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The path from paramilitary to politics: Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin, and the Good Friday Agreement: 1986-1998

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An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Brenann Hamilton
University of Northern Iowa
May 2022
ABSTRACT

Although the Troubles often have been written about by historians through a nationalistic or cultural context, pitting the Irish Catholic Nationalists against the Protestant British loyalists, much of the action took place within the political sphere, as the Nationalists’ and Unionists’ representatives fought for concessions and control. Rather than focusing on the religious differences or the ethnographic backgrounds of the people living in Northern Ireland, this thesis examines through a political context how the leaders of Sinn Féin shaped popular opinion and gained support through nonviolent means. While the national identity and cultural differences between the Nationalists and Unionists inform their political decision-making, these politicians all entered peace talks with their own biases and preconceived notions about themselves and their opponents. Although some mention of this has therefore been included in this thesis, however, the cultural and nationalistic differences between the groups are not the main focus. The actions of Sinn Féin politicians Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in guiding their supporters, the IRA, and public opinion from violence to nonviolence in Northern Ireland, as well as their interactions with other politicians who took part in the creation of the Good Friday Agreement such as John Hume, John Major, David Trimble, George Mitchell, and Tony Blair, guide how this thesis explores the end of the Troubles and the start of the Good Friday Agreement from 1988 to 1998.

A Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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Brenann Hamilton
University of Northern Iowa
May 2022
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has been approved as meeting the thesis requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of modern Ireland, the Irish have fought for their freedom against the oppression of the British. Despite three decades of fighting in the Troubles, the British and Irish leadership, with the aid of impartial foreign ambassadors, worked with the two major political factions in Northern Ireland, Unionists and Nationalists, and established peace with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The Unionists, mostly protestants descended from the original British settlers, wanted Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom. Although ten political parties were invited to the discussions, the peace could not have happened without the support of the major political parties to give each side a voice in the talks. David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) represented the moderate Unionists throughout the discussions, while Reverend Ian Paisley of the Democratic Ulster Party (DUP) represented the more reactionary Unionists. When the DUP withdrew from the peace talks to protest the inclusion of Sinn Féin, Trimble and the UUP became the primary voice for the Unionists.

Conversely, the Nationalists, often Catholics, wanted Northern Ireland, or the “Six Counties”, to be free of British control and to join with the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland. While John Hume of the Social Democratic Labor Party (SDLP) spoke for the moderate Nationalists, the more radical Nationalists were represented by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin, a political organization often
conflated with the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The SDLP were constitutional Nationalists, meaning that they believed that Irish Nationalism, specifically the end of the partitioning of Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland, called “the South”, could be achieved by working within the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom. Sinn Féin was a Republican Nationalist party, asserting that the parliament of the United Kingdom had no legitimate claim to rule Northern Ireland, and that only a government that represented all thirty two counties in a united Ireland would be legitimate. This led to a policy of absenteeism, in which Sinn Féin candidates elected to parliament in Belfast, Westminster, or Dublin refused to take their seats or sit in any parliamentary system outside of one that they saw as truly representative of the people of Ireland as a form of protesting the legitimacy of the system. Sinn Féin was not the only political party invited to the talks with ties to a paramilitary organization; on the loyalist side, paramilitary groups such as the Red Hand Commandos and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) were connected to the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) while the Ulster Defense Army (UDA) and Ulster Fighting Force (UFF) were connected to the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). Both the PUP and UDP were invited to the peace talks. These four loyalist paramilitary groups worked together for a time under the title of “Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC)” however their respective political organizations never

reached the same level of popularity as their mainstream counterparts, the UUP and DUP.\(^2\)

The Good Friday Agreement did not become law until citizens of Northern Ireland voted for it on May 22, 1998. Although the DUP opposed the movement and ran a campaign against it, seventy-one percent of the votes supported the agreement and it passed.\(^3\) On the Republican side, the Real IRA (RIRA) broke away from the Provisional IRA, because they opposed the terms of the peace and the ceasefire. In August 1998, they set off a car bomb in Omagh, killing 29 people. Their emergence, however, was met with hostility from most people, including from Adams and traditionally Republican sources such as An Phoblacht, a Republican newspaper that wrote of the violence, stating “this group has no community or political support base upon which to fall back. Its miniscule support is confined to the immediate associates of its activists. Now, as revulsion at the Omagh atrocity grows, it faces a wave of repression in both the North and South.”\(^4\) The RIRA, along with other splinter paramilitary organizations, have continued to create violence in Northern Ireland, although these actions have not been anywhere near the scale and volume of that of the Provisional IRA and other paramilitary organizations during the Troubles. Despite splinter groups that emerged in response to the Good Friday

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Agreement, most people welcomed the changes put forward and were hopeful about what the future would bring now that the gun had been taken out of Irish politics.

The Good Friday Agreement largely achieved the disarmament of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other paramilitary groups on both sides. It also provided a structure for both the “East-West” relationship between Northern Ireland and Britain and the “North-South” relationship between Northern Ireland and Ireland. During the talks leading to the Agreement, each relationship was analyzed individually in what was referred to as “strands”. Strand One had to do with the internal structure of Northern Ireland and its policies, while Strand Two examined the North-South relationship, and Strand Three addressed the East-West relationship. The issue of decommissioning arms and release of paramilitary prisoners were addressed in separate sub-committees under the broader umbrella of the peace talks. The “North-South” relationship established a North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and North-South Implementation Bodies, which functioned as a way to give Northern Irish people a say in Irish politics and vice versa. They would establish deeper cooperation between the Irish and the Northern Irish governments on issues of agriculture, trade, business, and other sectors of the economy and society where the two intersected. In the “East-West” relationship, the British government would devolve power from itself to the people in Northern Ireland, similar to the way in which Scotland and Wales were governed within the UK. The Assembly and Executive Committee of Northern Ireland would have control over internal affairs, but not international policies. This returned power to the Northern Irish Parliament at Stormont, which had been suspended for direct rule from Westminster in 1972.
For almost thirty years prior to the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland existed in a virtual war-zone status, with the Irish Republican Army (IRA, also known as the Provisional IRA (PIRA), or Provos), Protestant paramilitary groups, and the British Army fighting for control, and walls known as “peace lines” separating the Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods in cities. As a nationalist political party, Sinn Féin was labeled “the political wing” of the IRA, and its leaders were questioned repeatedly for potentially having ties to bombings or other acts of terror. While the IRA and Sinn Féin share many goals, as well as followers with membership in both groups, Sinn Féin officially does not agree with the violent means of the IRA and is an accepted legal political party whereas the IRA has been classified as a terrorist organization because of their use of violence. The leader of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, always made clear that the violence and deaths caused by the IRA were tragedies, but always placed the blame for any violence squarely on the British and their occupation of Northern Ireland, arguing that the violence would stop if the British left. In her time as Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher viewed Sinn Féin’s leader, Gerry Adams, as so much of a threat that her government censored his voice on television, requiring an actor to dub over his voice in news broadcasts, a ban which lasted until 1994. In the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Féin and their delegates were also censored for similar reasons as they were viewed as terrorists.

In 1986, SDLP Leader John Hume and Sinn Féin Leader Gerry Adams met privately, after a Redemptionist priest Father Alec Reid, sometimes called the “Sagart”,

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helped convince the two to put aside their political differences and begin to work together for the cause of the Irish nationalist politicians as a whole. Although the British and Irish governments had collaboratively established the Anglo-Irish Agreement three years prior, this agreement was only between the Republic of Ireland and the British Government, it did not include any input from Nationalists or Unionists, peaceful or otherwise. As such, this agreement had many gaps and limited impact on the Troubles, which Hume and Adams addressed in their discussions. These talks between Adams and Hume were mostly done in private since Gerry Adams was seen by many as leading the political wing of a terrorist organization, and Hume was aware that to many of his constituents, and especially to his political opponents, his talks with Adams would be interpreted as collusion with terrorists.

In 1991, Father Alec Reid published a paper based on the SDLP-Sinn Féin talks entitled, “Proposal for a Democratic Overall Political and Diplomatic Strategy for Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation.” The same year, Hume wrote the first draft of the Joint Declaration for the two governments of Ireland and Britain. The 1992 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, political convention, issued “Towards a Lasting Peace,” which outlined their requirements for peace. When the Hume-Adams meetings were made public in April 1993, Ian Paisley and other hardline Unionists including Trimble and members of the DUP quickly attacked Hume’s character and the SDLP, as had been expected. Despite some backlash, the discussions about how to find peace in Ireland had begun.

Over the next few years, steps towards negotiation and peace came quickly. The Hume-Adams discussions culminated in a joint statement on September 25, 1993. It read:
Our discussions, aimed at the creation of a peace process which would involve all parties, have made considerable progress. We agreed to forward a report on the position reached to date to Dublin for consideration. We recognise that the broad principles involved will be for wider consideration between the two governments. Accordingly, we have suspended detailed discussions for the time being in order to facilitate this. We are convinced from our discussions that a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace. Such a process would obviously also be designed to ensure that any new agreement that might emerge respects the diversity of our different traditions and earns their allegiance and agreement.7

A few months later, on December 15, the British and Irish governments issued a similar joint declaration of peace called the Downing Street Declaration.

Throughout this time, Adams was busy with more talks with Hume, as well as a brief 48-hour stay in America to promote the declaration of peace. At this time, Bill Clinton was the President of the United States and as the President soon after the reunification of East and West Germany, Clinton wanted to continue in this spirit of peace and conclusion of violence in foreign policy making, which included the Troubles and the violence in Northern Ireland. Likewise, Clinton’s aspirations were aided by the fact that Adams’ and Sinn Féin’s reputation in the public eye had shifted more towards a legitimate political organization, which allowed him to appoint Senator George Mitchell to lead a third party organization on behalf of the United States to facilitate peace talks. On August 28, 1994, Hume and Adams submitted another peace statement, followed by a statement by Irish Taoiseach, or Prime Minister, Albert Reynolds. In response, the IRA

declared a ceasefire three days later, and on October 13, loyalist paramilitary groups also declared ceasefires. Martin McGuiness led a Sinn Féin delegation to Stormont to meet with British officials to further discuss peace in early December. By late April 1994, the British ended the ban on ministerial contact with Sinn Féin, a sign of good faith that led many to believe that peace could soon be reached.

Then, momentum seemed to stall and the uneasy peace threatened to unravel. With no clear path to establishing peace and loud demands from Unionists for the IRA to hand over their weapons, the IRA ceasefire broke down. On February 9, 1996, the IRA bombed London’s Canary Wharf, killing two people and injuring over one hundred. In response, peace marches began in major cities. On February 26, Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin led a delegation to meet with Prime Minister John Major and other officials, where they set a date for all-party peace discussions to be held in June. Two days later, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness met with IRA leadership to determine why they had ended the ceasefire and convince the IRA to return to peace. The IRA claimed they had lost faith in the process because its endless talks had produced little except constant demands for IRA disarmament, something which was “unacceptable” to the IRA at the time.⁸

Even so, Adams and McGuinness’ talks with Hume, Trimble and Prime Minister Major, aided by U.S. Senator George Mitchell and President Clinton, continued leading up to meetings in June. When they first started, Sinn Féin was not allowed into the

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conference, as the IRA was still active, and one of the rules for inclusion stated that each political organization needed to make sure any paramilitary organization affiliated with them had declared a ceasefire as a sign of goodwill. Although this was not good enough for Paisley and other Unionists, who insisted that the IRA completely decommission all their weapons before Sinn Féin was into the discussions, the chairman of the Strand Two talks from America, Senator Mitchell, rejected their demands. He knew that requiring the IRA to completely surrender would sink the peace talks. Yet it took over a year of talks and negotiation between the politicians before the IRA restored its ceasefire on July 20, 1997, having come to believe that the path to peace was within reach. By this time, Conservative John Major had been replaced as British Prime Minister by the more liberal Tony Blair of the Labour Party.

To ensure that the peace would continue and that the ceasefire would not collapse once more, Senator Mitchell and the other politicians involved decided that by Good Friday 1998, a peace proposal should be reached. Although they worked all the way up to the deadline, spending the entire night before looking over last minute details, the Good Friday Agreement was signed on April 10, 1998. The next month, before the referendum on the Agreement, Sinn Féin changed its constitution to allow its candidates to take their seats in the proposed new Northern Assembly, ending the practice of absenteeism and guaranteeing the collaboration between Republicans and their political opponents into the twenty-first century. After the referendum passed, the shared government began. While this government did not function perfectly, and has been suspended multiple times since
its creation, it has succeeded in largely holding the peace together and continuing the original goals of the Good Friday Agreement.

Although the Troubles often have been written about by historians through a nationalistic or cultural context, pitting the Irish Catholic Nationalists against the Protestant British loyalists, much of the action took place within the political sphere, as the Nationalists’ and Unionists’ representatives fought for concessions and control. Rather than focusing on the religious differences or the ethnographic backgrounds of the people living in Northern Ireland, this thesis will examine through a political context how the leaders of Sinn Féin shaped popular opinion and gained support through nonviolent means by changing the policies and strategies of the IRA itself and its allies. While the nationalistic and cultural differences between the Nationalists and Unionists inform political decision-making, and will therefore be considered in this thesis, the cultural and nationalist differences will not be the main focus. The actions of Sinn Féin politicians Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in guiding their supporters, the IRA, and public opinion from violence to nonviolence in Northern Ireland, as well as their interactions with other politicians who took part in the creation of the Good Friday Agreement such as John Hume, John Major, David Trimble, George Mitchell, and Tony Blair, will be the focus of this thesis’s exploration of the end of the Troubles and the origins of the Good Friday Agreement from 1986 to 1998. Together, Adams and McGuinness brought their constituency into a new era wherein Sinn Féin was considered to be a legitimate political party and their efforts not written off as the actions of a struggling counterpart of a terrorist organization.
Historians of the Troubles have examined how the IRA and Irish resistance movements shaped Irish history and identity. In his article, “The Shadow of the Gunman: Irish Historians and the IRA” (2011), historian Ian McBride explores how the history of resistance towards the British has embedded itself in Irish tradition and history. He writes of how Irish nationalists came to view themselves as being either a part of “a great mythology or pantheon of revolutionary heroes,” as well as “a people continually under attack by the British.” In this framework, their own resistance to British rule became essential in how they viewed themselves, whether as heroes, survivors, or victims. McBride’s article examines how historians identified a movement of revolutionary fervor against the British in every generation, at least since the 1790s. From “traditional music to stories,” these nationalistic ideals of Irish unity are taught to each generation. McBride explores how Republicans understood their cause in fighting for a united Ireland, as well as how they viewed the history of nationalism in Ireland.

In the early 1980s, the IRA prisoners in Long Kesh prison held a hunger strike, which brought national attention to the Republican cause and Northern Ireland as a whole. Historian George Sweeney in his articles, “Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice” (1993) and “Self-Immolative Martyrdom: Explaining the Irish Hunger Strike Tradition” (2004), explains the cultural significance of hunger strikes and why the

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IRA chose such a tactic. The IRA hunger strikes of 1980-1981 were seen by many within Sinn Féin, but especially by Gerry Adams, as being a major catalyst for the success and awareness of Sinn Féin as a form of political Republicanism. He writes about how, in Celtic society, public fasting was a means to “draw attention to one's grievance and one’s debtor, and was used by the powerless on the powerful.” While someone who had little power in society might not be able to fight for justice for themselves, they could mobilize public opinion by starving themselves as a weapon against the powerful. After Christianity arrived in Ireland, according to Sweeny, these hunger strikes took on a religious aspect, dovetailing with ritualistic types of fasting in Christian tradition. He refers to the fight against the British as being a type of “devotional” revolt in which the revolutionaries profess their faith not only to God but to Ireland itself through self-sacrifice. He specifically mentions the tradition of sacrifice in the 1916 Easter Rebellion as the epitome of this blend of religion with revolution. Padraic Pearse, the leader of the 1916 Rebellion, interpreted the “sacrificial motif” in the Christian tradition of the crucifixion, applying Jesus’ sacrifice of his life for humanity to nationalists dying for Irish freedom. He believed that sacrificing himself and his colleagues for Ireland in a hopeless uprising would lead to the resurrection of Ireland as a nation, paralleling Jesus’ feat in the Bible. This history of revolutionaries fighting the British, even though defeat

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13George Sweeney, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 3 (1993), 421.
14Sweeney, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," 422.
15Ibid.
16Sweeney, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," 423.
was all but inevitable, inspired the members of the IRA in the 1970s and 1980s to continue their fight.

F. Stuart Ross’s book, *Smashing H-Block: The Popular Campaign Against Criminalization and the Irish Hunger Strikes: 1976-1982* (1993), explores how the hunger strikes influenced politics, specifically the role of Sinn Féin in collaboration with the actions of the IRA. He writes how the Press Relations Officer for the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, an organization created to “defend activists [who protested against the H-Block and on behalf of the prisoners] from harassment, arrests, and various charges,” appeared in the *Irish News*, which is a Republican newspaper, to remind people of the significance, both cultural and historical of the hunger strike.\(^{18}\) The organization stated that the hunger strikes were “the most crucial development and that only through our strong, unified militant agitation that the British will concede.”\(^{19}\) The nationalists who supported the strikers wished to reach out to the “grassroots movement of the SDLP (Social Democratic Labor Party) or Fianna Fail (a conservative Republican party), who, in turn, would (supposedly) put pressure on their leadership,” to steer legislation that would meet the demands of the hunger strikers.\(^{20}\) The main flaw in this thinking, which Ross points out, is that the SDLP, which was in a partnership with the political party of Fianna Fail, was “nonviolent” and would not support any of the violent or “active

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\(^{19}\) “Sinn Féin and Irish Unity,” *Sinn Féin*, https://www.sinnfein.ie/irish-unity

republicanism” that IRA advocated. Before the hunger strikes, the SDLP had won a majority of the Nationalist vote, while Sinn Féin had very minimal support and therefore tended to elect almost no Members of Parliament (MPs). Once hunger striker Bobby Sands was elected on his deathbed, despite not running as a Sinn Féin candidate, popular support for Sinn Féin greatly increased as Sinn Féin capitalized on the political success of Sands and encouraged Republican voters who had voted for Sands to vote for Sinn Féin candidates. Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, recognized that the hunger strikes had propelled Sinn Féin from being a minor political party to one of the largest nationalist parties. He realized that “recruitment to Sinn Féin used to occur primarily in the wake of events such as the 1969 pogroms, internment, Bloody Sunday, and the hunger strikes.” Adams wanted Sinn Féin to be able to consistently develop a relatable political base, rather than just being seen as “a poor second cousin to the IRA” so that they could keep more members rather than losing people to the SDLP once the momentum of major events was lost. The IRA was not without political support, as Sinn Féin, a political party active in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, supported Irish republicanism as well as Irish unity. Since late 1983, the leader of Sinn Féin was Gerry Adams, who recognized the struggle that Sinn Féin would face in establishing their party as independent of the IRA, yet still in support of it and its goal of a unified Ireland,

21Ibid, 30.
especially as many members of the Sinn Féin party were former (and likely current) IRA members.\textsuperscript{25}

Historian Kevin Bean’s \textit{The New Politics of Sinn Féin} (2007) further examines the changing role of Sinn Féin and their policies in relation to the IRA under Adams’ leadership. At the time, both were seen as “two sides of the same coin,” due to the similarities between goals and members of the two groups.\textsuperscript{26} In a recent interview for the BBC in 2018, Adams stated that he wanted to create “a peaceful way for Irish unity,” and said that ultimately the “British connection with Ireland needs to end.”\textsuperscript{27} In the same interview, he stated that he did not join the IRA as he had “joined Sinn Féin before the IRA became active, and wanted to focus on politics,” and creating “an alternative to violent republicanism,” which is further reflected in Bean’s writings as well, as Bean believes Adams’ claim that he never joined the IRA.\textsuperscript{28} Since its founding 1905 by Arthur Griffith, Sinn Féin had maintained its policy of absenteeism in the British Parliament as a refusal to recognize British authority over Ireland.\textsuperscript{29} Bean discusses how, when Bobby Sands was elected as a MP while a prisoner on hunger strike, he did not take his seat in Westminster, but remained dying in his cell in Long Kesh prison, which further influenced Adams to continue Sinn Féin’s practice of absenteeism in the North to connect


\textsuperscript{26} Kevin Bean, \textit{The New Politics of Sinn Féin} (Ireland: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 117.

\textsuperscript{27} BBC NEWS, “BBC Full Interview with Gerry Adams by Andrew Marr,” Youtube Video, 1:20-1:30, February 4, 2018, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atLrefOVx_0}

\textsuperscript{28} BBC NEWS, “BBC Full Interview with Gerry Adams by Andrew Marr,” Youtube Video, 0:40-1:00, February 4, 2018, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atLrefOVx_0}

his party with Sands and radical Republicanism as a whole. Sinn Féin continued their practice of absenteeism until May 1998, when under the leadership of Gerry Adams, they changed their constitution before the referendum on the Good Friday Agreement, so that their candidates could serve in the proposed new Northern Assembly. Bean writes in his book how “since the 1980s, [Gerry] Adams built up a deserved reputation among Republicans for delivering political success.” He was able to support the goal of Irish unity and excuse IRA violence in a context of British occupation, while not indicting himself or his organization with overt support of IRA violence. Ultimately Gerry Adams moved Sinn Féin from political obscurity towards being a major player in Northern Irish electoral politics and a successful peace process, while bringing the IRA into the negotiations and leading it away from violence through the ceasefire.

Historian Landon Hancock explains in his article, “The Northern Irish Peace Process: From Top to Bottom” (2008), how major political leaders such as Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin and John Hume of the SDLP worked together to formulate a peace that would not only work on the political and theoretical level, but also in the practical application of peace. He explores how non-governmental organizations such as local parishes and churches prepared communities for the peace while those at the top hammered out the specifics of how the peace would be implemented, all of which contributed to the success of the Good Friday Agreement. Hancock also singles out David Trimble of the UUP and Gerry Adams as having the unique task of “facing down

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their constituents in order to bring their parties to the table and work out the Agreement and implementation,” and argues that their individual actions cannot be understated. Handcock’s article specifically commends Adams and the other political leaders on their commitment to peace, while also celebrating that the majority of people had supported the Agreement as they saw it as a means to ending the paramilitary violence and a path towards peace.

While the previously mentioned historians examined the actions of Sinn Féin and the Republicans leading up to and during the peace, Roger Ginty, Orla Muldoon, and Niel Ferguson’s article “No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement” (2007), explores how, while the ceasefire has continued, some of the lingering problems of sectarianism and opponents to the peace still cause some problems in Ireland. Their article also examines how the “broken ceasefires, the collapse of the power-sharing government, communal tension, and violence” led to some initial breakdowns of peace talks, but that because of the trust of the citizens with their respective government officials, the peace could prevail. While other nations with peace treaties and agreements have fallen apart due to a lack of trust between the citizens and the politicians who formulate the peace, this article recognizes that because the people of Northern Ireland trusted their leaders and that their leaders remained open about the peace process, the people were able to more readily accept and maintain the Good Friday Agreement,

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especially as many of the principal leaders of the Agreement remained in power in respective organizations for multiple years following.

Likewise, Ginty, Muldoon, and Ferguson also conclude that, despite the deal’s rejection by the DUP and the emergence of the splinter RIRA, as well as ongoing traditional sectarian divisions between Catholics and Protestants, there is evidence that a “Northern Irish” identity, rather than primarily identifying with a religious group, has begun to emerge and bridge the gap between conflicting groups. 34 Although the article commends the people of Northern Ireland for creating a peace, it ends by stating that to protect it, they must continue to actively work to maintain it and find common ground rather than return to divisive political organizations.

Tim Pat Coogan’s *The Troubles: Ireland’s Ordeal 1966–1995 and the Search for Peace* explores the Troubles from the very start of the Civil Rights Movement in 1966 throughout the violence of the Troubles. 35 Throughout his book, Coogan utilizes primary sources to craft a narrative about how the IRA gained power and popularity as the minority Catholics in the North grew tired of their second class status in comparison to their Protestant counterparts. Coogan traces how citizens became radicalized and divided throughout the North due to their experiences and maltreatment by both sides of the conflict. He wrote of how the violence was utilized as “propagandist purposes” to convince those who would have potentially remained neutral to take sides and support

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34 Ginty et al., "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement," 8.
their respective paramilitary organizations. Likewise, in Coogan’s book, he clarifies how those who tried to remain neutral often were pushed to one side or the other as these paramilitary groups saw anyone who was not with them as their enemies, and brutally punished those who were “touts” or traitors.

While historians have begun to write about the Troubles and the peace process, many of the political leaders who took part in the talks have written about their own experiences as well. Gerry Adams has published numerous books about his experiences as the leader of Sinn Féin, including several memoirs. His autobiography, which explains the peace process from his own perspective, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland* (2004), is an important source of information about his role in the peace process and how the various politicians overcame their preconceived notions about each other to work together for the betterment of the people that they represent. Adams has also published collections of his columns from the *Irish Voice*, an American-Irish newspaper that supported the republican movement. These include *The Politics of Irish Freedom* (1986), *An Irish Voice: The Quest for Peace* (1997), *Free Ireland, Towards a Lasting Peace* (1997), and *An Irish Journal* (1997), all of which offer insight into his efforts to gain American support, through political statements about Sinn Féin and its policies.

Others involved have written books about the process, such as SDLP Leader John Hume’s *A New Ireland: Politics, Peace, and Reconciliation* (2000) and *John Hume, In*

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37 Ibid, 317.
His Own Words (2018), and Senator George Mitchell’s memoirs, Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement (2012) and The Negotiator: A Memoir (2016), and these all help to create a richer understanding of the events that took place during the peace process. 40 Both British prime ministers discuss the negotiations in their autobiographies: John Major’s Autobiography (2000) and Tony Blair’s A Journey: My Political Life (2010). 41 As secondary sources, biographies of David Trimble, Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism (2005), and Martin McGuinness, Martin McGuinness, A Life Remembered (2017), and Martin McGuinness, From Guns to Government (2001), offer further insight into the minds of two leaders who did not write autobiographies themselves. 42

Because the peace negotiations took place throughout the 1990s, there are various interviews and broadcasts now available on YouTube as well as other news websites that exist as primary source materials. 43 Some interviews that occurred included Gerry Adams’ time on “Larry King Live” in America and Gay Byrne’s “Late Late Show” in the

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Republic of Ireland. Throughout the peace process, members held interviews and went on talk shows to describe to their constituents what progress had been made and what issues were being discussed. Likewise, the *New York Times* as well as the London *Times*, and most articles from the BBC were available through their online archives, as are articles from the *Washington Post* and the *Irish Times*.44 Even the Republican newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, has archived articles about the peace for free on their website, as they were the first newspaper to move online in 2003. *An Phoblacht* continues to be based in Dublin and began as a Republican newspaper for Sinn Féin on December 3, 1906, under its English name, *The Republic*.45 Despite various changes over time in leadership, *An Phoblacht* has continued to provide news about and to Sinn Féiners and other Republicans. Newspapers from America, Ireland, and the UK during the time not only provide information as to what happened but also how each nation interpreted the actions of the Troubles. While reporter Jo Thomas for the *New York Times* could be sympathetic to Sinn Féin, writers from Northern and Southern newspapers such as the *Ulster Herald* and *Sunday Independent* were significantly less so.46 These papers’ opinions of Adams softened as the peace process went on, moving from referring to him as a terrorist to a politician.47

Beginning in the 1980s, Gerry Adams and his right-hand man, Martin McGuinness, helped to legitimize Sinn Féin as a party, and shaped how Sinn Féin and

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47 See *Belfast Telegraph*, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
other Republicans reacted to any opposition. One common stance that Adams repeatedly took after any type of violence committed by the IRA was to emphasize publicly via radio, TV interviews, press releases, or newspaper articles, that Sinn Féin did not condone violence. Unlike John Hume, whose political party fully condemned all violence by all paramilitary groups, Adams never fully condemned the IRA, which, however controversial, maintained his ability to communicate with the IRA leadership. Adams instead of a full condemnation, stated that, for the violence to stop, the British needed to leave Ireland as they were the instigators of the fighting, not the IRA. Gerry Adams helped to transform Sinn Féin from being a part of the “Armalite and the Ballot Box” strategy, which co opted the IRA’s violent methods to advance their political means, to focusing primarily on how the “ballot box,” or the political side of Republicanism could push for independence with far greater success than the “Armalite” alone ever could. The “Armalite” represented paramilitary violence on behalf of the IRA whereas the “Ballot Box” represented the votes for Sinn Féin, and the strategy was used in an attempt to harness the power of both peaceful and violent action towards the goal of a United Ireland. Adams’ strategy was to move Sinn Féin from the “Armalite and the Ballot Box” to simply the “Ballot Box" by utilizing various TV interviews and other means of public debate forums, especially into the 1990s when the censorship by the British and the Republic of Ireland on Sinn Féin were lifted.

As political Republicanism rose in popularity while the violent means of the IRA fell during the mid-1990s, Sinn Féin, under the leadership of Gerry Adams, worked with the British government and the SDLP and UUP parties to create a peace process.
culminating in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Between the Three Strand Agreement, moderated by three impartial politicians from nations independent of Ireland or the United Kingdom, with Senator Mitchell from the United States guiding the discussions and establishing the timeline, and the subcommittees on decommissioning and prisoner status, the politicians involved in the discussions worked cooperatively to create peace. By Senator Mitchell’s own admission, the peace could not have worked without Sinn Féin and the Republicans being represented in the talks, as although Sinn Féin denied it, by many they were seen to be the political mouthpiece and representation of the IRA. In any case, the connection between the two organizations was critical. Adams and McGuinness met frequently with the IRA leadership to ensure that the ceasefire would hold up and that the peace could continue, something that none of the other political parties could do, as members of the IRA only revealed their identities to those they felt they could trust.

Although the discussions leading up to the Good Friday Agreement involved a small group of chosen individuals to represent their respective political parties, the Good Friday Agreement impacted everyone living in the six counties. The disarmament of paramilitary groups, removal of British troops from Northern Ireland, and release of paramilitary prisoners were all enormous signs of change. While seventy-one percent of voters supported the Good Friday Agreement, some within the Republican movement

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were disenchanted with the ordeal.\textsuperscript{49} Many were left wondering “who really won” and “if it [fighting the British] was worth it” as those who had spent a majority of their lives fighting for one united Ireland thought that the Good Friday Agreement was practically a surrender to the continuance of partition.\textsuperscript{50} This led to the splintering of the Republican movement, the creation of the Real IRA, which has continued to create problems for those seeking peace into the twenty-first century. While the Provos completely decommissioned all their weapons by 2005, RIRA has remained active to this day. Likewise, the DUP’s and other hardline Unionists’ continual lack of support or recognition of the Good Friday Agreement have continued into the twenty-first century.

Throughout his time as the leader of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams promoted Republican politics and ideals, not only during the peace process, as he cooperated with politicians from Northern Ireland, the UK, and America, but after, to ensure the ceasefire and disarmament would continue without any rejection of the policies by the Provisional IRA. Despite opposition not only from IRA splinter groups but the DUP and Paisley, Gerry Adams managed not only to secure the Good Friday Agreement within Republican circles but also increase the popularity of Sinn Féin across Northern Ireland.

This thesis has been broken into five distinct chapters, with the first functioning as an introduction. The second chapter focuses on the background leading up to the ceasefire and peace process. This chapter explores how Gerry Adams and his right-hand,


Martin McGuinness, helped to further legitimize Sinn Féin as a party, and how Sinn Féin reacted to any opposition. Chapter two utilizes various TV interviews and other means of public debate forums to understand what Sinn Féin was fighting for and against, and how the leadership of Gerry Adams created a means in which Sinn Féin could not be ignored or censored by the public, and that could pursue peace on behalf of the PIRA.

The third chapter explores the ways in which Sinn Féin, under the leadership of Gerry Adams, worked with the British government and the SDLP and UUP parties to create a peace process culminating in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This chapter not only addresses the specifics of the peace but also how the various political parties which met to create the ceasefire and peace interacted with the representatives from Sinn Féin. This chapter also explores how decisions were made, whether through compromise or agreement, as well as examines the DUP’s opposition to the Good Friday Agreement, and how Sinn Féin worked with the other parties involved to deal with this opposition. This chapter also explores the relationship between Sinn Féin and the IRA and how Gerry Adams worked not only with political opponents but also those within Sinn Féin and the IRA to ensure that the voice and goals of Republicanism would not be lost during the negotiations and that the IRA would continue its ceasefire and disarmament.

The fourth chapter focuses on how the events leading towards peace impacted average people and how the practical implementation of the Good Friday Agreement went. This chapter specifically examines the disarmament of the IRA and the removal of troops from Northern Ireland, as well as any continual political support or opposition to this movement. This chapter also covers the splintering of the Republican movement, the
creation of the Real IRA, which have continued to create problems for those seeking peace into the twenty-first century. The DUP’s and other hardline Unionists’ continual lack of support or recognition of the Good Friday Agreement, as well as various splinter groups of the IRA, such as the Real IRA, which continued into the twenty-first century, have continued to create problems for those seeking peace. This chapter also explores the responses of the local and national governments towards these splinter groups and extremist followers who continue to start fights and attempt to disrupt or destroy the peace.

The fifth chapter functions as the conclusion, looking forward towards the 2000s and the winding down of Adam’s leadership, wrapping up the issues brought forward in the previous chapters. It summarizes chapters 2-4 by examining the ways in which Gerry Adams led Sinn Féin and promoted Republican politics throughout the peace process, cooperating with politicians from Northern Ireland, the UK, and America, while also functioning as a representative of the IRA to ensure the ceasefire and disarmament could continue without major concessions of Republican values despite opposition from groups such as the DUP and RIRA. This chapter also explains how the leadership and policies of Gerry Adams during the 1990s, previously discussed in chapters 2-4 fits with the understandings of historians of the Troubles and within the context of the Troubles as a whole.
CHAPTER 2: 
SEPARATING THE ARMALITE FROM THE BALLOT BOX

After the 1981 Hunger Strikes, where IRA political prisoners at the Long Kesh prison went on a hunger strike and died to protest their mistreatment in prison, Sinn Féin had risen dramatically in popularity. Bobby Sands, one of the hunger strikers, had been elected to public office, and although he was not a Sinn Féin candidate, Adams and Sinn Féin as a whole championed his cause and rode on the coattails of his success. His eventual death soon after his election inspired more people to join the political movement of Republicanism through Sinn Féin.

For a long time, Sinn Féin had not been taken seriously as a political party, as many Republicans believed that the gun was the only way to convince the British to leave Ireland. When Gerry Adams was elected to lead the party in 1983, he moved Sinn Féin away from the notion of the “Armalite and the Ballot Box,” a two-pronged approach to facing the British government which included the guns of the IRA and the votes for Sinn Féin, towards focusing solely on the political sphere. Adams himself wrote that, “there was a realisation that one could not organise politically as an illegal organisation,” and thus, he and Sinn Féin leadership made it a priority to “leave the back-room conspiracies and come out into the open,” and distance the organization further from any possible linkages to the IRA.\(^5\) He recognized that “Sinn Féin was by and large perceived, and was in reality, a poor second cousin to the IRA,” as the lack of public awareness of Sinn Féin as a political party in comparison to the attention the IRA received meant that Adams

faced an uphill battle in not only convincing others of the separation of the IRA and Sinn Féin, but of Sinn Féin’s legitimacy as well.\textsuperscript{52} While the IRA could continue with its armed resistance, those who were more politically minded could go to the polls and use rhetoric and the power of voting to convince others to their side.

Adams often stated that he wanted to give people the choice to nonviolently support Republican causes. Three years after taking the leadership role of Sinn Féin, Adams wrote a book, \textit{The Politics of Irish Freedom} (1986), to further announce his viewpoints on Irish Republicanism. He believed that, “[w]e cannot have justice and peace in Ireland because we do not have a society that is capable of upholding them. Instead we have a system based on coercion, violence, sectarianism, and exploitation.”\textsuperscript{53} Adams saw the inherent flaws that led to the Troubles and wanted to stop the cycle of radicalization which led to the acceptance of violence and offer a new road towards peace. Likewise, because Sinn Féin had not been seen as a serious political party, only as the mouthpiece of the IRA, there was not a clear vision in the party of how to proceed and what the goals of the party were, especially while the IRA continued to commit violent acts of terror.

Gerry Adams worked to reform this and create more structure within the system. He identified four different points that Sinn Féin needed to be building upon for continued success: “structured popular support, the need to develop an international outreach, propaganda and publicity, and the development of relevant radical republican

\textsuperscript{52}Adams, \textit{The Politics of Irish Freedom}, 150.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid, 62.
By creating more popular support, Adams not only chose to reach out to other Nationalist parties, such as the SDLP, but also to prioritize issues based on what the community and Sinn Féin most needed and what was most attainable at the time. One such issue was censorship, as the British government had censored the voices of all republicans, both from the IRA and Sinn Féin. For Adams, international outreach meant connecting with other minority groups struggling against British oppression, from South Africans under Apartheid to Palestinians, as well as to Irish Americans, who could use their influence within the United States to bring more attention to the cause of Sinn Féin. Through propaganda and publicity, Adams not only led Sinn Féin in engaging with the international community but also locally reaching across the aisle to the Unionists to engage in discussions. These discussions were often facilitated by Catholic and Protestant clergy members who invited their parishioners to meet with each other and just talk and truly listen to what the other side had to say.

One of the major developments in republican politics by Gerry Adams occurred during the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis of 1986. At this time, many in Sinn Féin, including Adams, wanted to change the long-standing Sinn Féin political agenda to end abstentionism, the practice of refusing to participate in a British government after being elected as a protest, for Sinn Féin politicians in the Republic of Ireland and in the North, as well. Adams argued that, “abstentionism towards the Irish Parliament- the Dail- had to go,” and that “delegates and visitors to our Ard Fheis had to cease being spectators of a

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struggle in the six counties and become pioneers of republicanism in the twenty-six counties.” Many in Sinn Féin, including Adams, felt that abstentionism was still necessary in regards to the British parliament, as this action had traditionally been used to protest what Sinn Féin saw as an illegitimate government. They now felt that the Irish parliament was not illegitimate, so participation in this government would not be sacrificing values. This controversial new policy passed with a two-thirds majority, and while most of Sinn Féin accepted it, the former president of Sinn Féin, Ruairí O Bradaigh, and forty of his colleagues left the meeting and started their own party, Republican Sinn Féin (RSF). This was not the first time that the IRA or Sinn Féin had split, nor would it be the last as these groups have continued to splinter due to conflicting groups within the party.

Around the same time as these changes were taking place, Adams made headway into another of his goals, structured political support. In 1986, Fr. Reid, the Sagart, wrote to both Gerry Adams and the leader of the SDLP, John Hume, encouraging them to meet. From their first meeting, Hume “found Adams ready to engage at a more exploratory pace than Fr. Reid has suggested to both of them for more public presentation.” By September 1986, Adams and Hume met for the first time and discussed their understandings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the IRA, and other political issues facing both parties. During their secret talks, a year later, on May 1, 1987, Sinn Féin published A Scenario for Peace, a document outlining what they saw as different necessities for peace

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56 Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland's Long Road to Peace, 49.
57 Farren, John Hume in His Own Words, Location 2718, Kindle.
in Northern Ireland to be achieved. The scenario specifically called for “an all Ireland constitutional convention being elected to organise a national system of government.”

Hume and Adams had a second meeting that August, and Hume wrote that Adams believed that “the sooner the SDLP and the Irish government could be shown to be subscribing to the principle of self-determination in the same terms as ‘republicans’ he [Adams] contended strongly, the sooner people could be persuaded that there was an alternative to armed struggle.”

In 1988, Adams and Hume had met for the first time publicly and agreed to hold public meetings with representatives from both Sinn Féin and the SDLP. The Fermanagh Herald reported of these talks that: “There were, and continue to be, reservations among SDLP supporters about holding these talks at all while the Provisional IRA campaign continues but after several meetings, the SDLP team led by Mr. John Hume has been able to exploit the scope open to a party not tied to a military organization.” During this time, Hume and Adams continued to meet in secret. In the same year, Fianna Fail representatives from the South agreed to meet with Sinn Féin, creating a greater sense of unity amongst the Nationalist political parties on both sides of the border and legitimizing Sinn Féin’s authority as a legitimate political party. This of course frightened Unionists and other political parties that were not Nationalist, as they feared that Nationalist unity could threaten not only their political success but also the future of Northern Ireland as a whole. A Fine Gael Councilor, from Monaghan County on the border of Northern Ireland

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59 Farren, John Hume in His Own Words, Location 2728, Kindle.
and the Republic of Ireland, Hugh McElvaney, was quoted in saying, “There is something sinister, a coalition between Sinn Féin and Fianna Fail and it's not the first time [referring to the history of Sinn Féin and Fianna Fail during the Irish Civil War and under the leadership of DeValera].” McElvaney stated this as he knew that, collectively, the Nationalist parties would be much stronger in pushing for unity with the rest of Ireland.

Amidst the fears that Irish Nationalists were unifying under a common cause, Margaret Thatcher’s government implemented a ban on broadcasting the voices of all Irish Republicans, whether Sinn Féin or IRA, which began in October of 1988. When she announced the ban, Thatcher stated that the censorship existed “to deny terrorists the oxygen of publicity”. Upon the introduction of the censorship, Sinn Féin published a statement which read: “If we were in Eastern Europe, the British government would be crying foul at the banning from TV and radio of a legal political party that has parliamentary representation and a mandate from its community.” While the words of Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, were still broadcast, his voice, like many others, had been dubbed over and replaced in an attempt to delegitimize the party and its messages. Richard McAuley, Sinn Féin's Director of Publicity, stated, “it [censorship] has worked

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in preventing people in Britain from getting a true picture of what's going on in the
North.”

Some journalists and politicians from Britain fought against the censorship, which
applied to both the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Independent
Broadcasting Association (IBA), as they not only feared that it would project weakness,
but also convey a sense of oppression which could further justify the existence of Sinn
Féin and other opposition groups. Roy Hattersley, the Labor Party’s Deputy Leader, said
it made “the government look simultaneously repressive and ridiculous,” and questioned,
“How have you considered the damaging ways in which this will be used both at home and
abroad, particularly in the United States, to portray this government as the enemy of free
expression?” Similarly, Hugh Dykes, of Thatcher’s Conservative Party, said the ban
“would look as if the government fears the IRA can persuade people of their sick
cause.” Despite their different reasons for opposing the censorship of Irish political
dissidents, both Conservative and Labor Party Members of Parliament could agree, not
only amongst themselves but also with the Northern Irish, that the act of censorship was
not in the best interests of the UK. Thatcher refused to end the ban, contributing further to
her inflexible and uncompromising “Iron Lady” public image.

Throughout her time in office, Thatcher and her government publicly condemned
Sinn Féin and the IRA and refused to enter into any discussions with “terrorists,” which

was influenced by the IRA’s attempt to assassinate her at a hotel in 1984. However, near the end of her premiership in 1990, secret talks between the British Secretary of State and representative to Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, and Sinn Féin began. On behalf of Brooke, Michael Oatley, a M15 officer on the brink of retirement, reached out to Martin McGuinness through the “line of contact” that existed between the Republicans and the British. Oatley told McGuinness that the British were interested in talks, and that although Oatley himself would be replaced, the talks would continue. Later that year, Thatcher was ousted from her leadership of the Conservative Party, with John Major as her replacement as leader and as Prime Minister. In December, the IRA announced a Christmas cease-fire, the first in 15 years of fighting.

In 1991, Peter Brooke met the “line of contact” for the IRA in the hope that such a contact could facilitate a basis for future negotiations of peace. During the same year, the Sagart produced a paper that was based upon the Sinn Féin and SDLP talks, “Proposal for Democratic Overall Political and Diplomatic Strategy for Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation,” that called for a peace convention. Both Hume and Adams drew upon this document as they further discussed how a peace conference would truly be held. John Hume also wrote the first draft of a joint declaration for the two governments, which would eventually be titled the Downing Street Declaration. At the end of that year too, the IRA announced another three-day Christmas cease-fire.

67 Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 97.
68 Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace, 105-106.
69 Sean Farren, John Hume in His Own Words (Four Courts Press, 2018), Location 3667, Kindle.
In 1992, Adams led the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, entitled “Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland,” which led to the creation of a document under the same name. This document arose from the peace discussions and outlined the Sinn Féin stance on how peace could be achieved in Northern Ireland. Central to this document was the inclusion of the IRA and Sinn Féin in establishing this peace. Adams argued that the failure of the Sunningdale Agreement (1973), the previous agreement for power sharing between the British and Northern Ireland, occurred because the Republicans had no representation at the agreement. Adams believed that peace could be achieved if the Republicans were allowed to have an equal status to that of the Unionists. In the Republic of Ireland, Albert Reynolds replaced Charlie Haughey as the leader of Fianna Fail and became Taoiseach on February 11, 1992. Unlike Haughey, Reynolds was more open to discussions with Sinn Féin. Despite Gerry Adams losing his West Belfast seat in Parliament in the British general election, a position which he did not take a part in because of Sinn Féin’s protest of British rule, he remained the leader of Sinn Féin. Meanwhile, Patrick Mayhew became the British Secretary of State for the North, and his role as such would create a channel of communication between the Sinn Féin politicians and the British Government. On April 23, 1992, former Presbyterian moderators, representatives of the Unionist community, revealed that they had had talks with Sinn Féin as they believed the political atmosphere lent itself more towards peace and compromise instead of hostility and division. Although they were heavily criticized for breaking the party line, this led to

71.Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 110.
72.Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 126.
further Protestant contacts with Sinn Féin, not only with religious leaders but also “unionist business people.” Later that year in December, Sinn Féin began to talk with the Irish Government and in response, the IRA announced a three-day ceasefire.

In 1993, a Fianna Fail/Labour Party coalition came to power in Dublin. Adams and other Republicans saw this as a favorable outcome, as newly elected politicians held more sympathetic views towards Sinn Féin and Republicanism as a whole than those who had previously held the same offices. The British representative told the Sinn Féin “line of contact” that direct talks between the British government and Sinn Féin were possible. In response, written positions and requirements for open talks were exchanged between the British and Sinn Féin. Martin McGuinness and Gerry Kelly met Colin Ferguson, whose real name was Robert McLaren, the British government representative, and while the talks did not end any specific policy changes, it did create a precedent for future discussions. Meanwhile, all of Gerry Adam’s secret meetings with John Hume became public, as newspapers had discovered and released that the two were in talks. The tabloids as well as Hume’s political adversaries took this opportunity to rake Hume over the coals. Hume himself recalled that “the resultant pressures and villifications were awful, making life extremely difficult for both of us [himself and Adams]” as the public discovered the meetings between them. Despite this, Hume continued his connections with Adams and Sinn Féin, believing the opportunity for peace to be greater than any

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73Ibid, 126.
75Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace, 99.
personal attacks in the media. On May 10, 1993, the IRA informed the British that they would be suspending military operations indefinitely to facilitate talks between Sinn Féin and the British government.\textsuperscript{78} From these talks, Adams sought to move the British past the Anglo-Irish Agreement position and create a better strategy towards building the proposed peace convention.\textsuperscript{79}

The Irish government gave the British government the Hume-Adams documents about peace, but both sides dug in their heels. The British rejected the offer by the IRA to suspend military operations to better facilitate peace talks, as they remained firm in their stance that the IRA would need to completely disarm and destroy all their weapons before any substantial peace talks could begin. Major stated, “that dialogue could only follow a permanent end to violent activity. If we were assured unequivocally of that, and events on the ground matched the assurance, we said we were prepared to open exploratory dialogue.”\textsuperscript{80} In response, the IRA reiterated that they would not turn over their weapons.\textsuperscript{81}

Despite this apparent roadblock in the public sphere, Sinn Féin and the British government continued to have their secret meetings and discussions.\textsuperscript{82} As these discussions of the possibilities of facilitating a meeting between the political parties and paramilitaries became more public, paparazzi and other members of the press began following the people involved in both Sinn Féin and the British government to find the

\textsuperscript{78}Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland's Long Road to Peace, 119.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid, 121.
\textsuperscript{81}Major, John Major: The Autobiography, 444-445.
\textsuperscript{82}Ibid, 444-445.
inside scoop. By late November, these secret contacts between Sinn Féin and the British government became public. While the British quickly denied any connection, reiterating their stance that they would not have talks with terrorists, Sinn Féin gave the press all of the documents revealing the secret talks and connections. At this point the British admitted to talking with Sinn Féin. At the end of the year, on December 15, 1993, the Downing Street Declaration was issued jointly from 10 Downing Street in London by Prime Minister John Major and Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds. This declaration outlined the requirements and the framework for all-party peace talks to take place in Northern Ireland. The document stated that the British government “no longer has any selfish, strategic or economic interests in Ireland, and that it is committed to promoting not only agreement between the divided people of Ireland, but also to legislating for any agreement that emerges from the representation of the people.”

At the start of 1994, Adams asked Prime Minister Major for clarification on the Downing Street Declaration. Major, as well as others within the British parliament, saw this request as a type of stalling tactic. They believed that Adams was too critical of a document that would continue to be open for revisions. Major himself wrote, “I was not going to get sucked into meetings to reinterpret or renegotiate our hard-won document under the guise of ‘clarification’,” as he recalled Adams’ response to the document. Adams, on the other hand, did not want to agree to terms of potential all-party peace talks

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without being certain that these requirements would not only be acceptable to the members of Sinn Féin but also his constituents, who included members of the IRA. In his article in the Irish-American newspaper, *The Irish Voice*, Adams accused the Major government of being “devious and mischievous in its approach to the Irish peace initiative.” He listed his specific questions about the Downing Street Declaration in this article as follows:

- Is the Declaration evidence of a real political will to build a genuine peace process, or is it the best that could be put together by two governments conscious of the popularity of the quest for peace but unwilling at this stage to deal in a real way with core issues?
- Is this as far as the British government will go?
- Is it as far as Dublin wanted them to go?
- Does the Declaration contain any evidence of a dynamic to move everyone significantly in the direction of peace?
- How does it match up to the initiative launched by John Hume and myself?
- Will the IRA’s positive and open attitude to Hume/Adams apply also to the Downing Street Declaration?

As a show of good faith, the government of the Republic of Ireland ended their censorship of Sinn Féin. This now allowed for Sinn Féin to speak to more potential supporters, which would also help to further their goals in establishing a United Ireland as they could then better influence citizens of the South to support them and potentially put pressure on their politicians to work towards the end of partition. Gerry Adams then went to talk with Gay Byrne, a talk show host of the “Late Late Show”. During the talk show, the host as well as the other speakers attacked Adams and Sinn Féin’s connections.

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to the IRA in an attempt to delegitimize their party and further the narrative that the Republicans in the North were trouble makers and seeking violence.\textsuperscript{89} Likewise, many people in both the North and South of Ireland were frustrated by the violence and blamed the IRA for much of it, which was justified as the IRA had committed large scale acts of violence not only against the British soldiers but civilians as well. Adams kept his cool throughout the entire interview, and because the questioners on the talk show relentlessly attacked him, the opinion in the South actually softened towards Gerry Adams and Sinn Féin. After the show, the Irish Independent interviewed a Loyalist couple that had been visiting the Republic of Ireland. They described the show as an “eye opener” as they had “always considered that Dublin had strongly nationalist sympathies.”\textsuperscript{90} As the peace process began, the Republic of Ireland as a whole began to relax their stances against Sinn Féin as the government and people of the Republic of Ireland realized that they would need to work with Sinn Féin if they truly wanted to create a lasting peace.

Although Adams repeatedly stated that he was not a member of the IRA, this was often contested by his opponents and widely held across the world, including in America, where he and the rest of Sinn Féin had been considered to be the political arm of the IRA. Despite this, President Bill Clinton gave Gerry Adams a 48 hour visa to visit New York City and take part in a conference about Northern Ireland for Sinn Féin on February 1, 1994. While some of his advisors recommended that Clinton not invite Adams to the United States, emphasizing his apparent ties to the IRA, Clinton chose to invite Adams as

\textsuperscript{89} Best of Craig Ferguson, “The Late Late Show: Gerry Adams Ambushed by 6 Freestaters, 1994,” March 12, 2015, Youtube video, 45:51.
\textsuperscript{90} Marianne Heron, “Orange on the Green,” Irish Independent, November 12, 1994.
he knew that Adams and Sinn Féin were the keys to convincing the IRA to put away their guns. Senator George Mitchell, a man whose previous experience would lead to his future appointment as a third-party chairman in the peace talks, saw this gesture as directly related to the IRA’s ceasefire announcement in August of that same year, as the visa “gave Adams access to the world stage.” With American approval, this signaled to Adams and the rest of the world that Sinn Féin would no longer be viewed as just the spokesmen for the IRA but would be considered a legitimate political party. British and Unionist politicians, as well as their supporters in the United States, disapproved of the President’s decision to allow someone that they considered to be a terrorist into the country. Adams recalled that a member of the Ulster Unionist Party, Ken Maginnis stated, “in the future, deaths in Northern Ireland will be Clinton deaths,” and that the Sunday Times decried the “gullible Americans,” who allowed Adams into their country.

After Adams’ two day trip to America, the Irish government provided the answers to the questions Adams wanted about the Downing Street Declaration. In response to the clarification, the IRA announced a three-day Easter ceasefire. The IRA viewed this clarification as a signal that the Irish government was serious about peace talks, and wanted to show their support for the potential for peace as well. Many hoped that this could possibly be a sign that the IRA would be open to further peace, with one newspaper stating that the ceasefire “also suggests that keeping up the pressure on Sinn Féin/IRA

92Mitchell, Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement, Location 1828, Kindle.
could bear yet sweeter fruit” than the limited ceasefire. After this, the British government finally provided Adams and Sinn Féin with the clarification about the Declaration. In addition, the United States government gave Joe Cahill, a Sinn Féin politician chosen to act on behalf of the party, a visa to discuss Sinn Féin politics in the United States.

In the spring of 1994, Gerry Adams held a meeting with top officials of the IRA and gave them a political assessment of Sinn Féin as it was presently, and his plans for the future. He specifically discussed how he wanted to move the party towards entering the all-party peace talks. Adams knew that, for these talks to progress, he would need the support of the IRA, specifically through nonviolence with an extended ceasefire and eventual disarmament. Adams and McGuinness went to speak to the Army Council of the IRA and, while the meeting was tense, according to Adams, they convinced the Army Council that “the struggle wasn’t ending,” and that “the difference between this cessation and any other one was that in the past these were bilateral agreements which were negotiated out, usually in secret between Republicans and the British. Now any arrangements would be multilateral.” Adams worked to convince the IRA that “now the struggle was bigger than the army,” as it would take more than the IRA to negotiate a peace, and that they needed to be open to trusting the peace process. Soon after this meeting, the IRA announced its complete ceasefire on August 31, 1994, the 25th

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anniversary of the British troops arriving in Northern Ireland. By putting down their arms, the IRA showed the world that they supported all-party peace talks and were committed to the democratic process. Critically, the IRA did not agree to disarmament or destruction of weapons at this time, a point that Unionists would continue to fight, despite the fact that Loyalist groups did not disarm either.

In September of 1994, Adams, Hume, and Reynolds met in Dublin to discuss the peace talks. The Taoiseach’s speech was summarized by the Irish Examiner as: “There had been many divisions within the Republican family, from which most of our political parties are descended. It was therefore, appropriate, that he should, as leader of the Irish State, meet both the Northern Nationalist leaders, John Hume and Gerry Adams.”

Unionists feared that this meeting would create a Republican coalition that would work collaboratively against them during the all-party peace talks. Now that Gerry Adams and Sinn Féin as a whole were included in more meetings and were considered a more legitimate party, rather than representing terrorists, the United States felt comfortable in granting Gerry Adams a two-week visa. When he arrived in America on September 24, Adams met various US officials in Washington DC including Senator Edward Kennedy, a longtime supporter of Sinn Féin. Adams also was a guest on the talk show, “Larry King Live”. While there, he also debated Ken Miggins, a Unionist politician.

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refused to shake Adams’ hand and held the Unionist policy of not compromising an inch, which, to an American audience, only served to generate sympathy for Adams and Sinn Féin.\textsuperscript{101}

Following Adams’ time in the United States, the Unionist paramilitaries announced a ceasefire similar to that of the IRA on October 13, 1994. Both the UVF and the UFF agreed to a press conference where they announced that the ceasefire would be “as permanent as the IRA ceasefire.”\textsuperscript{102} These organizations’ announcement represented the whole of the CLMC, which meant that all of the Unionist paramilitary organizations would be agreeing to the ceasefire. As both Republicans and Unionists declared cessations of violence, the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation opened in Dublin. Judge Catherine McGuniess of the Republic of Ireland presided over the Forum. The inaugural meeting took place on October 28, 1994. Following the Forum, newspapers across Ireland encouraged readers to send in submissions of questions or interests to the Secretary-General in Dublin. The ad read: “It is especially anxious that the voices of members of both the Unionist and Nationalist tradition, as well as of others, be heard.”\textsuperscript{103}

Although the atmosphere had begun to change in Adams’ and Sinn Féin’s favor, the resignation of Taoiseach Albert Reynolds as Taoiseach and as the head of his party, Fianna Fail, threatened to stop the momentum of the peace. The Irish public called for Reyonds’ removal and eventual resignation following the revelation that his government...
was keeping a pedophile priest from facing justice. His official resignation took place on November 17, 1994.\textsuperscript{104} Although Bertie Ahern, another politician who was sympathetic towards Adams’ calls for peace, became the leader of Fianna Fail, John Bruton, leader of the Fine Gael party, became Taoiseach. Members of Sinn Féin, including Gerry Adams, held concerns about this change, as the Fine Gael party was more conservative and less sympathetic to the cause of Sinn Féin and Republicanism as a whole. As the Sinn Féin politicians feared, Bruton did not work as closely with Sinn Féin as Reynolds had and did not support their party or their goals, as they were political opponents. At the end of the year, Sinn Féin and the British government held their first official public meeting.

Early in 1995, the British raised the issue of the IRA’s decommissioning of weapons as a prerequisite to entering the peace talks, which effectively barred Sinn Féin from joining the inclusive discussions.\textsuperscript{105} They insisted that the IRA and other paramilitaries had to completely surrender their weapons and be fully decommissioned before any of their related political parties could enter the discussions. Meanwhile, the Framework Document was published. This document outlined the preconditions as well as some of the conditions necessary for the peace process to start and for the peace process itself. It included the notion of the “three strands” that divided the talks into “North-South relations, East-West relations, and decommissioning arms.”\textsuperscript{106} Northern Irish Secretary Mayhew spelled out the Washington Three Preconditions on Arms. The


\textsuperscript{105}Adams, \textit{A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace}, 208.

\textsuperscript{106}Mitchell, \textit{Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement}, Location 412, Kindle.
Preconditions were as follows: “A willingness in principle to disarm progressively, a common practical understanding of the modalities, that is to say, what decommissioning would actually entail, and in order to test the practical arrangements and demonstrate good faith, the actual decommissioning of some arms as a tangible confidence building measure and to signal the start of a process.”\textsuperscript{107} While this was meant to aid Sinn Féin in joining the peace talks, the part about actually decommissioning some arms became a bit of a sticking point, as the IRA was not interested in decommissioning any at that time.

Adams attended the White House’s St. Patrick’s Day event in 1995 and met with President Clinton. After this meeting, the United States government removed the restrictions against Sinn Féin holding fundraising events in the United States.\textsuperscript{108} Due to the growing acceptance on the global scale of Sinn Féin, the British government agreed to Sinn Féin holding public meetings with their ministers. Adams met Patrick Mayhew in Washington DC. Sinn Féin also sent a delegation to South Africa and Adams met President Nelson Mandela in preparation for the peace talks. Like Mandela, Adams held the task of not only building peace after years of unrest, but also building permanent relationships to ensure that the peace would withstand time.\textsuperscript{109} Despite all this, the British government continually refused to set a date for all-party talks. By hesitating to set a date, many worried that the various cessations of violence by the IRA and Unionist paramilitaries would not hold.

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid, Location 402.
\textsuperscript{108}Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace, 200.
\textsuperscript{109}Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace, 213.
This fear was doubled with the release of British soldier Lee Clegg, a man who had been tried for the blatant murder of multiple innocent Irish people. Along with this, “Marching season,” a series of parades culminating in the middle of July where members of the Protestant-based Orange Order march through Catholic neighborhoods in celebration of their victories in the late 1600s, was just along the horizon. That year, in 1995, the Orange Order insisted upon marching along Garvaghy Road, which was in a Catholic neighborhood. Despite the fact that the people living there did not want the marchers to walk down their street, the Orange Order received legal protection to do so. Unionist leaders David Trimble of the UUP and Ian Paisley of the DUP danced the tango as they and the rest of the Orange Order reached the last few yards of Garvaghy Road. Although Gerry Adams and many other Republicans feared that these events would cause the IRA to return to violence, the paramilitaries remained steadfast in their cessation.

Throughout this time, the British and Unionists continued to insist that decommissioning arms must occur before political parties with ties to paramilitary organizations could enter the peace talks. Adams viewed their insistence as a ploy towards “reducing expectations, diminishing hope, and encouraging schisms among Republicans.” Senator George Mitchell provided an alternative, which established a twin-track approach to the decommissioning of arms. This meant that, so long as each side with paramilitary connections agreed not only to nonviolence during the talks but to

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participation in the Commission on Decommissioning, which would lead to the terms of eventual decommissioning, they could participate in the peace talks.\textsuperscript{114} Both the Irish and British governments agreed on these terms, and the Mitchell Commission on Arms was established. Through this commission, members from both Unionist and Republican paramilitaries, along with a non-partisan third party, which was represented initially by George Mitchell but later the third party representative from Canada, John de Chastelain, would supervise and establish the rules and regulations for the decommissioning of arms.\textsuperscript{115}

In November of 1995, President Clinton visited Northern Ireland to show the world his support for the peace process.\textsuperscript{116} As Adams put it, “the President’s visit had the potential to kick-start the process and save it from collapse.”\textsuperscript{117} Clinton traveled across Northern Ireland, visiting with politicians and meeting the people. He gave several speeches, and at his final speech in Whita Hall at Queen’s University in Belfast, Clinton pledged America’s support, stating, “The question of whether you will go forward [with peace] is all up to you, but if you do we will be proud to walk with you.”\textsuperscript{118}

From the Hunger Strikes in 1981 to the establishment of the Mitchell Commission in 1995, Sinn Féin grew from being a fringe political party that was seen as the mouthpiece of the IRA to a major political force, capable of determining the success or failure of the peace talks and it did so under the leadership of Gerry Adams. Unlike his

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\textsuperscript{114} Mitchell, \textit{Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement}, Location 1695, Kindle.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, Location 1847.
\textsuperscript{116} Adams, \textit{A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace}, 223.
\textsuperscript{117} Adams, \textit{A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace}, 225.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, 226.
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predecessors, Adams not only had his mind set on joining the political sphere, but also on growing popular support for the party. While a dozen of hardline Sinn Féiners split from the party, as they saw the politicization as the beginning of the end of what they viewed to be the true Sinn Féin, it was this very movement away from violence into politics that kept voters interested and led the governments of Ireland, Britain, and the United States to see Sinn Féin as a legitimate party. This legitimization of Sinn Féin facilitated the discussions and talks, as many of the governments that had sworn not to enter talks with the IRA or Sinn Féin, could now meet with Sinn Féin and allow their leaders access to their countries and press. The general consensus had become that Sinn Féin was a separate entity from the IRA, but that it was helping to guide it into peace. Of course, these governments knew that Sinn Féin was their key to knowing the mindset of the IRA, as no other political party had such connections to the IRA leadership.

Adams had to walk a very fine line by guiding Sinn Féin into the sphere of politics and away from war. He knew that by entering in talks with these governments, he would be gaining political legitimacy for Sinn Féin. However, Adams also had to balance the history of Sinn Féin’s practice of absenteeism as a protest against the British government with this participation. Likewise, he needed to balance between acting as the mouthpiece for the IRA’s stances in the peace process with his own political stance that he and Sinn Féin were not connected to the IRA. Regardless of the debate on whether or not Sinn Féin was a front for the IRA, it was through Adams and other Sinn Féin leaders that the IRA would have representation and therefore respect the outcome of the peace talks.
CHAPTER 3:
THE ROCKY ROAD TO THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Throughout his experience leading the second Strand of the peace process, Senator George Mitchell, the impartial representative from America who led the second strand discussions later stated that the greatest lesson from the process and his own political career was to “learn to listen.” Every member of the all-party peace talks entered with their own understandings of how the peace should be negotiated and which topics were non-negotiable. During these talks, people who had once considered even speaking to members of the opposing parties as treason, learned to listen to each other and even forge compromises that would lead to peace. These negotiations not only involved the political parties of Northern Ireland, but also the paramilitaries that were connected to these parties, meaning that these talks not only needed to lead to a political peace, but also to put a permanent end to paramilitary violence. Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Féin, although maintaining that Sinn Féin and the IRA were not connected, was the one person who represented the IRA in the talks and was the one person capable of meeting with the IRA’s Army Council to persuade them to follow through on the requirements of nonviolence and peace. The IRA and the other paramilitary organizations did not have direct representation in the peace talks, to ensure that the violent acts of the terrorists would not be legitimized, however, the major paramilitary organizations had political connections to represent their interests. While some accused him of just “looking in a mirror” when going to negotiate with the IRA

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leadership, Adams managed to not only distance himself and his party from the associations of the IRA but also maintained a good relationship with the IRA and its leadership throughout the peace process as he worked as their de facto representative during the peace talks.\textsuperscript{120} While the IRA and Republicans did not all agree with Adams or his strategy, Adams did manage to hold most of the popular opinion among the Republicans long enough to ensure the peace process would not be inhibited by splits or dissent. Senator Mitchell would later assert that without Gerry Adams’ involvement and skill in keeping the IRA to their commitment to their ceasefire and participation in the talks, the peace could not have happened.\textsuperscript{121} Mitchell recognized that, without Adams, the peace talks would not have worked as Adams was the only one capable of convincing the IRA to maintain their ceasefire and respect the decisions made in the talks.

Adams’ and Sinn Féin’s presence in the talks guaranteed that the majority of Republicans, especially those who were in the IRA and other radical Nationalist paramilitaries, felt represented in the talks and therefore would respect the outcome of the peace process. While John Hume had been supported by moderate Republicans, Hume alone would not have been able to create a peace that the IRA would have accepted, as the IRA did not hold any communications with Hume where Adams himself was not there, and the IRA did not respect the authority of Hume or other moderates, nor did the moderates like Hume wish to tarnish their reputations by spending too much time interacting with the IRA.

\textsuperscript{120}Tony Blair, \textit{A Journey: My Political Life} (United Kingdom: Vintage Books, 2011), 196.
\textsuperscript{121}George J. Mitchell, \textit{Making Peace: The Inside Story of The Good Friday Agreement} (Knopf: 2012), Location 2177, Kindle.
On January 24, 1996, Senator George Mitchell delivered the International Body’s report on the peace process. The International Body, which was composed of third-party delegates from the United States, Canada, and Finland, included George Mitchell, Canadian diplomat John de Chastlain, and Harri Holkeri from Finland. The report reiterated what Mitchell had stated in The Mitchell Report and the Washington Preconditions on Arms. The Mitchell report outlined three major issues or “strands” which would be addressed in the upcoming peace talks. Strand one would focus on North-South relations and how the governments of Northern and Southern Ireland would interact. Strand two focused on the East-West relationship between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. The third strand focused solely on the decommissioning of arms and the path to permanently ending the paramilitaries. The Preconditions stated that all parties that participated in the peace talks needed to have “a willingness in principle to disarm progressively, a common practical understanding of what decommissioning would actually entail, and in order to test the practical arrangements and to demonstrate good faith, the actual decommissioning of some arms as a tangible confidence-building measure and to signal the start of a process.”

In this new report, Mitchell added six new conditions to ensure the continuation of nonviolence by the paramilitaries involved with the peace. These conditions were that the parties involved affirm their commitment:

a) To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;
b) To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations;

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122 Mitchell, Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement, Location 412, Kindle.
c) To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;
d) To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;
e) To agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree and;
f) to urge that “punishment” killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.\textsuperscript{124}

In this report, Mitchell also ensured that the decommissioning of arms would not take place until the all-party talks had begun, which was mainly to ensure the continual support of peace by the IRA. Likewise, this report also maintained that participation in the talks required that all member parties’ affiliated paramilitary organizations remain under a ceasefire and inactive during the talks to ensure a truly democratic process.

Although Adams and the other Republicans supported this policy, Prime Minister John Major as well as other Unionists found several flaws within the document, specifically that the decommissioning of arms would take place concurrently with the peace talks, rather than before the talks began, as the Unionists wanted. The IRA and many Republicans viewed the British Army and the RUC as connected to the Loyalist paramilitaries, and, as these organizations would not be disarming, the IRA questioned their own safety as well as their perceived inequality in disarming. Likewise, Major called for an “elected body” to spearhead these talks, rather than having the participation of each political party.\textsuperscript{125} This was seen as unacceptable to both Adams and Hume, who

\textsuperscript{124} Mitchell, \textit{Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement}, Location 579-589, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{125} Major, \textit{John Major: The Autobiography}, 486-487.
saw it as an attempt “to try and buy votes [from the Unionists] to keep themselves in power” as there was an upcoming election for the Prime Minister and support for his government had fallen. Major was dependent upon the Unionists to keep his majority in the House of Commons, and by December 7, 1996, he had completely lost his majority to the Labour Party. Adams and other Republicans viewed Major’s reluctance to compromise or move forward with the peace as an attempt to garner support from the Unionists and secure their support in the upcoming elections. Likewise, this call for an “elected body” appeared to be a repeat of the failed government at Stormont prior to the Troubles, which had failed due to the lack of representation of Republican voices. Although the Republicans felt disappointment towards the shift in tone by Major, Mitchell viewed Major’s complaints as a “temporary sidestep” toward the peace process and remained hopeful that the Unionists and the British government would reevaluate their insistence upon complete disarmament in favor of the compromise that he and the International Body had put forth. Major was constrained at the time as a politician to please his constituents if he had any hopes for future reelection and continual support for his leadership from the Unionists and the Conservative Party as a whole in the United Kingdom, which explained his reluctance towards compromise, as he wanted to ensure that his base would not turn on him.

126 Ibid, 486-487.
129 Mitchell, Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement, Location 640, Kindle.
With little visible progress and no concrete date set for the talks, the IRA ended their cessation of violence by detonating a large bomb in Canary Wharf, London, an urban hub for shopping and businesses on February 10th, 1996. The bomb set by IRA volunteer, James McArdle, led to two deaths and hundreds of people injured. While Adams insisted the peace process should continue despite this clear act of aggression that ended the IRA ceasefire, Prime Minister John Major worried that “a dark shadow of doubt” now existed over any discussions of peace. Following this tragic attack, on February 28th, the British and Irish governments set June 10 as the date for beginning all-party talks, and many were hopeful that this could encourage the IRA to resume their ceasefire. Adams and other members of Sinn Féin were especially hopeful that this would appease the IRA, as Sinn Féin could not join any talks until the IRA restated their commitment to peace.

In the spring of 1996, Gerry Adams and John Hume met with the IRA Army Council as the commencement for the talks loomed overhead. They attempted to convince the Army Council leaders to recommit to a ceasefire, and spent several hours speaking to them. Adams recounted how the IRA noted that they had initially supported cessation, but felt that when “we sued for peace, the British wanted war. If that’s what they want, we will give them another twenty-five years of war!” They

133 Adams, A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace, 233-234.
cited a list of misdeeds, including the “continual ill-treatment of IRA prisoners in Britain, the failure of Taoiseach John Bruton to assert Irish Nationalist interests, the release of Lee Clegg [a British soldier charged with the murder of Irish citizens], and the decision around Gavargy Road [a Catholic neighborhood that the Unionists marched down in July]” among their reasons why they viewed the British as the aggressors, despite the fact that Bruton was not British. According to Adams, the meeting did have some positives, finding that “the IRA leadership was prepared to restore the cessation if a viable alternative could be proposed.” Adams also sent a delegation of Sinn Féin politicians to privately meet with the Irish government officials as a bid for entry into the talks as well as a way to bridge any gaps between their strategies in the upcoming peace so that Nationalist interests would be united. Irish officials told Sinn Féin, however, that their hands were tied, as the requirement for entry was that the associated paramilitaries would declare a cessation of activity during the talks, and that they had “no administrative or legislative power” to change that. While the Sinn Féin delegation was meeting with the Irish officials, Gerry Adams met with the United States National Security Adviser Tony Lake, Strategist Nancy Soderberg, and Maryann Peters, a Senior Aide in the White House to President Clinton to further discuss any options outside of fulfilling the preconditions that Sinn Féin would have in entering the talks. Lake assured Adams that the Mitchell Report was about “dismantling the issue of arms as a

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135 Ibid, 233-234.
137 Ibid, 235.
138 Ibid, 236.
precondition,” but Adams still worried that the peace talks would “reassert Unionism’s
demand for majoritarian politics,” and keep the wants of Nationalists out of the final
decisions from the peace talks, regardless of Sinn Féin’s participation. Adams was
assured that Clinton was aware of this and had already spoken to John Major about these
concerns.

In late March 1996, the Irish and British governments sent out a set of rules as
well as an agenda for the June 10th talks. This set of rules specifically called out Sinn
Féin in the participation section, stating:

Both governments expressed the hope that all parties with an
electoral mandate will be able to participate in all-party
negotiations. However, both governments are agreed that the
resumption of ministerial dialogue with Sinn Féin and their
participation in the negotiations, requires the unequivocal
restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994.

Adams attempted to convince the Irish, British, and American governments to
allow Sinn Féin into the talks without a restoration of the 1994 ceasefire as he made clear
to them that he “did not see the IRA agreeing to reinstating a cessation,” which the IRA
then demonstrated. On April 17, 1996, the IRA set off a bomb in Earls Court, West
London, and while no one was injured, the bombing did lead to “fresh calls for an
immediate restoration of the ceasefire” from both the Irish and British governments. A
week later, the British police found “the biggest semtex bomb ever planted in Britian by
the IRA,” which had failed to go off and contained over, “30 pounds of high explosives,”

139 Ibid, 236.
140 Bernard Purcell, “Govts Set Out Entry Rules to All-Party Talks,” Irish Independent, March 18, 1996.
and would have caused similar damage to the Canary Wharf bomb.\textsuperscript{143} While Unionists such as David Trimble, leader of the UUP, viewed these bombs as a rejection of peace and a resumption of violence, others were hopeful that, as the time for the peace talks grew closer, the IRA would return to their cessation.\textsuperscript{144}

Forum elections were held in Northern Ireland for all citizens to vote to determine which parties held majorities and therefore would be welcome to the June 10th all-party talks at the end of May. From these elections, Sinn Féin “won 116,377 votes— that is, 15.5 percent of the poll or 42 percent of the Nationalist vote,” which would have guaranteed their participation in the peace talks, had the IRA returned to their ceasefire.\textsuperscript{145} The peace talks began on June 10, 1996, but Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, and the other members of Sinn Féin were literally locked out of the talks as only those who had been invited to the talks could enter through the gates of Stormont. Knowing that they would not be allowed in, Adams, McGuinness, and the other Sinn Féin delegates made sure to have multiple images taken of them at the gates in an attempt to reframe the rest of the members of the peace talks as unwilling to talk instead of having the focus centered on how Sinn Féin could not join due to the continued violence of the IRA. When arriving at the gates, Adams demanded entry into the talks, but, as Adam recalled, in response to his demand, “a security man arrived with a chain and padlock” to ensure they could not open the gate doors.\textsuperscript{146} While Adams remained at the front gate, McGuinness and two others

\textsuperscript{143}Bernard Purcell, “Bridge Bomb Biggest Used by IRA in UK Attacks,” \textit{Irish Independent}, April 26, 1996.
\textsuperscript{144}Dean Godson, \textit{Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism} (United Kingdom: Harper Perennial, 2005), 221.
\textsuperscript{145}Adams, \textit{A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace}, 244.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibid, 248.
walked into the building from a side entrance in an attempt to gain access to the talks but were discovered and turned away by both British and Irish officials. Despite Adams’ protests, the peace talks continued without him, as did the violence of the IRA throughout the rest of 1996 and into 1997, which only further solidified the British and Irish governments’ stances against his and Sinn Féin’s entry into the talks.

These initial talks that occurred without Sinn Féin failed due to the fact that the politicians who took part in these discussions became more and more unwilling to compromise and listen to each other. Each side only wanted to further their own political agendas rather than prioritizing the peace over their own ambitions. Inside the peace talks, Senator Mitchell wondered that even if the deadlock over decommissioning “could be broken, what conceivable basis could there be to hope for an agreement on substantive issues, given the long and difficult time spent on procedural matters?” He asked himself, “Was it hopeless? Had I been deluding myself, over these many months, when I thought progress was possible?” John Major wrote of the talks, “relations with Dublin deteriorated,” as all sides were unwilling to compromise and did not want to give the other parties any victories whatsoever. This was further annunciated following the 1996 July Marches of the Unionists into Catholic neighborhoods to celebrate their defeat of the Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, “the peace talks were suspended and never regained momentum,” blaming the upcoming election season the following year in

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147 Ibid, 249.
149 Ibid, Location 1600.
1997 for the inaction during the talks themselves. Amidst the marches and protests of July by the Unionists, David Trimble withdrew the UUP from the talks and wrote to George Mitchell that they would not return until “the authorities come to their senses,” and calm down the riots rather than, as he put it, “an escalation by the RUC,” of tensions on the streets. While Trimble typically gave support to the RUC, he recognized that the RUC in this instance had been in the wrong. Trimble returned that September, however, it would take until the United Kingdom’s 1997 elections before hope returned to participants.

At the beginning of January 1997, Gerry Adams and John Hume tried to draw the British government into a dialogue to end the impasse by sending a series of letters to British politicians as well as faxing a list of five questions to John Major himself. According to Adams, the questions covered “the British government’s attitude to inclusive and comprehensive negotiations; the implications of this position for Sinn Féin’s entry into talks; what assurances London could give on preconditions; what assurances it could give that Unionists wouldn’t be allowed to thwart progress; and how the British government would deal with the issue of confidence building measures in the event of a ceasefire.” Ultimately, they hoped that there could be another way for Sinn Féin to join the peace talks without the IRA’s ceasefire. But the British insisted that the IRA must commit to nonviolence before Sinn Féin could enter the talks, as was required by the agreement when the talks began. Adams was discouraged, but did not give up

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hope, writing to his American allies in the Irish American press to garner support for the inclusion of Sinn Féin, regardless of the IRA’s actions. Adams repeatedly stated that his party was not connected to or representative of the IRA, and argued that, on that basis, they should be allowed into the discussions. He often asserted that: “Sinn Féin was not the IRA. We were not involved in armed struggle, nor did we advocate for it.”

Although Adams continued to put forth this assertion that he was not involved in the IRA, he was one of the few people who could not only speak to the IRA, but also one of the few who were capable of representing the IRA’s interests during the peace talks. Regardless of whether or not he was a member of the IRA, Adams could not deny his obvious connections to the Army Council and their interests. Despite his efforts, most Irish Americans supported the ceasefire and a genuine commitment to nonviolence by the IRA more than they supported his assertion that Sinn Féin should not be held responsible for the IRA’s actions. A prominent Irish-American Senator from Massachusetts, Edward Kennedy, publicly called for the reinstatement of the IRA’s ceasefire, stating: “I urge the IRA to restore its ceasefire immediately so that all of us who support fair talks can credibly argue for Sinn Féin's admittance to the talks on June 3rd.”

Kennedy also warned that, if an IRA ceasefire did not take place, Irish Americans and even President Clinton would lose faith in and support for the current peace process, meaning that the peace talks would be pushed further from the center of the global stage.

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154 Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 258.
As the British general elections were about to begin in early May, the Labour Party’s leader, Tony Blair, sent several messages with the intent of cultivating a good relationship with Sinn Féin. To Sinn Féin as well as others, it was clear that John Major’s party would lose the election and he would no longer be Prime Minister. Establishing a line of communication with Blair, soon to be the new British Prime Minister, was vital for Adams and the rest of Sinn Féin in their bid for entering the peace talks. The election strengthened Sinn Féin’s position, as its vote rose significantly. Gerry Adams retook the West Belfast seat and Martin McGuinness won Mid-Ulster, a local government district in Northern Ireland. The Republican newspaper, An Phoblacht, reported that “Sinn Féin made gains in 12 councils as the party vote surged to a record 16.9% share of first preferences.” In local elections, Sinn Féin became the largest party in Belfast. Gerry Adams was quoted as saying:

There's a new era. We are going in with a very clear view that the institutions of local government should reflect the mandates of all the parties. As far as Belfast is concerned, it's the beginning of a new Belfast when all of the citizens should have the ownership of all its institutions.

As predicted, on May 1, 1997, Tony Blair became the new British Prime Minister and Mo Mowlam was appointed to be the British Secretary of State for the North. She was the first woman to hold this office. At the end of June, a new Fianna Fail-Progressive Democrat coalition government was elected in the Republic of Ireland with Bertie Ahren

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as the Taoiseach. These election results signaled to Adams and others in Sinn Féin and the IRA that the atmosphere around the peace talks would now be led by both British and Irish governments that were more liberal than the previous governments and therefore more open towards listening to and respecting the goals of Republicans as a whole. For Adams, this meant that he had further ground to prove to the IRA that the peace talks could create actual change in Northern Ireland. While Adams did not go into great detail in his personal reflections on how he convinced the IRA to commit to peace, he did emphasize how he viewed the peace process as a step towards the reunification of Ireland, which he likely mentioned in his meetings with the IRA.

On July 19, 1997, the IRA announced a complete cessation of violence, returning to their 1994 August ceasefire. This meant that Sinn Féin could finally enter the peace talks, which they did in September of that year.\(^{160}\) As a result, hardline Unionists like Ian Paisley and the rest of the DUP and UKUP party members permanently left the talks in response to the inclusion of Sinn Féin the same month, arguing that to have remained would have acknowledged Sinn Féin as a legitimate political party.\(^{161}\) Afterwards, David Trimble and members of the more moderate UUP, as well as other Unionists who chose to stay in the talks, faced criticism not only from the Nationalists but also from their former allies in the DUP and UKUP who saw them as traitors to the cause of Unionism. Senator Mitchell was grateful that they stayed despite this criticism, as he felt that the

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\(^{161}\) Godson, *Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism*, 217.
Talks were now closer to being all-inclusive as both Unionist and Republican voices were present.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{Making Peace: The Inside Story of the Making of the Good Friday Agreement}, Location 1676, Kindle.}

Tensions also grew on the extreme Nationalist side, in both the IRA and Sinn Féin. While some Republicans felt ready for peace and ending the Troubles, others disagreed. These naysayers saw the peace process as another compromise. They argued that they should never acquiesce to British power over Ireland, and that, by holding the ceasefire and engaging in negotiations, they were admitting that the British did have legitimate and justified power in Northern Ireland. Likewise, they wanted to continue the fight, believing that they were close to victory and that was why peace talks had begun.

Val Lynch, a man who had first joined the Provisionals and later Sinn Féin stated: “I thought that when the campaign (to remove the British presence from the island of Ireland) got underway that this was going to be the final campaign,” and that victory was near.\footnote{White, \textit{Out of the Ashes: An Oral History of the Provisional Irish Republican Movement}, 399.} These Republicans saw the peace talks as a final attempt to hang on to power by the British, and did not want to enter into any negotiations that would lead to compromises. Seamus McGrane, a former Chairman of the IRA’s Army Council who led the dissidents, stated: “There was no case for a ceasefire,” and that he “didn’t even know why it was being discussed.”\footnote{Ibid, 397.} To them, these negotiations amounted to a surrender of power and admission of defeat by the Irish. In November, members of the IRA who disagreed with the path to peace and who wanted to continue fighting, split from the IRA.
to create their own group, the Real IRA or RIRA. They also went by the name, “‘the Cokes’, because they are the ‘real’ thing,” much like the advertisement for Coca-Cola soda from the 1990s. The RIRA, unlike the Provisional IRA, never got much support, as only a handful of volunteers actually joined their cause at the time of the split, so they never came to be seen as a threat to the Provisionals. The Provisional IRA, rather than leaving with RIRA and abandoning their commitment to peace, continued to remain peaceful and keep their guns out of action. The Provisionals believed that Adams could guarantee a peaceful means towards the reunification of Ireland and that committing violence this close to the deadline of peace would only serve to jeopardize their standing and turn public opinion further from Republicanism.

The following month, in December, roughly a dozen members of Sinn Féin, led by the sister of Bobby Sands, Bernadette Sands, left to start their own political party, the Thirty-Two County Sovereignty Movement (32 CSM). This party rejected the Mitchell Principles and thought that the movement towards peace held no guarantee that partition would end or the North would reunify with the South. Phil O’Donoghue, a member of 32 CSM, explained that “The way I look at it is that, in the twenty-six counties, they fought a very, very bitter civil war on this issue, and then for them to just come along and to accept the Crown was just unacceptable.” Many hardline Republicans began to compare Gerry Adams to Michael Collins, the Irish 1920s freedom fighter who originally comprised with the British over the partition of Northern Ireland in the Anglo-Irish
Treaty, but divided his movement, leading to a Civil War and his own assassination. Peter McAleer, who had joined Sinn Féin in the 1960s, stated, “I found that Sinn Féin then were becoming more like major political parties...the important thing [for Sinn Féin] was to have as many seats as possible rather than the actual substance of why you should be there.”

Like Collins, Adams was open to compromising and taking more gradual steps towards the Republican goal of reunifying the North with the South and ending British rule, rather than taking an all or nothing approach to the peace. One unnamed Republican stated, “the peace process means to me a British solution to an Irish problem.” Like others who left Sinn Féin, he or she felt that Adams had begun to compromise too much and abandon their goals in favor of working with the British.

Another event that further proved to these hardliners that Adams was too willing to compromise occurred when Adams and a Sinn Féin delegation held their first meeting with a British Prime Minister in 10 Downing Street in almost 75 years. On December 11, 1997, Adams and Blair, along with other members of Sinn Féin and British officials met to discuss the peace talks and their respective positions. Hardline Republicans were not the only ones who disagreed with Adams’ meeting with Blair, as Blair recalled going to a mall and being accosted by a group of “angry, protesting grannies shouting, swearing, calling me a traitor, and waving rubber gloves in my face,” which he later found out meant that he “should’ve worn gloves when shaking hands with Gerry

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168Ibid, 433.
169Ibid, 430.
Adams.”  

These hardliners were in the minority, however, as most people throughout the British Isles, including Northern Ireland, were in favor of cooperation between political parties as a means to ending violence.

The new year started with violence. In the middle of January 1998, a Catholic father of two, and husband of Adams’ niece, Terry Enright, was killed by members of the Unionist paramilitary group, the Ulster Defense Association (UDA), in retaliation for the killing of Billy Wright, an LVF leader, by the INLA in December 1997. Within a week of this murder, British Secretary of State, Mo Mowlam, visited with Unionist paramilitary prisoners to talk to them about the peace process, causing Nationalists to question her motives. An Phoblacht asked its readers, “Did Mowlam break the mold to encourage loyalists to accept the need for real change or was it simply an exercise in reassuring them that the status quo is still the only option?” Adams asked the readers of his Irish Times column a similar question: “Why did the British secretary of State fudge the issue?” and expressed anger at the late timing by the British and Irish governments to expel the political party associated with the UDA, the UDP, from talks.

For Sinn Féin members such as Gerry Adams, as well as for other Republicans, this delay in suspension of the UDP from the talks appeared to be just another example of the British government’s favoritism towards Unionists. In response, Tony Blair announced the formation of a Bloody Sunday Inquiry in an attempt to gain more support from the

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Nationalists for himself and his government. This inquiry, which eventually found that the Nationalist protesters that the British soldiers shot and killed in 1972 were innocent, did not complete its findings until 2010.

On February 8, 1998, the IRA murdered two people, Robert Dougan and Brendan Campbell. The IRA was blamed for the two killings and as a punishment for breaking the rules, Sinn Féin was expelled from the talks for two weeks. Adams protested this two week ban, going to the press and stating that “no evidence had been presented to substantiate any charge that Republicans had been involved in the killings.” An Phoblacht reported that: “Adams also accused the Unionists of “a conspiracy of silence” during the loyalist killing spree a few weeks earlier compared to their reaction to recent Nationalist killings. It is of particular note that the Ulster Unionist Party has responded with great speed to implicate Sinn Féin in these killings and is threatening to indict Sinn Féin. People will not be fooled by this cynical and selective attitude by Unionists.” The Unionists thought that the two week punishment was not enough and wanted a harsher punishment for Sinn Féin. Senator Mitchell knew that the deadline to complete the peace was fast approaching and that, without the approval of Sinn Féin, any decisions made would not be truly representative nor would they take hold, as Republicans would not accept any decision made without being represented, so he stuck to the two week

175 Blair, A Journey: My Political Life, 166.
176 Ibid, 166.
punishment. After the two week period, Sinn Féin reentered the peace talks on Monday, March 9.

At the talks, much of the discussions were dependent upon the interactions and relationships between the politicians to ensure the success of the Good Friday Agreement. Gerry Adams records in his book *Hope and History* that he realized the difficult position that Senator George Mitchell held in moderating the conflicting parties and thought that Mitchell was a “good-natured, humorous, and patient man” as Mitchell was able to host all of the parties in one room and encourage discussion. Mitchell recognized that Gerry Adams was the key not only for interacting with the IRA but for guaranteeing the support of hardline Republicans, which would ensure that the peace that was made would be accepted. Likewise, Hume recognized Adam’s strengths in convincing the IRA to remain in a ceasefire, and acknowledged that he could not have crafted a peace alone that the IRA would have accepted. According to Hume, their personal relationship and dialogues continued after the talks. Although they were opponents for the Nationalist vote, Adams viewed Hume as an ally in the talks and, due to their past history of talking about the peace process, Adams knew that he could rely on Hume in most situations to help Sinn Féin and ensure that both parties had representation. Adams wrote that Hume’s personal way of working was different than any others that he encountered and thought that, “throughout all of our engagements, from the very first

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182 Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 320
184 Farren, *John Hume in His Own Words*, Location 3114.
meeting, I found John to be extremely tense.” Adams also respected and admired Taoiseach Ahren, writing that “he is a natural conciliatory…not to say that he is not tough,” and was “tough and shrewd” when dealing with political adversaries. Ahren recognized the necessity of having Adams at the talks, as he could be used as a representative of the IRA, which ensured that the IRA would respect any decisions made. Ahren, like many other politicians of the time, was not convinced that Adams was not in the IRA, and was quoted stating that, “I used to have this running battle with Gerry Adams; that he was never in the IRA. I’d say ‘well I was never in Fianna Fail either’.”

His predecessor, John Bruton, did not view Adams in the same light, which was partially why the early talks failed, as he did not value the opinions of the IRA or Sinn Féin and thought that they complete the talks without Sinn Féin. When reflecting on the peace process, Bruton was quoted in stating, “the only reason there had to be a peace process was because of the mistaken belief of Gerry Adams and his associates that they could bomb one million unionists in Northern Ireland into a united Ireland.” Adams did not like Bruton and went as far as to say that Bruton was “pro-unionist” and that Bruton’s actions in the talks would likely “prove disastrous.” British Prime Minister John Major recognized Adams as a necessary part of the talks, stating that “Adams, and many in the Provisional leadership seemed committed to a political process,” however,

185 Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 44.
186 Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 346.
187 Ronald Quinlan, “Bertie Ahren: ‘Gerry Adams saying he was not in the IRA is like me saying I was not in Fianna Fail,” Independent, November 23, 2014.
189 Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland, 198.
Major viewed Adams and Sinn Féin with heavy speculation.\(^{190}\) Conversely, Blair wrote of Adams that he was “a partner, even a friend,” by the end of the peace process.\(^{191}\) On his part, Adams preferred Blair to Major, as he saw how Major was limited by his constituents and viewed Blair as far more capable of making change. Adams wrote that the “atmosphere was relaxed and friendly,” when he met with Blair.\(^{192}\) Trimble, much like the Prime Ministers, saw Adams as untrustworthy, but also the key to the IRA, and did not leave the talks when the rest of the major Unionist players such as Ian Paisley did when Sinn Féin entered the talks.\(^{193}\) Adams respected Trimble as he realized that Trimble was largely alone and facing opposition from his own party for staying in the talks, despite the fact that Adams did not agree with much of Trimble’s opinions on policy.\(^{194}\)

With only a month left before the Good Friday deadline of midnight, April 9, all members of the negotiations worked intensely, collaborating amongst themselves and across party lines to complete the peace agreement. Adams reported that his first meeting with the SDLP was good, and that “it was Senator Mitchell’s stated goal to produce a rough draft within the first week,” meaning that negotiations were taking place across the board among all the parties involved.\(^{195}\) Adams held a phone call with Blair, in which Blair assured him that the “Unionists now accepted the need for North-South bodies,” but that any weapons discussions would be “tortuously difficult.”\(^{196}\) Adams also spoke to

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\(^{192}\) Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 312.

\(^{193}\) Godson, *Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism*, 733.

\(^{194}\) Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 322.

\(^{195}\) Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 345.

\(^{196}\) Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 46.
Bertie Ahern about his personal belief that the “Unionists were playing a tactical game designed to minimize the potential of the talks.”\textsuperscript{197} The relationship between the SDLP and Sinn Féin began to deteriorate with competition between the politicians and their constituents over which party was best representing Nationalist interests keeping the party members from interacting in fear of sharing too much information about their strategies or appearing to be too similar to their opponents, however, Adams was able to re-engage the SDLP politicians with a more positive and less competitive atmosphere.\textsuperscript{198} Simultaneously, Adams sent McGuinness to talk to the British politicians to ensure that Sinn Féin interests would not be overlooked amidst the discussions, specifically in terms of “Republican political prisoners” or IRA prisoners, for whom Adams wanted to secure an early release.\textsuperscript{199}

By the week before Good Friday, the negotiations and talks surrounding the first and third strands had been completed, however, the second strand of the peace talks, which focused on the British and Irish relationships had yet to be agreed upon, as the debate of how much or little power the British would hold was contentious. On Tuesday, April 7, Bertie Ahern had left Stormont to attend his mother’s funeral in Dublin the next day. Senator Mitchell received word, however, that the Unionists wanted to renegotiate the terms that Ahern and Blair had previously agreed upon for Strand Two and passed the word on to Ahern. Had Ahern refused to renegotiate, Mitchell was certain that “there

\textsuperscript{197}Ibid, 346.
\textsuperscript{198}Ibid, 348-469.
\textsuperscript{199}Ibid, 353.
would not have been a Good Friday Agreement.” Ahern scheduled a meeting with Blair for 7 AM the day of the funeral to start the process. According to Mitchell, from then until Mitchell announced the Agreement to the press at 5PM on Good Friday, Ahern, Blair, and the rest of the members of the peace process hammered out the final negotiations of Strand Two. Mitchell told the members involved that, “we’ll continue until we finish. There can be no discussion of a pause or break.” On Thursday night, the British and Irish governments committed to establishing a North/South Ministerial Council that could create “implementation bodies,” to carry out the council’s decisions, which, for a time, would coexist with a Northern Ireland Assembly, and that both the Assembly and Council would be completely codependent upon each other. This was to appease the Unionist calls for an Assembly and the Nationalist calls for North/South Institutions. By Friday morning, the last alterations and final calls for changes were made upon the final document. Although Adams and the rest of Sinn Féin accepted the Good Friday Agreement, Trimble and the UUP still had doubts. Nearing the end of the afternoon, Adams reported that a bunch of politicians from the other parties met and began to complain about the time, with Adams himself saying that, “we are going home soon if things don’t shape up,” and another politician stating, “Somebody needs to put testicles on David Trimble.”

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201 Ibid, Location 2833.
202 Ibid, Location 2833.
At 4:45 PM, David Trimble told Mitchell that the Unionists “were ready to do the business,” and fifteen minutes later, camera crews from various news stations were set up to send the live footage of the governments and parties voting in agreement. While Sinn Féin did not officially endorse the Good Friday Agreement until after their Ard Fheis in May, Adams gave Mitchell “encouraging and supportive,” words.\(^{205}\) In Mitchell’s announcement, he stated:

I’m pleased to announce that the two governments, and the political parties of Northern Ireland, have reached agreement. This agreement proposes changes in the Irish Constitution and British constitutional law to enshrine the principle that it is the people of Northern Ireland who will decide, democratically, their own future. The Agreement creates new institutions: a Northern Ireland Assembly, to restore the people to the fundamental right to govern themselves; and a North/South Council, to encourage cooperation and joint action for mutual benefit. It deals fairly with such sensitive issues as prisoners, policing, and decommissioning….If this agreement is approved in referendums North and South, it offers the chance for a better future. But to secure that future it will take the good faith efforts of the leaders gathered here, and the commitment of all the people of Northern Ireland...This agreement proves that democracy works, and in its wake we can say to the men of violence, to those who disdain democracy, whose tools are bombs and bullets: Your way is not the right way. You will never solve the problems of Northern Ireland by violence. You will only make them worse...\(^{206}\)

Afterwards, Adams spoke to the media, stating:

“While there was much in the agreement, much more still had to be done. The equality agenda was paramount. The agreement had to be a vehicle to bring about parity of esteem, equality of treatment, and equality of opportunity for all citizens in all aspects of society.”\(^{207}\)


\(^{207}\)Adams, *Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland*, 375.
The efforts of the political parties during the peace talks culminated in the creation of the Good Friday Agreement. This Agreement established a precedent wherein parties who had once been unable to be in the same room as each other could now look back on the compromises and collaborative efforts put in to serve a greater purpose in ending the violence in Northern Ireland and guaranteeing the safety and rights of citizens regardless of political or religious backgrounds. While the Agreement would not be voted into law until later that year, its very existence pointed towards a hopeful future of peace and collaboration between the Unionists and Nationalists and a Northern Ireland that would be free from large scale paramilitary violence and warring factions. Likewise, this Agreement reflected the changing atmosphere wherein violence, regardless of origin, would be wholeheartedly condemned by all political groups.

The Agreement also meant that Gerry Adams and other politicians with previous connections to paramilitary organizations could fully commit themselves to politics rather than being caught between the maintenance of a political identity and that of a paramilitary identity. After the Good Friday Agreement, Adams no longer needed to represent the IRA, which was in the process of dissolution, and could focus on reaching his goals for Sinn Féin and Republicanism solely through political means without needing to balance the opinions of the Army Council. This was something that many of Adams’ critics from within the Republican movement pointed out, as they felt abandoned by Sinn Féin and Adams as the party became more political and less about the IRA and the armed struggle as a whole. To quote Brendan Hughes, a survivor of the 1980s hunger strikes, “the Army (IRA) was being run down. I began to get suspicious about the whole
political direction, the way things were going.”

Because the majority of Republicans were in favor of the Agreement, as proven by their 1998 Ard Fheis in May where Sinn Féin voted to accept it, and taking the gun out of Irish politics, Adams could now pursue a more moderate stance that would increase political support for Sinn Féin without repercussions from his original political base, which was celebrating their advancements for political Republicanism in the Good Friday Agreement. While there were never any specific voter percentages revealed in the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, Adams does state in his book *A Farther Shore*, that the “yes” vote for the Good Friday Agreement won. Due to his political maneuvering not only in discussions with other political parties but also when talking to the IRA Army Council, Adams guaranteed that the Good Friday Agreement not only would pass but continue to find support within the majority of his constituents who felt that their views were represented as the pieces of the Agreement were put into policy.

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CHAPTER 4:
THE AFTERMATH OF THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Following the announcement of the Good Friday Agreement, the Northern Irish had the decision on May 22, 1998 to either vote to ratify the Agreement or reject it. On that date, “over 71 percent of those who voted supported the Agreement” with a turnout of “82 percent of registered voters” meaning that the majority who voted for the Agreement truly represented the feelings of those living in Northern Ireland. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) led by Ian Paisley had campaigned in the month leading up to the vote against the Agreement, in an attempt to nullify all that had been proposed by the peace talks, however, this campaign was unsuccessful.

On the same day as the Northern Ireland referendum, May 22, the Republic of Ireland, also known as the South, held their own referendum to change both Articles 2 and 3 of their Constitution to reflect the “principle of consent” which had been written into the Good Friday Agreement. This meant that the Irish Government would respect the choice of the Northern Irish to remain in the United Kingdom, as long as the majority reflects that choice. This allowed Irish politicians from the South to still maintain their goals of eventual unification with the North, without appearing to disrespect the wishes of the

Northerners or appear to be inciting violence against the United Kingdom. This policy had been one that Sinn Féin had promoted among its own ranks to encourage voter turnout for the Good Friday Agreement, insisting that, while the Agreement did not ensure reunification, the concept of consent ensured that reunification could truly happen at any time the voters chose to leave the United Kingdom. Over ninety-four percent of voters in the Irish Republic responded “yes,” to the Amendment changes, which meant that the Good Friday Agreement would be supported by the governments involved.²¹²

While the Agreement did not fully satisfy either extremes of the political landscape, most politicians, including Gerry Adams and those of Sinn Féin, urged their constituents to support the Agreement by arguing that, while it did not guarantee everything that they had hoped for, it would be a starting point in the right direction. For many, the Agreement was a sign of a brighter future for themselves and their descendants; a future without the fear of paramilitary violence. As the Troubles themselves had lasted for nearly thirty years, the people of Northern Ireland had grown tired of the seemingly constant warfare that, by most accounts, had led to nothing but continued death and destruction. Even those who had taken part in the violence had begun to grow weary of the continual fighting and began to see the futility in their ways. This Agreement provided a peaceful alternative and an end to violence towards the path of reconciliation.

between the warring parties. Likewise, for many political parties such as Sinn Féin, which had arisen out of the Troubles as de facto representatives of paramilitary organizations, this new political landscape which promised to fully take the bullet out of the “bullet and the ballot box” strategies now found themselves needing to rebrand and redefine themselves to be more palatable for moderate voters that had not previously considered their political parties as legitimate. Likewise, parties like Sinn Féin needed more moderate voters to replace the votes of the more radical members of their party that did not want to admit that the war was over and that peace had begun.

Gerry Adams, already sensing this shift in the political atmosphere, had begun moving Sinn Féin more towards actions of a mainstream political party. While the previous moves he made had been calculated and cautious to guarantee minimal dissent and to maintain the support of both moderates and hardliners, Adams now had much more leeway to make Sinn Féin fully mainstream and much more political than the party ever had been, abandoning some of the more radical thoughts to ensure moderate voter support as well as entice new voters to join the party. In this post-Good Friday Agreement Northern Ireland, Adams now had the ability to shake off the final remnants of accusations that Sinn Féin was related to the IRA and establish Sinn Féin as a fully independent political party that did not need to rely on a radical base for support.

On May 10, 1998, Sinn Féin held an Ard Fheis to discuss the Good Friday Agreement. In his opening address, Gerry Adams outlined Sinn Féin’s peace
strategy in building democratic alliances and changing British policy through the
Referendums to build their political strength.\textsuperscript{213} He wanted to ensure that this
decision was recognized as a historic opportunity for the party to take the lead in
laying the new foundations for peace. Adams told his party that “the vast majority
of people in Ireland want peace. Peace demands justice….They wish to see their
representatives concentrating their efforts to bring about a just and lasting
settlement.”\textsuperscript{214} Adams wanted to convince his party members that the Good
Friday Agreement was the best possible way to represent the needs of their
constituents. He also wanted to ensure that Sinn Féin would continue to be a
political leader in Northern Ireland and hold the same importance that they had
held during the peace talks. Five days later, on the 15th, the members of Sinn Féin
agreed to not only support the Good Friday Agreement but also launch a “Yes
campaign” to ensure the success of the Agreement.\textsuperscript{215} Although all the strands and
parts of the GFA were agreed upon in 1998, the implementation of these
agreements took time.

On June 25, 1998, the first elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly
took place. While the political parties of the Assembly were voted upon by the
Northern Irish people, the people who would represent the parties were chosen by
the parties themselves. The Executive Committee of Ministers, which would lead


\textsuperscript{214}Adams, “Gerry Adams Presidential Address to Ard Fheis 1998,” \textit{Sinn Féin},
\url{https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/15175}

the Assembly, were voted upon by the members of the Assembly. The leaders of the Executive Committee of Ministers are called the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and continue to have the power to set the number of seats available in the Assembly. With one hundred and eight available seats, twenty eight went to the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), twenty four went to the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), twenty went to the DUP, six went to the Alliance Party, five went to the United Kingdom Unionists (UKUP), two to the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) as well as the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, and three went to other independent parties. For their part, Sinn Féin received eighteen seats or available spots to place representatives within the new Assembly. This also meant that the party would hold two ministerial positions within the power sharing Executive Committee of Ministers. The Assembly met for the first time on July 1, 1998 at Stormont Castle. At the Assembly, the Secretary of State to Northern Ireland, Marjorie Mowlam, appointed Lord Alderdice as the Initial Presiding Officer, a title that would later be changed to “Speaker”. The Speaker was to be voted upon at the first meeting by all members of the Assembly, and Lord Alderice was confirmed to continue his position as the Speaker. Also at the first meeting, David Trimble of the UUP was elected to be


the First Minister and Seamus Mallon of the SDLP was elected as the Deputy
First Minister.220

Although, as Gerry Adams stated, “Stormont houses a lot of bad vibes for
Irish Nationalism,” he and the Sinn Fein politicians were eager to take part in the
newly formed Assembly and work together with other politicians to set the
groundwork for how Northern Ireland would function during a time of peace.221
From Sinn Féin, the eighteen ministers who were chosen to take their seats in the
Assembly included: Gerry Adams, Bairbre de Brun, Pat Doherty, Michelle
Gildernew, Gerry Kelly, John Kelly, Barry McElduff, Martin McGuinness, Gerry
McHugh, Mitchell McLaughlin, Pat McNamee, Alex Maskey, Francie Molloy,
Conor Murphy, Mick Murphy, Mary Nelis, Dara O’Hagan, and Sue Ramsey.222
For the two Executive positions, Sinn Féin promoted Martin McGuinness to
become the Minister of Education and Bairbre de Brun to the position of Minister
of Health, which took effect in 1999.

Although they had protested the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the
DUP later would work with the politicians of Sinn Féin to not only participate but
also lead the Northern Ireland Assembly. In 2007, DUP leader Ian Paisley was
elected to the position of First Minister with Sinn Féin’s Martin McGuinness as
his Deputy. Although both men had been on political extremes during the

Troubles, even going to jail for their causes, they were able to put aside these differences and work together for the betterment of Northern Ireland, and, in later years, become such good friends that their coworkers knew them as the “Chuckle Brothers” as they enjoyed laughing and spending time together. Because of the shifting atmosphere from the Troubles to a time of peace, the long held animosities between Unionists and Republicans began to fade. The politicians no longer viewed each other as mortal enemies, rather, coworkers who together could ensure peace for the citizens of Northern Ireland. While the Unionists and Republicans continue to differ on opinions and political stances, the disputes between the parties would no longer stop the democratic process altogether, with parties leaving the room when others entered, but allow for constructive debate and cooperation between organizations.

Not everyone was in favor of the peace and the new atmosphere of cooperation that was brought with it. Gerry Byrnes of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the political wing of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), was quick to judge the Good Friday Agreement. Because the INLA remained active throughout the peace talks, the IRSP had not been invited to the discussions. Although, due to their own political agendas, even if they had been invited, they would not have attended. Like the Republican Sinn Féin (RSF) and the Thirty Two County Sovereignty Committee (32 CSC), these Republicans

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rejected the notion of peace talks and saw the work of Gerry Adams to be nothing more than a surrender of their Republican values. For these Republicans, the war would never be over until all British influence left Northern Ireland and the partition between the North and South ended. Likewise, many members of the IRA questioned what their fighting had truly brought to Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement.

One IRA man was quoted saying that the acronym for the Good Friday Agreement, GFA, stood for “Got Fuck All,” as he felt as though the Republicans did not gain anything from the Agreement or the talks. These Republicans felt that the only reason that the talks should have occurred was for the British to establish a peaceful way of surrendering and allowing Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland. When they realized that it was to establish political entities in Northern Ireland, and therefore establish Northern Ireland as a part of the United Kingdom, they felt cheated and betrayed. These members of the IRA felt as though they had fought the British to a stalemate, and did not understand why Sinn Féin and by extension Gerry Adams had not fought harder for reunification and a complete British surrender.

While some IRA members were willing to put their guns aside and work towards forgetting the past, for some, the past would never leave them. For sisters and first female members of the male-dominated IRA, Dolorus and Marian Price, their experiences in a men’s prison in Britain left permanent scars, as both

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224 White, Out of the Ashes: An Oral History of the Provisional Irish Republican Movement, 394.
suffered from bulimia and anorexia following their hunger strike, which had broken by continual force feeding. Following the Good Friday Agreement, unable to reclamate as a citizen in peacetime and put the Troubles behind her, Marian joined RIRA. Her sister, Dolorus, meanwhile regretful of her role in the IRA, took part in a documentary about her life entitled *I, Dolorus* in which she described how the Troubles took their youth from them and left them with nothing in return. Dolorus committed suicide before her perspective was told to the public. In this documentary as well, Dolorus claimed to be a part of a secret group within the IRA called the “Unknowns,” who were tasked with taking out secret hits against touts, or double agents, and other enemies of the IRA.225 Her job had been to drive these people to secondary locations where they would be killed. Dolorus also claimed that the Unknowns were led by none other than Gerry Adams.226 Both Dolours Price and Brendan Hughes criticized Adams’ role in the peace process, demanding that he come forward as a leader of the IRA and admit his crimes. They viewed Adams as a hypocrite, especially when Adams called upon former IRA members to admit their crimes so that societal healing in Northern Ireland could begin.

Adams has maintained to this day that he never was a part of the IRA, nor was he a member of their Army Council.227 He continues to state that the accusations against him by former IRA members are false and only exist to

225 Maurice Sweeny, 2018, *I, Dolorus*, [Film], Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.
226 Sweeny, 2018, *I, Dolorus*, [Film], Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.
227 Ibid.
delegitimize himself, the Good Friday Agreement, and Sinn Féin as a whole. As of right now, there is no concrete evidence tying Gerry Adams to the IRA outside of verbal accusations by former IRA members. Even during the two times that Adams was held in Long Kesh prison during the 1970s, the RUC and the British intelligence could not produce any evidence of his membership in the IRA to keep him there. Currently there continues to be some investigations into these claims that Adams led a secret organization in the IRA known as the “Unknowns,” however nothing concrete has surfaced. 228 Until there is conclusive evidence, Adams remains innocent in the eyes of the law, regardless of the accusations against him.

Despite the naysayers, most political sides welcomed the new peace and were ready to put away their guns and condemn violent acts. This was especially visible when, on August 15, 1998, RIRA claimed the bombing in Omagh. This attack led to the deaths of twenty nine people as well as hundreds of injuries. Whereas in the past, the IRA had been tacitly supported by hardline Republicans, with even more moderate Republicans deflecting the blame for the attacks on the British, arguing that the IRA would not exist if the British left Ireland, when the RIRA attack occurred, Republicans unequivocally condemned the attacks as well as the organization, RIRA. Gerry Adams described himself as “totally horrified,” and spoke for Sinn Féin when he stated, “we are saying they should stop and stop

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228 Ibid.
now.”

Even Ruairí Ó Bradaigh, who had led the split from Sinn Féin due to disagreements about the political nature of the party, was quoted describing the attack by RIRA as the “absolute inhumanity of the slaughter of the innocents.”

The Republican newspaper, An Phoblacht, wrote of the violence that: “It is obvious that the splinter group responsible for the Omagh bombing is totally militarist. It has passed through the stages above and gone further. This group has no community or political support base upon which to fall back. Its miniscule support is confined to the immediate associates of its activists. Now, as revulsion at the Omagh atrocity grows, it faces a wave of repression North and South.”

This assessment of RIRA held true, as RIRA found itself lacking popular support as well as any support from sources that had traditionally fought for the removal of British troops at any cost.

Although the discussions leading up to the Good Friday Agreement involved a small group of individuals representing their respective political parties, the Good Friday Agreement impacted everyone living in the six counties. The disarmament of paramilitary groups, as well as the removal of British troops from Northern Ireland and the release of paramilitary prisoners, were all implemented and represented significant change. While most people supported the Good Friday Agreement, some within the Republican movement were

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disenchanted with the ordeal. They were left wondering “who really won” and “if it [fighting the British] was worth it”. Some who had spent a majority of their lives fighting for one united Ireland thought that the Good Friday Agreement which gave up the armed struggle while accepting partition in practice was practically a surrender. This led to the splintering of the Republican movement and the creation of the Real IRA, which have continued to create some problems for those seeking peace into the twenty-first century. While the Provos completely decommissioned all their weapons in 2005, the Real IRA has remained active to this day. Likewise, the DUP’s and other hardline Unionists’ continued refusal to support or recognize the Good Friday Agreement has continued into the twenty-first century.

Sensing the turning of the tides, the Provisional IRA began to enter into concrete agreements to solidify their plans to fully decommission and put their arms out of service. With John de Chastelain of Canada leading the decommission of arms for all of the paramilitary organizations in Ireland, the IRA met with him to discuss the plans for decommissioning, which de Chastelain would present to the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD). The initial deadline for the IRA’s decommissioning had been set for May 22, 2000, by the Good Friday Agreement, with this date supported by the IICD as well as the other major paramilitary organizations such as the UFF and UVF. Although

233 Ibid, 406.
234 Godson, Himself Alone: David Trimble and the Ordeal of Unionism, 464.
other paramilitary organizations still exist in Northern Ireland to this date, none of these groups have the same amount of backing or support that the IRA had in its prime. Because most people accepted the peace, these new paramilitary organizations have been met with disdain by both sides of the political spectrum. Despite this momentum towards peace, the IRA did wait until 2005 to completely decommission all of its weapons and complete the agreements of the third strand of the GFA.\footnote{U.S. Response to IRA Statement on Decommissioning, "Office of the Press Secretary, last modified September 26, 2005, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050926-3.html}

Despite the continuation of their ceasefire and rejection of violence following the peace talks, the IRA did not announce the end of the struggle, nor completely decommission their weapons immediately after the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The IRA’s deadline to decommission their weapons had been set for May 22, 2000, but this was missed due to political negotiations between the Northern Assembly and the IRA, as well as with the Independent International Council on Decommissioning (IICD). The IRA continued to push back for another year before announcing a start date. October 23, 2001 marked the beginning of the decommissioning process for the IRA.\footnote{Chronology of Provisional IRA Disarmament, Irish Times, last modified, September 26, 2005, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/chronology-of-provisional-ira-disarmament-1.497118} A year later, after the Northern Assembly had been suspended, later referred to as “Stormontgate” the IRA left the IICD in October 2002.\footnote{Chronology of Provisional IRA Disarmament, Irish Times, https://www.irishtimes.com/news/chronology-of-provisional-ira-disarmament-1.497118} Throughout 2002 and into 2003, the IRA
remained unwilling to cooperate and a stalemate emerged. John de Chaistlain of Canada attempted to work out a deal with the IRA.

Although it appeared like the IRA would accept a deal in October of 2003, it fell apart when de Chaistlain could not guarantee proof to the Stormont government that disarmament would occur.\textsuperscript{238} The Northern Ireland Assembly demanded proof of disarmament, as they did not want to leave any of the work that they had put into the peace up to chance. A year later, de Chaistlain returned to Stormont and the IRA with a new deal which would guarantee the IRA would disarm in the presence of himself and two other witnesses. Ian Paisley and the DUP refused this deal, insisting that there must be photographic evidence of the former IRA members’ weapons dumps so that the entire world could be certain that the disarmament actually occurred.\textsuperscript{239} The IRA saw this request as completely humiliating and refused. In July 2005, the Secretary to Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, allowed for the early release of Sean Kelly, a former IRA member who had bombed the majority Protestant and Unionist Shankhill Road in 1993.\textsuperscript{240} That same month, the IRA announced the end of their armed struggle. By September 26, 2005, the IRA had completely decommissioned all of their weapons under the witness of one Catholic priest and one Protestant minister as well as John de Chaistlain, meaning that the final strand of the Good Friday Agreement had been completed and all the pieces of the peace talks had been enacted.

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
Following the Good Friday Agreement, politicians that had previously defined themselves by the violence of the Troubles now needed to redefine their stances to better reflect a society in peace, rather than one of violence. Likewise, they not only had to juggle the new institutions and Northern Assembly that was formed, but also new criticisms from those who thought that the Good Friday Agreement was nothing more than another disappointment from governmental and political institutions. Gerry Adams specifically found himself in this scenario as the position that he held as a de facto representative of the IRA and hardline Republicans during the peace talks now held him up to the scrutiny of those who felt that he had failed to fully represent them. While those who disagreed with the Good Friday Agreement made up roughly thirty percent of the population, this loud minority did little to sway the politicians and rest of the population that was ready for peace from abandoning the Agreement or returning to the Troubles.

With the move more toward politics following the Good Friday Agreement, Gerry was able to move Sinn Féin into the mainstream. Although this did bring the criticism of the hardliners, it also brought the support of many moderates who had been hopeful for a peaceful future for their children. From the start of his presidency of Sinn Féin in 1983 and throughout the peace process, Gerry Adams transformed public opinion about Sinn Féin from it being considered the equivalent of the IRA into acceptance of it as a mainstream political party. As party leader, Adams used his prior connections to the IRA to boost initial Republican support of the party. As more people began calling for an
end to the violence, Adams slowly shifted the party line from an apologist for the IRA to rejection of their violent methods, while maintaining IRA support for the party by arguing Sinn Féin’s new policies were most likely to achieve their ultimate goal of a united Ireland. By the time the Good Friday Agreement was approved in 1998, and the majority of the violence had ended, Adams had completed Sinn Féin’s transformation into a mainstream party by allowing its members to take their seats in Parliament and fully recognize and commit to the political institutions that he himself had aided in building during the peace talks.
CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

Throughout his time as the leader of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams promoted Republican politics and ideals, not only during the peace process, as he cooperated with politicians from Northern Ireland, the UK, and America, but afterwards, to ensure the ceasefire and disarmament would continue with the support of the Provisional IRA. Despite opposition not only from IRA splinter groups but Unionist hardliners like Ian Paisley and the DUP, Gerry Adams managed not only to secure the Good Friday Agreement within Republican circles but also increase the popularity of Sinn Féin across Northern Ireland, not only during the time of the Troubles and the peace talks, but into the 2000s and up to his resignation from leadership in 2018.

Through their experiences at the peace talks, Adams and the other politicians who took part not only learned how to better cooperate amongst themselves, but also how to view each other as equals rather than as opponents. Rather than treating each other as the problem, Adams and the other politicians realized that their problems could only be solved through collaboration with each other. Gerry Adams played a major role in this, as it was through his connection to the IRA that he convinced them to facilitate the talks in the first place by committing to nonviolence, and convinced them to recommit to peace to ensure the talks could proceed. Many argue that Adams’ critical role in the peace process lay in steering the IRA and Sinn Féin into a policy of political engagement and eventually an openness to collaborate with and participate in the peace process.
Although RIRA and other splinter groups have emerged since 1998, none of these paramilitary organizations have gained the political or public support that the Provisionals had attained during the Troubles. Most of those who now pursue the cause of a united Ireland have put their faith in their ballots rather than their bullets. Because the concept of “consent” was written into the Good Friday Agreement, most Republicans to this day simply await the time when the majority of Northern Irish people will choose to vote for separation from the United Kingdom. Those who continued to perpetuate violence have found public opinion strongly opposed to their actions. They are labelled terrorists and considered to be falsely representing Republican interests, even by *An Phoblacht*. In 2008, *An Phoblacht* called the RIRA a “pseudo Republican group” after a bomb threat by the organization. While a minority of IRA members did transfer their membership to RIRA after the Good Friday Agreement, most IRA members relinquished their guns and faded into obscurity. Some former IRA members questioned Adams’ loyalty to the cause, as well as whether their means of violence justified the ends of the Good Friday Agreement. However, this view was seen by many as more of a personal indictment of their own violent actions rather than blaming Adams for not fulfilling their dream of a united Ireland.

Through a political context, this thesis has explained how the leaders of Sinn Féin changed popular opinion and garnered support through nonviolence and political strategies. This adds to the current historiography of the Troubles, as most historians have taken a nationalistic and/or a cultural lens when examining the violence that occurred in

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Northern Ireland. These historians focus more on the actions of paramilitaries from the Irish Catholic Nationalists and the Protestant British Loyalists, whereas this thesis focused more on the political actions of the Nationalist and Unionist representatives leading up to, during, and following the Good Friday Agreement. Although these representatives’ national and cultural backgrounds influence their actions, this thesis did not have a primary focus on these factors, rather, this thesis focused specifically on the political actions of Sinn Féin politicians Gerry Adams and his right hand man, Martin McGuinness. Gerry Adams and his party led their supporters, which included members of the IRA, from supporting violence as a means of promoting Republican goals to nonviolent political actions. Adams’ political maneuvers and interactions from the end of the Troubles with Good Friday Agreement not only with his constituents and fellow party members, but also with his fellow politicians including, John Hume, John Major, David Trimble, George Mitchell, and Tony Blair, guided this thesis’ conclusions about Adams’ role in the Good Friday Agreement. Gerry Adams took Sinn Féin, a political party that had once been seen as nothing more than a struggling representative of a terrorist organization to a fully legitimized and internationally recognized political party that ensured the cessation of violence in Northern Ireland and the continuation of peace.

Given the current historiography of the Troubles, this thesis confirms what most historians have written about the Troubles and the Good Friday Agreement, specifically surrounding the cultural and nationalist lenses that historians, such as Ian McBride, George Sweeney, F. Stuart Ross, Kevin Bean, Landon Hancock, and Tim Pat Coogan, have used when writing about the Troubles. As this thesis does require the background
knowledge of the nationalist and cultural backgrounds of the politicians who took part in the shaping of the Good Friday Agreement, the work of previous historians in writing about Irish cultural movements aids in the understanding of the mentalities of the politicians entering the peace talks. This thesis, however, does complicate the existing historiography by focusing on the Troubles and Good Friday Agreement through a political lens rather than through a cultural or nationalist lens to further expand upon and explain the importance of Sinn Féin and the leadership of Gerry Adams at the time.

To solely focus upon just the cultural or nationalistic backgrounds of the politicians and leaders during the Troubles reduces the importance of the political process and how seriously damaged the governmental and political systems in Northern Ireland had been before the Good Friday Agreement took place. This thesis explores how Adams not only legitimized his party, Sinn Féin, in the eyes of the public, but also how he legitimized the governmental and political processes in the eyes of hardline Republicans who had previously believed that the government or any political organization could ever work to support them or their goals.

While historian Ian McBride explored in his article, “The Shadow of the Gunman: Irish Historians and the IRA” (2011), how the history of resistance towards the British embedded itself in Irish tradition and history, this examination fails to recognize how this resistance played out in any spheres outside of cultural and traditional means. McBride did elaborate how the nationalistic ideals of Irish unity are taught to each generation, which was a concept that this thesis built upon through the examination of the

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political base for Sinn Féin. This thesis fills in the gaps that McBride’s article left by further examining how the multigenerational concept of Irish Nationalism impacted the political sphere.

Likewise, this thesis also built upon the cultural significance of hunger strikes that historian George Sweeney explored in his articles, “Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice” (1993) and “Self-Immolative Martyrdom: Explaining the Irish Hunger Strike Tradition” (2004). Because the 1980 Hunger Strikes functioned as a catalyst for the awareness of Sinn Féin as a form of political Republicanism, these articles were used to set a framework of how hunger strikes had been used in Ireland’s past by those who felt wronged by those in authority to mobilize public opinion by starving themselves as a weapon against the powerful. Like the previous article by Ian McBride, these articles provided context for the cultural landscape in Ireland and aided in this thesis’ exploration of why the 1980 Hunger Strikes took place as well as why this action succeeded in Ireland as a political action. Also like the McBride article, these articles by Sweeney focused primarily on a cultural context, and this thesis took the concept further by exploring how this culturally based action impacted the political landscape.


244 Sweeny, “Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice,” 421.
245 Sweeny, "Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice," 422.
He wrote about how “recruitment to Sinn Féin used to occur primarily in the wake of events such as the 1969 pogroms, internment, Bloody Sunday, and the hunger strikes.”

Much like this thesis, Ross explained how Gerry Adams wanted Sinn Féin to be able to develop a relatable political base, rather than just being seen as “a poor second cousin to the IRA” so that they could keep more members rather than losing people to the SDLP once the momentum from major events was lost. The thesis expanded upon what Ross had proposed and took this concept further by exploring how Adams did go forward with developing a legitimate and reliable political base that was separate from the IRA.

Similarly to what Ross wrote, Kevin Bean’s The New Politics of Sinn Féin (2007) further examined how Sinn Féin changed under the leadership of Gerry Adams as well as their changing relationship to the IRA. Like Ross, Bean wrote about how both the IRA and Sinn Féin were viewed by the public as “two sides of the same coin.” Bean wrote in his book how “since the 1980s, [Gerry] Adams built up a deserved reputation among Republicans for delivering political success.” This thesis agreed with and built upon Bean’s assertion that Gerry Adams moved Sinn Féin from political obscurity towards leadership in politics, while bringing the IRA into the negotiations and leading it away from violence.

Much like the focus of this thesis, Landon Hancock’s, “The Northern Irish Peace Process: From Top to Bottom” (2008), explored how major political leaders such as

249 Bean, The New Politics of Sinn Féin, 256.
Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin and John Hume of the SDLP worked together to formulate a practical peace that could be implicated by a collaborative governmental organization in Northern Ireland. Hancock commended the actions of the individual politicians, not only the individual citizens that voted to support the Agreement, but also politicians such as David Trimble and Gerry Adams, men who had the task of “facing down their constituents in order to bring their parties to the table and work out the Agreement.”

Much like this article, this thesis focused on individual actions of politicians, however, this thesis explored the actions of Gerry Adams specifically, rather than equating his actions with all of his fellow politicians and the individual citizens of Northern Ireland.

While most of the historians of the Troubles end their narratives with the Good Friday Agreement, both this thesis and the article by Roger Ginty, Orla Muldoon, and Niel Ferguson, “No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement” (2007), explored some of the lingering problems of sectarianism which has continued to cause problems in Northern Ireland. This article, much like the thesis, explored the way in which “broken ceasefires, the collapse of the power-sharing government, communal tension, and violence” led some to question the legitimacy of their newly created political organizations. This article, unlike the thesis, emphasized national identity over the political process, and stressed the necessity of the creation and establishment of a “Northern Irish” identity to bring the conflicting groups together. The concepts of nationalism of course influenced and impacted the politicians who took part in the Good

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251 Ginty et al., "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement," 3.
252 Ginty et al., "No War, No Peace: Northern Ireland after the Agreement," 8.
Friday Agreement, and was important for further background information to better understand the politicians’ stances, which strengthened the thesis as a whole.

Because Tim Pat Coogan’s *The Troubles: Ireland’s Ordeal 1966–1995 and the Search for Peace* explored the Troubles from the very start of the Civil Rights Movement in 1966 throughout the violence of the Troubles, this source provided a good narrative background to contextualize the actions of the politicians from 1986-1998 with what had been happening throughout the Troubles as a whole.\(^{253}\) By utilizing primary sources, Coogan crafted a narrative about how the IRA gained power and popularity as the Catholics, who were a minority population in the North, grew tired of how the Protestants had been treating them as second class citizens. Coogan’s book explored how both sides grew increasingly more radicalized and primed towards violence, which had been used by both sides for “propagandist purposes” for their paramilitary organizations.\(^{254}\) While Coogan’s book focused mostly on the actions of the paramilitary organizations, this aided in the overall understanding of the thesis by providing the explanation for why groups such as the IRA not only existed but also why they felt that violent action was the only way for achieving their goals. This thesis adds to his narrative by including more about the political landscape of the Troubles and how the politicians reacted to the violence on both sides.

The first chapter of this thesis acted as an introduction, and included a basic timeline of Sinn Féin politics, as well as the difference between Sinn Féin and the IRA, as


many sources, specifically from America and Britain, have tried to conflate the two. This chapter explained the difference between the IRA and the PIRA or Provos, as some sources have referred to these organizations interchangeably, while the Provos had split from the original IRA organization so that they could continue to pursue more effective violent action against the British. This introduction also provided an overview of the Troubles leading up to the 1990s, establishing the representatives of major political parties at the time. This introduction also explored who the constituents of these political organizations were, and how the politicians worked with their base to ensure their positions and further their goals.

The second chapter, “Separating the Armalite from the Ballot Box,” further elaborated on the background of the Troubles directly leading up to the IRA’s ceasefires and Good Friday Agreement. As the title states, this chapter focused on the political strategies and goals of Sinn Féin and how they interacted with the IRA. While both Sinn Féin and the IRA were Republican organizations, Gerry Adams wanted to separate Sinn Féin from the IRA and the violence that they perpetuated. This chapter illustrated how the politicians of Sinn Féin worked to utilize interviews on TV, radio, and newspaper articles, to explain to the public the difference between their political organization and the IRA. While Adams was always quick to discourage violence, he retained his good standing with the IRA by placing any blame for violence squarely on the British presence, ensuring viewers and voters that the IRA would stop the violence when the British left. This line that Adams walked between legitimizing Sinn Féin while not completely condemning the actions of the IRA allowed for him to become the later de
facto representative of the IRA during the peace talks, which was further explored in the third chapter.

In the third chapter, “The Rocky Road To The Good Friday Agreement,” Adams further utilizes his position as the leader of Sinn Féin, as well as a person who the IRA has trusted as a representative, to work with the British government, as well as the other political parties of Northern Ireland to create the Good Friday Agreement with the assurance that the IRA would respect the decisions made. This chapter not only addressed the specifics of the Good Friday Agreement, but also how the political parties made decisions and worked together to build a new foundation for political and governmental systems based in democracy and peace. Chapter three specifically was entitled “The Rocky Road To The Good Friday Agreement” as the path to peace was not direct, rather, a winding road full of opposition and violence from both sides of the political spectrum. Both Unionists and Republicans dug in their heels and refused to compromise and talk at various points, however, despite these setbacks, they managed to work together and create the Good Friday Agreement. While this Agreement was not perfect, it was supported by a majority of people, many of whom were ready for peace to begin.

Because the Agreement was not a perfect system, the fourth chapter, “The Aftermath of the Good Friday Agreement,” focused on the reactions and practical implications of the Good Friday Agreement following Good Friday. This chapter specifically focused on the final strand of the Good Friday Agreement, which surrounded the disarmament of the IRA and other paramilitary organizations, as this strand was not immediately resolved when the Agreement went into place in May of 1998. As this
chapter focused on the reluctance of the IRA to decommission, it also focused on the splintering of the Republican movement and the creation of the Real IRA (RIRA) and the reactions of the public to the minimal continued violence in Northern Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement. This chapter was followed by the conclusion, which summarized the thesis and the main points of each chapter, as well as how this thesis interacts with the current historiography of the Troubles.

Gerry Adams’ leadership of Sinn Féin led to the legitimacy of Sinn Féin as a political party on both a domestic and international level as he and his fellow party members worked with international leaders such as American President Bill Clinton and British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair throughout the end of the Troubles and leading towards the peace process. Adams and his party members also worked with members of competing political parties such as John Hume of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) and David Trimble of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) to collaborate and compromise during the all-party peace talks and craft the Good Friday Agreement. During the work leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, Adams and his fellow politicians learned how to compromise and establish governmental organizations that would reflect a time of peace rather than the wartime mentality of the Troubles. For this, these politicians put aside their cultural differences that had previously kept them from even sitting in the same room as each other for the betterment of their communities.

Gerry Adams successfully changed the public perception of Sinn Féin from that of a weak political organization tied to the IRA to a strong leading organization that
valued peace and democracy through his and his party members’ actions during the peace
process. To this day, Sinn Féin has maintained their image of a leading political
organization that supports peace as well as reunification of Northern Ireland with the
Republic of Ireland, with little to no direct attacks or accusations linking the party to the
IRA. This also has been aided by the fact that the Provisional IRA fully disarmed in
2005, and ever since, Sinn Féin has taken a hard stance against any violence by fringe
Republican organizations. Although Gerry Adams relinquished his leadership of the party
in 2018, he remains a large figure in their organization. Adams’ public image has greatly
shifted since his days working towards the Good Friday Agreement, as he has confronted
less accusations of being a member of the IRA, although members of the press have
continued to pursue this question. Adams now works to promote Irish language learning
and his own personal works through his social media. Adams even released a Good
Friday Agreement themed cookbook, which further illustrates how far Sinn Féin has
come in becoming a legitimate political party since Adams first took leadership in 1983.
For his part, Adams succeeded in shifting the perceptions of Sinn Féin in the public eye
and legitimizing the party so that political leaders of Sinn Féin could take part in and lead
governmental institutions in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
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