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MODELS OF RECONCILIATION: FROM CONFLICT TOWARDS PEACE IN NORTHERN
IRELAND AND SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE 1990s

by

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Introduction

There is a traditional African saying, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – ‘people are people through other people’.¹ Being human necessitates contact with other humans. From birth people enter into a world of intertwining stories in which no one person can completely separate herself or himself from the living text of another. The past is full of these interweaving stories creating a complex web of relationships that are often reconstructed into larger narratives in attempts to create meaning. Few would deny the complexity of such historical reconstructions as the narratives of conflict and peace within Northern Ireland and South Africa during the late 20th century. In what ways are the histories of conflict and peace within these two countries interconnected? What meaning might be gleaned from analyzing them alongside one another through a lens of contact? The peace processes of both Northern Ireland and South Africa strove for reconciliation and achieved a peaceful resolution of conflict; however, to this day both countries are dealing with the realities of broken relationships and systems as a result of conflict. Does this mean reconciliation was not achieved? How might the study of these two peace processes be helpful in developing a more nuanced understanding of reconciliation? Ultimately, these two case studies illustrate how a peaceful resolution of conflict is merely one step in the process of reconciliation and that experiences of positive contact are essential to reconciliation.

¹ *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, (Report, South Africa, October 29, 1998), 127.

Defining Terms

Given the scope of this paper, and the potential ambiguity associated with the term reconciliation, a definition of terms is prudent. Within the context of this work a distinction is made between the peaceful resolution of conflict and reconciliation. A peaceful resolution of conflict is defined as a form of compromise between two or more conflicting groups that is reached either formally or informally through peaceful means resulting in an overall cessation of violence. This does not necessarily mean that any prior relationships have been restored, or that justice has been achieved. It merely suggests that all sides have collectively come to agreement, through nonviolent means, that the perpetuation of further hostilities in the future is not a viable option for progress. Reconciliation is understood as a way of life that is grounded in hope and radically inclusive of all people through the costly and continual pursuit of justice and peace that acknowledges the past and strives to transform broken relationships and systems in order to embody the reality of future wholeness. In this way reconciliation is much more than a cessation of conflict but it is an ongoing process. Lastly, in this context the term contact implies positive personal interaction between peoples over a sustained period of time.²

The Historical Background of Apartheid

² This understanding of contact originates from a theory within social psychology known as contact theory. The theory was developed in 1954 by Muzafer Sherif and suggests that repeated opportunities of interaction between different social groups are vital to reducing negative attitudes of the other.

The word apartheid means separateness and was invented by an Afrikaner historian P van Biljoen in 1935.³ Apartheid became an official structural policy of systematic segregation and discrimination on the basis of race following the South African general election of 1948. During this election most of the black population was prohibited from voting and the National Party (NP), who championed a policy of apartheid, came to power through the support of the white electorate.

Nevertheless, influencing factors of apartheid date back to the 17th century when the first Dutch settlers arrived in South Africa during 1652. Originally driven by economic interests in the Indies, the small Dutch Cape Colony was founded by the Dutch East India Company as a supplies station for their trade ships traveling between the East and West. Within the first ten years of settlement, the beginnings of a complex, racially stratified society had already developed within the colony.⁴ Over the next three centuries, continued growth and expansion of Dutch settlers across South Africa in addition to British imperialism during the 19th century, lead to increased tensions between the peoples of South Africa.

In 1910 the four existing colonies in South Africa, all of which were under British control, were brought together in what is known as the Union of South Africa. This granted greater autonomy to the unified provinces but was largely seen by black South Africans as a great sell out, because only whites were allowed to participate in the political process. Consequently, there were two primary results of this union: the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1912, and the

³ Christie Kenneth, *The South African Truth Commission*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 11.

⁴ Leonard Monteath Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 33.

implementation of more severe discriminatory legislation, such as the Natives Land Act of 1913. The latter reinforced segregation and structural inequalities by preventing black South Africans from buying, renting, or using land except in designated reserves or homelands. Pass Laws were also legislated requiring blacks to carry an identification permit when outside their designated homeland. In this way the government was able to maintain a strict system of segregation and to control the movement of black citizens. Other disparities developed throughout South African society within the realms of education, labor, wages, and politics. In part these inequalities and the intentional separation of peoples were rationalized based on false beliefs in religious and biological superiority of white South Africans. Ultimately, the segregation of society led to the oppression of the black South African majority by a white minority, who were mainly of Dutch and English descent. This dominant minority controlled most of the country's, land, resources, and wealth.

With the formation of political resistance movements such as the ANC in 1912, long campaigns of organized defiance against the injustices in the country began. Many supporters of the ANC were mobilized to peacefully protest discriminatory legislation during the height of apartheid, following the 1948 elections. Organized marches, strikes, boycotts, defiance of pass laws, and student protests are a few of the ways in which many South Africans resisted the system of apartheid. These means of peaceful protest were met by stricter legislation and increased violence, as demonstrated in the Sharpeville massacre in March of 1960 when police opened fire on peaceful protestors killing 69 people and wounding 186.

Following this the government declared a state of emergency banning the ANC and another resistance organization known as the Pan African Congress (PAC). As a result, the ANC began a campaign of armed resistance against the South African Government in 1961 alongside continued peaceful protests.

The Historical Background of 'The Troubles'

The Troubles is the name used to describe the period of political violence in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998; nonetheless, the roots of this conflict can be traced to the 16th and 17th centuries. During the 1500s Britain possessed colonial holdings around Dublin and in 1609 James I expanded upon these footholds by proclaiming a land settlement for the northern region of the island known as Ulster. This began the process of British colonization primarily undertaken by transplanted Englishmen and lowland Scots. Motives for British colonization of Northern Ireland are complex including theories related to economics and national defense. For example, after the defeat of the Spanish armada in 1588, the surviving Spanish ships sailed north in hopes of escaping the British and returning home along the west coast of Ireland. A number of these fleeing ships crash-landed off the coast of Ireland and one theory suggests that the British became alarmed by the possibility of a foreign country obtaining a foothold so close to Britain. Under this premise, the realization that the island posed a threat to the economic and national security of the nation, prompted the British to secure their own power over the island via colonization.

As in many cases of settler populations, tensions rose between the British colonizers and the native Irish, resulting in several centuries of intermittent instances of rebellion against British rule over the island. Irish independence was not achieved until 1922 after the war for Irish independence. Consequently, this war ended with the partition of the island by the British into what are today Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In the partitioning of the island the British assured that a majority population of predominantly protestant people identifying as British, due to their deep roots coming out of the colonization of the 17th century, existed within Northern Ireland. Consequently, in doing this, the British also established a minority population of predominantly Catholic people who identified as Irish. A common misconception of the conflict in Northern Ireland is that it is solely a result of religious division. While religion is an important aspect of Northern Irish history, this misconception is a vast oversimplification of a conflict which is a much more complex interweaving of history, politics, economics, and culture. Irish scholar Feargal Cochrane demonstrates this complexity in stating that, "A form of ethno-nationalist division emerged, where religion served to define and identify the sides, rather than to create those divisions in the first place. To know someone's religion was to know their politics and their culture".⁵

The division that was created within Northern Ireland led to high tensions and segregation between the two communities. This was perpetuated by a one party rule within the devolved Parliament of Northern Ireland under the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). The UUP managed to maintain its dominance up until 1972 through

⁵ Feargal Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 4.

support from the unionist majority population, the use of gerrymandering, and a winner take all electoral system. As a result, discrimination against the predominantly Catholic nationalist community became common in the realms of education, housing, employment, policing, and voting. The perpetuation of these inequalities led to the rise of both violent and nonviolent resistance.

In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed to peacefully protest discrimination within the country and advocate for greater justice. Yet, on a number of different occasions violence broke out during originally peaceful protests that turned into riots as marchers were attacked by loyalist sectarian groups in addition to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), a primarily protestant police force. In response to these clashes between protestors and the RUC, the British Army was deployed to maintain peace. The heightened level of tension during this time led to the re-formation of militant sectarian groups within both nationalist and unionist communities who began to see violence as the only means of furthering their political and ideological aspirations. These paramilitary groups included the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and the Ulster Defense Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters UDA/UFF. The escalation of violent and counter violent resistance reached its height in 1972 due to the events of what is commonly known as Bloody Sunday. On January 30th 1972 Non-violent protestors gathered for an anti-internment demonstration in Derry but as the march progressed British paratroopers opened fire upon the peaceful crowd killing thirteen and injuring another thirteen, one of whom died of his wounds several months later. As a result, Britain dissolved the Parliament of

Northern Ireland and introduced direct rule over the country as it was propelled into further sectarian violence over the course of the next three decades. Similar to the situation in South Africa, this background history of the Troubles provides necessary context for understanding the peace negotiations in Northern Ireland and why contact or the lack thereof is essential to discuss in light of reconciliation.

South Africa

The Peace Negotiations in South Africa

When looking at South Africa after its transition away from a regime of apartheid, it is impossible to ignore the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This commission was an integral aspect to the formation of a 'New South Africa' and to the process of reconciliation within the nation. While one can hardly discuss the peace efforts in South Africa without addressing the TRC, this commission is merely one part of a complex and often ambiguous narrative of peace. Thus, it is useful to recognize how the move towards a peaceful resolution of conflict, as seen throughout the several years of negotiations that ultimately lead to South Africa's first democratic nonracial elections in 1994, laid the foundations for the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

After several decades of oppression, conflict, and violence resulting from the legalized policy of apartheid, tentative moves towards initiating a process of negotiation began to develop between the governmental leadership and the ANC. Both sides took steps towards engaging in these talks due to different realizations.

For the government, it became evident that maintaining the system of apartheid was unrealistic for two reasons: it was financially crippling to the nation, and the dominant white minority was rapidly becoming more outnumbered by the black majority. On the other hand, liberation movements realized their ability to completely overthrow the regime was unlikely and the greatest opportunity for change lay in peaceful negotiations. Therefore, in August of 1987 a group of sixty-one white South Africans lead by Alex Boraine and Frederik van Zyl Slabber, co-founders of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa and both members of the Progressive Party, met with seventeen members of the ANC over three days in Dakar Senegal.⁶ Here, the participants of this meeting came to understand that they had a common interest in seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict in South Africa and expressed unanimous support for a negotiated settlement.⁷ In an attempt to open negotiations between the National Party and ANC, another strand of communication was developed. Prior to his release from prison, and without the knowledge of the ANC leadership in exile, Nelson Mandela was approached by members of the NP who recognized his influential leadership.⁸ The ensuing conversations revolved around the ANC commitment to armed resistance, their alliance with the communist party, legalization of the ANC, the withdrawal of troops from townships, ending the state of emergency, but most importantly balancing the ANC demand for majority rule in South Africa with the

⁶ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 244.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 245-246.

white minorities concerns over this demand.⁹ Eventually, De Klerk met with Mandela in prison and the initiation of these conversations lead to his release on February 11th 1990 after twenty-seven years of imprisonment.

Following Mandela's release, peace talks continued with increased attention though not always directly relating to the pressing disagreements between the various parties. Mandela had suggested that a climate for negotiations should be created before proceeding to formal negotiations. In May of 1990 another series of meetings known as the Groote Schuur talks occurred over a period of three days, this time within South Africa at the president's official residence in Cape Town.¹⁰ Here ANC leaders and their government counterparts met in an attempt to get to know one another and begin to form personal relationships. They also agreed upon conditions that had to be met in order to end political conflict within the nation. This resulted in a series of steps being taken by the NP government to move the peace negotiations along by gradually removing the nationwide State of Emergency, releasing the majority of political prisoners, and allowing political exiles to return with immunity from prosecution. In August of 1990 the Government and the ANC reaffirmed their commitment to the Groote Schuur Minute and elaborated upon it in what is know as the Pretoria Minute. This was another meeting in which provisions surrounding the continual release of political prisoners and the Internal Security Act were discussed along with the announcement that the ANC would be suspending all

⁹ Ibid, 245.

¹⁰ Ibid, 248.

armed action from its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in the interest of moving towards a peacefully negotiated political settlement.¹¹

With the legalization of the ANC in February of 1990 and further steps taken by the NP government to facilitate peaceful negotiations, the ANC was able to hold its first conference within South Africa since being banned. At this conference in 1991, 2,244 elected delegates worked to transform this organization into an official political party by establishing a sixty-six member National Executive Committee. At this conference, Nelson Mandela was selected to represent the party as its president and Cyril Ramaphosa was chosen to serve as the secretary general. Following this transition in November of 1991 and the government's final repeals of remaining apartheid laws after the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes, the peace process moved into more official territory with the formation of a Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). CODESA incorporated nineteen different political parties each represented by approximately twelve member delegations for a total of around 228 delegates who were mostly African and many of whom were women.¹² This convention opened on December 20th 1991 and was presided over by two judges, Petrus Schabert and Ismael Mahomed, the first black judge to be appointed to the Supreme Court in South Africa.¹³ Most of the politicians involved in CODESA had received mandates of support from their constituencies with the

¹¹ *The Pretoria Minute*, (Agreement, South Africa, August 6, 1990), <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=3884>.

¹² Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 252.; and South African History Online: Towards a People's History, "The CODESA Negotiations," Last Modified April 21, 2016, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/codesa-negotiations>.

¹³ T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 5th ed. (Hampshire England: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 560.

exception of the NP representatives. Amongst the National Party there was considerable concern revolving around the convention. In order to prove that he had the support of a majority of his constituents, particularly Afrikaners, President De Klerk decided to hold a whites only referendum on March 17th, 1992 in which 68.7% out of the 87% of eligible voters endorsed the continuation of negotiations and reform.¹⁴

CODESA established five working committees which sought to address issues surrounding: the new constitution, establishing an interim government, the future of the homelands, the time period for the implementation of these changes, and the electoral system.¹⁵ Two of these issues, the development of an interim government and a constitution, proved most problematic to peace negotiations due to the parties' inability to reach any form of consensus beyond the desire to have each of these governmental structures put in place. This is largely because the NP desired a minority veto within the interim government and insisted upon a higher majority percentage needed to make decisions pertaining to the constitution and bill of rights than the ANC would agree to. As a result, this led to a deadlock in negotiations and the breakdown of CODESA particularly after the violent massacre at Boipatong on June 17th, 1992.

In tracing the peace process in South Africa up to 1994 violence did not completely cease but was taking place alongside negotiations. According to a race relations survey, in 1990 there were 3,699 political killings, in 1991 there were 2,

¹⁴ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 254.; and South African History Online, "The CODESA Negotiations".

¹⁵ South African History Online, "The CODESA Negotiations".

706, in 1992 there were 3,347, in 1993 there were 3,794, and in 1994 there were 2,476.¹⁶ This helps to illustrate the high levels of tension and frustration that accompanied peace talks during this time, particularly after negotiations stalled in 1992. In spite of the progress that had been made, it is understandable why CODESA broke down and why Mandela suspended all talks with the government after the events at Boipatong. On June 17th, hostel dwellers of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), later determined by the TRC to have been in league with members of the police, attacked a neighboring shack settlement in the township of Boipatong killing forty-five people, mainly women and children.¹⁷ At this time, the opportunity for a peaceful settlement looked minimal as ANC-Government relations were strained; nevertheless, the two parties maintained a channel of communication through their chief negotiators, Roelf Meyer representing the NP, and Cyril Ramaphosa representing the ANC. These men met a total of forty-eight times between June and September 1992 as they worked to resolve outstanding issues between their parties. As a result of this relationship, on September 26th of 1992 the two were able to bring both Mandela and De Klerk together to sign a Record of Understanding that led to the reopening of talks at the Multi-Party Negotiation Process in February 1993. Essential to the resumption of negotiations and the reaching of a compromise was the policy adoption of a sunset clause that would honor existing contracts of civil servants, judges, police, and military personnel as well as provide for a period

¹⁶ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 248.

¹⁷ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 254.; and Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 564.

of compulsory power-sharing in the governmental cabinet.¹⁸ Moreover, leading up to the Multi-Party Negotiation Process positive relationships between the two parties were further fostered at two *bosberaads*, or meetings of undisclosed locations, in December of 1992 and January of 1993. At these meetings the various participants, including members from both the NP and ANC, lived together, ate together, drank together, and talked together over the course of four days in casual circumstances helping to break down barriers and stereotypes as they came to a better understanding of one another.¹⁹

Finally, as negotiations progressed, a new Multiparty Forum was convened on April 1st 1993 including all of the major political parties in the country besides the IFP and Conservative party who both opposed the negotiation process. This forum eventually created the interim constitution, which it approved on November 18th 1993, and set the date for upcoming elections on April 27th, 1994. Once approved, the interim constitution was endorsed by the standing apartheid parliament in order to create continuity and legitimacy of governance between the old government and the and new. Parliament also formed a Transitional Executive Council (TEC) that would govern until the nonracial elections as well as an Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) that was in charge of organizing the upcoming elections. Consequently, many of the barriers that had once prevented compromise had been overcome throughout the peace negotiations that lead to the

¹⁸ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 255.

¹⁹ Padraig O'Malley, "Northern Ireland and South Africa: Hope and History at a Crossroads", in *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: The Northern Ireland Conflict and the Good Friday Agreement in Comparative Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 296.

development of an interim constitution. Nevertheless, the country still teetered on the edge between peaceful resolution and further violence all the way up to the elections as the ANC and NP fervently sought to bring the IFP and Conservative Party within the folds of the political settlement and because no one could predict what would happen once the elections results had been finalized.

The Democratic Elections of 1994

After decades of inequality and racial segregation under apartheid along with several years of negotiations, the atmosphere was filled with anticipation as the first nonracial democratic elections in South African history approached. Many were uncertain about how the elections would turn out and whether or not a narrative that had been stacked towards severe violence and bloodshed would end in a peaceful transition of power after all. The election was originally set for April 27th 1994; however, in order to accommodate the large masses of people that were expected to turn out for the vote, it was decided that the election would be held over a period of four days from April 26th to the 29th.²⁰ It is estimated that over twenty million South Africans, around eighty-six percent of the electorate, turned out to vote over the course of these four days, often waiting for hours just to get to the polling stations. Although the election process, under the regulation of the IEC, was critiqued for its inability to live up to the standards of the European Union observers, the end results still reflected the pre-election polls fairly well given the difficulties that an understaffed and inexperienced IEC faced in managing the voting.

²⁰ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 263.

On May 6th the results were finally announced with the ANC winning 62.65% of the votes and 252 seats in the National Assembly, the NP winning 20.39% of the votes and 82 seats, the IFP winning 10.54% of the votes and 43 seats, while the remaining 23 seats were split between four other parties.²¹ Moreover, due to various aspects of the interim constitution which stated that the National Assembly was to elect a president and that cabinet seats were to be awarded based on representation in the Assembly, Nelson Mandela was sworn into office on May 10th 1994 as President of South Africa with F.W. De Klerk and Thabo Mbeki as deputy presidents and the NP and IFP were awarded 5 and 3 cabinet positions respectively.²² Despite the miracle of this peaceful transition, the Nation still had a legacy of injustice and inequality to address as it attempted to create one unified vision for the future of a new South Africa.

The Beginnings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The main method that was selected to address the painful history of apartheid was a type of truth commission. Conversations about holding a truth commission had been present early on in negotiations through voices of people like Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Western Cape Kader Asmal. He reasoned that a truth commission would help move the nation towards a number of crucial goals that included enabling people to achieve a measure of justice by acknowledging their suffering, providing a basis for a collective acknowledgement

²¹ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 264 and Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 568.

²² Ibid.

of the illegitimacy of apartheid, and making room for genuine reconciliation.²³ Additionally, the ANC had prior experience with their own truth commissions after accusations were levied against them in 1991 claiming that human rights violations within some of their camps in-exile during the 1980s and early 1990s had been committed.²⁴ In response, the ANC appointed several commissions of enquiry into these allegations known as the Stuart, Skweyiya, and Motsuenyane commissions which all reported back confirmation that gross violations of human rights had been committed within the ANC camps.²⁵ As a result, in 1993 the National Executive Council of the ANC accepted the criticisms directed at the organization but called for a more comprehensive national truth commission so that these violations might be seen within the context of human rights violations that had taken place throughout South Africa during the regime of apartheid.²⁶ It was partially in the light of these precedents that the new South African government issued the National Unity and Reconciliation Act in 1995 that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and laid out its structure, objectives, functions, and power.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

²³ Kader Asmal, *Reconciliation through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance*, 2nd ed., (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers; Oxford: James Currey Publishers; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 10.

²⁴ *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, 50.; and Russell Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 47.

²⁵ *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, 50.

²⁶ *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, 50.; and Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*, 47.

According to the National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995 the objective of the TRC was “To promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and division of the past”.²⁷ The intention was that this might be achieved through the completion of four major tasks given to the Commission. These included establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature, and extent of the gross violations of human rights between 1 March 1960 and 10 May 1994, restoring the human and civil dignity of victims through testimony, facilitating the granting of amnesty, and making recommendations to the President for preventing future violations of human rights.²⁸ Nonetheless, the commission recognized that the TRC was not an end in itself, for it could only begin the process of reconciliation, which necessitated the continual efforts of all South Africans striving to transform the broken relationships and systems resulting from apartheid.

The formal hearings of the Commission began on April 15th 1996 and the first five volumes of its final report were released in October of 1998. These were followed by the publication of two additional volumes in March of 2003. The Commission was presided over by seventeen commissioners who were broadly representative of the South African Society. The selection of the commissioners began with the public nomination of 186 women and men, 40 of whom were interviewed in public by a multi-party panel, which then presented a list of 25

²⁷ *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995*, (Legislative Act, South Africa, July 19, 1995), 4.

²⁸ *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 1, 57.

candidates to Nelson Mandela for the final appointment.²⁹ Archbishop Desmond Tutu was selected to be the Chairperson of the Commission with Dr. Alex Boraine as Vice-Chairperson. Structurally the TRC was divided into three committees: The Human Rights Violations Committee, the Amnesty Committee, and the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee.

The primary function of the Human Rights Violations Committee (HRVC) was to listen to the many testimonies of people who were victims of gross violations of human rights, inquire into these abuses, and construct as complete a picture as possible of their cause, nature, and extent. This committee was directed by eight of the commissioners including Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Mr. Wynand Malan (Vice-Chairperson), and Ms. Yasmin Sooka (Vice-Chairperson). Many of the hearings focused on particular incidents while others were more topical. There were institutional hearings on business and labor, faith communities, the health sector, media, and prisons in addition to political party hearings and special hearings on children and women.³⁰ Moreover, these hearings were not limited to victims of apartheid organizations or state security forces but included those who were victims of liberation organizations as well. In this way the TRC remained unbiased and allowed the narrative of the past to be shaped by all members of society.

In relation to the HRVC, the Amnesty Committee (AC) was charged with the task of receiving applications for amnesty, hearing the testimonies of those who had committed human rights violations, and determining whether or not amnesty would be granted. Amnesty was awarded based on two main principles: One, that those

²⁹ Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 691.

³⁰ Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*, 50.

applying for amnesty make full disclosure of all relevant facts including the extent to which others were involved and any chain of command; Two, that offenses were associated with a political objective. This means that the act was committed in execution of an order, on behalf of, or with the approval of an organization, institution, or liberation movement in furtherance of a political struggle or resisting said struggle and does not include acts committed for personal gain or malice.³¹

Three commissioners managed this committee, Adv. Chris de Jager, Ms. Sisi Khampepe, and Adv. Denzil Potgieter.

As suggested by its title, the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee was given the task of determining the appropriate measures of compensation to victims suffering from gross violations of human rights and how best to help them reintegrate into society. Recognition was given that in many cases no amount of reparations could adequately address the suffering of victims but it could help to restore the human and civil dignity of such victims. One of the main issue with this committee was that it had no funding of its own and thus could only make recommendations to the President and Parliament of applicants qualifying for a measure of reparation. This committee was presided over by five commissioners lead by Chairperson Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize and Vice-Chairperson Dr. Wendy Orr.

Overall, the Commission heard over twenty thousand testimonies of gross violations of human rights and received more than seven thousand applications for amnesty. Additionally, the South African Government was very intentional about the public nature of the TRC. By holding hearings in public and publishing a report on

³¹ *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995*, 14-16.

the commission, the TRC helped to promote a greater sense of nation unity and inclusiveness through the collective contribution of many peoples and perspectives to the narrative of past conflict.

Northern Ireland

The Peace Negotiations in Northern Ireland

The most well known aspect of the Northern Ireland peace negotiations that took place throughout the 1990s is the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). After several years of formal negotiations that had begun on the 10th of June 1996 this agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement was finalized on April 10th 1998.³² Although only one part of a complex and often divided history of events pertaining to the peace process in Northern Ireland, the GFA played a significant role in illustrating that the use of “Democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues” was possible within the country.³³ This was a step towards the peaceful resolution of conflict and away from paramilitary violence; nevertheless, the Belfast Agreement was far from providing closure to a number of polarizing issues or clarity as to a united vision for the future of Northern Ireland.

To understand the full extent of the Good Friday Agreement and its location within the peaceful resolution of conflict in Northern Ireland, it is worthwhile to analyze the broader negotiation process. These complex peace negotiations can be divided into two main phases. The first being talks that began under British Prime

³² Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 186.

³³ *The Good Friday Agreement*, (Agreement, Northern Ireland, April 10, 1998), 2.

Minister John Major when he took office in 1990, and the second being negotiations that took place under his successor Prime Minister Tony Blair beginning in 1997.

Negotiations Under Prime Minister Major

After Major took office following Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, signs of tentative movements towards peace began to appear encouraged by Secretary of State Peter Brooke's rather quiet announcement that, "Britain had 'no selfish, strategic, or economic interest' in Northern Ireland and would legislate for a united Ireland when the majority of the people of Northern Ireland expressed such a wish".³⁴ One of the first illustrations of this hesitant step toward peace following Brooke's statement occurred in December of 1990 when the Provisional IRA announced a three-day ceasefire over Christmas.³⁵ This was the first official ceasefire the IRA had issued since 1975, yet it would take another four years before the IRA would announce a "Complete cessation of military operations" on August 31st 1994.³⁶

Following these initial tests of the possibility of peace, the governments of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland began trying to foster better diplomatic relations with one another. Additionally, Great Britain tried to encourage both unionists and nationalists to engage in public constitutional talks. Nonetheless, this period was largely dominated by an atmosphere of secrecy as various parties

³⁴ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 123.

³⁵ Ibid, 124.

³⁶ *Irish Republican Army Ceasefire Statement, 31 August 1994*, (Public Statement, Northern Ireland, August 31, 1994), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/ira31894.htm>.

engage in clandestine negotiations with one another to the ignorance of other parties. Despite their relatively feeble public efforts to bring some change to the stalemate in Northern Ireland the British government engaged in a series of indirect private talks with Sinn Féin and the IRA without the knowledge of the Irish government, the SDLP, or unionists. During this stage of negotiations the Irish government had also established secretive and indirect contact with both republican and loyalist paramilitaries to the exclusive knowledge of those involved. Sometimes this culture of secrecy even pervaded intra-party communication as in the case of John Hume and Gerry Adams who were engaged in secret dialogue between 1988-1993 without their own parties' knowledge let alone the knowledge of the British and Irish governments.

Part of the issue with the secretive nature of these conversations, was that they created a vast amount of mistrust and confusion between the parties. As a result, the British were unwilling to openly deal with Sinn Fein or welcome them into public constitutional talks until they called a permanent ceasefire, the IRA was unwilling to declare an official ceasefire until they were certain the British would remain neutral in Northern Ireland, and loyalist paramilitaries such as the UDA and UVF were unwilling to lay down their own arms until the IRA did. Consequently, sporadic violence continued throughout the 1990s even as these initial steps towards peace were taking shape. For the most part, the violence committed by the IRA during this time was directed at economic disruption such as the Bishopsgate bomb in April of 1993, which caused around £1 billion of damage; however, there were continued occasions when this violence escalated beyond economic disruption

resulting in loss of life. An example of this was the Shakill road bombing of Frizell's fish shop on October 25th, 1993 that resulted in nine civilian casualties, as well as loyalist retaliation on the 30th of October when three UFF gunmen killed eight people at the Rising Sun Pub in the village of Greysteel. Interestingly, the perpetuation of a cycle of violence was not the only result of these attacks. In many ways, the shock and resulting grief from these events can be seen as a catalyst of action that brought Irish and British politicians together in recognition of the potential consequences in failing to move peace talks forward within the formal political process, thus leading to the formation and publication of the Downing Street Declaration on December 15th 1993.

This document was a Joint Declaration and "Charter for peace and reconciliation" issued by Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds and British Prime Minister John Major on behalf of their governments.³⁷ Recognizing that this was only one stage in the peace process, the two governments attempted to use this declaration to move the official talks forward by emphasizing the right of the people of Northern Ireland to exercise their own national "Self-determination on the basis of consent", encouraging the formation of trust between all parties, and advocating for the commitment to "Exclusively peaceful methods" in reaching a political settlement.³⁸ Additionally, despite their past histories of involvement, the British and Irish Governments presented themselves as unbiased facilitators of an agreement who were impartial when it came to the most divisive issue between unionists and

³⁷ *The Joint Declaration of 15 December 1993 (Downing Street Declaration)*, (Public Statement, Northern Ireland, December 15, 1993), 1.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 1-2.

nationalists: continued unification with the United Kingdom or the formation of a united Ireland. This was demonstrated by the British with their commitment to honor the democratic decision of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland for self-determination. Moreover, the Republic of Ireland expressed a similar commitment that any change to the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of an electoral majority. Their willingness to amend articles two and three of the Irish constitution in the event of an overall settlement so as to reflect a more neutral stance towards the future of Northern Ireland illustrates the sincerity of this commitment.

While this declaration was a starting point for formal negotiations and laid the foundation for key aspects of the Good Friday Agreement, the actual document was filled with ambiguity. This placed pressure upon Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein who wanted to be certain that the Downing Street Declaration did not undermine their nationalist aspirations. It was at this point, in the months following the publication of this document, that the United States of America under the leadership of President Bill Clinton began to take a more active role in the situation of Northern Ireland. Despite the risk it posed to his political report, in January of 1994 Bill Clinton decided to issue Sinn Fein leader and 'alleged terrorist', Gerry Adams, a visa before the IRA had announced a ceasefire.³⁹ This frustrated Major who was trying to force the IRA into a ceasefire but encouraged nationalists that there was an outside power willing to act as an unbiased intermediary and whose lack of historical involvement within the conflict could truly act as balance between unionists and

³⁹ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 163.

nationalists desires in ways that the more historically involved British and Irish governments could not. After several months of internal deliberation, written correspondences with Major, and clarifications of various pieces of the joint-declaration, Adams publicly stated on August 29th 1994 he had advised the IRA that now existed the opportunity to end the stalemate.⁴⁰ With much public anticipation and uncertainty, the IRA then issued a short four paragraph statement declaring that “As of midnight, August 31st, there will be a complete cessation of military operations” for, “We believe an opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement has been created”.⁴¹

For many this announcement was cause for celebration; however, for the most part unionists did not see it this way because they feared that Prime Minister Major had made a secret deal with the IRA behind their backs.⁴² This illustrates how the culture of secrecy so prevalent in the formation of the peace process continued to impact and pervade the atmosphere of negotiations even after decisive steps forward. Thus, unionist mistrust of the British government initiated another set of talks that took place between Major and unionist political leaders such as James Molyneaux of the UUP and Ian Paisley of the DUP reassuring them that no secret deals had been made, but one problem remained. Loyalist paramilitaries were unwilling to announce their own ceasefire until they had been convinced that no agreements were made between the British government and the IRA, yet the British refused to have any contact with these paramilitaries until they announced a

⁴⁰ Ibid, 134.

⁴¹ *Irish Republican Army Ceasefire Statement, 31 August 1994.*

⁴² Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 139.

ceasefire. Therefore, the British relied upon other unionist parties to convince the loyalist paramilitaries to move forward with a ceasefire. Meanwhile the Republic of Ireland chose an alternative route establishing contact with organizations such as the UDA and UVF through intermediary figures. Eventually, with enough constituent support to avoid significant fracturing the loyalist paramilitaries issued their own ceasefire on the 13th of October 1994.⁴³ This cessation of violence was predicated upon two stipulations: one, that Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom was secure based on a democratic majority's right to self-determination and two, that the IRA ceasefire remained permanent.⁴⁴

With the announcement of ceasefires from both republican and loyalist paramilitary groups it seemed as though official peace negotiations could commence. Unfortunately, at this point Major hesitated to open public dialogues with Sinn Fein and to invite them into the political process out of fear for his own governmental position. This is because unionist politicians had the ability to bring down Major's administration within the House of Commons and so he sought to win over unionists before inviting Sinn Fein into the political negotiations. This brought the central issue that would plague the peace process for years to come, even after the Good Friday Agreement, to the forefront of negotiations for the first time. IRA Decommissioning. For republicans this was a new precondition that Sinn Fein saw as disconnected from their own engagement in negotiations but for unionists and the British it was a test of the IRA's sincerity of their ceasefire. Consequently, further

⁴³ Ibid 140.

⁴⁴ *Combined Loyalist Military Command Ceasefire Statement, 13 October 1994*, (Public Statement, Northern Ireland, October 13, 1994), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/clmc131094.htm>.

fear and mistrust spread during an eighteen-month deadlock as an even larger barrier over the relinquishment of arms replaced the once impenetrable wall of achieving a cessation of violence.

At this point, a central character in the narrative of the Northern Ireland peace negotiations entered the picture, former Senate Majority Leader in America, George Mitchell. After being appointed by President Bill Clinton as his 'Special Advisor for Economic Initiatives in Ireland', Mitchell spent three years in Northern Ireland from 1995-1998 speaking with and mediating between many of the various players involved in the negotiations. In the initial meetings that took place within the first few weeks, Mitchell and his two other team members worked to assess and provide a report on the situation in Northern Ireland specifically revolving around arms decommissioning. In their investigation they found that IRA decommissioning as a precursor to Sinn Fein participation in peace negotiations was extremely unrealistic and in spite of Major's attempt to control negotiations by threatening to reject the final report if this prerequisite was not upheld, Mitchell and his team recommended that parallel decommissioning be implemented. This final report was given on January 22nd 1996 and is commonly referred to as the Mitchell Principles. These principles laid the foundation for the future negotiations and attempted to move the talks beyond the impasse of decommissioning by calling for the absolute commitment of all parties to "Democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues".⁴⁵ Unfortunately, despite the efforts of George Mitchell and

⁴⁵ *Report of the International Body on Arms Decommissioning, 22 January 1996*, (Report, Northern Ireland, January 22, 1996), Section III, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/gm24196.htm>.

his team in the publication of their report, the stalemate persisted as the British Government and unionists continued to insist of upon prior decommissioning before political inclusion. Consequently, IRA patience with the perceived bad faith of the British Government and incompetence of Prime Minister Major ran out and on February 9th 1996 the ceasefire was broken when the IRA set off a bomb in the Docklands area of London causing £85million of damage, two deaths, and a number of injuries. As a result, the British and Irish Governments announced that multi-party talks would commence on the 10th of June 1996 but would exclude Sinn Fein. Given his already prominent role in negotiations, knowledge of the conflict, and neutral outside perspective, George Mitchell was selected to chair this process, which continued for a year without much progress due to the exclusion of Sinn Fein. Therefore, expectations were high during the 1997 British general elections as people anticipated a change over in the government that might bring about a fresh approach to the peace talks in Northern Ireland.

Negotiations Under Prime Minister Blair

In the May elections of 1997 change came in the form of Tony Blair, who replaced John Major as the British prime minister, and the Labor party who took over from the Conservatives. Blair immediately illustrated the new direction he intended to take in Northern Ireland through his desire to meet with representatives from all of the various parties, especially Sinn Fein. This initiative was extremely significant because it emphasized the value of open and inclusive negotiations and recognized parties such as Sinn Fein as valuable and legitimate

political entities. On October 13th 1997 Blair and Adams met signaling the first meeting between a British prime minister and a member of Sinn Fein leadership since 1921.⁴⁶ Given the new political climate and visible efforts being made by the British government to renew “A democratic peace settlement through real and inclusive negotiations”, the IRA made the decision to resume their ceasefire of August 1994 by declaring “A complete cessation of military operations from 12 midday on Sunday 20 July, 1997”.⁴⁷ After a period of six weeks to ensure the good faith of the IRA, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Marjorie Mowlam, officially invited Sinn Fein to join the multi-party negotiations at their resumption in September 1997.⁴⁸ This received negative backlash from unionist leaders who threatened to walk out of negotiations; however, with tactful ambiguity in dealing with the diverse parties, Blair was able to keep all but Ian Paisley’s DUP involved in the multi-party talks and committed to principles of non-violence under the international mediation of George Mitchell.

The negotiations were held in three different locations throughout the peace process: Belfast, Dublin, and London.⁴⁹ The Northern Irish political parties that participated in these peace talks included Sinn Fein, the Social Democratic Labor Party, Ulster Unionist Party, Ulster Democratic Party, Progressive Unionist Party, Labor Party, Alliance Party, and the Women’s Coalition. Unlike the negotiations

⁴⁶ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 171.

⁴⁷ *Irish Republican Army Ceasefire Statement, 19 July 1997*, (Public Statement, Northern Ireland, July 19, 1997), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/ira19797.htm>.

⁴⁸ Marjorie Mowlam, *Momentum: The Struggle for Peace, Politics, and the People*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), 381.

⁴⁹ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 180.

under Major these talks included parties from the political extremes such as Sinn Fein and the UDP/PUP who represented republican and loyalist paramilitaries respectively. Moreover, the participation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was quite influential to the successes of the negotiations because they incorporated into the process more diverse and necessary perspectives, attempting to accentuate the values of inclusiveness, dialogue, and tolerance that for the most part had previously been ignored.⁵⁰

Despite the achievement of managing to include all of these diverse political parties within the negotiating process, those most stringently divided along the ideological lines of nationalism and unionism refused to interact with one another directly. Throughout the entirety of the peace negotiations up through the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, delegations from the main parties, Sinn Fein and the SDLP on one side and the UUP and the UDP/PUP on the other, were still not in direct communication with one another.⁵¹ Therefore, George Mitchell played the essential role of intermediary, relaying messages between parties and offering important political judgment and assessment to all sides. It took over a year, from September 1996 to October 1997, for the parties to establish a set of procedures and vague agenda for the discussion of substantive issues. It was during this time that the South African Government, who had been undergoing their own movement towards a resolution of conflict following the deconstruction of the apartheid state, invited

⁵⁰ Feargal Cochrane, "Unsung Heroes? The Role of Peace and Conflict Resolution Organizations in the Northern Ireland Conflict", in *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: The Northern Ireland Conflict and the Good Friday Agreement in Comparative Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 153.

⁵¹ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 179.

the various political leaders and chief negotiators of Northern Ireland to attend a secure conference called De Hoop Indaba in the town of Arniston in the Western Cape province. This took place in May of 1997 and at the conference President Nelson Mandela along with many other representatives from South Africa's negotiation settlement of November 1993 met with the delegates from Northern Ireland over the course of three days providing advice from their own experiences of the complexity involved in reaching a peaceful resolution. Then, from September 1997 until March 1998 the multi-party talks of Northern Ireland focused on outlining and discussing general issues such as developing a system of power-sharing and navigating the rival British and Irish identities that existed within the country. Finally, in the last few weeks leading up to April 10th 1998, the real strenuous work and hard arguing took place.⁵²

At this point, with the consent of all involved parties, Mitchell decided to impose a one-week deadline upon the remainder of the negotiation process because he recognized how the absence of a deadline was preventing progress. Thus, by April 6th a draft of the agreement, known as the Mitchell Document, had been created and distributed to all of the negotiating parties for review. Full of ambiguity that allowed for varied interpretations, the agreement continued to be edited up to the assigned deadline of midnight on the 9th of April. Even then unionists were still discontent with the lack of connection between decommissioning and Sinn Fein participation in the government but Blair refused to reopen negotiations after they had closed. Instead he wrote a personal letter to David Trimble in attempts to

⁵² Ibid, 177.

reassure him of the British understanding of unionist worries related to the Good Friday Agreement and to provide him with a form of written assurance linking decommissioning and holding political office.⁵³ This was enough to achieve unionist support for the agreement and as evening approached on April 10th 1998, it was finally confirmed that a settlement had been reached bringing to an end the negotiation process that had balanced on the brink of collapse from its beginning. The final result was a democratic and peaceful way forward.

Though a consensus for the Belfast Agreement had been reached at the political level it needed to obtain public affirmation before implementation. The agreement called for two referendums to be held on May 22nd 1998. One was to take place in Northern Ireland and would answer the question, “Do you support the agreement reached in the multi-party talks on Northern Ireland?”⁵⁴ The other was to take place in the Republic of Ireland regarding the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.⁵⁵ Holding these referendums was a way of recognizing the importance of drawing the general public into the process of designing the new political system rather than having it imposed upon them.

In the few months leading up to the referendum in Northern Ireland, campaigns in favor and in opposition of the agreement were formed. The yes campaign was disunified due to the divisions that existed between the parties who for the most part campaigned separately from one another. This was because each party held a different and often contradictory interpretation of the agreement’s

⁵³ *Letter from Tony Blair to David Trimble, 10 April 1998*, (Letter, Northern Ireland, April 10, 1998), <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/tb100498.htm>.

⁵⁴ *The Good Friday Agreement*, 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

ambiguous language that they expressed to the electorate in order to reassure their own constituents. An independent yes campaign did arise, but their tactics did not always gain the approval of the main political parties. To achieve support for the agreement without splitting their parties, groups such as the SDLP and UUP advocated for the agreement from those positions that appeared most favorable to their constituents. One instance that demonstrated this delicate tension was when the independent yes campaign received an endorsement from the internationally renowned President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, who offered to fly to Northern Ireland the day before the vote. Despite the incredible sense of finality that this would have apparently given to the yes campaign, Trimble was quick to oppose Mandela's presence on the eve of the referendum explaining, "Yes, he is an international moral icon, but he is also the world's best example of a former paramilitary turned political and national leader—all without decommissioning".⁵⁶ Trimble saw Mandela in many ways as a threat to unionism illustrating the complexity of navigating the diverse political perspectives of those involved in the peace efforts of Northern Ireland.

Despite the challenges of disunity faced by those in favor of the agreement, strong public desire for peace was evident as the final results of the referendum in Northern Ireland indicated. Out of a total voter turnout of 81%, the highest in the history of Northern Ireland, 71% of the electorate voted in favor of the agreement and only 29% voted against it.⁵⁷ Within the Republic of Ireland there was a significantly lower turnout rate of 55%, nonetheless an overwhelming 95% of

⁵⁶ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 198.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

people voted in support of the Belfast Agreement and reform of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution.⁵⁸ Thus, with political settlement and public approval, a peaceful resolution to the state of instability and violence that had plagued the nation for decades was imminent, as the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement could begin.

The Good Friday Agreement

As previously mentioned, the actual contents of the Agreement were at times quite ambiguously worded especially as they pertained to divisive issues such as decommissioning, prisoner release, or investigations into security forces. Therefore, even though the Agreement briefly discusses these topics the primary portion of the document is divided into three strands. These set out the terms for new multi-party accommodations based on nonviolence and power sharing between nationalists and unionists.

The first of these strands was concerned with the domestic relations, outlining the Democratic institutions within Northern Ireland. The agreement established that a 108 member inclusive Assembly would be created with the ability to exercise legislative and executive authority subject to safeguards protecting the rights and interest of all sides of the community.⁵⁹ The Assembly would be a power sharing form of government with seats allocated in proportion to a party's strength and key decisions being taken on a cross-community basis. According to the agreement there would also be an executive authority made up of a First Minister, a

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *The Good Friday Agreement*, 7.

Deputy First Minister, and up to ten Ministers with departmental responsibilities who would constitute an Executive Committee. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister would be elected by the Assembly and come from opposing parties while the posts of departmental Ministers would be allocated based on the number of seats each party held within the Assembly.

Strand two of the Agreement emphasized cross boarder relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the development of a North/South Ministerial Council that would be made up of representatives from both countries and work to co-operate on areas of mutual interest throughout the island of Ireland. Some of these areas suggested in strand two pertained to agriculture, education, transportation, tourism, and the environment. This strand was jointly written by the British and Irish governments but was posed as George Mitchell's own work with the understanding that it was more likely to be accepted by both unionists and nationalists if it was perceived to come from an independent third party.⁶⁰

The third strand of the Agreement then focused upon the relationship between Ireland and Britain through a British-Irish Council and Conference that would be comprised of representatives from both governments in addition to delegates from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Islands. The intention of this council as stated in the Good Friday Agreement was, "To promote the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the totality of relationships among the peoples of the islands".⁶¹ Some of the specific topics to be

⁶⁰ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 183.

⁶¹ *The Good Friday Agreement*, 17.

addressed in these meetings included rights, justice, prisons, and policing in Northern Ireland.

Drawing Connections

Given each of these narratives there is no doubt that in both Northern Ireland and South Africa during the 1990s truly historic peace settlements were achieved. This is one of the most prominent parallels between these two case studies, yet further analysis of these events in relation to one another reveals many more distinctions and similarities.

A broad view of these case studies illustrates a fairly similar structural process towards peace, beginning with the tentative conversations that laid the foundation for formal peace talks. In South Africa this was illustrated in the meeting between representatives of the ANC and Progressive Party as well as the conversations between future president Nelson Mandela and members of the NP government, including active president F. W. De Klerk. In Northern Ireland the many different secret negotiations taking place indirectly between the British government and Sinn Fein, or the Irish Government and paramilitary organizations on both sides demonstrate this first stage. In both countries these initial talks developed into more formal negotiations, exemplified by CODESA in South Africa and the first multi-party talks in Northern Ireland. However, in both cases negotiations eventually broke down in part due to the to NP's failure to release political prisoners in South Africa and the exclusion of Sinn Fein within the negotiations of Northern Ireland. Finally, formal talks were renewed in both countries resulting in the

formation of the interim constitution of South Africa and the Good Friday Agreement of Northern Ireland that lead to peaceful and democratic elections in each country.

From a broad perspective, these case studies diverge with the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa because no equivalent structure was formed to address the deep history of violent and counter violent conflict in Northern Ireland.⁶² The various leaders of South Africa recognized the need to go beyond merely a peaceful resolution of conflict in “The pursuit of national unity”.⁶³ According to the South African Constitution this required, “Reconciliation between the people of South Africa”, “The reconstruction of society”, “The need for understanding but not for vengeance, the need for reparation but not for retaliation, the need for Ubuntu but not for victimization”, and “The need to establish truth in relation to past gross violations of human rights”.⁶⁴ These recognized needs lead to the formation of the TRC. However, at the political level in Northern Ireland the desire for reconciliation was predominantly subverted by the individual ideological aspirations of both communities. The political leaders of Sinn Fein and the SDLP wanted a peace agreement to the extent that it ultimately furthered their nationalist ideals of uniting with the Republic of Ireland. Likewise, unionist political leaders desired a peace agreement to the extent that it supported

⁶² In May of 2008 a Commission for Victims and Survivors was established in Northern Ireland under the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 as amended by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act 2008; however, this commission was different in scope and practice from the TRC.

⁶³ *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993*, (Constitution, South Africa, January 25, 1994).; and *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995*, 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

unionist sentiments and did not alter Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdoms. According to the Reconciliation and Victims of Violence section of the GFA, all parties did "Recognize and value the work being done by many organizations to develop reconciliation, mutual understanding, and respect between and within communities and traditions in Northern Ireland... as well as pledge their continuing support to such organizations".⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the participants in the agreement seemed unwilling to engage in these efforts of reconciliation themselves based on their political interactions and refusal to meet face to face. Therefore, the Belfast Agreement serves as a good example of a peaceful resolution of conflict but there are few clear examples within the political sphere of moving beyond this within the process of reconciliation.⁶⁶

Another distinction is the various levels of outside involvement within Northern Ireland compared to South Africa. Due to the historic nature of the situation in Northern Ireland and its formation as a result of partition following the Irish War for Independence, both the British and Irish Governments were significantly involved in the peace negotiations. The deep connections between Northern Ireland and the commonwealth of the United Kingdoms as well as the Republic of Ireland made these two governments integral to achieving a peaceful

⁶⁵ *The Good Friday Agreement*, 23.

⁶⁶ I am careful to specify here the 'political sphere' because I recognize, as the Good Friday Agreement does, that there are individuals and organizations within the country who are engaged in the process of reconciliation. Many of them have had profound impacts in helping to foster healing, forgiveness, repentance, justice, and transformation within the country. Even in making this statement, there are some governmental organizations, such as the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition that have engaged in cross-community reconciliation work, but as a whole this is uncommon.

resolution of conflict. This is especially the case with the United Kingdom since direct rule had been re-imposed upon Northern Ireland in 1972 after the events of Bloody Sunday and British participation in the peace process was necessary to replace direct rule with an established Northern Irish Assembly. Moreover, under the presidency of Bill Clinton and the guidance of George Mitchell, the United States government played a vital role as outside mediators operating from a neutral position.

Contrarily, this level of outside involvement was not present within South Africa. Although there was international pressure placed upon the apartheid government to address the legalized systems of inequality and injustice, largely through sanctions, when it came to the actual negotiations there was little outside mediation. There was a level of advising given by NGOs and other countries in the formation of certain policies that impacted the process of reconciliation as seen in the drafting of the National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995, but the peace negotiations themselves took place directly between members of the South African Government and the ANC. This differentiation leads us to the essential nature of contact within the process of reconciliation.

In analyzing the peace processes of Northern Ireland and South Africa alongside one another and through a lens of reconciliation, one of the starkest differences that appears is the extent to which negotiations were characterized by direct and positive contact. In South Africa many instances of direct and positive contact occurred. This may have been due to the lack of outside mediation that was directly involved in the process, but there were many more contributing factors.

Contrary to this, Northern Ireland had very little instances of contact between the framers of the agreement. The more removed groups were from the situations of conflict, the more willing they were to have direct contact with the other parties. For example, throughout the majority of the peace talks George Mitchell acted as the primary mediator, spending time with all of the involved parties including Sinn Fein, the UUP, the British Government, and the Irish Government. In spite of declaring themselves neutral to the situation within Northern Ireland early on, both the British and Irish governments were hesitant to be seen in direct communication with those political parties that represented paramilitary organizations. In fact, under Prime Minister Major, Britain refused to have direct contact with paramilitaries. Even relations between the two countries themselves were not ideal when the tentative talks began. Nonetheless, as the process continued especially under Prime Minister Blair, both governments became much more willing to engage directly with the various parties, including those representing paramilitaries. The real issue of contact existed between the political parties of Northern Ireland, split largely by the ideological lines of nationalism and unionism.

In a chapter on Northern Ireland and South Africa Professor of Peace and Reconciliation at the University of Massachusetts, Padraig O'Malley, accentuates how cultivating trust is fundamental to negotiations as well as achieving a peaceful and lasting settlement.⁶⁷ However, trust cannot be nurtured without positive and continual experiences of contact with the other. It is in the act of positively encountering the other that one comes face to face with their humanity and one's

⁶⁷ O'Malley, "Northern Ireland and South Africa: Hope and History at a Crossroads", 284.

own. Over time each person begins to understand the other more clearly as they really are and not through the sole guise of stereotypes. It is in this sense of shared understanding that little by little trust begins to form. This trust does not necessarily predicate friendship because as Nelson Mandela said at the Arniston conference, "You negotiate with your enemies, not with your friends".⁶⁸ Instead, this kind of trust is best understood as believing in the integrity of the other, that they too genuinely desire peace and are striving to overcome the present obstacles.⁶⁹

When it came to the negotiations in Northern Ireland the indirect nature of contact in which the conversations began by operating through intermediaries in some ways continued throughout the entirety of the peace process. Delegates from the main political parties who had refused to have contact with one another from the beginning continued to refuse to talk with one another up through the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. This left Senator George Mitchell the arduous job of communicating between the different sides. In this way there was no opportunity for members of the polarized groups to experience the humanity of the other. The extent to which this stubborn refusal to interact with one another persisted was illustrated by Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein and David Trimble of the UUP who did not shake hands until after the signing of the Belfast Agreement, and this was merely a formality for the public.⁷⁰

Even with the overall lack of direct and positive interactions between the Northern Irish political parties, there were a few instances of hope amidst the peace

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 293.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

⁷⁰ *ibid*, 296.

process. One of the most influential participants in helping to bring about a peace settlement was Marjorie (Mo) Mowlam. Under the Labor Government in Britain, Mo Mowlam served as the secretary of state of Northern Ireland from May 1997 to October 1999 and made significant strides towards the validation and inclusion of all within the multi-party negotiations. She was sharply criticized by David Trimble who called for her removal multiple times because of a perceived nationalist bias. Eventually, Trimble refused to interact with her stubbornly insisting upon dealing with Blair directly. Whatever her alleged bias might have been Mowlam brought a radically new approach to the negotiations. Unlike many of the other traditional politicians participating in the multi-party talks, Mowlam recognized how significant personal contact was to the success of an agreement. She illustrated this most clearly in her decision to visit loyalist prisoners during January 1998 in the Maze prison. Mowlam was convinced that the loyalist opinion within the jail mattered and her actions demonstrated to loyalists that she took them seriously. By initiating this contact she affirmed the value of their perspective and treated them with dignity and equality by choosing to humanize rather than ostracize them. All of these are key characteristics of reconciliation.

Beyond this, Marjorie Mowlam was strong willed and viewed by many as a person of integrity. She was willing to listen as well as speak directly. These characteristics coupled with her informal manner had a powerful effect in bridging the gap between the political elites and grassroots communities. Her willingness to risk her political position for the sake of peace through instances of direct contact with the other, in many ways embody a lifestyle of reconciliation that helped move

the peace process forward. Tragically, in 1997 it became public that she was undergoing treatment for a brain tumor and while this did not diminish her commitment to the peace process, in August of 2005 it took the life of the woman who had given so much to peace in Northern Ireland.⁷¹

Another instance of hope within the Northern Ireland peace process that illustrates the significance of positive situations of contact occurred in direct relation to South Africa. As previously mentioned, in May of 1997 delegates from the various factions in Northern Ireland traveled to South Africa where they met with members of the government who had participated in their own peace settlement a few years earlier. This was known as the Arniston *Indaba* or Conference. At this conference the South Africans described their experiences and what they learned about engaging in cross community negotiations in the hopes of aiding the politicians of Northern Ireland in their own peace process. Two suggestions that developed out of this were that “There should be transparency and openness in the negotiating process” and “There must be no fudge factors”.⁷² In both cases the peace process of Northern Ireland fell woefully short in these regards. On the one hand, deep distrust existed between the nationalist and unionist parties, which their lack of contact did not help. This distrust coupled with the many conversations that had been conducted in secret earlier on in the peace process, gave the impression that deals were being made behind closed doors. This proved to be an unhealthy environment for negotiations, as it led to uncertainty and mistrust of the process. On

⁷¹ Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace*, 176.

⁷² O'Malley, “Northern Ireland and South Africa: Hope and History at a Crossroads”, 285-286.

the other hand, unlike the South African Constitution the Good Friday Agreement was extremely ambiguous leaving its policies up to multiple interpretations.

Nevertheless, the South Africans also shared the importance that empathy and positive personal contact have upon achieving a settlement and moving towards genuine peace through reconciliation. First they mentioned that parties must learn to put themselves in the shoes of the other.⁷³ Through personal experiences with another, one is able to become more empathetic. Empathy in turn helps one to better understand the other and develop a respect for their position even if contrary to one's own. This openness to the process of humanization, understanding, and respect developed through positive contact befits a lifestyle of reconciliation.

The politicians from South Africa explained that, "The level of trust that develops among negotiators is a function of their ability to communicate outside the formal settings of negotiating structures at crucial points".⁷⁴ Communicating outside the systems of negotiation necessitates contact. In these informal interactions the participants are removed from their formal personalities as negotiators and become more difficult to dehumanize. George Mitchell understood the value of humanizing the negotiation process because at one point during the late stages of negotiations, the talks were held in the US ambassador's residence in London where he insisted all the participants eat meals together. Mitchell also asserted that there be no discussion of issues at these meals and that the conversation be directed towards

⁷³ Ibid, 287.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

other subjects so that the participants could begin to see each other as human beings rather than adversaries.⁷⁵

Finally, in the experience of the South Africans, “Process is everything”.⁷⁶ It is the journey more than the destination that initiates real transformation, because one cannot separate the goal from the process. Though contact is essential to reconciliation it is not a panacea for conflict. It would be naive to assume that a simple answer such as initiating positive interactions could solve situations of inextricable complexity. Instead a more nuanced understanding is needed recognizing reconciliation as a continual process that involves peaceful resolutions of conflict but does not assume these as ends in themselves. Personal and positive contact within reconciliation is therefore essential to continuing transformation of both broken relationships and systems as people strive for justice, healing, and peace.

O’Malley himself, who played a central role in establishing the Arniston Conference, described eleven problems that he saw as obstacles threatening the Northern Ireland peace process. The first two of these challenges that he accentuated were, “The absence of continuing meaningful contact between the UUP and Sinn Fein at the highest levels” and “The absence of contact between the IRA and any party other than Sinn Fein”.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, this conference can be seen as an instance of hope because of some of the realizations that occurred from this cross-country, cross-community engagement. In reference to the South African

⁷⁵ Ibid, 297.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 290.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 302.

political parties, chief negotiator for Sinn Fein, Martin McGuinness reflected, “Obviously a number of years previously these people were bitter enemies, and here they were sitting together. From watching their body language it was clear that many of them actually liked each other, even loved each other. The message for me was that if they can do that, we can do that also”.⁷⁸ Additionally, Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern stated that the conference in South Africa “Provided an invaluable forum for face to face discussion between parties and people who found it extremely difficult to meet on their home ground in Northern Ireland. In facilitating that process of human interaction, the South African retreat could be described as a precursor to the type of atmosphere which helped us achieve the breakthrough in the Review”.⁷⁹

Though there is much room for further study as to the impact that contact or the lack thereof had on the actual peace processes in Northern Ireland, the essential nature of positive contact in moving a country towards reconciliation can be seen in a number of key instances throughout the narrative of South Africa as well. One instance is the meetings of August 1987 in Dakar Senegal that took place between members of the ANC in exile and progressive white South Africans setting a precedent for the continuation of face to face communication.⁸⁰ These three days of interaction provided necessary instances of positive contact where each side came to better understand the other and where both groups recognized their common desire for peace. This laid the foundation for not only the necessary systemic

⁷⁸ Ibid, 300.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 301.

⁸⁰ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 244.

changes that would have to take place within the nation in order to move towards greater wholeness, but also the transformation of cross-party relationships.

Throughout the negotiations both the ANC and the NP recognized the value of contact. Even when tensions were at their highest between June and September of 1992 the parties ensured that a channel of communication remained intact through their chief negotiators Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer. This illustrates the recognition that interpersonal interaction is not the ultimate answer to instances of conflict, because the situation could have become more polarized if de Klerk and Mandela had continued to meet regardless of their growing frustration with each other. Nevertheless, in the case of South Africa, contact was extremely important in achieving a peace settlement and continuing to encourage a lifestyle of reconciliation. This is exemplified in the forty-eight meetings that took place between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer. These personal meetings furthered the efforts to bring about systemic change because they helped foster an incredible amount of empathy between these two men and the difficulties, fears, and hesitations that each of their parties faced. This glimpse into the perspective of the other, which was facilitated through contact, also allowed for great respect and personal rapport to develop between them. Thus, the importance of these meetings to the peace agreement cannot be overstated as the relationship that formed between the chief negotiators made the way for the resumption of peace talks and continued engagement in the process of reconciliation.

What the meetings between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer did for their personal relationship, the *bosberaads* of December 1992 and January 1993 did for

the relationships of the ANC leadership and members of the South African Government as a whole. These two meetings where the representatives lived together, helped to confront false stereotypes, break down barriers, and bridge existing divisions. Additionally, these meeting picked up where the meeting in Senegal left off, nurturing greater understanding of the other through personal experience and contact rather than preconceived prejudice. In this way, the positive environment of interaction brought both sides in contact with the humanity of the other where they experienced an aspect of Ubuntu. That “My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours. We belong in a bundle of life”.⁸¹ Unlike what we see in Northern Ireland, this humanization through positive contact allowed for a greater sense of trust to pervade the peace negotiations and lead beyond mere resolution towards a greater sense of wholeness in reconciliation.

In analyzing the structure of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the intentionality devoted to the selection of commissioners further reflects the importance of positive contact across divisions because of the way in which it affirms diversity and unity. The seventeen commissioners were broadly representative of South African society including women, men, black, white, religious, irreligious, former supporters of apartheid, and resisters of apartheid. This not only demonstrates the value of diversity, but also the inclusion of diversity within the commission demonstrated for the first time that all members of the South African society were equal. Moreover, the way in which the commissioners interacted with each other over the course of the Commission discussing, debating,

⁸¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1st Image Books ed. (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000), 31.

listening, deliberating, disagreeing, and cooperating embodied the reality that a diverse group of people could work together towards unity.

Finally, there are countless examples of how public contact during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission served to move some individuals towards reconciliation through the humanization of the other. One of these stories is that of Mrs. Ginn Fourie, a white woman, and Mr. Ggomfa, a black man who had been part of the Azanian People's Liberation Army. Mrs. Fourie's daughter was killed in what is known as the Heidelberg Tavern Massacre by Mr. Ggomfa and two other accomplices. In an earlier criminal trial Mr. Ggomfa refused to speak to Mrs. Fourie; however, three years later during the TRC amnesty trial he and his accomplices apologized, addressed her with respect by calling her *Mama*, and expressed genuine concern for her suffering.⁸² This transition not only exemplifies the humanization that occurred between these two individuals but it also represents the opening of interactions and dialogue between diverse groups of people within the larger society.

Although there were many instances throughout the Commission of experiences of repentance, forgiveness, and humanization like the story of Mrs. Fourie and Mr. Ggomfa, it would be over idealistic not to recognize that there were also many instances in which this did not occur despite contact within the TRC. Reconciliation is not achieved at the point of forgiveness or repentance for it must be continually lived into. These are important aspects of the reconciliation process but nothing can erase the suffering and grief of past conflict. In this way

⁸² Daye, *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*, 6.

reconciliation is not about getting back to where one was but continually being transformed in relation to the past violations of human rights and striving to transform the systems that perpetuate them. Therefore, contact is by no means a panacea for instances of conflict but it is an essential aspect of the reconciliation process, without which the best one can hope for is a peaceful resolution of conflict.

Conclusion

While the evidence from these two historical case studies supports the position that positive contact is essential to the process of reconciliation, this is a delicate matter that demands deep discernment before application to other instances of conflict. In some cases the possibility of contact does not exist because the depth of animosity is too great to foster any form of face to face interaction. At the very least, this recognizes that engaging in the process of reconciliation through contact takes time and is not easy, for harms have been done and that reality cannot be excused. The seriousness and weight of this suggestion can be seen in the many heartbreaking testimonies of South African and Northern Irish people who lost loved ones in the cycles of violent conflict. As a result, it is no light matter suggesting that people come face to face with the person who killed their sister, brother, mother, father, child, or friend nor someone who violated one's community. Nonetheless, as the peace processes in both Northern Ireland and South Africa suggest, if any form of lasting reconciliation is to begin developing, contact is essential. The hope, healing, and peace of lasting reconciliation may never be fully

realized on earth, but it is a lifestyle worth pursuing because it transforms broken relationships and systems helping to embody the reality of future wholeness.

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Appendix

The Relationship Between Faith and Learning

One way that I view the relationship of faith and learning within this project is in the understanding that, “The primary task of scholarship is to ‘pay attention’ to the world”. This quotation is taken from the writings of Rhonda and Douglas Jacobsen in their book, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*. In this work they describe from a Christian perspective the task of scholarship. My project revolves around this perspective of paying attention to the world because it focuses upon the past events within Northern Ireland and South Africa during the 1990s, which drastically impacted the lives of millions of people and continue to influence our present world in unprecedented ways.

The historical nature of this project is significant because history engages people in a type of cultural exchange that not only crosses boundaries of geography but distances of time. In this way by approaching the historical past with humility the historian learns greater empathy towards past cultures, in turn fostering greater empathy in the present. The characteristic of empathy is essential to a lifestyle of reconciliation because it allows for the humanization of the other, fosters a better understanding of the other, and cultivates mutual respect. In the context of this project the intersection of faith and learning is mainly manifest through this theme of reconciliation.

The topic of reconciliation is complex and has deep roots within the Christian faith. The story of Jacob and Esau’s reunion in Genesis 33 demonstrates this

complexity. Though the brothers are reunited in an emotional encounter from which forgiveness and repentance seem to emanate, the narrative ends with a question. Does this story represent reconciliation? When the brothers part ways, Jacob asserts that he will reunite with his brother in Seir (Gen. 33:14), yet instead he goes to Succoth (Gen. 33:17). After this the text makes no mention of any interaction between the brothers except at the death of their father Isaac in Genesis 35:29. Can this really demonstrate reconciliation if reconciliation goes beyond one instance of peacefully resolving conflict? Just as Genesis 33 begs this question the historical narratives of conflict and peace in Northern Ireland and South Africa during the 1990s prompts this question too. As the South Africans elaborated upon in the Truth and Reconciliation Report, reconciliation is not achieved at the point of forgiveness or repentance for it is a lifestyle that is continually lived into. This lifestyle of reconciliation is central to the gospel message, for as human beings we are called to be reconciled with God and all creation. Therefore, within this project, the academic study of these two historical accounts alongside one another and in light of reconciliation, serves as the primary place of meeting between faith and learning.