Outline and explain the political effects of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement

Abstract

This essay attempts to analyse a critical milestone in the conflict settlement process in Northern Ireland. To gain a better understanding of the political results of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, this essay analyses the Agreement itself, the context within which it was made, the opposition it encountered and the fate of the institution it created, the IGC (Intergovernmental Conference). The Agreement was made possible when the deplorable condition of Anglo-Irish relations were improved by the positive relationship that developed between Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald, especially compared to relations under his predecessor, Charles Haughey. This essay shows that the way in which the Agreement was created led to its greatest opposition coming from within Northern Ireland itself, as the Unionists felt betrayed and left out of determining their own future. A major political result in the 1980s was therefore a growth in loyalist paramilitary activity, exactly the sort of violence Thatcher hoped to stop. Views over the Agreement and IGC’s effects and importance in the peace process differ, however, when they are viewed on a short term vs. long term basis. Overall, it is clear that the Agreement represented a watershed moment in Anglo-Irish relations, leading to increased co-operation, international engagement and a growth in the idea of an Irish dimension in the running of Northern Ireland. Consensus over the political effects of the Agreement is non-existent, yet this essay engages with a diverse range of views in order to get a more nuanced understanding of how this treaty was received.

Keywords: Northern Ireland; Anglo-Irish Agreement; Conflict

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed over 25 years ago at Hillsborough, County Down, on 15th of November 1985 between the British Prime Minister and Irish Taoiseach with representatives from Northern Ireland notable in their absence. According to Arthur Aughey and Cathy Gormley-Heenan this Agreement defined politics in Northern Ireland for the next decade (Aughey & Gormley-Heenan, 2011, p. ix). Many of the political effects of the Agreement however originated not from the document itself but the secretive way in which it was created that did not consult the representatives of the majority of Northern Ireland, the Unionists. While the Agreement caused a response from most groups in Northern Ireland the Unionist opposition to the Agreement and what it represented was the primary political effect it provoked. This analysis shows that the effects of the Agreement can be related to its ambiguous nature and the uncertainty concerning the institutions it created, namely the Intergovernmental Conference. This has led to a high level of academic and political debate over the effects, meanings and place of the Agreement in Northern Ireland conflict settlement overall. Varying perceptions over the Agreement’s objectives, and what it meant, play a
large role in the years after 1985. Why the Unionists opposed it and the effects of this protest, such as increased paramilitary support, are central to this question. In contrasting academic opinion over the Agreement it is useful to see its effects compared over the short term and the long term. This allows the improvement in Anglo-Irish relations, its contribution to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and the enhanced role of external actors, namely the US, to be considered.

In analysing the political effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement an understanding of the provisions and the text of the Agreement itself is important. Central to analysing how the Agreement was perceived is recognizing how its Articles were open to various interpretations. For example, the Agreement, in Article 1, affirms that “any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland” (Fitzgerald & Thatcher, 1985). This can be seen in a number of different lights. For example John Hume of the SDLP claims that this shows British neutrality towards the Union and that they have no interest of their own in staying in Ireland (Bew, et al., 2002). This is most clearly seen in Article 1c which declares that

“If in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish” (Fitzgerald & Thatcher, 1985)

Hume’s line of argument was that if the British government were no longer pro union then there was nothing to stop them becoming pro-Irish unity, and it was the SDLP’s job to convince the Unionists that this was in their interests (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 207). However Brendan O’Leary shows that in Gerry Adams’ point of view the Agreement was “copper fastening partition” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 62). Unionists, on the other hand, rejected Article 1 because, according to McGarry and O’Leary, as Hume alluded to, it suggested a lack of commitment to the Union in Westminster (O’Leary & McGarry, 1993). The Agreement interestingly, while it explains that the majority of the population do not wish for a change in the status of Northern Ireland, never defines this status itself. Bew et al claim that this was in order to avoid a clash with Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, concerning the territories of Ireland.¹ Brendan O’Leary on the other hand stresses that the significance of this clause is that it ends the policy goal of Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party of Irish unification, putting stability above it. Indeed, this marks the end of the united front among constitutional Irish nationalists towards a unified Ireland as a policy goal. Fine Gael were now prepared to accept Northern Ireland, whatever this entity was, if the majority of people there so

¹ Article 2 of the Irish Constitution states that “The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 64). Paul Bew interestingly highlights that this clause meant nothing in international law as the 1925 treaty, where Dublin recognised the Belfast regime, held sway. Bew shows that the Irish officials at the start of the Troubles were aware of this yet British negotiating seemed to be completely unaware (Bew, 2011, p. 43)
wished. This gives a brief insight into how ambiguous and open to interpretation the Agreement was, as well as an insight into the delicate and complex nature of conflict settlement in Northern Ireland. This was arguably a deliberate intention of the authors in order to avoid overly alienating any group concerned.²

The primary creation of the Agreement is the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). While the Agreement spells out the different functions of the Conference, the views of the two heads of State, Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald, are important to consider when dealing with the reaction to the Agreement. As it turned out, many of the political effects of the Agreement were tied up in their attitudes towards the Agreement, their reasons for signing and their perception of what the Agreement represented. Writing in 2010, Garret Fitzgerald claims that it was Unionist intransigence and increased support for Sinn Féin that prompted his decision to negotiate with the British. Fitzgerald argues that “our objective was to divert British policy away from a security-dominated approach, which had been alienating a growing proportion of the minority population” (Fitzgerald, 2010).³ Thatcher on the other hand saw security as a primary motivator (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 205).⁴ These aims going into negotiations are pivotal to the effects the Agreement had, as some may see it as more of a success than others due to what their aspirations for it were.

The IGC was the primary result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and its importance has become the topic of much academic debate. Jennifer Todd argues that while no formal powers were ceded to the Irish government, they could merely put forward views and proposals within the structures of the Conference, there was a high degree of symbolic significance within this process. Bew et al, however, focus more on the tangible outcomes of the Agreement claiming that unless the Agreement led to joint authority, “all that had been achieved was responsibility without power – ‘direct rule with a green tinge’” (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 209). In order to analyse these two arguments it is useful to distinguish between the short term and long term effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

In the short term Bew et al appear to make the more convincing argument, however, it could be argued that this is solely due to symbolic non tangible forces taking longer to have an effect. They

² David Goodall explains that much of the work of the Agreement consisted of putting the results of their negotiations into mutually acceptable language (Goodall, 2010).
³ Both Michael Lillis and Garret Fitzgerald see the meetings of the two heads of State on the margins of the European Summits to have had an effect in improving relations and opening both sides up to discussion. Goodall points to the fact that Thatcher had a high regard, and even some personal affection, for Fitzgerald without which the talks could not have proceeded. (Lillis, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2010; Goodall, 2010)
⁴ Goodall explains that in the discussions of potential exchanges concerning Northern Ireland, the British were keen the Irish would participate and commit to joint- terrorist operations (Goodall, 2010). After signing the Agreement, Thatcher announced that “I went into this agreement because I was not prepared to tolerate a situation of continuing violence” (Bew, 2011, p. 39).
focus on the failure of Unionists to negotiate with the SDLP and their adversity to power sharing or devolution (Bew, et al., 2002, pp. 210-211). Over the long term, as Todd argues, the idea of an Irish dimension was instilled into British thinking on Northern Ireland, which can be seen to have a significant effect on both the future peace process and the place of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in settlement history. Twenty-five years after the Agreement, Todd renews this argument and even claims that “its impact was over a longer term, and is still not fully played out”. According to Todd, the new British-Irish Intergovernmental Council and “now habitual informal contacts” meant that Irish influence in the North continued to develop (Todd, 2011, p. 62). Boyle and Hadden confirm this assessment by stating that “the secretariat has carried out its role of maintaining continuous contact between the two administrations on both contentious and non-contentious issues” (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, p. 74). In this way, while Bew et al correctly show that the IGC did not lead to joint authority, bringing into question its purpose, Todd’s overall view of what the IGC represented and developed into is important in assessing its overall political effect.

Initially, the biggest effect of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was the widespread Unionist opposition to it. The Unionists resigned from all of their parliamentary seats forcing by-elections, however, opposition also took the form of mass demonstration (Bew, 2011, p. 40). On Saturday, 23rd November, over 200,000 people gathered at the City Hall in Belfast in protest against the Agreement. Peter Taylor’s documentary displays the magnitude of the loyalist demonstration (Loyalists, 1999). Why were Unionists so opposed to the Agreement? Ian Paisley’s speech reflects what many Unionists saw as the message of the Anglo-Irish Agreement

“Where do the terrorists return to for Sanctuary? To the Irish Republic! And yet Ms Thatcher tells us that that Republic must have some say in our province. We say Never! Never! Never!”

The demonstration was the biggest the city had seen since 1912. Three days later the Official Unionist Party leader, James Molyneaux, argued that the Agreement could not bring peace, stability or reconciliation (Hadden & Boyle, 1989). However, while the Agreement itself and the IGC were the focus of much anger, the way in which the Agreement had come about and the forces behind it were more disturbing to many Unionists. Indeed, as Hadden and Boyle point out, when the main Unionist parties created the Grand Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly their first report concluded that

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5 In an interview with Peter Taylor, Ian Paisley claims that the Agreement represented a complete surrender of Ulster’s position, as, for the first time, the Prime Minister of the Irish republic had a real say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland (Loyalists, 1999).
“The manner in which the Agreement was negotiated clearly indicates that it is designed to operate to the detriment of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland... there has been no willingness on the part of Her Majesty’s Government to enter into serious discussions with the representatives of the majority of the people” (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, p. 70)

The lack of a role that the Unionists played in the Anglo-Irish Agreement is central to the political outrage that followed. Interestingly Seán Donlon shows that, while the Irish side was in close contact with John Hume and the SDLP, he claims that “it was assumed, incorrectly as became clear, that the British side kept Unionist leader James Molyneaux informed” (Donlon, 2010). This contrasts with both Lillis and Goodall who were adamant that the Unionists play no part in negotiation. Lillis claims that, despite Fitzgerald being unhappy at leaving the Unionists out of the consultation process, he felt “they would have wrecked the negotiation process had they been included in it” (Lillis, 2010). Goodall argues that an unavoidable flaw in the whole process was the exclusion of the Unionists. He similarly contends, however, that they would have killed any chance of negotiation or settlement (Goodall, 2010). Aughey is sympathetic with the Unionist grievances of being excluded from the Agreement.6 In this way the process by which the Agreement came about was to a large extent responsible for the large Unionist opposition but it may not have come about at all had they been involved.

The effects of this unionist reaction had grave implications for Security in Northern Ireland. Hundreds of young people joined paramilitary organisations like the UDA (Loyalists, 1999). RUC policemen started to come under attack as they were seen as upholding the treaty. Todd explains that due to these attacks by Protestants, many had to leave their homes in Protestant estates (Todd, 2011, p. 848).7 Furthermore, the formation of Ulster Resistance and the Ulster Clubs can be seen in response to the Agreement. The Ulster Clubs were created to form a network of local groups to mobilise protest and also resistance if the Agreement was forced on them (Aughey, 1989, p. 74). They were involved in street protests, the one day strike, and confronting police at Maryfield; the site of the Anglo-Irish secretariat (Aughey, 1989, p. 75). Ulster Resistance was formed almost a year after Hillsborough on 10 November 1986 in order to continue Unionist opposition to the Agreement. Aughey claims that despite the rhetoric from the two organisations “no one was preparing for armed conflict with the forces of the state, however, Taylor’s documentary shows this not to be the case. Taylor explains how, alongside the UDA and the UVF, Ulster Resistance procured arms from Lebanon

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6 Aughey claims that the British “were keen to undermine the Union while piously professing the opposite intention” (Aughey, 1989, p. 49).
7 Nicholas Scott of the Northern Ireland Office informed the House of Commons in May 1986 of 368 cases of loyalist intimidation against members of the RUC. It is later shown that 500 homes were attacked and 150 families forced to move (CAIN, 2012).
with money from a bank robbery, of £300,000, in Portadown. As Lillis and Todd show however, the Agreement did bring changes in this face of this opposition, such as the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, strengthening of the law on incitement to hatred, and increased nationalist representation on public bodies (Lillis, 2010).

This opposition can be seen in relation to the wider effects the Agreement had on the political parties in Northern Ireland. The period after the Agreement led to a decrease in DUP support, which is thought to explain Paisley’s involvement in Ulster Resistance, in order to remain involved with opposition to the Agreement (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 210; Aughey, 1989, p. 76). The Agreement had been rejected by most parties in Northern Ireland except for the SDLP, while the Alliance Party, which remained critical of the secrecy with which the Agreement was made, “resolved to give it a fair chance to achieve its objectives of peace, reconciliation and political stability (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, pp. 69, 71).” While Bew et al show that the Agreement was not successful in marginalising Sinn Féin, it did force them to offer an electoral pact to the SDLP (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 211). The Official Unionist Party (OUP) involved itself wholeheartedly in constitutional opposition to the Agreement yet Molyneaux was unwilling to push protest too far, he did not want to be seen as completely inflexible. (CAIN, 2012; Bew, et al., 2002, p. 211). For Unionists the level of public opposition to the Agreement eventually became milder and its effect on the political parties weakened. Indeed by January 1990 an opinion poll showed that 68 per cent of Protestants and 62 per cent of Catholics felt the Agreement had made no difference to the political situation in Northern Ireland (CAIN, 2012).

In 1985, however, the terms of the Agreement itself were very worrying to Unionists politicians, not just the fact that they had not been consulted. Hadden and Boyle show how the IGC was perceived by Unionists. They claimed that it was “joint authority in embryo” which diminished British sovereignty in Northern Ireland by inviting a foreign Government to be involved in the running of Northern Ireland (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, p. 70). Arthur Aughey stresses that the Agreement did give the Irish government “an explicit role in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland” and that the Conference was expected to receive attention at the highest level (Aughey & Gormley-Heenan, 2011, p. 2). Writing in 1989 Aughey strongly criticizes the Agreement, as, instead of stability it created uncertainty and insecurity. It was this uncertainty that led to a rise in loyalist paramilitary

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8 Paisley, who had initially supported the organisation, withdrew his support as their illegal activities became known. In his interview with Peter Taylor, Paisley claims that he did not know Ulster Resistance were involved in arms purchasing and robberies (Loyalists, 1999).

9 For the SDLP, who had actually been in contact with the negotiators of the Agreement, it was proof that political negotiation could bring about change (Todd, 2011, p. 842).

10 In the years after 1985 less and less people attended Unionist marches and protests against the Agreement (CAIN, 2012)
activism (Aughey, 1989, p. 58). This activism has been seen as one of the major effects of the Agreement. Indeed the ambiguous nature of the Agreement was at the core of many hostile perceptions for Unionists. Jackie MacDonald of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) explains that the Agreement was seen as a complete betrayal and that the young people that swelled the ranks of the UDA thought that it signalled the death of Ulster (Loyalists, 1999). Hadden and Boyle and Aughey are united in highlighting the failure of the Agreement to achieve peace, stability and reconciliation (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, p. 73; Aughey, 1989, p. 58). It could be argued however that Unionist opposition to the Agreement on this point was a self-fulfilling prophecy. While the authors of the Agreement wished to ensure that those who used violence did not succeed, the ambiguous nature of the Agreement and the IGC ironically led hundreds towards paramilitary activity.11

In analysing the political effect of the Agreement it is important to note how these arguments change over time. In 1989 Aughey provides a strong criticism of many aspects of the Agreement. He sees the idea that the British government would be a sponsor and protector of Unionists while the Republic does the same for nationalists as “a Constitutional monstrosity” with no likelihood that it will achieve its avowed objective of peace, stability and reconciliation (Aughey, 1989, p. 57). However, Aughey explains in 2011 how, both Paul Bew and himself, found that the 1985 Agreement worked out in a way no one had intended (Aughey & Gormley-Heenan, 2011, p. 20). Bew explains that the Secretariat “took on a profound symbolic importance”, arguably drawing his assessment closer to that of Todd’s (Bew, 2011, p. 40) The effects of Unionist opposition in this way had both short term and long term consequences. Hadden and Boyle argue that, over the short term, the opposition meant that the British government has been reluctant to act promptly in improving equality of opportunity for nationalists or introducing reforms in security and the administration of justice (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, p. 77). Overall a principal political effect of the Agreement were the paramilitary activity and killings as well as a lack of British incentive to push reforms. O’Leary argues that it is when Unionists feel at their most threatened that these loyalist killings are at their highest (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 86). However, in judging the effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Todd is closest to the truth in stating “the AIA did lead to significant institutional changes in Northern Ireland, but the sceptics are right that these did not follow immediately” (Todd, 2011, p. 853).

11 The preamble to the Agreement states that the government of Ireland and the government of the UK were “Reaffirming their total rejection of any attempt to promote political objectives by violence or the threat of violence and their determination to work together to ensure that those who adopt or support such methods do not succeed”.
What were these long term political effects of the Agreement that are seen as so important? The change in Anglo-Irish relations is paramount. To understand these effects and the conditions created as a result, both in Northern Ireland and cross border relations, it is vital to put these relations into the context in which the Agreement was signed. Michael Lillis describes how bad Anglo-Irish relations were in the years before the Agreement and the animosity between Charles Haughey and Thatcher, especially concerning his attempt to break UN policy on British sanctions against Argentina during the Falklands war (Lillis, 2010). In Todd’s account the Agreement came on the back of “14 years of violence and successive crises and failures of government initiatives in Northern Ireland” (Todd, 2011, p. 841). What were the conditions at this time that brought about this significant change in Anglo-Irish Relations? The compatibility of the two leaders shown earlier, and importantly their scope for action within their party was crucial. Fitzgerald’s election victory coupled with Thatcher’s desire to “do something about Ireland” if she got back in for a second term coincided with a fear that constitutional nationalism was fatally threatened by Sinn Féin (Goodall, 2010; Bew, et al., 2002, p. 202). These conditions led to increased communication between the two governments and after long negotiations, the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Jennifer Todd argues that the Agreement placed a “wedge” into this situation of Anglo-Irish relations that could bring about incremental change (Todd, 2011, p. 840). This new element was the Irish dimension in Northern Irish policy, manifest in the IGC. Todd agrees with other scholars, such as Brendan O’Leary and John McGarry, that a major change had taken place. What was this major change though? The creation of the IGC appears to be at the heart of the discussion. However, as O’Leary stresses, the IGC had very limited power, and he himself defines it primarily on what it was not rather than what it was (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 63). Indeed, the disparity between Todd and Bew et al does not come from their ideas of the powers they felt the IGC had but rather the importance of its very existence. Bew et al stress the insignificance of the “green tinge” on addressing the problems the Agreement was created to address (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 209). They point to continued support for Sinn Féin, an increase in violence and Thatcher’s shift back to a more traditional approach (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 209). Todd however sees the IGC’s very existence as a channel between the British and Irish, as influential, while also raising various questions over sovereignty in Northern Ireland (Todd, 2011, p. 487). The very raising of these questions put Unionists on the alert and eventually pushed them towards the negotiation table. Was this wedge

12 O’Leary explains how the Agreement is not joint authority; neither is it putting Unionists on notification of a United Ireland; nor is it abandonment by the Republic of a claim to Northern Ireland (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 63).

13 Todd claims that through the processes of layering, displacement and conversion the Irish wedge played a significant part in Northern Ireland’s conflict management and eventual settlement (Todd, 2011, p. 853).
that Todd describes worth what Aughey and Bew see as the initial disastrous effects of the Agreement? In answering this, the long lasting effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement come under consideration as it is analysed as a contributor to the peace settlement in 1998.

In the Northern Ireland of today it could be argued that the most important political effect of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was its use in future settlements. For the British to suggest that the Irish had a role in Northern Ireland while on the Irish side the suggestion that they accepted Northern Ireland was British, had set a significant precedent upon which future Anglo-Irish Relations were built. Lillis argues that the very existence of the Agreement and the Unionist desire to destroy the hated “diktat” also contributed to the peace process, as in the Good Friday Agreement the 1985 Agreement was formally abrogated as a key concession to Mr Trimble (Lillis, 2010). However, Todd’s examination of significant actors’ experiences and witness testimonies, in her analysis of the mechanisms at work in producing change, challenges this view. Todd shows that for some respondents each new settlement did not learn from the previous ones but rather institution building had to start all over again (Todd, 2011, p. 851). Overall there is strong support for the idea that the Agreement was fundamental to the Peace Agreement in 1998. Even Bew et al claim that the Agreement had fundamentally altered the context in which any future initiative was launched (Bew, et al., 2002, p. 209). Contrast can be seen though between Aughey and O’Leary. O’Leary argues that one of the main outcomes of the Agreement is that it “ends Protestant supremacy” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 95). Aughey strongly criticizes this approach remarking that it is two decades out of date and “after 1972 the idea of unionists any longer being a privileged caste or in a position of supremacy does not bear close examination” (Aughey, 1989, pp. 62, 63) Again the assessment of the political effects of the Agreement are largely based upon the varying perceived problems of Northern Ireland which influence in what light the Agreement is seen. Hadden and Boyle famously stated that “the Agreement represents the most significant and carefully prepared development in the relationship between Britain and Ireland since the partition settlements of the 1920s” and that it was more likely to produce peace than any other practical option (Hadden & Boyle, 1989, pp. 1, 76). This may be so but in what way did it contribute towards peace if it was largely replaced in 1998? Todd’s argument that the Agreement importantly stretched the limits of the possible upon which actors like Tony Blair could work 18 years later best explains the role of the Agreement in the overall settlement process (Todd, 2011, p. 853).

A major political effect of the Agreement, which plays into its influence on future settlements, is the wider international forces it engages. Sean Donlon describes how after the Brighton bombings and
Thatcher’s famous “Out! Out! Out!” speech the US was vital in keeping the process going. Thatcher’s visits to Washington were used as chances to stress the importance of discussions (Donlon, 2010). However, as Grainne Kelly points out, the fact that external actors did not play a mediative role is arguably what cemented the British-Irish relationship that proved so valuable in subsequent years (Kelly, 2011, p. 152). Indeed the Irish civil servants’ experience of getting to know their British counterparts and the officials and system of Northern Ireland during the Maryfield Secretariat can be seen as an integral part of Anglo-Irish relations. American dissatisfaction at the British government’s arbitration of the Northern Ireland conflict also played a role in promoting negotiation. The US had become increasing more involved in this period, evidenced in the “MacBride principles” of November 1984, and also Reagan raising the Northern Ireland issue with Thatcher every time she visited America (O’Leary & McGarry, 1993, p. 215). When the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, it was quickly endorsed by the United States and the European Parliament, as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. John McGarry contends that this response “made it difficult for future governments to change path” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 316). It was after the election of President Clinton in 1992 that American interest in Northern Ireland’s conflict resolution saw its most significant growth however. These developments tie into McGarry and O’Leary’s theory, which criticizes Lijphart for not considering that external actors could facilitate, rather than merely hinder, consociation (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006, p. 48). They see the end of the Cold War as freeing up American diplomacy which was previously wary of interfering in UK’s internal affairs (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006, p. 50). An important aspect of this international dimension was the international fund created in Article 10 (a) of the Agreement. Under the Reagan administration this fund received 50 million dollars in its first year of implementation (Kelly, 2011, p. 152). In 2010 Seán Donlon shows the progress of this fund that has now distributed €750 million to 5,800 projects (Donlon, 2010).

Overall, the Agreement, while causing opposition from Unionists may have provoked a reassessment of their position over time that encouraged them to negotiate in the 1990s. The fact that the British government had gone over their heads to create this inter-state Agreement, that recognised a role of another state in the province, was at the heart of the Unionist position. While paramilitary support did increase as a result of the ambiguity surrounding the IGC, as this did not replace the Northern Ireland Office, opposition’s fears waned over time. Drastically improved Anglo-Irish

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14 American involvement leading up to the 1998 agreement steadily grew from 1985 onwards. Indeed Gerry Adams claims that his visit to the United States brought forward the IRA ceasefire of August 1994 by one year (McGarry & O’Leary, 2004, p. 317).

15 Article 10 (a) states that the two Governments shall consider securing international support to promote economic development in parts of Ireland that have suffered from the instability.
relations and increased international support for peace followed after the Agreement. By engaging international actors and developing Anglo-Irish relations, this Agreement arguably started a path dependency that culminated in 1998. Indeed, it is now widely seen as “a foundation stone in the process”, yet as Aughey and Gormley-Heenan explain, the indefinite article before foundation stone is crucial (Aughey & Gormley-Heenan, 2011, p. 21). It was part of a larger process that created the favourable conditions for the more noteworthy Good Friday Agreement.
Bibliography


