

# Negotiations resolution and conflict



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Running head: The success of a negotiation process is commonly dependent on the development of flexibility between the parties involved. Full participation of the parties to a conflict and their cooperation is important for the negotiation process to be successful. In essence, various stages of the negotiation process can not be completed successfully where one party is unwilling to participate in the negotiation process. Though the various stages and procedures of the negotiation process are generally applicable in most situations, I take the case of Northern Ireland and try to relate these to other conflict situations.

Understanding the history of Northern Ireland demands the analysis of the peace process which has generally been attributed to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) cease fire in 1994. It was this notable development that ended most of the violence and the signing of the Belfast Agreement in an effort to end the thirty years of political stalemate and sectarian violence. The chaos which were facing the region as of that time were a product of political disagreement between the political parties and in particular the nationalist Social Democratic and labor party (SDLP) which was been led by John Hume and Sinn Fein (SF) closely associated with PIRA. Political differences between the unionist and the republicans had been triggered by disagreement regarding formation of a union between Northern Ireland and Great Britain on one hand and the formation of a united Ireland on the other hand (Hennessey, 2001, p. 45).

The major goal of the negotiators in the Northern Ireland peace process was ending the violence that had hit the region for 30 years. This as the parties realized, could only be achieved through a campaign aimed at permanently ending the use and support of paramilitary violence. On the part of the

unionist, creation of a united Ireland would not be a good move based on a number of factors and in particular religious factors. The unionist argued that formation of a united Ireland would give the Catholic Church excessive power over the non Catholics. On the other extreme, the republicans led by the Provisional IRA wanted the formation of a united Ireland and the release of republican prisoners who were been held by the Irish government.

On February, 22, 1995, a three day ceasefire was announced by the provisional IRA and this was followed by disputes over the permanence of ceasefire as declared by PIRA. These disputes were mainly centered on those parties which were still using paramilitaries and their involvement in the negotiation talks. In essence, these disputes did little in stopping bombings and killings by loyalists from both sides.

The negotiation process started with the establishment of framework for formation of an accountable government in Northern Ireland and a framework for agreement dealing with both north and south institutions. The framework for an accountable government proposed a 90 member assemble in a single chamber with the members been elected through proportional representation. The unionists were not happy with this proposal arguing that it translated into a joint government program for the unity of the Irish. A joint committee formed by the Irish and British government in November 1995 established what was known as a twin track process aimed at making progress in regard to the all party negotiations and decommissioning issue (Knox, 2000, p. 67). In addition, preparatory talks were to initiate all-party negotiations expected to start earlier 1996. The international body was to be led by Senator George Mitchell from U. S. and was expected to provide an independent assessment in regard to the decommissioning process.

In January 1996, the international body released a report known as the Mitchell report which set six “ Mitchell Principles” to act as a guide for all-party talks. The report suggested a number of measures aimed at building confidence between the parties and included measures such as elective process. The conclusion of the report was that arms decommissioning would take place during all-party talks as opposed to before or after the talks. Despite the fact that the Irish government and the opposition parties welcomed the report, the unionist had their reservations with DUP rejecting it outright.

Participants in the all-party talks were required to agree to abide with all the international report principles with preparatory proximity talks a necessarily condition. Some of the unionist parties refused to join in the talks with the Provincial Sinn Fein been refused entry due to the IRA persistence violence. In the same month, a date for elections to determine the all-party negotiations participants was set and the Northern Ireland Act passed to allow for smooth voting process. Violence still roamed in the region with loyalist killing in an effort to show their frustrations with the peace process progress. Riots and protests followed the initial talks with republicans threatening to walk out from the ongoing Northern Ireland forum (Knox, 2000, p. 72). A committee was set up to review parades in Northern Ireland which later released a report recommending the set up of an independent commission that would be responsible for reviewing contagious parades. Though this was welcomed by the nationalist and some republicans, the unionists attacked it as infringing the freedom of assembly right. Here, it is observed that the various parties were all along using unethical tricks to win the compliance of the others. For example, Sinn Fein made use of

abstentionism policy whereas the unionist tended to reject most of the proposals put forth by the various committees.

Arguably, the entire peace process made little use of Franciscan values. In essence, most of these values were not applied but rather what was practiced by the parties involved showed a complete contrast. To start with, the parties involved did not engage in responsible social actions. Notably, every individual party was supposed to protect the rights and freedoms of community members. On the contrary, paramilitary violence initiated by the parties as evident in the frequent bombings and riots even after the negotiation process had begun indicates no responsible social action. Further, reverencing all creation as one of the major Franciscan value was never upheld. This was again evident in the numerous assassinations and injuries caused by the parties' triggered violence and riots. Perhaps the only value that can be said to have been upheld during the whole process but not without some accompanying ugly incidents is that of making peace through the promotion of non violence and means of solving the existing conflicts (Hennessey, 2001, p. 47).

In conclusion, despite the many hitch backs experienced throughout the negotiation process, setting aside of paramilitary force was finally agreed upon and substantive talks started in October 1997. After a series of negotiations meeting, an agreement was reached between the two governments and Northern Ireland political parties paving way for prisoners release, a devolved and inclusive government, reduction of troops, paramilitary decommissioning, civil rights measures and Irish reunification polls provisions. The agreement however was to be approved through a referendum which after been conducted welcomed the formation of the

Northern Ireland Assembly.

References:

Hennessey, T. (2001). The Northern Ireland peace process. London, Macmillan Publishers, p. 45, 47

Knox, C. (2000). Peace building in Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa. London, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67, 72