime Minister in almost 30 years. (Representatives of the loyalist paramilitaries from the Ulster Democratic Party and Progressive Unionist Party met with Taoiseach Bruton for the first time on September 19, 1995.) Trimble led a UUP delegation to Dublin on March 11, 1996, for a full-scale meeting with Taoiseach Bruton and top Irish officials.

The Twin Track Initiative of November 28, 1995

The paramilitaries' arsenals have been an impediment to progress on setting up multi-party talks on Northern Ireland's future. Reportedly, the IRA has over 100 tons of armaments, including mortars, semiautomatic weapons, and Semtex high explosives. For months, the British government and unionist politicians insisted that the IRA had to begin decommissioning arms before all-party talks could begin. The Irish deemed this position unrealistic. Sinn Fein believes that any surrender of arms must come in the context of an overall settlement and be linked to a withdrawal of British troops. In early March 1995, the Irish government and the Ulster Unionists separately proposed that an international commission supervise disarming of the paramilitaries. On July 14, Taoiseach Bruton, Foreign Minister Spring, Gerry Adams and the SDLP's John Hume issued a statement calling for "inclusive, all-party talks" as soon as possible, with weapons decommissioning as an objective of peace talks, rather than a precondition. Unionist leaders rejected the proposal as a "complete non-starter."

Almost three months after an aborted summit meeting to move the peace process forward, British Prime Minister Major and Taoiseach Bruton met on November 28, 1995 to announce their Twin Track Initiative. The approach included having the two governments begin preliminary talks with Northern Ireland's political parties, while simultaneously establishing an international panel to deal with the issue of decommissioning paramilitary weapons. For the first time, the two Prime Ministers set a target date of the end of February 1996 for the beginning of all-party negotiations.

The Irish government had cancelled the September summit, reportedly, because Sinn Fein had objected absolutely to the idea of a disarmament commission, arguing it was a trap to force the IRA to "surrender" its weapons as a precondition to talks. Sinn Fein had also insisted upon a "fixed," rather than a "target" date for the commencement of all-party talks. However, it would appear that President Clinton's trip to the region put pressure on all sides to agree on a workable compromise. The two Prime Ministers announced their initiative the evening President Clinton left Washington for London. The President called the Twin Track Initiative "a brilliant formulation."

On one track, the two governments agreed to invite all parties to "intensive preparatory talks...on the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda to bring all parties together for substantive negotiations aimed at a political settlement based on consent." The two governments were willing to meet with the parties individually or

collectively, and issued invitations to preparatory talks on December 1, 1995. The DUP's leader, Ian Paisley, quickly rejected the invitation.

On the other track, an international advisory panel studied how the weapons of the paramilitary groups could be disposed of. The panel consisted of a chairman, former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, who serves as President Clinton's Special Adviser for Economic Initiatives in Ireland; Finland's former Conservative Prime Minister Harri Holkeri; and Canada's top military officer, General John de Chastelain. The panel was asked to "identify and advise on a suitable and acceptable method for full and verifiable decommissioning" and "report whether there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve that." Its findings, released on January 24, 1996, are "advisory," meaning that "neither Government, nor any party cooperating with the work of the Body, is bound in advance to accept" them.

Mitchell Commission Report. The report of the International Body on Decommissioning contains five substantial sections. First, the authors argued that to "reach an agreed political settlement and to take the gun out of Irish politics, there must be commitment and adherence to fundamental principles of democracy and non-violence." They recommended that parties to any talks affirm their commitment to "democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues," to total disarmament, and to urging that "punishment" killings and beatings end. Second, in discussing the level of commitment among the parties to decommissioning, the report points out differences of opinion on when decommissioning should take place, and concludes that the paramilitary groups will not decommission any arms prior to all-party negotiations. Third, the report recommends "an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge." Fourth, the report offers guidelines on the modalities of decommissioning; the decommissioning process should "take place to the satisfaction of an independent commission," lead to "the complete destruction of armaments," be fully verifiable, and "not expose individuals to prosecution." Finally, the report comments on possible confidence-building steps. One such step is electing an assembly for Northern Ireland, a unionist proposal. The three-man commission responded to that idea as follows: "If it were broadly acceptable, with an appropriate mandate, and within the three-stranded structure, an elective process could contribute to the building of confidence."

The report sparked an emotional response. British Prime Minister Major addressed the House of Commons on January 24 and argued that, "in light of the Mitchell report, there are two ways in which all-party negotiations can now be taken forward." Either the paramilitaries could begin decommissioning their weapons before all-party negotiations (not a probable outcome according to the report) or a democratic mandate for such negotiations could be secured through elections. Major later stressed that an elected forum would have no administrative or executive role, and that elections would lead "directly and speedily" to all-party negotiations. The British government deems the commission's proposal to decommission paramilitary arms in stages during all-party negotiations unworkable. Unionist politicians cheered the seemingly uncompromising British response. The UUP, which had originally proposed the assembly concept, has said it would be prepared to negotiate with nationalists in an elected body even if the IRA continued to refuse to disarm.

The Irish government warmly welcomed the Mitchell report, while expressing deep concern over the British response. Sinn Fein hailed the report's rejection of decommissioning prior to negotiations as a vindication of its demand for unconditional all-party talks. Both Sinn Fein and the moderate SDLP angrily rejected Britain's election counterproposal. Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams said that Major "is quite clearly acting in bad faith by swapping one precondition to all-party talks for another." The SDLP's John Hume accused Prime Minister Major of "buying" unionist votes in the House of Commons to buttress his dwindling parliamentary majority. President Clinton backed the report's proposals, as did many Members of Congress. The Congressional Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs criticized Britain's idea of an elected assembly, calling it "a red herring to deflect attention from the Mitchell Report."

In a bid to break the deadlock, the Irish government proposed in early February that, with the British government, it convene a two-day meeting to bring together all parties in a single place. The meeting would allow for "proximity talks," fashioned after the Dayton Talks which brought about a breakthrough in the Yugoslav conflict. The parties would assemble under the same roof, but not in the same room. The focus of the meeting would be (1) the Mitchell report; (2) "the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda of all-party negotiations;" and (3) the issue of how elections could facilitate such negotiations. British officials described the proposal as "premature."

End of the IRA Cease-fire (February 9, 1996)

On February 9, 1996 at 6 p.m., the IRA announced an end to its cease-fire; an hour later a large bomb exploded in London, killing two people and injuring one hundred. The IRA claimed responsibility. According to a statement, the IRA resumed military operations "with great reluctance," blaming the Major government and unionist politicians for "squandering" the opportunity for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. On February 15, British police destroyed a bomb that had been planted by the IRA in central London; another IRA bomb exploded on a London bus on February 18, killing one. These IRA actions shook the peace process profoundly. The British and Irish governments broke off ministerial contacts with Sinn Fein following the first bombing. The bombings have raised questions about how much authority Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams retains over the IRA. Several hundred British troops were flown back to Northern Ireland and security measures were stepped up. On February 25, tens of thousands protested IRA violence in rallies throughout the island of Ireland. On March 9 and again on April 17, small IRA bombs exploded in London, but no one was injured. On April 24, two enormous IRA bombs failed to detonate under a major London bridge. According to police, the bombs contained one of the largest amounts of explosive material planted in England by the IRA. President Clinton has called on the IRA to restore the cease-fire immediately. The Protestant paramilitaries' truce appears to be holding.

Anglo-Irish Communique of February 28, 1996

Prime Ministers Major and Bruton announced a new initiative on February 28, 1996. The two leaders announced that "proximity talks" among the Northern Ireland parties would begin on March 4 and end on March 13, and focus on three issues. First, the parties should agree on "a broadly acceptable elective process leading directly and without pre-conditions to all-party negotiations on June 10, 1996." Second, the parties should agree on "the basis, participation, structure, format and agenda of substantive

all-party negotiations." Third, the parties should decide whether referenda relating to a repudiation of violence and all-party negotiations ought to be held in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The two governments agreed that Sinn Fein could only participate in this process once the IRA cease-fire had been restored. The two leaders hoped the fact that, for the first time, they had set a date for all-party negotiations would provide sufficient incentive for the IRA to reinstate its cease-fire.

Intensive Consultations. On March 4, 1996, the planned "proximity talks" began inauspiciously. Gerry Adams led a 10-member Sinn Fein delegation to the meeting, but was turned away at the gates because no IRA cease-fire was in place. The major unionist parties, the UUP and DUP, boycotted the meeting because they saw Irish Foreign Minister Spring's presence as an attempt to extend Dublin's influence in the north. The talks ended on March 13. The parties could not agree on what form elections should take and thus Prime Minister Major confirmed that he would submit his own proposal for parliamentary approval.

Elections in Northern Ireland. Elections were held on May 30. Five members of the peace forum were elected from each of Northern Ireland's 18 constituencies on a proportional representation basis. The remaining 20 members were picked on an intentionally non-proportional basis, with two seats going to each of the top ten vote-getting parties. Thus, seats for the smaller parties, in particular the political wings of the Protestant paramilitary groups, were virtually guaranteed. The parties in the resulting 110-member forum will select teams to participate in all-party talks to negotiate a new political settlement. Britain has stated that the forum will have no executive powers and will cease to exist when talks end. The Irish and U.S. governments backed the election proposal. Twenty-four parties fielding close to 1,000 candidates contested the election. On election day, President Clinton underscored "the need for the IRA to restore the cease-fire so that Sinn Fein can participate in the talks." Final results showed that the UUP won 30 seats, the DUP, 24, the SDLP, 21, and Sinn Fein, 17; at 70%, voter turnout was unexpectedly high. Sinn Fein's 15% share of the vote was its highest ever.

All-Party Negotiations. London and Dublin agree that Sinn Fein will only be able to participate in the all-party talks, scheduled to begin on June 10, if the IRA reinstates its cease-fire. British Prime Minister Major wrote in *The Irish Times* on May 16 that the surrender of IRA arms, a particularly sensitive issue, should not be allowed to block progress in the all-party talks. The British government appears to have accepted the recommendation of the Mitchell commission that the talks and arms decommissioning proceed simultaneously; previously British officials, like unionist politicians, had insisted that decommissioning precede all-party talks. Unionist politicians have reacted with anger to what they see as British "backsliding" on this issue. The UUP, whose nine seats in the British parliament shore up Major's one-seat majority, has threatened to oppose the government. The more hardline DUP has said it will not participate in talks if Sinn Fein is present. The Irish government says that the parties should only be required to "consider" ways to achieve decommissioning during the talks. Depending on what compromise is reached on decommissioning between the two governments, the UUP may also decide to boycott the talks. On May 20, Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's leader, said that, if Sinn Fein is permitted to participate in the all-party talks, it would formally agree to principles of non-violence contained in the Mitchell commission's report. On May 31, he added that Sinn Fein would accept the outcome of all-party talks even if they failed to deliver the goal of a united Ireland.

The talks will be arranged in three strands; the underlying principle is that "nothing will be finally agreed in any strand until everything is agreed in the negotiations as a whole." In the first strand, the political parties in Northern Ireland and the British government will discuss future governing arrangements for Northern Ireland. In the second strand, the political parties, the British and Irish governments will discuss relations between the two parts of Ireland. In strand three, the two governments will examine implications for their relations of any settlements agreed upon in the other strands. Both London and Dublin appear to support the idea of former Senator Mitchell serving as chairman of a separate decommissioning strand of talks, but Dublin would like Mitchell to play a larger role, overseeing the plenary session and strand two of the talks.

Issues For The United States

Many Members of Congress actively support the peace process and legislation has been introduced which addresses the economic and political situation. The Clinton Administration has focussed more attention on Northern Ireland than its predecessors.

Visits of Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams

Prior to landing in New York on January 31, 1994, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams had been refused a visa to visit the United States eight times on the grounds that he was involved in terrorist activity. The White House, in granting the visa, contravened the recommendations of the State Department and the CIA. The British government was also upset by the decision. Barred from fund-raising during his visit, Adams was limited to a 48-hour stay within a 25-mile radius of New York. Two factors appear to have affected President Clinton's decision to grant the visa. First, significant support existed in Congress. Senators Edward Kennedy and Daniel Patrick Moynihan were joined by 38 other Members in urging Clinton to grant Adams a visa. Second, the President felt Adams' visit to the United States might "advance the cause of peace."

In September, following the IRA cease-fire, the Clinton Administration granted Adams a second visa over State Department objections. The Sinn Fein leader arrived on September 24 for a nine-city tour. On October 3, Vice President Gore phoned Adams to notify him that the Administration was lifting a 25-year-old ban on official contacts with Sinn Fein; Adams was received at the State Department. Adams returned to Washington for his first White House visit, a meeting with National Security Adviser Tony Lake, on December 6, 1994. In March 1995, the Clinton Administration, for the first time, allowed him to raise funds for Sinn Fein. Many Members of Congress, as well as the Irish government, supported this decision. Reportedly, British Prime Minister Major was irritated by the fundraising decision in light of what the British saw as Sinn Fein intransigence on decommissioning IRA weapons. Adams was invited to the St. Patrick's Day reception at the White House on March 17, as were unionist politicians. However, in light of Adams' attendance, the main unionist politicians declined the invitation; Gary McMichael, leader of the Ulster Democratic Party, a political wing of the loyalist paramilitary groups, was the only unionist to attend. During his three-week U.S. visit, Adams claims to have raised \$600,000. He also opened a Sinn Fein office in Washington. Adams came to Washington to meet with Administration officials and Members of Congress in mid-September 1995; his next visit, in early February 1996, included a brief discussion with President Clinton.

Despite the end of the IRA cease-fire, Gerry Adams was granted a visa on March 1, 1996 and he undertook a St. Patrick's Day tour of New York City, Washington, and Scranton, Pennsylvania. Adams said he would not raise money during that visit, and the Clinton Administration announced that he would have no meetings at the White House (nor would he attend the Saint Patrick's Day party there) or other government departments. Many Members of Congress supported the visa issuance, but Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole criticized the decision in the absence of a cease-fire.

Visits of Unionist Leaders

On November 1, 1995, David Trimble, the newly elected head of the largest unionist party in Northern Ireland, became the first UUP leader to meet a U.S. President officially. Trimble said that he stressed to President Clinton the importance unionists attach to the issue of decommissioning IRA weapons. The UUP opened an office in Washington reportedly in an attempt to ensure that unionist perspectives are heard by U.S. politicians who unionists tend to see as biased in favor of nationalist views. Ian Paisley, head of the smaller Democratic Unionist Party, met with National Security Adviser Lake and Vice President Gore on October 27. David Trimble returned to the White House on February 12, 1996, following the London bombing, and urged President Clinton to cut off visas and fundraising for Sinn Fein. Trimble attended the annual Saint Patrick's Party on March 15 at the White House; his attendance stood in contrast to Gerry Adams' exclusion. Ian Paisley met with Tony Lake again on March 21; President Clinton dropped by the meeting. Reportedly, Paisley stated that the United States had no business interfering in Northern Ireland's internal affairs.

President Clinton's Visit to Northern Ireland

Bill Clinton became the first serving U.S. president to visit Northern Ireland on November 30. The President was greeted by huge, enthusiastic crowds in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. His itinerary and speeches showed careful balance, and the visit was widely interpreted as having provided a valuable boost to the peace process.

U.S. Private Investment

The United States is an important source of investment for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; that investment and the job creation which results are seen as critical to tackling Northern Ireland's high unemployment. On January 10, 1995, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell became Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State for Economic Initiatives in Ireland. He oversaw the White House conference on trade and investment in Ireland which took place from May 24-26 in Washington. Over 1000 people registered for the conference, including roughly 300 U.S. businessmen. President Clinton addressed the conference on May 25. On November 30, 1995, former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown announced a \$918 million investment by CableTel in Northern Ireland to build a fiber optic communications network; CableTel plans to create 800 jobs.

International Fund for Ireland

Successive U.S. Administrations and the U.S. Congress have seen economic development as key to fostering peace in Northern Ireland. Support for the paramilitaries is strongest in the communities suffering the highest level of

unemployment and economic deprivation; thus, many see the creation of jobs and economic opportunity as on par with working out a political solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Critics of U.S. assistance to the region argue that the European Union, not the United States, is the appropriate source of aid and further that private investment, rather than aid, is central to job creation. Supporters of the aid program, including many Members of Congress, see aid and investment as complementary, with aid often serving as a catalyst for investment.

The International Fund for Ireland is the conduit through which the United States provides assistance to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It was created in September 1986 by the British and Irish governments, based on objectives stated in the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. The Fund supports economic and social development projects in the areas most affected by the civil unrest in the North, with roughly 75% of the Fund's resources spent in Northern Ireland and the remainder in border areas of the Republic. Of the money allocated for Northern Ireland, roughly 70% is spent in the most disadvantaged areas. Many of the Fund's projects are focussed on areas suffering from high unemployment, outward migration of young people, lack of facilities, and little private sector investment. The IFI provides seed funding to stimulate private and public sector investment in those areas. The Fund also seeks to "encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland." The IFI has assisted about 3,100 projects in the areas of tourism, urban development, agriculture and rural development, technology, business and community development. As of September 1994, IFI investment was responsible for the creation of 16,645 direct jobs and a further 7,142 indirect and construction jobs.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement Support Act of September 19, 1986 (P.L. 99-415) authorized U.S. contributions to the Fund. The United States is a major donor, and has requested that its contribution be used primarily to stimulate private sector investment and job creation. President Clinton requested and, on May 29, 1996, the House Appropriations Committee recommended \$19.6 million for the International Fund for Ireland for FY1997. In the report (104-600) accompanying the Foreign Operations bill (H.R. 3540), the Committee "strongly urges" the IFI "to take every step possible to ensure that all recipients of Fund support are promoting equality of opportunity and non-discrimination in employment."

TABLE 1. U.S. Contributions to the IFI
(in millions of dollars)

| | | | |
|--------|------|--------|--------|
| FY1986 | \$50 | FY1991 | \$20 |
| FY1987 | \$35 | FY1992 | \$19.7 |
| FY1988 | \$35 | FY1993 | \$19.7 |
| FY1989 | \$10 | FY1994 | \$19.6 |
| FY1990 | \$20 | FY1995 | \$19.6 |
| | | FY1996 | \$19.6 |

Other IFI donors include the European Union (EU), Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Since 1989, the EU has contributed ECU15 million (\$18.3 million) a year. In light of the peace process, the EU decided, in the fall of 1994, to increase its annual

contribution to ECU20 million (\$24.4 million) for the following three years. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland receive additional, substantial EU aid through, among other things, the EU's structural funds for economically depressed regions. Canada, New Zealand, and Australia have made much smaller contributions to the IFI.

Fair Employment and the MacBride Principles

The House International Relations Committee held hearings on Northern Ireland on March 15, 1995; much of the testimony was related to the issue of fair employment. All major social and economic indicators show that Catholics in Northern Ireland are more disadvantaged than Protestants. The most persistent area of inequality has been employment. Catholics experience rates of unemployment over twice as high as Protestants and Catholics are more likely than Protestants to experience long-term unemployment. The British government sees inward investment and the creation of employment opportunities, linked to its fair employment legislation, as the best antidote to Catholic unemployment. Others believe implementation of the MacBride Principles would provide an important remedy.

The MacBride Principles are nine equal opportunity/affirmative action principles, intended to promote employment options for members of underrepresented religious groups in Northern Ireland. Among other things, the Principles call for provocative religious or political emblems to be banned from the workplace; for all job openings to be publicly advertised with special recruitment efforts to attract applicants from underrepresented groups; and for adequate security at the workplace. The Principles were introduced in November 1984; since early 1985, U.S. firms with plants in Northern Ireland have been under pressure to adopt them.

Supporters of the Principles have led a campaign to have MacBride legislation enacted in the United States at the Federal, State and city level. Some sixteen States and over 30 cities have adopted legislation on the MacBride Principles. No U.S. company operating in Northern Ireland has adopted the Principles. Instead, about 25 U.S. companies have come to an agreement with the New York City Comptroller's office, whereby they will "make lawful efforts to implement the fair employment standards embodied in the MacBride Principles." Roughly 50 U.S. companies employ over 9,000 people (9% of the total manufacturing workforce) in Northern Ireland.

The U.K. government strongly opposes the MacBride Principles and argues that the MacBride campaign has harmed the Northern Irish economy by driving away foreign investment so critical to creating new jobs. The Irish government sees nothing objectionable in the principles, but withholds comment on the campaign. Sinn Fein is the only party in Northern Ireland which unequivocally supports both the principles and the campaign. The Clinton Administration believes the principles are "highly commendable," but has expressed concern about whether their implementation might discourage investment (for more, see *Northern Ireland: Fair Employment and the MacBride Principles*, by Karen Donfried, CRS Report 96-354F, April 18, 1996).

LEGISLATION

H.R. 244 (Engel)

Requires certain entities receiving U.S. funds from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) to comply with the MacBride Principles. Introduced January 4, 1995.

H.R. 245 (Engel)

Concerns paramilitary groups and British security forces in Northern Ireland. Introduced January 4, 1995.

H.R. 470 (Gilman)

Provides for adherence with the MacBride Principles by United States persons doing business in Northern Ireland. Introduced January 11, 1995.

H.R. 1561 (Gilman)/Conference Report 104-478

Authorizes appropriations for foreign assistance programs, including \$19,600,000 for FY1996 and FY1997 for the IFI. Conditions receipt of U.S. funds from IFI on compliance with "principles of economic justice." Conference Report filed March 8, 1996; House agreed to report on March 12, Senate on March 28; President vetoed on April 12; override vote failed on April 30, 1996.

H.R. 1868 (Callahan)

Makes appropriations for foreign operations, including \$19,600,000 for FY1996 for the IFI. Introduced June 15; passed July 11, 1995; Senate bill passed September 21, 1995 with no IFI provision; conference report (H.Rept. 104-295) issued October 26 included \$19,600,000 for IFI. Enacted into law on February 12, 1996 (P.L. 104-107).

H.R. 2844 (Maloney)

Amends the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to authorize the President to issue loan guarantees for economic development and job creation activities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Introduced January 4, 1996.

H.R. 3540 (Callahan)

Makes appropriations for foreign operations for FY1997, including \$19,600,000 for the IFI. Introduced May 29, 1996. Committee Report 104-600.

S. 424 (D'Amato)

Provides for adherence with MacBride Principles by United States persons doing business in Northern Ireland. Introduced February 15, 1995.

H.Con.Res. 43 (Maloney)

Endorses the Irish-American agenda for the White House Conference on Trade and Investment in Ireland in May 1995. Introduced March 16, 1995.

H.Con.Res. 44 (Menendez)

Expresses the sense of the Congress with respect to the conflict in the northeast of the island of Ireland. Introduced March 16, 1995.

H.Con.Res. 121 (Maloney)

Urges the President to seek negotiations with the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and international financial institutions for the purpose of establishing an Ireland Development Bank. Introduced December 14, 1995.