

The 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture

Risks, Rights and Respect – Essential Elements of the Irish Peace Process'

given by

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Introduction

When I was invited to give the 11th Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture, I realised the honour and challenge of following in a long line of good friends and distinguished liberal colleagues in particular David Steel, Russell Johnston, Zach de Beer, Steingrimur Hermannson, Conrad Russell and Otto Graf Lambsdorff, as well as a number of very distinguished Sri Lankan figures.

All of these colleagues were, like me, happy to pay tribute to Dudley Senanayake, Prime Minister of this wonderful country and one of its most outstanding and genuine liberals. He was not only a political and economic liberal, but also a man who inspired genuine public affection and support, and had his electoral support not been frustrated by the vagaries of the first past the post electoral system his governmental record might have been even more remarkable. Sri Lanka would certainly have benefited from his broad and genuine sympathies for all the people of this beautiful island and had his vision of all sections living together in harmony been achieved, Sri Lanka would have been saved from the misery and heartache it has experienced since then and experiences to this very day..

I trust that it will not be taken amiss if I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to another great Sri Lankan Liberal, Chanaka Amaratunga. Chanaka and I were close contemporaries. I became leader of the Alliance Party in 1987, the same year that he established the Liberal Party of Sri Lanka and we met often at Liberal International gatherings. Like all of you I was shocked at his tragic and untimely death which not only robbed this country of a leader of singular intellectual and political integrity and ability, but left many of us in Liberal International bereft of a good friend and colleague who we fully expected had a major role to play in our world-wide liberal movement. We still miss him, and it was a delight for me to welcome his mother Mrs. Swarna Amaratunga to the Liberal International Congress this past May in my home city of Belfast. Sri Lanka's many liberal friends, and I count myself as one of them, look with hope to a revival of the liberalism for which Dudley Senanayake and Chanaka Amaratunga worked with such distinction.

I have long wished to visit Sri Lanka, not alone because of its exotic beauty and friendly people, but also because of a sense of fellow feeling, coming as I do from Ireland, another rather less exotic island, which has also been marred by deep division and violent political conflict. I know enough from my own experience of well meaning visitors to Ireland however, that I would not dream of proffering you any advice about solving your problems. Nor however could I simply ignore the division and violence. Living in such a situation it is impossible to be a liberal without seeing this chronic tragedy as being the central and key

liberal political challenge. I propose therefore to follow the example given to us by our friends in South Africa. When we were trying to find a way forward they invited us to visit their country. They did not advise us about Ireland's problems. They simply told us the story of the South African Process and not only were we inspired by the idea that the impossible had come good for them, but we did indeed find lessons in the hard won experience of Nelson Mandela, FW de Klerk, and of course the courageous Liberals who played such a key role, Helen Suzman, Zach de Beer and Colin Eglin.

A history of the Northern Irish Conflict

As I turn to the history of Ireland's feud, I should make it clear that there is no undisputed account of the past in Ireland. This is my interpretation, but like almost everything in Ireland, there are differing views. That there has been a long-standing conflict however there is no disagreement. Centuries before the religious divisions of the 16th century Protestant Reformation arrived on Irish soil, indeed centuries before England was England, the legendary warrior Cuchulainn was reputedly defending the North-eastern Irish territory of Ulster against the men of the rest of Ireland who were led by Queen Maeve. In more reliable history we know that when Congal of Ulster was fighting with Domnal of Meath as far back as 637 AD his support came from his friends in Scotland. This suggests that there was never a simple unity of the people of Ireland, and that the Northern Irish people long had a sense of separateness, feeling closer to those who lived across the channel in Scotland, than they did to those in the rest of the island. The stretch of water between Antrim, in the north of Ireland, and Galloway, in Southern Scotland was more a channel of communication, than a boundary, with people moving back and forth with relative ease throughout history. Indeed for a few hundred years from the 5th century AD the kingdom of Dalriada consisted of territory in both the Northeast of Ireland and the Southwest of Scotland.

Superimposed on this relationship between some of the people in Ireland and Scotland was the historic struggle for control of the whole archipelago of islands by the English who over many centuries gradually extended their control to include all the parts of the British Isles within one United Kingdom. There remained however a significant nationalist strand of opinion in Scotland, Wales and Ireland which held that these were separate countries and should be independent nation states in their own right. Much of the history of the islands is of violent struggle for control of territory in the service of these conflicting ends, a political debate which is still very much alive today, though fortunately now promoted through democratic politics rather than physical force.

Religious adherence played a role in these struggles, with Scotland having its own Presbyterian form of church based on Swiss Calvinism, and distinct from the episcopacy of the Anglican Church. The Roman Catholic Church had an even more difficult relationship with the British state from the time of Henry VIII and the English Reformation in the early 16th century. From that time too political and religious affiliations gradually realigned in Ireland.

Attempts by the British Crown to subdue Ireland increasingly involved the settlement of Scottish and English colonists who, it was hoped, would not only be loyal to the British Crown and defend the territory, but also promote the Protestant strand of the Christian religion. Not surprisingly Northern Irish Protestantism was more influenced by the Calvinism of the Scottish Presbyterians, from which many of the soldiers and settlers were drawn, than by

the Anglicanism of the minority of English. For a time in the late 18th century some of these Scots-Irish Presbyterians actually sided with the Catholics in fighting for an independent Ireland, free of the oppressive rule of the British state, but after the failure of the 1798 Rebellion, and arguably more importantly Daniel O'Connell's campaign for Catholic Emancipation and a separate Irish Kingdom in the 19th century, an increasing majority of Protestants came to the conclusion that they would be less free in a majority Catholic Irish state, than in a majority Protestant British state. They therefore sided with the British State politically and continued to provide indigenous militias and later police services whose purpose was the maintenance of British rule, as well as law and order, and whose membership was largely Protestant.

In the late 19th century the British Liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone moved to address Irish Catholic and Nationalist concerns, partly at least because of the strength of Irish Nationalist representation at Westminster. The result was that Ireland polarized further along religious/political lines, and eventually his own Liberal party split when the Irish Liberal Unionists and their supporters joined the Conservatives.

In 1916 there was another unsuccessful rebellion by nationalist republicans in Dublin, known as the Easter Rising because of the date when it took place. The rebels had little support until the British forces executed the defeated ring-leaders, who then became martyrs to the cause of Irish freedom. As the First World War came to an end in 1918 and with it the break-up of many empires across Europe, so in Ireland there was a continued rise in Nationalist sentiment and the issue had to be addressed again by a British Liberal Prime Minister; this time, David Lloyd George. By now the divisions between the Protestant North of the island and the Catholics in the rest of the country seemed unbridgeable. In 1919 the Irish War of Independence broke out in, and ended in 1921 with the partition of the island; the six counties of the North which had a Protestant majority remained within the United Kingdom, while the twenty-six Southern counties opted for independence.

Britain hoped in vain that it had laid the matter to rest by the partition settlement in the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, and over the next fifty years it treated Northern Ireland largely as a self-governing dominion, though still within the United Kingdom. The Southern Irish state meanwhile emphasized and developed its independence by leaving the British Commonwealth, becoming a Republic, remaining neutral during the Second World War and refusing to join the NATO military alliance. During that period from 1923 to 1968 there was only sporadic terrorist activity and much could have been done to address the needs of the Catholic minority in the North and the Protestant minority in the South. Cross-border economic cooperation would also have made a substantial difference to relations. Instead the two states developed separately and little was done by way of cooperation of any kind. After fifty years of partition few Protestants remained in the Irish Republic and the increasingly substantial Catholic minority in Northern Ireland felt isolated and alienated.

The 'Troubles' 1968 - 1998

When the civil rights marches, which were a feature of the late 1960's all over the world, made their appearance in Northern Ireland the key issue was this sense of alienation from the state and the problems of political and religious discrimination against Catholics and especially Nationalists. The initial demand of Nationalist leaders at the time was "British rights for British citizens" however as hard-line Protestant elements responded to the civil rights marches with violent opposition and attempts at intimidation the situation broke down

into serious urban unrest. It was also obvious that while the trouble was within Northern Ireland, the context was still the territorial dispute between the North and South and the unresolved relationship between Britain and Ireland.

The breakdown quickly became bloody and in the violence that followed three and a half thousand people were killed and tens of thousands were injured in a population of only 1.5 million, most of the deaths coming in the first five years of what became known locally as 'the Troubles'. As is usually the case in such circumstances, the first reaction of the Government was to deal with the problem as a matter of internal security. The Northern Ireland Government had very extensive powers under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act of 1922 and the Emergency Powers Act of 1926 - legislation which had been introduced in the emergency context immediately after the civil war, but had remained in place and in use over the whole of the following fifty years. However the Northern Ireland Government which controlled the Northern Ireland police failed to stem the tide of violence, and in 1971 introduced executive detention without trial as a last ditch attempt at internal management, using the special powers legislation. This had a completely counter-productive effect. The security situation deteriorated disastrously as many observers had already warned it would. In fact internment, as it was known locally, acted as recruiting sergeant for the Irish Republican Army. The IRA was the main nationalist republican terrorist group. It had been quiescent for years, but now re-emerged, partly as a protection against Protestant mobs which were attacking Catholic areas.

The British Government realized that it had to intervene and in the following year (1972) in the face of increasing destruction and loss of life, it prorogued the Northern Ireland Government and Parliament. During the whole of its fifty years of existence until then Northern Ireland had been run by one political party, the (almost exclusively Protestant) Ulster Unionist Party. The 1920 settlement had failed to deliver long-term stability and the Government in London took over direct rule of the North again. A Protestant/Catholic power-sharing arrangement that was negotiated in 1973 collapsed after only six months as a result of massive action by Protestant militias that could not be controlled by the police or the British Army. .

Over the next number of years the British Government in London kept some level of law and order and ensured that health, education and other public services and the economy survived. Meanwhile both Government and civil society in the form of the churches, trade unions, the business community and non-governmental organizations all appealed for, and worked very hard for a settlement but to no avail. In the late 1970's a major peace movement was led by women who felt particularly grieved by the death and injury brought by terrorism. These Peace People held marches and organized many activities bringing ordinary people from the two sides together. It seemed to have mass appeal and in 1976 its leaders, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, but in the end it too came to nothing. Business and professional people who had been the backbone of the public institutions left political life, while the terrorists on both sides seemed oblivious to the suffering and economic havoc they were causing.

The capture, conviction and imprisonment of republican and loyalist terrorists did little to improve the situation because inside prison they continued their campaigns. It became impossible to manage the prisons with integrated arrangements because of violence between the two sides. Once they were separated each used the educational facilities to develop their political ideas and strategies, as well as continuing to protest against their treatment as ordinary prisoners on charges relating to weapons, bombings, murder, robbery etc. They

insisted that they were political prisoners whose 'crimes' were all in the cause of their political beliefs. The fact that after almost ten years the IRA's terrorist campaign had not brought about the expected withdrawal of British forces led to a strategic rethink by the increasing numbers of IRA prisoners, especially those in The Maze Prison. Their struggle with the authorities resulted in a cycle of regressive self abuse and dehumanization. First they refused to wear prison clothes since these would identify them as criminals rather than prisoners of war. When this resulted in the prisoners being refused leave from their cells to use the toilet, they responded by taking faeces from their slop buckets and smearing themselves and their cell walls. The inhumanity of the circumstances for them and their jailers brought by this so-called 'Dirty Protest' was responded to by the prison authorities with power hosing and disinfection of the cells and inevitably physical abuse and fights. The cold, unswerving and punitive approach taken by British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was reacted to with a decision to go on Hunger Strike. When the first of these hunger strikes ended with recriminations and accusations by the prisoners of bad faith by her and her officials, the stage was set for a climactic starvation to death of ten men. The tensions heightened when the leader of the Hunger Strike, Bobby Sands was elected an MP at Westminster while in prison and on hunger strike. He continued his fast after his election and was, as he had planned, the first to die. This progressive and profoundly inhuman treatment of themselves brought few obvious short-term benefits in that they died and the process was abandoned without concessions when the families, especially the mothers, began to intervene, but the ten Hunger Strikers of 1981 who had died became martyrs, in a remarkable and possibly conscious repetition of the executions of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising. Theirs was seen as a blood sacrifice and became the basis for the political rise of Sinn Fein at the expense of the moderate or so-called 'constitutional Nationalists' in the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) who were led by John Hume and were committed to peaceful and democratic means of bringing about change. Violence and terrorism seemed to be making the possibility of a peaceful outcome more and more remote, and a weary and fearful despair descended on the community.

Further responses by British Government to the outbreak of the Troubles

While the situation continued to deteriorate, despite the expenditure of massive resources in policing, army and other security measures, it should not be imagined that nothing constructive was being done. On the contrary a whole raft of measures was rapidly introduced in the early 1970's and they were continually reviewed and updated over the next twenty years.

The police service in Northern Ireland - called the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) - were judged almost entirely positively by the Protestant population who regarded them as their defenders, whereas for much of the Catholic population the attitudes to the police were quite the reverse. From the outbreak of the Troubles it became clear that policing would be one of the chief areas of difficulty. After the serious violence of 1969 there were sweeping changes in police structure, the creation of a representative Police Authority of Northern Ireland giving all sections a role in oversight of the police, and the abolition of the police reserve and their replacement by a new regiment of the British Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment.

There were also major legal changes. A new office of Director of Public Prosecutions was set up, the hated Special Powers Act was replaced by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act in 1973, and internment which had been such a disaster was

phased out, though it remained on the statute book.

Even before the outbreak of violence in 1967 it was recognized by progressive politicians and thinkers in Northern Ireland that there were many areas of communal life where injustice and discrimination contributed to the sense of Catholic alienation and resultant political instability. A Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights was established and the office of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman were established to give clear routes for complaints to be investigated against public authorities.

The Fair Employment Agency was established to change the unfair employment practices against Catholics and the new regional Housing Executive moved quickly to ensure that all housing allocations were scrupulously fair.

The idea that education of Protestant and Catholic children in separate schools might contribute to the community divisions in Northern Ireland was not a new one, but now there were substantial moves to create an Integrated Education sector in Northern Ireland where Protestant and Catholic children would be educated together, and in January 1990 the Community Relations Council was set up to promote better community relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

The Development of a Peace Process

Despite the enormous security measures and all these constructive efforts at addressing areas of grievance and inequality the terrorist campaign was unabated and the polarization of the community continued. Since 1973 however, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland had been members of the European Economic Community. As a result, government ministers and others began to meet regularly within the structure of the EEC and this slowly began to change the context of Anglo-Irish relations. Mutual respect grew as practical working arrangements developed.

When the two Governments, in the aftermath of the 1981 Hunger Strike found themselves facing profound threats to political instability both North and South of the Irish border they had at least developed a new and positive political relationship. In 1985 after intense and secret talks between the two Governments, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed by British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher and Irish Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald laying the foundations for unprecedented cooperation between the two states in addressing the Northern Ireland issue. It was helped by the institutional and personal relationships which had developed in the context of the European Economic Community but it must also be said that this initiative did involve leadership and the taking of political risks. From then on the British and Irish Governments worked together becoming the engine for the Peace Process and giving each other the encouragement needed to take more risks for peace.

The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement not only came about in the context of the EEC, it was also to a very great extent modelled on the same European principles. It set up new bilateral institutions between Britain and Ireland, including a British-Irish Secretariat based just outside Belfast, a regular Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, and a British-Irish Inter-parliamentary Body, and this all helped improve relations between Britain and Ireland. But while the democratic Catholic Nationalists now felt less isolated, the IRA continued its terrorist campaign, and Protestant paramilitaries, feeling betrayed by Britain, took revenge through further sectarian killings of Catholics. Indeed the profoundly adverse reaction of

almost the whole of the Protestant unionist population of Northern Ireland, and some Conservative political figures in Britain, led to a serious political crisis. But for the steadiness of the police in Northern Ireland led by Sir John Hermon (even under profound pressure from the Protestant community from which most of them came) the community might well have slipped over into chaos. Many policemen were driven from their homes with threats to their lives and families not just from the IRA but now also from their own protestant co-religionists who were furious about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It took six years of diplomatic activity to get political representatives of the two sides in Northern Ireland to sit around a table to talk, and even then the parties with terrorist involvement were not present – that took a further five years. During all of this period whatever Prime Minister or party was in power in London or in Dublin, the Peace Process held firm. Margaret Thatcher, Charles Haughey, Garret Fitzgerald, Albert Reynolds, John Major, John Bruton, Tony Blair and Bertie Aherne all led different governments in London and Dublin during this period, but all in their own way regarded the Peace Process as something that was a national commitment and interest that transcended party politics.

During the years of what became known as 'Talks about Talks' the parties edged very slowly towards the Table, not by exploring the substantive issues, but by discussing how they could even begin to engage. This required commitment and devotion by small teams of civil servants and party officials behind the scenes, setting up arrangements, smoothing the way, and keeping records, notes, and contacts in place. This work was necessary to hold the Process together over the years, and to facilitate the involvement of people in all the communities through their own representatives, without which little progress can be made. Those years were not years of perfect achievement. Mistakes were made. But the consistent, gradual and increasingly inclusive approach was essential.

The wider international community played a role too, particularly the United States of America during the two Clinton administrations. They provided economic assistance, encouragement, expertise and mediation. Visits were arranged for Northern Ireland politicians to other parts of the world to see conflict resolution at work. As I have said earlier, South Africa was especially helpful in this regard.

The formal Talks in 1991 consolidated agreement on the basis for the future negotiations. It was agreed that our historic problems were the result of damaged communal relationships and there were three sets of relationships which needed to be addressed – relationships within Northern Ireland (particularly between protestant Unionists and catholic nationalists), the relationship between North and South, and the relationship between Britain and Ireland – and there would be three strands to the Talks mirroring these relationships and involving the various stakeholders. At this point the British and Irish Governments, and the four major democratic parties in Northern Ireland (Ulster Unionist Party, Democratic Unionist party, Alliance Party and Social Democratic and Labour Party) were participants in the Talks. However the republican and loyalist parties connected to the illegal terrorist groups on both sides were excluded (ie Sinn Fein associated with the IRA, the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party associated with the UVF and UDA respectively).

While a useful basis for working and relating together emerged, these Talks ultimately made little progress on the substantive issues. John Hume, the leader of the moderate Catholic SDLP had come to the view that while we could have a political process involving only the democratic parties, we could not have a Peace Process unless those who were causing the violence were involved. It had been clear for some time to those who wished to see it, that there was no military solution to the problem, indeed this had been said publicly

by British military commanders for some years. There was of course a military role, and it was often described by the British Generals as "holding the ring until the politicians sort out the problem", however political progress was still regarded as possible only among the more moderate law-abiding parties. At this point no-one else, including the Irish Government, agreed with John Hume about involving the IRA or its representatives and when he then made it clear that he would no longer continue in the process unless Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA became involved it looked as though the process was doomed.

In fact, the opposite was the case. This change of strategy, like the bringing together of the British and Irish Governments in the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, turned out to be another watershed. Intensive, often secret and deniable conversations which included representatives of the British and Irish Governments and the paramilitary (terrorist) groups eventually led to a memorandum called the Downing Street Declaration in December 1993, and in August of 1994 the IRA called a ceasefire. The scene was now set for serious negotiations involving all the key players including those who represented the terrorist groups.

Framework Documents for a settlement were published by the two Governments in February 1995 and a twin-track process developed later in the year to address the three stranded political agenda and the problems associated with getting rid of the terrorist weapons - this latter was known as 'decommissioning', a term which recognized that the terrorists were not being disarmed, but were voluntarily giving up their war materials. In many ways the key to the process was not just that it was inclusive of all the key parties, but also that it was recognized that no settlement could be achieved through force. The principle of 'consent' was the foundation for any agreement. Everyone would have to be confident that the rights of their people were being respected.

The approach of Senator George Mitchell as chairman of the multi-party talks that led to the Belfast Agreement in 1998 was vital for its success. He did not bring his own solutions to the talks. He listened patiently and carefully for a very long time to all the different parties to the problem. He excluded no-one, and created a process where the parties brought their proposals to him in the presence of each other. They did not reach agreement in this way, but he built such trust that when the parties had exhausted the process of talking, they asked him to bring forward proposals. This work of building a process, rather than conjuring up a solution, was the heart of the conflict resolution. It required skill and stamina and like the preparatory phase took some years. There were many aspects to the negotiations. The careful use of deadlines, gradual building of respectful behaviour (even the absence of *feelings* of respect), devices to break through when there was deadlock, and the imaginative use of different formats for the talks were just a few of the skills needed in this key phase of the Peace Process. I must however emphasise again that the key was coming to an understanding that it was the process, and not any specific formulae or propositions which enabled us to make real progress.

The 1998 Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and its Implementation

In any community that has been affected by serious and prolonged inter-communal violence as Northern Ireland has, the process of bringing the conflict to an end almost always involves major changes in the political institutions and the justice and security agencies. Such changes not only symbolize the commitment to a new start; they also institutionalize real change and create the opportunity for that new start. Of course, all the same people are around, and many of the underlying tensions remain, but there is at least a chance for a new

start if the rules of the game are changed.

The first change in the rules of the game is the requirement for inclusiveness and agreement. The new rules must be agreed by everyone, or there must at least be a sufficient consensus. Even after the years long negotiations of the Belfast Agreement were finally completed on Friday April 10, 1998 by the British and Irish Governments and the majority of the elected representatives of unionist, nationalist, and nonaligned parties in Northern Ireland, it was still necessary to take the proposition to the people for their approval. The people had to be directly included, not just their representatives. In referendums in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in May 1998, the people gave their overwhelming support to the proposed new institutions, arrangements and structures, and the two Governments proceeded to pass them into law in both countries.

The institutional changes the people agreed to were very substantial indeed. The Talks Process had been a three-stranded affair to address the three sets of relationships - within Northern Ireland, between North and South and between Britain and Ireland. The Belfast Agreement had substantial new proposals in all three strands.

As already observed, the experience of the development of the Europe Union showed itself in the content of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and the same could be said of the 1998 Belfast Agreement. EU cross-border cooperation was mirrored in a new 'Strand Two' North-South Ministerial Council (bringing together ministers) and North-South Executive Bodies (staffed by civil servants) from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland dealing with areas such as agriculture, economic development, environmental protection and transport.

In 'Strand Three' the British-Irish Secretariat and the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental arrangements largely remained but to them was added the variable geometry of a new British-Irish Council bringing together not only ministers from London and Dublin, but also the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

The institutional centre-piece of the Agreement was however in 'Strand One' with the new-style Assembly. In Northern Ireland, with its deep divisions between pro-British Protestants and pro-Irish Catholics, a series of completely different forms of government had previously been tried-everything from majority rule by a single party, through power-sharing; from a first-past-the-post voting system for elections to proportional representation. In the new arrangements *everything* would be proportional. If a party received 10 percent of the vote, it would have 10 percent of the members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, 10 percent of the members on all committees, 10 percent of all the chairmanships and deputy chairmanships, and even 10 percent of the ministers in the government. In addition there were a series of complex and overlapping legal and political protections and veto arrangements so that nothing could be done that was unacceptable to a significant minority of the community. One example was that instead of a Prime Minister there would be a First Minister and a Deputy First Minister representing the two main sections of the community. They had to be elected together on a joint slate, by cross-community agreement. In this vote (and all other significant votes), the representatives in the Assembly were identified not only by their membership of a political party but also by their alignment as unionist, nationalist, or 'other', and for a vote to pass, it required not only an overall majority but also a majority of both unionists and nationalists. Neither of the two top elected officials could act separately; they could act only jointly and by agreement.

The strengths of such a complex arrangement are obvious—the requirement that the partisan forces cooperate in protecting each section of the community from oppression by the other. However, this is also its Achilles' heel, and the new Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended on a number of occasions because of political difficulties between the representatives of the main communal groups on the issues of weapons and the use of force. The absence of consensus, or at least a degree of consent from both sides, resulted for some years in repeated crises in which the only options seemed to be either breakdown of the whole Agreement or the intervention of the external stakeholders – the British Government in cooperation with the Irish Government. Eventually this 'teething' period seems to be passing, but it did provide some serious threats to the survival of the new institutions.

In addition to the North-South bodies, the British-Irish structures and the Northern Ireland Assembly all the previous human rights and equality protections and institutions were maintained or built upon. There was a new and more powerful Human Rights Commission, and an Equality Commission which brought together the powers and responsibilities of a number of previous smaller Commissions. Then there were the provisions for the decommissioning of weapons, release of prisoners, reform of policing, normalization and demilitarization of security and the improvements to the administration of justice.

It is sometimes assumed that once an agreement is reached the main problems are well on the way to being resolved, but Senator George Mitchell wisely pointed out to the participants at the signing of the Belfast Agreement in April 1998, that in many ways the hard part was just beginning. Implementation would indeed prove every bit as challenging as he had prophesied. There were many crises, but in truth the Peace Process had been in crisis from the start. Early arguments over the semantics of its 'permanence' or 'completeness' of the IRA's cessation of violence were just indications of the difficulties to be faced all along the way. The peacefully settlement of an ancient feud is rarely achieved without a prolonged, sometimes tortuous, process.

The wording of the Belfast Agreement had not been clear on the decommissioning of weapons. Some nationalist politicians saw pressure on decommissioning of IRA weapons as premature, but regarded moves which were clearly set out in the Agreement on prisoner releases and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the North-South Implementation bodies, the Human Rights and Equality Commissions and the British Irish Inter-Governmental Council as needing immediate implementation.

Meanwhile the unionist parties were angry about the British Government fulfilling its commitments on prisoners, in advance of the IRA decommissioning of weapons, and when there was no clear commitment from the IRA that 'the war was over'. All sides saw some political developments as too rapid and others as not quick enough. For ordinary people, relief that both republican and loyalist terrorist campaigns had ended, was tempered by anxiety about the underlying threat of a resumption of violence. Street confrontations and sectarian attacks on people and property were worryingly reminiscent of the way the Troubles had begun in the late 1960's, and there was evidence that social and psychological difficulties from the Troubles years, were emerging as a form of negative peace dividend. The implementation of the Belfast agreement was incomplete and no-one was yet entirely at ease.

Rebuilding of the Rule of Law

In essence people turn to violent political conflict both because they feel a sense of deep injustice, and often of humiliation and disrespect, and also because they cannot see how the normal mechanisms of democracy and the rule of law can address their concerns. People in any conflict will only therefore begin to turn away from violence as a means of solving their predicament if they feel that there is an alternative way to address their grievances, and that the prize of peace is worth the price of peace. The community needs to be weary of war and prepared to accept an outcome which is less than their ideal - a compromise - for the sake of peace. Central to this is the rebuilding of the Rule of Law.

We have seen that wide-ranging reforms had been made in anti-discrimination measures, a whole range of commissions, ombudsmen, tribunals and equality bodies. Education, community relations, and economic under-development, especially in targeting social need in under-privileged areas had also received substantial attention and resources. The most difficult and contentious changes however were in the reform of policing and the criminal justice system, the release of prisoners, the decommissioning of illegal weapons, and demilitarization.

A key requirement is to have a policing service which has the confidence of the whole community. During the talks process it was agreed that to establish an independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland to produce the necessary recommendations. The following year its report "A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland" was published with no less than 175 recommendations, including the replacement of the Royal Ulster Constabulary by a new Northern Ireland Police Service, with a new Policing Board and District Policing Partnership Boards to ensure accountability, and a new uniform and a new badge and symbols free of onesided political associations.

The British and Irish Governments welcomed the Patten Report and it became the key document for the reform of policing in Northern Ireland. The British Government moved to the implementation of its 175 recommendations including the necessary legislation and the appointment in 2000 of the ex-chief of police for New York State, Tom Constantine as Oversight Commissioner.

One of the other key appointments proposed by the Patten Commission was that of a powerful Police Ombudsman with its own investigatory capacity. The first Ombudsman was Mrs Nuala O'Loan, a Catholic lawyer whose husband was an elected Nationalist politician. This was a clear sign that the police would be held accountable for any complaints and in her period as Ombudsman between 1999 and 2007 she took a strong and independent line.

The terms of reference for the Review of the Criminal Justice System set out in the Belfast Agreement were wide-ranging. The Review which was published in March 2000 made 294 recommendations. It was then subject to extensive consultation before the publication of the Government's response, including an implementation plan in June 2003. Lord Clyde was appointed Justice Oversight Commissioner in June 2003 for a period of 3 years and was responsible for monitoring and reporting regularly on the progress of implementation of the 293 accepted recommendations.

Much more could be said of the many commissions and bodies to deal with the past, the needs of the victims of violence and the decommissioning of weapons, demilitarization and

security normalization. The body with which I have been most associated during this implementation phase of the process is the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) which was brought into being to deal with the problems implementation of the Belfast Agreement. Six years after it was signed the IRA and the Loyalist paramilitaries still had not got rid of their weapons and as result a the cross-community, power-sharing Government kept collapsing over the problems of distrust. The regular six-monthly reports of the IMC on terrorist activity and demilitarization (and there have been 19 reports to date from the four Commissioners) have helped to rebuild a sense of trust in official 'truth-telling' and to put pressure on the illegal loyalist and republican paramilitaries to get rid of their weapons and leave physical force and the threat of force behind. The IMC also monitored British Army and police 'normalization' and it has been remarkably successful in gaining a sense of trust within the community and enabling the Peace Process to move forward by persuading the IRA to stand down its' volunteers and organizational structures, delivering up its weapons to the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning and ultimately giving support to the new Police Service of Northern Ireland

The need for financial assistance to ensure stability in Ireland had long been recognized. While the British Treasury has paid a substantial subvention which has at times amounted to 50% of the total public expenditure bill, we have benefited from significant other assistance. The Irish diaspora has played its part. Perhaps the most notable example is that of Dr (now Sir) Tony O'Reilly, former President, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of H.J. Heinz Co., and Pittsburgh businessman Dan Rooney. These two Irish emigres created The Ireland Fund, with three main aims - Peace, Culture and Charity. The Ireland Funds are an international network with Ireland Funds in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Japan, Monaco, China and the USA, and they have raised more than \$300 million for peace-building causes in Ireland.

In 1986 after the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the British and Irish Governments established the International Fund for Ireland as an independent international organization to channel financial aid from the USA, the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and since the end of the 1980's the European Community has become one of the main sources of funding for the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), and contributes €15 million per year to the IFI. In addition, in 1995, the European Community set up a special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. This operates in Northern Ireland and in the Border Region of Ireland to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation in the region. The PEACE II Programme (2000-2004), was worth € 708 million. Much of the funding is actually managed by locally-based partnership structures and by nongovernmental organisations which cross the community divide, and encourage people to come together and work as closely as possible at grassroots level. This approach has had some success in paving the way towards joint action as well as extending the reach of EU funding to parts of the communities that would not otherwise have benefited.

All these different forms of financial assistance - governmental, international and philanthropic - have played a crucial role in maintaining some semblance of stability during the most difficult and violent period, as well as in helping people build a more stable society once political agreement was achieved. It is important however to note that economic assistance on its own did not lead to a resolution of the problem, a mistake in approach which is often made by external players, especially those coming from relatively stable and prosperous Western societies.

I hope that you will forgive me for being overlong in my description of the Irish Peace Process, but this is not mere self-indulgence. I have been trying to convey the commitment and complexity involved in developing and sustaining the kind of process which is necessary to deal with long-standing violent political conflict. If people still believe that they can solve such a problem by military force, there will be no serious process. Only when they come to the conclusion that neither side can win out totally over the other in perpetuity, will they appreciate that this is a political problem which requires a political solution, and that means dialogue. If it is then to move beyond a political process to become a Peace Process it will ultimately require dialogue with those who have been involved in the violence. This will need leaders of real courage and political ability who are prepared to take risks for the benefit of the next generation. Engagement with people that you have hated and who have hated and tried to kill you demands a degree of moral courage and emotional containment that I can promise you does not come easy to any of us. And while there is an enormous peace dividend, as those of you who have visited Ireland in recent years will have seen, the prize of peace does have an enormous emotional and political price tag.

Conclusion

The various components that I have outlined - the critical part played by influential *international relationships*, the *sustained political commitment* over a long period of time whatever government was in power, a significant *preparatory period of pre-negotiation*, the difficult but necessary *inclusion of the representatives of all parties, including those associated with violence*, the creation of *sustainable economic development and cross-border trade*, the deployment of *patient, imaginative and skilful mediation* through a long-term talks process, an element of *institutional creativity*, and the embedding of *international instruments of human rights protection* - these were all vital aspects of the Peace Process of conflict resolution in Ireland. This was also true of the difficult but crucial problems of *rights, responsibilities, and respect for minorities*, which cannot be avoided, for they are at the core of almost all such conflicts, and even international legal norms and structures are rarely a sufficient guarantor for the partisans in a conflict. Perhaps some of the most difficult of the issues which had to be addressed however included *policing and the administration of justice, the release of prisoners and dealing with the weapons and the legacy of the period of violence*.

While relationships and communities cannot survive without the stability of legal and political structures and boundaries, they are based on more than the observance of rules and laws. There must also be a spirit of generosity and respect. Without this the new arrangements cannot flourish, and conflict is never truly put to the past.

Rules and rights can provide the context for a conflict to be stopped, but only a new culture of mutual respect can prevent it from returning. Developing that political culture of respect and trust is the task that this generation in Northern Ireland has shouldered. We must not delegate it to the next generation for if we do we may also be handing on to them the poisoned chalice which we inherited, and that is no commendation for any generation, in Northern Ireland, in Sri Lanka, or in our wider world.

(Lord John Alderdice FRCPsych was the Leader of Northern Ireland's cross-community political party, the Alliance Party from 1987 to 1998, the first Speaker of the new Northern Ireland Assembly from 1998 to 2004, and one of the four members of the Independent Monitoring Commission from 2004. Since 1996 he has been a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords, and since 2005 he has been President of Liberal International, the world-wide federation of liberal political parties.)