

What made the good friday agreement possible in 1998 essay



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There were many factors which made the Agreement in 1998 possible, incorporating different groups.

These groups were the IRA, Sinn Fein, lead by Gerry Adams, SDLP headed by John Hume, Irish Government, the British Government who were primarily directed by the Conservatives and then the Labour Party in 1997. Also, the USA, with Bill Clinton as the president and both him and George Mitchell playing a major role in the peace talks, UUP, with David Trimble being the leader and Loyalists Paramilitary Groups for example the LVF and UVF. Also, the Catholic Church was a big part of it as well. The DUP can also be linked in with all of these groups however did not want to be a part of the peace talks. There had been a lot of previous attempts at peace but they had failed. This was because with each, at least one group had disagreed to it and not everyone could get on because of different views and opinions.

For example The Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. This was unsuccessful however because Sinn Fein discarded of it saying it established the partition in Northern Ireland. So for peace to be likely, an agreement would have to be brought up which linked every group together and so they found a common ground. A state of affairs came about in Easter 1998 where there was a chance that peace could be possible. This then led to talks leading to the Good Friday Agreement. This essay will investigate the factors which helped make the agreement possible and how they all link together in a chain.

The Catholic Church had wanted peace all along and these were the people who were trying to get Sinn Fein to join the peace processes. The Church recognized that Sinn Fein had an essential role to play if peace was to come

about. This was because Sinn Fein could contact the IRA, who would listen to them, because they were on their side and understood them. Consequently, the Church put major pressures on the Sinn Fein party to take on a more peaceful approach to resolve the Northern Ireland situation. At this time, Sinn Fein was also losing a lot of votes because the voters seemed to want less and less violence and the SDLP were gaining more votes at Sinn Fein's expense. And so as a result, Sinn Fein did agree to adopt more peaceful methods.

The Catholic Church, as a whole, played a major part but also individuals did as well; priests acted as messengers between groups trying to sort out problems, this then connects with next link. With the Catholic Church persuading Sinn Fein to become a lot more peaceful, and priests acting as go-betweens, Gerry Adams was prepared to have peace talks with the leader of the SDLP: John Hume. This was not as easy as it sounds however, because the SDLP had never been in connection with Sinn Fein and many SDLP supporters did not want this ever to happen. But John Hume, to make peace possible, was prepared to talk to Adams, even if it may damage his reputation. Once the talks were taking place, followers of Hume did not agree and the British Government, especially, was very disapproving of Sinn Fein's participation. The talks between Adams and Hume were very successful and led to an agreement which they proposed to the Irish Government.

This Government supported it and so it was taken to the British Government. If it had been just Sinn Fein who had put forward this agreement, the British would have turned them down straightaway, without even considering it.

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However, because the SDLP was also behind it and they have more credibility than Sinn Fein, the British were prepared to take into consideration this agreement. This shows that the peace talks were successful and links in the chain of parties were starting to come together. This also shows that the Republican side of this "chain" were all on board for peace to happen; Sinn Fein and the SDLP, also, Sinn Fein are in contact with the IRA.

Sinn Fein now had more authority because of the peace talks they had had with the SDLP and that they had come up with an agreement for peace. People saw that they did want peace after all. The president of the U. S. A also saw this and he was prepared to work with them, which would also give Sinn Fein more credibility, as America is a very powerful and influential country.

Clinton stated that the U. S. A would give economical help to Ireland if a peaceful settlement was reached and he invited Gerry Adams to stay in America showing that he was "giving him a chance". Adams was quick to take up the offer, as economic help from the U.

S. A would be a huge help and he also did go to visit. Now, here we have many parties on board, Sinn Fein, the SDLP, the Irish Government and the U. S. A and the links in the chain are getting much stronger, this shows how keen parties are to get to a peaceful stage.

Also at this point, the British were under a lot of pressure to come up with a peaceful agreement. They decided on the Downing Street Declaration in

1993. This was a declaration in which only parties which rejected violence
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could join and it stated that the future of Northern Ireland must be decided by its citizens. The British Government however, said that Sinn Fein could only join if IRA had a ceasefire and so this put the IRA into a corner.

However at this stage, there was a factor which could back track the whole peace progress which had been made; the British Conservative Government did not trust the IRA and Sinn Fein to be able to endure their involvement with the peace process. They demanded that the IRA fully disarm, however the IRA did not want to and did the complete opposite; they called off their ceasefire and rampaged. This then looked as though everything was back to where it started and the progress they had made had been for nothing. A major turning point then however was the British 1997 elections and the Conservative Party were no longer in charge and the Labour Government came into power. They had a more subtle approach and did not demand impossible things. The Labour party helped to bring the chain back together, especially an MP named Mo Mowlam.

She made in particular progress with the paramilitary groups on both sides by visiting Maze Prison and got both to agree to a peace settlement, they all trusted her. The British Government called for just a ceasefire from the IRA and not a whole disarm also, which was not as harsh as the Conservatives approach. Now the peace agreements start to take shape. Here we have every party committed to getting to a peaceful situation, apart from the UUP.

This party is the main Loyalist group and without their support the whole thing would collapse. It was under a lot of pressure, especially their front man; David Trimble. He was under a huge amount of pressure from his own

party because if he agreed then it would have been seen as giving in to the Nationalists and also a lot of IRA prisoners would be freed. However he was also under a lot of pressure from the other parties who had agreed to the settlement, because if he did not consent, then he would have been seen as the man who wrecked Northern Ireland's chance for peace. And so he was set a deadline to agree. He was in talks for a very long time until he did finally agree and put his role as leader of the UUP on the line.

George Mitchell, senator in the U. S. A played a very vital role in these talks; he was a very highly ranked negotiator and could get people to agree to many things. He brought together the last link in the chain and played a huge part. Trimble agreed to the settlement on Good Friday, hence the name and the people of the Republic of and Northern Ireland all voted on the agreement in a referendum in May 1998. All the issues that I have discussed all link together in one way or another and are highly important for the succession of peace.

If one party had disagreed then it may have all destroyed and a peace agreement may not have been established, even today. At the moment the situation is quite unpredictable and is quite carefully balanced.