

ULSTER UNIONIST DIMENSION IN THE USA

**Prioritising Neutrality or Leverage, Third Party
mediation with a reluctant actor: The U.S. government
and Ulster Unionists as a case study**

By

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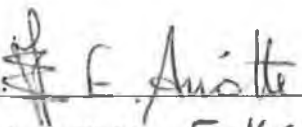
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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of a Ph.D. is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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In memory of Alain Janey, my grand-father, without whom, all of this would never have been possible.

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ELODIE AVIOTTE

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This thesis looks at the evolution of the interaction between the Ulster Unionist Party and the US government during the peace process that led to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and its implementation. It uses mediation in ethnic conflict resolution as a theoretical framework as it defines the role that the US played in the peace process, presenting itself as an honest broker. This thesis contributes, firstly, to the gap in the literature on the unionist perception of the US involvement and provides new insight into the peace process. Secondly, it contributes to the wider debate in international mediation using Ulster Unionists-US relationship as a case study, in order to define to what extent leverage guarantees a long-term success.

If the US mediation in Northern Ireland has been fruitful in that it contributed to the signing of the agreement, and somehow established links with the most hostile actors, its long-term success is still questionable. It actually operated in relation to the Unionists who had not clearly perceived any kind of hurting stalemate and whose internal division caused a serious threat to peace.

The monitoring of the implementation of the agreement revealed that the majority of the Unionist community remained very hostile towards it. Thus, despite David Trimble's pragmatic approach to reform Unionist strategy, he did not convince his electorate of the quality of the agreement. The primary cause for this is the lack of internal motivation within Unionism to support the agreement. Therefore, this study teaches us that even if leverage is an essential parameter in mediation, it cannot overcome the lack of internal driving force.

OUTLINE OF ABBREVIATED TERMS

AIA: Anglo-Irish Agreement
ANIA: Americans for a New Ireland Agenda
BIS: British Information Service
DUP: Democratic Unionist Party
GFA: Good Friday Agreement
IAFCG: Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore
IICD: International Independent Commission in Decommissioning
INC: Irish National Caucus
IRA: Irish Republican Army
LVF: Loyalist Volunteer Force
NIO: Northern Ireland Office
NORAIID: Irish Northern Aid
NSC: National Security Council
PUP: Progressive Unionist Party
UDA: Ulster Defence Association
UDP: Ulster Democratic Party
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
UUP: Ulster Unionist Party

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of the US administration under President Clinton in the attempted resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict is one of the most significant aspects of the recent peace process. This represented a significant shift in US engagement with Northern Ireland, reversing the hands off approach, which had dominated since Sinn Féin attempted to get recognition for an Irish Republic in 1919 (Cronin, 1987). The involvement of the Clinton administration has encouraged a significant literature examining the motivation behind this decision and the impact it had on the peace process (e.g. Wilson, 1996, O'Clery, 1996, Cox, 2000, Arthur, 2000). Most of the general literature on the peace process has also devoted attention to this aspect dedicating a chapter or a substantial passage to this topic (e.g. Todd and Ruane, 1996, Cox, Guelke & Steven, 2000). However very little of this literature addresses the attitude of unionist political parties in Northern Ireland towards US involvement, their reaction to this development, their capacity to engage with it or the impact such engagement may have had on the wider political strategies of Ulster Unionism. This dissertation proposes to address that missing dimension. The election of President Clinton saw the elevation of this regional conflict on the international agenda. For eight years, Northern Ireland became one of the major foreign policy issues for the most powerful country in the world. The Unionists were forced to change their strategy, because US involvement in the conflict became inevitable.

This thesis draws on theoretical approaches in ethnic conflict resolution that focus on mediation by external actors, in particular the works of Bercovitch (1996), Rubin (1981) and Kriegsberg (1991). Changes in international context, such as the collapse of the USSR, indirectly aided efforts at developing a new peace process in Northern Ireland. The post World War II international order was based on the legal principle of non-intervention. Thus, the international system along with the Anglo-American special relationship favoured the United Kingdom and the Unionist pro-status quo position. But in the post-cold war era, the disequilibrium of strength between the US, being the only remaining super-power, and the UK transformed the situation into one where a US intervention became possible.

The development for the first time in Northern Ireland of a serious external intervention at least created the possibility of a new dynamic in the conflict. Given its novelty in the Northern Ireland context, the wider international literature on external mediation provides a good context for this research.

In turn, this thesis adds a new case study to the international debates on external mediation. In particular, because the intervention came from the US and was generally seen to have played a positive role despite Unionists' initial hostility to it. Therefore, this dynamic in the Northern Ireland case adds to our understanding of the often-competing pressures between neutrality and leverage in international mediation. Clearly, a more "neutral" mediator from a unionist perspective could have been found. However, this thesis, in analysing the reaction of Ulster Unionists, looks at whether the strong leverage brought by the US was ultimately more important.

The reluctance by Ulster Unionists to accept any US intervention at the beginning of Clinton's first presidency appears to have progressively vanished and been replaced by a real attempt to create a relationship between the Unionists and the American government. This raises a number of fundamental questions. Did the unionist position actually alter over time? If Unionists, who for so long stuck to their traditional position of opposition to external involvement, shift toward a more pragmatic approach to the issue, why did they do this? What was the impact of US mediation on the Unionists' political approach to the situation in Northern Ireland? Did it diminish their "under-siege mentality" and in that sense make Unionist politicians more comfortable engaging outside Northern Ireland? Did Unionists come to see any advantages in external mediation over time? Finally, does this analysis raise issues of a wider interest for international scholarship on mediation in regional conflicts?

The focus of the thesis is on the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), as it was then the largest party, and how their stance regarding US involvement appeared to evolve throughout the peace process. Even if the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) nurtured much greater connections in the US, more particularly with South East American fundamentalist Protestantism, they remained quite intransigent in their rejection of the US playing the role of a third-party. Thus, it was more important to focus on the UUP and analyse the evolution of their relationship with the US.

The research from the thesis is largely based on a series of interviews with key UUP actors including David Trimble, Jeffrey Donaldson and Jim Molyneaux, along with those who interacted with them in the US or elsewhere,

such as Nancy Soderberg or Peter King, other Northern Irish parties' members and British and Irish officials.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the contextualisation of the UUP engagement with the US as mediators. It discusses the alternative theoretical frameworks on mediation and how they promote a useful context for the analysis of the UUP's relationship with the US. The second chapter is divided into two main parts. The first division deals with the methodological approach. The second part introduces the historical background of the relationship between the US and the Ulster Unionists, examining the historical reasons for the lack of a pro-Unionist political platform in the US in spite of the massive Protestant immigration to the American colonies throughout the 18th century. It also offers an analysis of the Unionists' perception of the US administration prior to Clinton's involvement in the Northern Ireland issue. Chapter three and four deal with the UUP's engagement with the US during Clinton's first term. Chapter five covers Clinton's second term and corresponds to the period of negotiations that led to the signing of the *Good Friday Agreement* (GFA) on 10 April 1998. It includes a section on the monitoring of the implementation of the GFA and an analysis of the US role in light of the UUP perspective. The final chapter sets out conclusions to the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALISING UNIONIST ENGAGEMENT WITH US MEDIATION

INTRODUCTION

Northern Ireland throughout the height of the recent conflict was studied primarily from an internal conflict perspective. Very limited reference was made in the literature to the possible international context and its influence on the conflict evolution and eventual resolution (Cox, 2000, p.249). However, the collapse of the Soviet Union generated a debate on the impact of the end of the Cold War on the Northern Ireland conflict and its resolution. Michael Cox triggered this controversy in advocating that the influence of the Cold War on Northern Ireland was greater than most academics had anticipated. The point is not to defend Cox's argument but to agree with the idea that very little was said about Northern Ireland in a wider international political spectrum. John Whyte himself, in *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (1990), a commended bibliography about the Troubles, did not identify any significant literature connecting Northern Ireland to an international context.

However, this international influence on the Northern Ireland conflict can be witnessed in several areas. Firstly, Northern Ireland cannot be isolated from

the external context and thus evolves within a changing worldwide situation. Secondly, Northern Ireland is under British sovereignty, in other words, it involves one of the most prominent states in the international system. The geopolitical changes resulting from the collapse of the USSR did not directly contribute to the launch of a new peace process, but certainly offered new perspectives as external intervention became more acceptable. Thirdly, the US diplomatic intervention was obviously not aimed at imposing a solution, but rather at offering a mediation process enabling a positive environment for all-party talks in order to encourage an end to violence and make the province democratically governable.

The US intervention in Northern Ireland sparked a significant literature. However, Unionists' relationship with US representatives during the peace process has not been adequately covered and deserves closer attention due to three main points. Firstly, the Unionists' traditional position was always one of opposing any type of external involvement, and their relationship with London has always been more ambiguous than the official attitude that both Unionists and London tended to show. Secondly, the US involvement created a new sphere of negotiation between the third party and the actors of the conflict. This involvement, as is often the case, generated a "triadic relationship" as Bercovitch argued: 'mediation turns an original bilateral dispute into triadic interaction of some kind. By increasing the number of actors from two to three mediation effects considerable structural changes and creates new focal points for an agreement' (1992, p.4). This "triadic interaction" is worth studying in the Northern Ireland case because of the double level of "triadic relationship" that the US involvement generated, both internally and with the two governments and

which will be discussed below. Thirdly, relocating the Northern Ireland issue in the broader spectrum of international relations and more specifically in the field of mediation raises new questions on the nature and evolution of the relationship between the Americans and Unionists, in other words, between the third party and the most reluctant actor to any external intervention.

This thesis seeks to analyse the impact of the Clinton administration's involvement in the peace process on the Ulster Unionist Party as evidenced through the expressed view of party elites, and to analyse the party's actions and publications. This not only requires an analysis of the party's traditional attitude to the external involvement of the US in particular, but also demands an examination of the lack of any pro-active international strategy of their own and in particular the failure of Ulster Unionists to develop a domestic lobby within the USA on par with the nationalist "Irish-America".

As will be discussed in the first two parts of this chapter, Ulster Unionists were reluctant to accept any kind of external involvement. Therefore, Ulster Unionists initial attitude raises crucial questions for the thesis. The first one is what made them change their mind? Did Unionists perceive a "hurting stalemate"? Had they reached an impasse or simply realised that they would never win, creating the right opportunity for an external intervention?

The relatively successful mediation process by the USA also raises issues of more international and comparative interest. The US position on the Northern Ireland conflict has not been perceived as neutral, at least in the first instance. The interplay between their obvious international power and the negative

reaction of Unionists to a suggested role is of relevance in the on-going debate between those prioritizing neutrality or leverage as characteristics of successful international mediation as in Bercovitch (1992, 1996, 2002), Kleiboer (1998) or Zartman (1995) among others and this will be more fully discussed in the third part of this chapter.

This introductory chapter is divided into three main parts designed to help define the questions raised in this thesis. The first part contains two aims. Firstly, it defines the Cold War international context and its impact on the Northern Ireland situation, and how it favoured the Ulster Unionist side. Secondly, it discusses the impact of the end of the Cold War on the Northern Ireland situation, focusing on the Unionists' perception. Then, on the basis that Unionists have always rejected any potential third party involvement in the conflict, the second part of this chapter will cover the evolution of the events within Northern Ireland from a Unionists' viewpoint focusing on their perception of the rather ambiguous attitude of the British government, the role of the Irish government and finally the upheaval that the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) generated and its role in creating the conditions for the involvement of a third party.¹ Thirdly, this external involvement is located in the broader theoretical context of international mediation. This final part discusses the relative importance of the sometimes conflicting priorities of neutrality and leverage and discusses it in the light of the Ulster Unionists' initial reluctance.

¹ The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement is also known as Hillsborough Agreement

I- THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONFLICT

Three key elements of the International System had a significant impact on the Northern Ireland case: firstly, the priority given in International Relations to the preservation of the status quo; secondly, the principle of non-intervention along with the Cold War context and the necessity to maintain stability within the two opposing blocs; and thirdly, the impact of the post-Cold War world-wide upheaval on the involvement of a third-party in the Northern Ireland peace process.

A-Preservation of the Status Quo

The stability of the nation-state system is intimately linked to the principle of sovereignty that guarantees the harmony of the relationships between states based on the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of any other sovereign state. This principle is based on each state's acceptance within the international system that there is only 'a single source of authority within the state and none beyond it' (Mayall, 1990, p. 22).

In an international context, the Northern Ireland conflict rests on the controversy over the legitimate source of sovereignty over the province. Northern Ireland is internationally recognised as a part of the United Kingdom. However, its nationalist minority and the Republic of Ireland (until the removal of article 2 and 3 from its constitution) contested British sovereignty over the province. While there is a considerable international sympathy for the Nationalist

position (Guelke, 1988, p.11), under international law, this opposition to the British authority was not acknowledged.

The principle of self-determination as the right of every nation to determine its own future is the basis of the popular sovereignty ideology that shaped modern-nation states (Taras and Ganguly, 2000, p.49). President Woodrow Wilson reaffirmed it at the beginning of the 20th century in his famous 14 points (Young, 1976, p. 19, Taras and Ganguly, 2000, p. 49). Nevertheless, with the re-attestation of the Nation-State after World War II, its implementation could only be limited, as its universal practice would have led to the destruction of states based on a potential partition of territory (Taras and Ganguly, 2000: p.50). The principle of self-determination, seen as the *sine qua non* condition of the Nation-State, was necessarily constrained by the principle of a majority's right to secure the sovereignty of each state and the presumption in favour of existing states boundaries. By enacting the principle of majority consent in 1949 Great Britain reinforced the legitimacy of its sovereignty over the province since it was based on the will of the majority of its inhabitants. They overruled the potential opposition within the nationalist minority.

Nevertheless, since its creation, the United Nations has guaranteed the right of self-determination to its member-states. Articles 1 and 55 of the United Nations Charter assert that member-states should 'develop friendly relations among nations based on the respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of the peoples' (Mayall, 1990, p.27). Article one of the two United Nations Conventions of Civil Rights and of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) reaffirmed the right of self-determination (Mayall, 1990, p.28).

The term “peoples” in the first quotation is obviously vague. Indeed, what does “people” exactly refer to in this phrase? It seems likely to have been deliberately ambiguous in order to regulate the possibility of intervention according to some fluctuating criteria such as economic or strategic interests. Thus, the implementation of the principle of self-determination was in reality confined to the issue of independence of the third world colonies (Young, 1976, p. 20, Taras and Ganguly, 2000, p.53). Self-determination actually became a synonym of decolonisation and transition to majority rule in South Africa (Mayall, 1991, p.424). Even in the case of decolonisation, self-determination was a restricted issue. First, access to independence happened within the boundaries drawn under the authority of the colonial powers. Secondly, the UN General Assembly enacted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples on 14 December 1960 in which article 6 overruled the right to partition within the newly independent states.² Thus, a strict line existed between self-determination and minority rights. Colonies could have access to independence but only individual rights would protect their minorities (Wippman, 1998, p.13). Only Bangladesh benefited from the international acknowledgement of its partition from Pakistan between 1945 and 1991 (O’Leary and McGarry, 1993, p.1, Taras and Ganguly, 1990, p. 53). The pressure of the Cold War along with the contempt for the notion of ethnicity, assimilated to tribalism, in western countries generated the need for a constant status quo reinforcing the notion of limited self-determination. Therefore, in the light of the

² General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), 14 Dec.1960, *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, art. 6: ‘Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.’ And art. 7: ‘All States shall observe faithfully and strictly the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the present Declaration on the basis of equality, non- interference in the internal affairs of all States, and respect for the sovereign rights of all peoples and their territorial integrity.’

parameters mentioned above, along with the absolute principle of sovereignty, ethno-nationalist movements in Western Countries did not benefit from any significant international support, and the nationalist agitation against partition in Ireland fitted into this broad model.

The recognition of only one source of authority in each state greatly limits any potential recognition of contesting ethnic minorities who challenge the status quo. The United Nations favours the rights of individuals rather than minority groups in such circumstances. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights insists on individual rights rather than groups. Its preamble stipulates that 'Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom', but it does not refer to the case of any minority group.³ Therefore, the international system favoured the principle of non-intervention based on the recognition that there is no higher authority than the state (Mayall, 1990, p.20). Discriminated ethnic minorities' means and remedies were extremely limited. The use of chemical weapons on the Kurd minority in Iraq in 1988 illustrates this point. The Geneva Convention in 1972 reaffirmed the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons and extended it to their production and storage. Iraq was condemned but this condemnation did not lead to any international intervention.⁴

³ General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, preamble, statement number 5.

⁴ Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction, 10 Apr. 1972

Northern Ireland has never reached such an extreme level of violence and Great Britain recognised the political existence of a nationalist minority in the province. Nonetheless, the United Nations' limited acknowledgement of minority groups' rights prevented the organisation or any of its powerful members from putting pressure on the British government to favour a more political and conciliatory strategy rather than a military and security one.

Northern Ireland was internationally perceived as being an integral part of a democratic state where political means other than violence were potentially accessible. There was very limited international support for any intervention at the level of the states or international organisations prior to 1969. This did not change much in the 1970s and 1980s. The case of other nationalist movements such as the Corsicans or the Basques in the rest of Europe confirms this tendency. Governments facing such an issue aimed at securing stability within their borders.

Even if these nationalist movements gained some sympathy, the importance attached to the stability of the international system ensured there would be no external pressure to resolve the conflict. International law on the principle of non-intervention would have prevented any possibility of interference, at least on a jurisdictional basis. Moreover, even if, from a Northern Ireland perspective, the UN Charter can be interpreted in a pro-Nationalist or a pro-Unionist context, its practice favoured the Unionist and British government positions.

B-Principle of non-intervention

The principle of non-intervention is 'one of the cardinal principles of international law' (Heraclides, 1991, p.26). The Declaration on the Rights and Duties of States adopted by the UN Law Commission in 1949 strictly regulates the possibilities of intervention. Article 1 emphasises the 'right of every state to independence without dictation by other state' and article 3 insists on the duty of every state 'to refrain from intervention' which protects the sovereignty of the states from any non-wanted interference.² These latter articles are the confirmation of the explicit content of article 2 paragraph 7 of the UN Charter:

Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.

Still, International law authorises intervention, as Heraclides sums up, 'in exceptional circumstances, and for such reasons as defence, peace and security (in which case there is collective intervention by an intergovernmental organisation or by its members following a specific resolution), and in rare cases for humanitarian considerations, in particular in flagrant instances of institutionalised racism and violence against a majority, and in classical colonialism' (in Taras & Ganguly, 2002, p.48). On an international level, articles

² Art. 1: Every State has the right to independence and hence to exercise freely, without dictation by any other State, all its legal powers, including the choice of its own form of government.

Art 3: Every State has the duty to refrain from intervention in the internal or external affairs of any other State.

1 and 3 of *Declaration on the Rights and Duties of States* prevent states from intervening but also protect them from doing so. In the case of a diaspora or a part of the population strongly in favour of intervention, a government can entrench itself behind international law without becoming too unpopular. American presidents adopted this attitude as Irish-American support to Irish Nationalism in the mid-19th century started growing.

Nevertheless, interventions were in practice carried out during the period prior to the collapse of the communist bloc. They were however all confined to second and third world countries. The USA and the USSR were the ones that most often intervened. Touval calculated the level of intervention strictly in the field of mediation, including conciliation and good offices by the two superpowers. The United States intervened in 90 cases as a mediator and the USSR in 17 cases between 1945 and 1989 (1992, p.232). They obviously, and quite regularly, were infringing the principles of international order, thanks to what James Mayall calls the “political dispensation”(1990, p.22). The hierarchy of the states involved overcomes the jurisdictional equality of the sovereign state. These interventions were generally of two types. Firstly, several were made in order to defend threatened state sovereignties such as in Korea, Vietnam or Congo. Secondly, the two superpowers engaged in a series of unofficial support for anti-governmental guerrillas in civil wars such as El Salvador and Angola.

The US intervention in Vietnam, the USSR intervention within its eastern European satellites’ internal affairs in 1953, 1956 and 1968 and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Red Army in 1980 to ensure the presence of a “friendly government”, were not judicially condemned because of the states’ permanent

presence within the Security Council. Though these countries had rights, they were powerless since the UN could not act against the intervening forces.

The United Nations, as its name defines it, is a Nation-state alliance and therefore makes it impossible to establish a supra-national and independent system. The five permanent members of the Security Council (UNSC), including the UK, with the power of veto, cannot be forced by the UNSC to follow international rules (Heuser, 1997, p.82). Thus, states holding real power overrule the principle of equality between sovereign states. For example, the Republic of Ireland called for the deployment of peacekeeping forces in Northern Ireland in August 1969. On 19 August, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs called for serious talks among the Security Council by virtue of article 35 of the UN Charter. There was no reaction in the international organisation (Arthur, 1996, p.115). The United Kingdom used its power of veto and thus prevented any attempt at intervention. In this regard, the absence of international intervention in the period up to the early 1990s is in keeping with the nature of the international system and the United Kingdom's place within it.

If the Cold War played a major role in limiting possible intervention in the world but also indirectly in Northern Ireland, favouring the British and Unionist stances, then the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the end of the bi-polar world had an undeniable impact on a possible third party intervention in Northern Ireland, therefore weakening the pro-status quo side.

C-Impact of the end of the Cold War on the Northern Ireland peace process

The end of the Cold War generated a worldwide upheaval in the International System. According to Wippman, it engendered three major changes:

First, the end of the US-Soviet rivalry accompanied, in some respects facilitated, a proliferation of virulent ethnic conflicts (...). Second, the immediate corollary to the end of bipolar competition was the beginning of new possibilities for great power co-operation in international organisations, the Security Council in particular. Though the potential for such co-operation has often been overstated, the fact remains that in recent years the UN and other international organisations have displayed a far greater ability and willingness to intervene in what might previously have been considered the domestic affairs of member states (...). Third, the collapse of socialism as an alternative to the liberal democratic capitalism promoted by Western states has accelerated a shift in international norms pertaining to the legitimacy of state power and external intervention in internal affairs (1998, p.1).

The Northern Ireland situation could not be isolated from the international changes as scholars also questioned the impact of the end of the Cold War on the Northern Ireland peace process. Cox (1997) initiated the debate, arguing that the Cold War had had a major impact on the peace process in Northern Ireland, as it redefined the Republican approach to the British presence in Northern Ireland, changing the argument of the strategic interest to keep a part of Ireland within the UK and therefore under NATO's influence into an obsolete

one (Cox, 2000, p.253). Cox even argued that the end of the Warsaw Pact made the IRA cease-fire feasible (Cox, 2000, p.254).

The importance that Cox conferred to the international dimension, and the Cold War in particular, triggered criticism among other scholars such as Jonathan Tonge, faulting Cox for 'attempting some form of weighting in promoting the collapse of the Soviet bloc as primary force in shifting republicans [leading to] some important omissions of internal changes and a suspect chronology' (Tonge, 2001, p.263). Paul Dixon, another detractor of Cox's analysis, suggested that 'the "Cold War" argument missed the continuities of British policy and exaggerated the significance of developments in British policy' arguing that 'the origins of the peace process probably pre-dated the Cold War' (2000, p.226). However, Cox clearly stated that his aim was not to deny the roles of these internal factors (2000, p.251) but to add the under appreciated international dimension, a point also raised by Guelke (2002, p.2). Moreover, Cox pointed out that the US engagement as a third party in the Northern Ireland issue 'would not have been done during the Cold War when the United States was locked into an intimate security partnership with the United Kingdom' (1998, p.63). This argument is sustainable when considering the importance of the nation-states' system of alliances during the Cold War. The United Kingdom was America's best ally in Europe. Therefore, the immediate post-Cold War period did not overturn the international system entirely. There was still reluctance at acknowledging new states other than when inevitable as with the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia. The United Kingdom's position as a UN veto holder remained, but their other power vis a vis the US inevitably became

changed this situation, leaving Unionists ill equipped to face the US involvement at first.

II- NORTHERN IRELAND'S PECULIAR STATUS

The mutation of the international system was not the only factor that facilitated a heightened internationalisation of the Northern Ireland conflict. Ulster Unionists had long been aware of Great Britain's ambiguous position on the Northern Ireland issue especially after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA). This section looks at the influence of the implementation of the AIA in weakening the Unionists' position within the British government decision-making process and to what extent it may have influenced their ultimate acceptance of the US as a third-party.

One of the Unionists' deepest fears is that the British government is ready to 'sell them out' at any time. As Aughey argues, Unionists have always felt misunderstood for two main reasons: they consider that Britain has an equivocal perception of the Union, and perhaps more importantly they perceive that Britain 'subscribes to the main Irish viewpoint'. Hence, the search for safeguards against the danger of Irish unification is at the heart of Unionism (1989, p.21). If this view is by no means universal, its importance in the nature of Ulster Unionism justifies an analysis of the British position in this context.

A-The British Position

The British position toward Northern Ireland had been a complex one, oscillating between keeping some political distance with the province, as the largely autonomous Old Stormont regime or the attempt at “Ulsterising” the conflict in the 1970s show, and reaffirming Northern Ireland’s Britishness by passing acts such as the 1949 *Ireland Act*.

One aspect of Northern Ireland political life is that all political parties are local ones. None of the major British parties are represented in Northern Ireland even though some links have existed between the UUP and the British Conservative Party. Such a system facilitated Northern Ireland’s transformation into a small autonomous political entity within the United Kingdom. ‘Provided that the Ulster issue was not thrust before the general public’s consciousness, Westminster was more than willing to remain aloof’ (Arthur, 1980, p. 72).

The British government often sought to offer the image of an arbitrator of the conflict between the two communities rather than one of a biased actor. Sir Patrick Mayhew set out this self-image in December 1992 when he declared in the interview for *Die Zeit* (quoted in *Irish News*, 24 Apr. 1993) that the role of the British government was the one of a “facilitator” with no independent political agenda’ (Bruce, 1994, p.65). Sir Patrick Mayhew continued saying:

Many people believe that we would not want to release Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom. To be entirely honest-with pleasure, no, not with pleasure, I take that back. But we would not stand in the way of Northern Ireland, if that would be the will of the majority (Bruce, 1994, p.66).

Dixon argues that 'the British government has not been the sponsor of Ulster Unionism in the way the Irish government has supported Irish nationalism' (2002, p.4). This mutual lack of understanding between Unionists and London was due to the difference in their perception of the Union and the place of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. David Trimble emphasised this point in an interview with Feargal Cochrane, "one has to acknowledge the possibility that there will be circumstances where the other party [Great Britain] to the Union would wish unilaterally to end it" (Cochrane, 1997, p.69). Indeed, the Union is founded on a contract rooted in a conditional loyalty to the Crown. As Arthur and Jeffery argue, this loyalty can only be conditional as Unionists have doubts that Britain will maintain the Union at all costs (1996, p.36).

While Britain clearly demonstrated considerable political, military and economic commitment to defeating the IRA and at least by extension to defending the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, there was always sufficient ambiguity in their position to uphold Unionists' fears. Although there is no clear evidence that the British government wishes to abandon Northern Ireland and few could or would argue that Unionists' concerns had no basis in reality.

There seems to be a general acknowledgement that Northern Ireland has always been treated as "a place apart" (Coulter, 1996, p.170, Aughey, 1989, p.33, O'Leary and Arthur, 1990, p.27). As Coulter recalls, 'direct rule did not change this perception' (1996, p.170). If this idea of "difference" is undisputed among

scholars, a question remains: To what extent does this difference put the place of Ulster Unionists within the United Kingdom in jeopardy?

Aughey (1989) and Cochrane (1997) argue that London's secret agenda was to favour the unification of the island as the ultimate goal. Cochrane argued: "Few people within mainstream Unionism expect the British to announce a sudden policy change or declare their intention to withdraw from Northern Ireland. Many Unionists however, believe that the British are leaving by the backdoor" (1997, p. 372). Aughey stated that 'Westminster exercises a reluctant sovereignty, one based on necessity and expediency rather than expressing a sense of common will (1989, p.33). This argument finds some echoes in Dixon's claim that there are a lot of signs justifying British untrustworthiness through an analysis of the 1970-1976 period and the aftermath of the AIA (2002, p.1).

Garret Fitzgerald's approach is slightly different, arguing that the British government did not have any clear agenda to resolve the issue but that their policy had been 'dominated by a belief that what they faced there was a security problem that they could overcome by intensifying security measures' (2003, p.180). His argument is echoed by O'Duffy's argument that the British government favoured a containment approach rather than a conflict resolution approach (1993, p.129).

If these arguments find a justification in ambiguous British behaviour, they ignore the real attempts by British government to find a solution based on a strong security response to the IRA, isolation of Sinn Féin and the establishment of a power-sharing system between moderate Nationalists and Unionists as

strongly advocated in McGarry and O'Leary. In this regard, the British government had an agenda regarding Northern Ireland conflict resolution by adopting the position of a neutral arbitrator (1993, p.183).

The question of Britain "being a neutral arbitrator" on the Northern Ireland issue is a cause of fear, suspicion and indignation among the Unionist community. These feelings are well depicted in Aughey's words: 'The British government cannot be taken at its word if only because it cannot simultaneously be neutral and partisan' (1989, p. 39).

Therefore, the signing of the AIA and the re-introduction of the Irish dimension in the Northern Ireland conflict resolution process was interpreted as a sign that, not only was the British government not willing to defend the Union as it should, but also that it favoured the idea of a United Ireland by conferring on Dublin a right to have a say in Northern Ireland's internal affairs, whereas Unionists regarded the Republic of Ireland as an irredentist force willing to swallow them into an Irish Catholic state.

The 1984 *New Ireland Forum* report contested the British self-image of neutrality and accused London of preserving the Unionists veto on any reform:

4.1- (...) In practice [...], [the British guarantee] has been extended from consent to change in the constitutional status of the North within the United Kingdom into an effective unionist veto on any political change affecting the exercise of nationalist rights and on the form of government for Northern Ireland.

4.2: Although the policy of the British government was to favour power sharing, there was no firm determination to insist on the implementation of this policy in practice.⁶

These articles illustrate the Irish Republic's open criticism of the way the British government handled the situation, favouring Unionists' standpoint over stability in the province. The Forum was also interesting in that it challenged the British Government to over-rule Unionist objections to internal reform in return for the recognition by the Irish government of British sovereignty over Northern Ireland, without any of the more specific reforms included in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA).

British policy in Northern Ireland, as perceived by Unionists, strengthened the tendency towards isolation and a retreat into communal solidarity. If the sovereign government could not be relied upon to oppose Irish nationalism what hope was there that an external actor from another country would be more sympathetic? The role of the British government, like the international system, re-enforced Unionists' reluctance to pro-actively engage internationally.

If the Forum demonstrated some mutation of Irish nationalism, it also triggered some changes in British policy: the signing of the 1985 AIA conferred on the Irish government what Garret Fitzgerald described as a "more than consultative but less than executive" role (in O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, p.226)

⁶ New Ireland Forum Report, 1984, p.17

without consulting Unionists (Aughey, 1994, p.58), therefore, overcoming the Unionist veto in this area of reform at least.

The advocacy of the security imperative by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is underlined in her current view that the AIA was a mistake: 'our concession alienated the Unionists, without gaining the level of security co-operation we had the right to expect' (Thatcher, 1993, p.415). Thatcher did not convince Unionists that playing the Dublin card as an ally against Sinn Féin and the IRA was in their interests.

The Unionist rejection of Dublin is illustrated by Porter's argument that if Unionists want to fight for their survival they must accept the Irish dimension (1996, p.35). Porter in 1996 believed that Unionists had not changed their line on that matter ten years after the AIA. Trimble, elected as leader of the UUP in September 1995, was the first Unionist leader to go to Dublin and meet the Irish Prime Minister. As Richard English argues, Trimble was the key figure of a 'significant section of the Unionist family looking to make a new deal with Irish nationalism' (2001, p.10). Nevertheless, it took Ulster Unionists ten years after the AIA to open direct official contact with Dublin.

Thus, the Unionists' position vis a vis London is of significance as it underlines the tremendous difficulty for the unionist political leadership to grant credit to any actor outside their own community. This very ambiguous and often explosive relationship with London certainly affected their perception of a potential international involvement, as, from their perspective, even the sovereign state did not seem to show much sympathy for their cause.

B-Unionist Position after the AIA

From a Unionist perspective, the fact that the Republic of Ireland wanted to act as an intermediary between Northern Irish Nationalists and London was unacceptable. To most Unionists, the Republic remained an irredentist state. For instance, Chris McGimpsey, though often depicted as a liberal Unionist, declared: "The South's demand for the destruction of Northern Ireland – Eire's claim for Lebensraum- is equivalent to Hitler's claim over Czechoslovakia", portraying the Irish Republic as Nazi Aggressors and Unionists brave liberal Czechs in 1990.⁷ Other analogies have been made such as Steven King, David Trimble's current adviser, stating that the return of partition as a solution for Yugoslavia undermined the illusion of multi-ethnic state reinforcing the well-founded basis of the Irish partition.⁸ Another example of this perception is a quotation from John Taylor in an interview with Feargal Cochrane, in which he recognizes the need for some collaboration but rejects any interference (1997, p.106-107):

I believe that Unionists should find some accommodation with the Irish Republic. That requires an awful lot from the Irish Republic mind you; they have got to act as good neighbours and they have been far from good neighbours, over the last twenty years... I think that Unionism should be big enough to be able to embrace that and face up to the Irish Republic and say 'yes, we believe that we have got a separate identity, we want to maintain that separate identity, but where there are areas of common concern we can work with you.

⁷ *Irish Times*, "Opposition to Articles 2,3 endorsed", 29-30 Oct. 1990

⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Partition Back in Vogue", 13 May 1999

It appears that Unionists did not immediately accept the Republic as a valid and trustworthy partner in potential negotiations.

Aughey underlines the Unionists' uncomfortable approach to a potentially non-irredentist Irish nationalism advocating that Haughey is preferred by Unionists 'as they know where he stands' whereas Fitzgerald's position is seen as a disguised speech to attract Unionists into a politically unified Ireland (1989, p.46). These signs of fear towards an Irish irredentist position suggest that the AIA did not change the Unionists' perception of the Republic of Ireland. Nevertheless, its signing impacted on Unionists' strategy as they appeared to be completely isolated and powerless for the first time.

According to Cochrane, 'the agreement shocked many Unionists because they finally realised they were an unwanted child' (1997, p.31). Unionists were certainly aware long before the signature of the AIA that their position within the United Kingdom was not fully accepted. Indeed, as Arthur argues, 'from the bottom up to the elites, there is reluctance and distrust in the elite, especially the British government, above all since 1985' (1999, p.480).

Therefore, contrary to Cochrane's statement, Unionists were certainly not surprised as they expected a potential "treason", but they definitely did not anticipate the extent of the potential "betrayal". This surprise was even bigger because they were not expecting such an attitude from Margaret Thatcher who was famous for her hard-line position vis a vis the Northern Ireland situation. Meanwhile, John Hume played an important role in the elaboration of the agreement. Thus, Unionists who represent the majority of the people of Northern Ireland were not included in the process whereas the leader of the constitutional

nationalists had played a key role. Lord Maginnis depicted the agreement as 'a great realisation for Ulster Unionists that it did not matter that we sent our young people to die in 1916, it did not matter that we had always been, in many ways, been more British than the English.'⁹

The signing of the AIA revealed that the British government was ready to negotiate with the Republic of Ireland without any unionist participation. The lack of consultation was likely to be seen as a betrayal from the Unionist perspective. However, it can also be interpreted as a warning that a British government could negotiate without them.

The resignation of Unionist MPs, along with the rally in Belfast to try and wreck the agreement, as in 1974, did not work out for several reasons (Arthur, 2000, p.228, Cunningham, 2001, p.50). The most obvious one is that having negotiated without them, the British government did not formally pay too much attention to their silence or their anger. Moreover and more crucially, as McCall suggests, the AIA and IGC were extra-governmental organisations so they did not need Unionists to work. Therefore, the AIA signalled the end of the Unionist veto on the structure of policy making in Northern Ireland (1999, p.46).

If Unionists wanted to undermine the AIA, they would have to negotiate. Therefore, the AIA transformed the situation. For the first time, Unionists had to establish a form of dialogue in order to justify the need for an alternative to the AIA. Also, for the first time, Unionists were forced to be introspective in order to solve, comprehend and deal with their own weaknesses. As Porter puts it, the first weakness to eradicate was the lack of communication (1996, p.14). The

⁹ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarter, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

“behind the barricade” mentality resolutely had a negative effect on Unionism and actually played into their adversaries’ hands. The acknowledgement of the necessity to modify their way of thinking became visible with the cross-party, DUP/UUP publication of *An End to Drift*. According to Dermot Nesbitt, ‘it contemplated that Unionists should not be “ashamed to adapt to the changing circumstances” and that both parties should perhaps abandon “pure majority rule”’(2001, p.3). While the UUP had evolved toward a power-sharing approach over time, DUP maintained its pro-majority rule position.

Transformation was made even more necessary when, during the early 1990’s, Brooke mentioned the possibility of finding an alternative to the Hillsborough Agreement (Cunningham, 2001, p.78). The then Secretary of State’s statement opened the way to new negotiations and offered an opportunity for Unionists to participate in order to defend their position.

Nevertheless, in spite of this experience with the AIA, this change of trajectory did not necessarily imply an immediate acceptance of a third party. As already mentioned, the signing of the agreement did not convince Unionists to interact differently with Dublin.

Academic literature, including Aughey (1989), Fitzgerald (2003), O’Halloran (1987), Ruane and Todd (1996), agrees that Unionists see the Irish government as being hostile. But, beyond this primary consensus, scholars are divided regarding the real motivations behind the Irish government’s willingness to play a part in negotiations. This debate focuses on the level of irredentism in Irish nationalism (in this context nationalism in the Republic of Ireland). Two

streams came into being. On the one hand, there are those arguing that Irish nationalism is deeply irredentist such as Aughey stating that a “united Territory” remained more important for the [Irish] authorities than “uniting people” (1989, p.42), or Clare O’Halloran arguing that Irish nationalism was deeply irredentist at least until the 1970s, even arguing that the New Ireland Forum of 1984 “hides traditional demands behind conciliatory speech’ (1987, p.210). On the other hand, Garret Fitzgerald argues that Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party abandoned their irredentist claims during the autumn of 1969, only Fianna Fáil kept them until the Downing Street Declaration (2003, p.177). In addition, Former Daíl Deputy, Desmond O’Malley argues that Ireland called off its irredentist claims in 1985, offering the possibility to build a positive relationship with the British government (2003, p.68). O’Leary and Arthur reach the same conclusion and contradict O’Halloran’s approach, stating that, ‘the Forum produced a revision to traditional Irish Nationalism and enabled Dr. Fitzgerald’s government to negotiate and sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement in November 1985” (1990, p. 43). All writers acknowledge the irredentist nature of Irish nationalism but are divided as to when this irredentism faded away.

If Unionists could no longer ignore the Irish dimension, they did not necessarily try and change the traditional strategy of the “empty chair” vis a vis Dublin. Yet, as Lord Maginnis crucially argued: ‘one thing that Unionists were determined about was that nobody would ever again make an agreement behind their backs.’¹⁰

¹⁰ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarter, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

The best way to prevent this from happening was to be present in all negotiations. Boycotts, strikes and other traditional practices became obsolete, as the 1985 failure showed.

Moreover, as seen above, the AIA played a major role in increasing the level of Unionists' isolation in the Northern Ireland political arena. There was no alternative but to engage in negotiations to defeat the AIA. So, if the US were going to play a part in the launch of fresh talks, Unionists would not be able to boycott them or walk out from the negotiation table without missing out on the opportunity of putting an end to the AIA. This certainly is part of the answer to the question why, in spite of Unionists' strong reluctance towards the US involvement, they never organised any protest, not even when Bill Clinton visited the province in 1995, as it would have appeared to be ludicrous. The UUP was clearly aware of it. The *Belfast Telegraph* reported that Taylor declared that any Unionists boycott 'would play into the hands of Republicans and lead to Unionists being portrayed as unreasonable.'¹¹

Thus, the ambiguous British strategy, the "treason" of the AIA and, the impossibility of removing the Irish dimension, isolated Ulster Unionists up to the point that when mediation was offered, even if they expressed extreme reluctance to it as seen in chapter 3, they remained in the negotiations. This was not necessarily a demonstration of their wish to collaborate on the issue as the DUP leader Paisley expressed as early as December 1994: 'his party would take seats in any new assembly - but its priority would be to work from within to destroy

¹¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, " 'Revolving Reception' plan in move to avoid boycott", 16 Oct. 1995

it.’¹² Thus, Paisley’s statement is the illustration that the acceptance or the reluctant toleration of the inclusion of a third-party in the negotiation does not equate to an involvement in peace making.

Unionist’s traditional attitude to the British government and their fear that the latter may abandon them, heightened their apprehension of other mediators as, if the British government desire to withstand pressure was not strong, they might have compromised even more in formal third party negotiations. Yet, Unionists accepted the US involvement. Perhaps, the literature on Unionists’ reaction to the AIA offers a mode of analysis that can explain the Unionists’ position. There is certainly no internal dynamic in favour of mediation but perhaps the experience of the failed campaign of 1985-1988 against the AIA generated a desire within the UUP not to be excluded – at almost whatever price had to be paid. This aspect of Unionist motivation will be fully explored in chapters 3 and 4.

III-THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF MEDIATION

The Northern Ireland conflict was largely defined as quasi-insoluble, with some, such as Rose in *Governing Without Consensus*, arguing that ‘in the foreseeable future, no solution is immediately practicable’ leaving virtually no chance to solve the issue (1971, p.21). Two possibilities had never been tried prior to the 1990s: firstly, the implementation of fully inclusive talks, secondly,

¹² *The Press Association Limited*, “Sinn Féin Strategists meet-as Paisley Threatens Wrecking tactics”, 3 Dec. 1994

the inclusion of a third party within the discussions to act as a mediator between all actors involved.

The peace process that started in the early 1990s contained both these two new parameters. Through Brooke's declaration in 1989, Britain had expressed that it had "no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" (Bew and Gillespie, 1999, p.242). As Jonathan Caine, former political advisor to Sir Patrick Mayhew, argued: 'the phrases were actually directed to the Nationalists and Republicans and it was quite simply saying that the colonial presence in which we are determined to hold on to Northern Ireland for our own interest is unfounded. Come what may, Northern Ireland has no special strategic importance for us.'¹³ The British government wanted Sinn Féin to be part of the negotiations with the condition of an end to IRA violence. The US administration initiated contacts in 1992 to volunteer as a third-party facilitator.

The US administration opted for mediation, as it was the only acceptable diplomatic tool in a situation such as Northern Ireland. Indeed, mediation differs from any other type of intervention on two fundamental points. 'It is not based on the direct use of violence and it is not aimed at helping one of the participants' (Zartman & Touval, 1997, p.445). The privileged relationship between the US and Britain and the location of the conflict in Western Europe within a democratic country made the use of other diplomatic tools than mediation unthinkable.

As the US role was defined according to the concept of mediation, their relationship with UUP naturally operated within that framework. Indeed, in

contrast to Irish nationalists who benefited from a certain influence in the US, the Ulster Unionist political community did not have any political presence there. Therefore, the first Ulster Unionist official contacts with the US administration took place in the context of the US offering their service as a third party.

There is 'a myriad of possible mediators and the range of mediatory roles and strategies is (...) wide' as 'mediation may take place between states in conflict, within states, between groups of states, between organisations, and between individuals' (Bercovitch, 2002, p.7). Following Bercovitch, mediation is here defined as 'a process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider (...) to change their perception of or behaviour and to do so without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law' (Bercovitch, 1992, p.7, 1997, p.130).

Unionists naturally expressed strong resentment at the US proposal, arguing first, that Northern Ireland was a British issue and second, expressing considerable reservation regarding the neutrality of the US, accusing them of holding pro-nationalist sympathies. As Jeffrey Donaldson commented: 'the vast majority of Americans were not terribly interested in Northern Ireland and they were not terribly interested in a foreign policy issue that does not have a direct bearing on their day to day life, but of course from this distance it appeared to Unionists that [...] the whole of America had this pro-nationalist view which was not accurate at all.'¹⁴ Still, Unionists agreed, though reluctantly, to interact with the US. This leads to a debate that transcends the Northern Ireland situation, in

¹³ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

¹⁴ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

the wider literature on international mediation theory, focusing on the debate between those advocating neutrality as a priority and those favouring leverage. In the Ulster Unionists' case, has neutrality or leverage been more crucial in their decision to progressively engage with the US? Did the fact that the US, the only remaining superpower, was a candidate to play the role of a third-party influence them into, at least officially, altering their reactive attitude? This is clearly of relevance to the debates in the literature on who can actually intervene, and how can this potential mediator intervene?

These three main questions as per “when”, “who” and “how to intervene” correspond to the content of the three subdivisions of this part of the chapter, as it facilitates the implementation of theoretical concepts to the UUP-US administration relationship.

A-When to intervene?

Is it better to intervene before or after what Bercovitch calls the “point of strength” (1996, p.23)? The traditional or structuralist approach including Zartman (1982, p.45, 1985, 1995, 1997), Bercovitch (1997) and Rubin (1981, p.5) among others, advocates that intervention is more efficient when the actors of the conflict have reached the “mutually hurting stalemate” defined as the realisation by both sides that they are ‘never going to win or solve the problem’ (Zartman & Touval, 1997, p.452-453). Nevertheless, this solution is increasingly being questioned due to the multiplication of ethnic conflicts in the aftermath of the Cold War and on humanitarian principles. Indeed, the lack of external intervention generates a high risk of triggering a snowball effect in neighbouring

countries. Moreover, it is morally not acceptable to let people kill each other and then wait until they are tired of it and let genocides such as in Rwanda or former Yugoslavia take place. As Bercovitch rightly points out, 'The adversaries' perception of the issues is a key factor in determining whether or not to accept a mediation initiative and influencing whether it will have much success' (1996, p.24). To what extent can the international system let the actors of the conflict judge whether or not they reached this "hurting stalemate"?

Some academics such as Timothy Sisk (1996, p.108) advocate the use of preventive diplomacy. Furthermore, even if Zartman still advocates the "hurting stalemate", he and Touval underline that it would be better if there was an implementation of preventive diplomacy in order to make conflicting actors perceive this hurting stalemate as a much lower level of violence (1997, p. 453). Zartman and Touval's 1997 argument highlights the shifts on ethnic conflict regulation theory in response to the evolution of the global situation and the greater consideration taken of humanitarian issues. International political figures such as the Norwegian minister Gro Harlem Brundtland have evoked the necessity to apply more preventive diplomacy (Arthur, 1999, p.476). Even though preventive diplomacy has not been used in many cases, some relatively successful examples exist such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) intervention in Macedonia (Hauss, 2001, p.44).

The problem is that, as Hauss argues: 'one actor will not abandon the fight as long as he is persuaded he can win the war or at least avoid losing' (2001, p.58). Thus, reaching the hurting stalemate often offers the greater chance of positive results in mediation. This idea is seen in the literature dealing with

Northern Ireland with for example, John Darby stating that 'there has been no resolution because the violence has not been intolerable' (1986, p.10).

Therefore, even if mediation was seriously considered and then took place in the Northern Ireland context in the mid-nineties, in other words twenty-five years after the eruption of the modern troubles, it appears worth analysing whether the main actors of the conflict had reached this hurting stalemate by the beginning of the 1990s. If Unionists did so, did it have an impact on their decision to accept the US involvement?

Bercovitch provides a list of points required if a conflict is to benefit from intervention. This list will be used as the theoretical framework for the Northern Ireland issue focusing on the extent to which the UUP was ready to solve the issue peacefully and consequently to accept the contribution of a third party. This choice relies on the fact that Bercovitch's method consists of 'large-scale systematic studies that draw on numerous cases of international mediation to formulate and test proposition about effective mediation and to assess the conditions under which mediation can be made to work better.' Bercovitch's sampling did not include the Northern Ireland issue. Thus, it is interesting to apply these criteria to Northern Ireland and analyse to what extent this conflict corresponds to Bercovitch's conceptual model focusing on Ulster Unionists. Bercovitch distinguishes four main criteria: the length of the conflict, the actors must reach an impasse, the level of readiness to carry on the struggle at any cost and the willingness to accept the assistance of a third-party (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996, p.13, Bercovitch, 1997, p.133, 2000, p.8).

Firstly, it must be a “long term conflict”. Northern Ireland was in a situation of protracted conflict. Still, looking at the number of deaths and casualties, it would be located internationally among the low-level conflicts. In case of low-level conflicts, the possibility to reach agreement is lower as the casualty rate still remains at a level that is tolerable if not morally acceptable.

Secondly, there is an impasse in the efforts committed by the actors involved (1996, p.13, 1997, p.133, 2000, p.8). In Northern Ireland, Republicans remained persuaded of their capacity to win the war against the British “occupation” for a long time. However, leaked documents from the late 1980s and early 1990s such as the Totally Unarmed Strategy (TUAS) document ‘which was circulated within the IRA and Sinn Féin in the summer of 1994’ (Mallie & McKittrick, 1996, p.311) suggest that the leadership of the IRA had come to the conclusion that while they could remain “undefeated” they could not secure a united Ireland based on their own strength and resources.¹⁵ The Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) former leader John Hume was involved in a series of informal talks with Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, and constantly reported their substance to the Irish government. These talks were crucial as Hume was contributing to the reorientation of Sinn Féin’s position that later resulted in their inclusion within the peace talks.

The new British conservative Prime Minister John Major appeared to be more flexible on the issue than Thatcher as the famous Brooke’s declaration suggests, quoted above and directed at Republicans in order to persuade them to give up the use of weapons and progressively be integrated in the talks. In

¹⁵ The TUAS document is wholly reproduced in Mallie & McKittrick (1996) Appendix 3, pp-481-484

addition, the Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds benefited from a greater popularity in British political circles than his predecessors and had a convivial relationship with Major, which was an encouraging sign of improvement in the relationship between London and Dublin on the Northern Ireland issue. He was also much more willing than his predecessors to engage privately with Sinn Féin. Therefore, in the early 1990s, the British government along with the Republicans assisted by the constitutional nationalists and indirectly by the Irish government may not have been ready to make a step forward to enter inclusive negotiation but had reached an “impasse”. They may have reached a mutually hurting stalemate in their own perception of the conflict. No actor involved was willing to make the first step towards negotiations by fear of making compromises that would weaken their initial position.

However, there is some evidence that the British government, the IRA, Sinn Féin and the Irish government favoured a process of negotiation over the status quo or attempts at military escalation. As far as Unionists were concerned, however their status quo objective was focused on advocating a containment policy. Ulster Unionists’ determination to maintain the status quo did not intrinsically require much effort to solve the issue peacefully. The Unionists’ perception of peace was to eliminate the IRA and certainly not negotiate with Republicans. They did not perceive their position as a hurting stalemate, still pushed for a robust policy on security to defeat the IRA, and rejected talks with Sinn Féin and/or the Irish government on Northern Ireland. A section of Unionists in the early 1990s still believed in a potential security victory over the IRA and demanded an escalation of the security battle. This conception that the “Republican enemy” can be defeated is omnipresent in Unionists’ declarations

until fairly recently. James Molyneaux declared that 'the key to success in the battle against terrorism is the denial of the expectation of victory. The so-called guarantee (...) is itself a cause of instability because it recognises the possibility of change'.¹⁶ Trimble affirmed: 'to hold out the possibility of change is to encourage terrorism.'¹⁷ And Robert McCartney argued that 'the great problem that the British government have faced for the last 25 years is that they have a political policy directed towards withdrawal and are faced with the position that an effective security policy would frustrate their own political objective.'¹⁸ Thus, a part of the Unionist political community remained persuaded that political violence could be defeated.

Bercovitch's third criterion is that "neither actor is prepared to countenance further costs or escalation of the dispute" (Bercovitch, 1996, p.13, 1997, p.133, 2000, p.8). The Northern Ireland conflict had lasted for about twenty-five years and it was clear that the British government based its strategy more on containment than conflict resolution and this choice proved to be inefficient (O'Duffy, 1993, p.128). The IRA did not seem to be able to win the war against the British, as after more than twenty years of conflict, Northern Ireland was still a part of the United Kingdom. Thus, both the British government and the Republicans had definitely reached the point of "mutually hurting stalemate". Nonetheless, Ulster Unionists had not reached this stalemate. The conflict was a low level one and somehow contained with efficacy. The British government mostly carried the cost.

¹⁶ House of Commons, 12 Mar. 1990, vol.169, col. 61.

¹⁷ House of Commons, 5 Jul. 1990, vol. 175, col. 1204

¹⁸ Northern Ireland Forum, 17 Jan. 1997, vol. 24 p.17

Thus, the only motivation for Unionists to enter the peace process was to defeat the AIA. Even if this was a positive point as they were willing to engage, peace was not their primary motivation. Secondly, this evolution does not necessarily imply that Unionists were more inclined to welcome a third party in potential negotiations.

Bercovitch's fourth main criterion is that 'Both parties welcome some form of mediation and are ready to engage in direct or indirect dialogue' (1996, p.13, 1997, p.133, 2000, p.8). If the Nationalists along with the Irish Government were encouraging the inclusion of an external mediator, above all the US, the British government and Unionists, for different reasons, were fiercely against any external involvement. Besides, the British government had imposed conditions on direct dialogue with Republicans, starting with a renunciation of violence. However, Unionists refused to deal directly or indirectly with Sinn Féin until the election of the 1996 assembly. Only then did the UUP accept any engagement with Republicans and even then only indirectly until fairly recently. The first meeting between Adams and Trimble only took place after the signing of the GFA during the summer of 1998.

Bercovitch identifies key issues, which seem to fit the other actors in the Northern Ireland case but certainly need further examination from the Unionist perspective. The application of Bercovitch's model to Northern Ireland suggests, from an initial study, that only one out of four criteria is fully represented in the situation: it is a protracted conflict. If the other criteria are largely present among most of the actors involved, it is not at all clear that Ulster Unionists had reached any form of hurting stalemate and were perhaps ready to maintain the situation

under the status quo applying a containment policy to violence in the region or even agreeing with an escalation in military strategy. They also clearly resisted external mediation. Does the fact that Ulster Unionist behaviour did not correspond to any of the criteria necessarily imply that it was not the right time for a mediation process to be implemented?

In the Northern Ireland case, the early 1990s context appeared to be the right time for the insertion of a third party due to the positive mind-set of most of the other actors. Moreover, if Ulster Unionists had been consulted on that matter, no external intervention would have ever taken place as the time would have never been right. Did Unionists' subsequent acceptance of US involvement suggest a greater degree of "hurting stalemate" thinking with the UUP than they first suggested or does it indicate that those criteria are not as crucial as the literature suggests?

B-Who can intervene?

Unionists perceived the United States as a biased actor in the Northern Ireland issue due to the strong Irish-American connection that had played a fundamental role in Clinton's victory in November 1992. The later successful intervention therefore suggests that other parameters can be more crucial than initial suitability. This leads to a discussion on the nature of the mediator based on two main points, neutrality and leverage, starting with trying to answer the questions: who is a suitable candidate for intervention? Which factor does determine the suitability of a candidate for intervention?

First, several political or non-political entities such as a non-governmental organisation, individuals, or state-coalitions can play the role of mediator (Rubin, 1981, p.9) but this study is located at the crossroad between the state as mediator, which generally uses 'the services of one of the top decision-makers' (Bercovitch, 2002, p.11) and an individual as mediator in the sense that 'he or she is not a government official or political incumbent' (Bercovitch, 2002, p.10). Senator Mitchell was not a US government representative and had been appointed as an independent chairman by London and Dublin. Nevertheless, the role that the US administration and Clinton in particular played is strongly intermingled with Mitchell's role even though they were taking place on different levels as covered in chapter 4.

As Bercovitch argues, 'a greater number of definitions [of the role of mediation] emphasize neutrality and impartiality, as opposed to bias, as the distinguishing features of mediation' (2002, p.6). Thus, at first sight, neutrality in the potential third party is necessary tends to make them acceptable to the conflicting parties. As Fisher declares: 'the ideal mediator is [often] seen as a kind of eunuch from Mars who happens to be temporarily available' (1981, p.97).

If one considers that the will to be involved in mediation is based on the "cost-benefit calculation", neutrality can seriously be questioned (Zartman and Touval, 1996, p.451). Carnevale and Arad confirm this point arguing that there are two types of mediators: on the one hand, the "biased mediator" who is closer to one side than another, on the other hand, the "impartial mediator in the sense that he or she has no opinion regarding the conflict at hand, however unlikely it

might be" (1996, p. 40). Yet, they argue that impartiality remains one of the means to provide influence to the mediator over the actors involved. When the mediator is perceived as being impartial, the negotiations are more likely to succeed. "When the disputants believe that a mediator is biased against them, they are likely to be less receptive to mediation" (Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, 1994, p.201). Still, they agree that impartiality, often expected, is almost impossible to reach.

However other authors argue that partiality does not necessarily lead to negative outcome. The party which nurtures a close relationship with the mediator is willing to preserve this privileged relationship and the less privileged one can appear to be ready to launch a relationship (Carneval & Arad, 1996, p.42). In some cases, it can also help the weaker party to gain power and reach a certain level of equality with the adversary in order to launch balanced negotiations (Rubin, 1981, p.12)

In the Northern Ireland case, almost all potential mediators would have been perceived as favouring the Nationalist side as Unionists were dedicated to preserving the status quo and were opposed to any kind of mediation. In Northern Ireland, a potentially more neutral but less powerful mediator would almost certainly have been rejected in the first place. Indeed, the price for rejection of such a person would not have been high enough to overcome Unionists' reluctance. Besides, in the highly unlikely case of their acceptance by the parties, their suggestions would have been easily refuted and then the negotiations would have failed, such as when Sir Ninian Stephens, a prestigious Australian lawyer and politician (Bruce, 1994, p.73) was invited to chair the talks

on strand 2, the negotiations about the north-south relations round of talks launched by Brooke in 1991-1992. If the intention was to bring a third voice, Stephens did not have any material ability to persuade both sides of the rightness of his suggestions. There is obviously very little possible comparison between Stephens' role that was not clearly defined as one of a mediator and Mitchell's part in the 1996-98 peace-talks. Nevertheless, the presence of outsiders in the talks was not new but doomed to failure, as they did not have enough leverage to make influential suggestions.

'A mediator is not chosen by the actors because of their impartiality but because of their ability to influence, protect or extend their interest of each party in conflict' (Bercovitch, 1996, p.26). Hopmann also states that mediators are chosen on the basis of 'the weight of the state or organisation they represent and personal skills' (1996, p.221). Following this logic it may be that US mediation was the only option. It was certainly one of the few possibilities that Unionists could not veto once the British government had agreed. The Unionists' perspective on this is discussed in detail in chapter 3.

In fact, the American proposition was difficult to turn down. As Touval argues, there are 'offers that cannot be refused' (1992, p.232). Thus, Bercovitch's argument that 'the parties retain (...) their freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediator's proposal' (1992, p.5, 2002, p. 5) can be contradicted by the political realities that can constrain their freedom or strongly influence their judgement. Unionists had two options. They could agree to try and implement an agreement with the Nationalist minority or they could reject the US involvement. This last option may have led to unanimous condemnation of international public

opinion. It would have helped the IRA justify the use of violence. Unionists would have gained nothing out of such a strategy. They took the lesser “evil”. It may have been that the awareness of a section of the Unionist politicians, mainly from the Ulster Unionist Party, of this sensitive situation progressively led to a compromise in the acceptance of the US involvement. The issue, basis for UUP acceptance of US mediation is analysed in more details in chapter 3, in the context of these debates.

C-Intervention: Creating a triadic relationship?

Each case requiring a third-party involvement is unique and therefore it is barely possible to build up a conceptual model that works indefinitely in any case and any location. Nevertheless, some constants exist such as the creation of a triadic relation as a consequence of a third-party involvement. In that sense, the Northern Ireland case appears to be even more complicated as it generates the creation of a double level of triadic relations. The United States, as a third-party, launched a triadic relationship with the two sovereign states, the United Kingdom and Ireland, but also with the representatives of the two local communities, in other words with Nationalists and Unionists. Moreover, this double level of triadic relationship is also on the US side, since Senator Mitchell benefited from an explicit role as chairman of the negotiation but Clinton played the role of an imprecise third-party, constantly intervening on the side of London and Dublin to provide substantial leverage.

The point is not to underestimate the efficiency of small states involved in mediation such as Algeria during the 1979 American Embassy Hostage Crisis in

Teheran but to demonstrate that leverage is a major factor in general and certainly was in Northern Ireland. In fact, in this case, and in the majority of others, mediation always implies leverage, as pressures on the conflicting parties are obviously more telling (Touval, 1992, p.233). Indeed, a more powerful third-party has rewards to offer to conflicting parties in the case of progress in negotiations (Hopmann, 1996, p.227). In such a situation 'strong mediators like those from the US are needed when the parties lack sufficient motivation to settle when a "rearranging pay-off is needed to tip the cost-benefit calculation of each side"' (Pruitt, 2002, p.51). As covered in the first subdivision, Ulster Unionists had not reached a "hurting stalemate". Therefore, the potential mediator had to be sufficiently influential to convince them that their presence was positive or, at least, to convince them that to reject them would generate a worst outcome than to acknowledge them. Due to the British government's importance on the international stage, mediation required somebody with significant authority to have any influence on every actor involved. Few apart from the US could have done so.

As Kleiboer argues:

A great power 'brings a higher degree of authority to the mediation process, since it is much more perilous to alienate a great power than less powerful international actors, (...) [it] can wield far more and more diverse sticks and carrots which each party believes will help to achieve its objectives or minimise its losses. (...) [It] has the ability to compensate parties making concessions. (...) Finally, [it] is often the only one that can guarantee that a negotiated agreement will be implemented (2002, p.129).

Rewards are not the only type of leverage that the third party can use to put pressure on parties. Zartman introduces two others, positive ones or “carrots” such as ‘attractive outcome for both’ and negative ones or “sticks” such as ‘the threat to end the mediation process through withdrawal’ (1995, p. 21). Rubin provides other important tools at the mediator’s disposal such as “expert power”, which means that the mediator has a better knowledge and experience of certain issues, or “a legitimate power”. In the Northern Ireland case, London and Dublin’s joint appointment of Mitchell conferred a certain degree of legitimacy to the new chairman (1992, p.29). This list is obviously not exhaustive.

The American government, by offering to play a role, appeared to possess all the qualities since they had clearly sufficient leverage. They could also offer substantial investments, as the organisation of a big conference on investment in both parts of Ireland demonstrated in May 1995. Former Senator Mitchell, who later became the Chairman of peace-talks organised the conference.

‘Moreover, leverage does not only depend on the resources alone but also on the willingness of the mediator to deploy them and the skill with which it is done’ (Kleiboer, 2002, p.127). Therefore, such a major event can also be interpreted as the introduction of the massive US potential that could not be seriously rejected looking at the critical economic situation of Northern Ireland. Unionists were aware of it since both the DUP and the UUP sent a delegation to the conference which took place a little more than a month after Gerry Adams’ invitation to the White House for the St Patrick’s Day celebration which they had boycotted.

Leverage does not ensure success but it can be argued that 'acceptability is determined by power-political consideration, by the expected consequences of acceptance or rejection not by perceptions of impartiality' (Hopmann, 1996, p. 225). Thus, in the early 1990s, the situation in Northern Ireland had considerably improved. Some of the actors were ready to make a step toward peace. Nevertheless, others, Unionists in particular, lacked motivation to engage into a peace process. In those circumstances, it appeared that the lack of internal agreement on mediation prevented a weaker leverage-free mediator. Therefore, the US appeared to be the only powerful third-party that could intervene in the Northern Ireland conflict resolution process.

The International System created after World War II was based on the preservation of states and on the principle of non-intervention. Thus, the limited acknowledgement by the United Nations of rights to any minority groups limited the capacity of Northern Irish nationalists to put pressure on the British government to favour a political and conciliatory strategy rather than a military and security one. More crucially, the United Kingdom as a permanent member of the Security Council benefited from the veto and thus would have barred any attempt at intervention. Thus, the international system benefited the United Kingdom and Ulster Unionists' positions. However, the multiplication of inter- and intra-state conflicts throughout the world becoming 'the most serious challenge' in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War made intervention more acceptable (Taras & Ganguly, 2002, p.2). Mediation became 'the most tolerable way to deal with civil wars' as it represented 'a low-cost alternative between the choice of doing nothing and large-scale military intervention' (Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 1999, p.7).

The end of the Cold War certainly played a role in facilitating the inclusion of the US as the third-party because of the weakening of the British position. But, did Unionists' limited vision of the importance of the international context, mostly focusing on the regional one, prevent them from analysing the end of the Cold War as a source of danger for the status quo in the province? Therefore, where can we find the roots of Ulster Unionists' decision to progressively accept the US as a mediator in the 1990s peace process? Are they actually located in the internal evolution of the situation and mostly in the reaction of the Unionist community in general to the AIA? These questions will be answered in chapters 3 and 4.

Moreover, the use of Bercovitch's criteria tends to indicate that Ulster Unionists had not reached a "mutually hurting stalemate". Did however Unionists perceive an impasse and finally recognise their incapacity to maintain the status quo due to the British government's unwillingness to escalate the security response? Ultimately, can this study of Unionism contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the concept of "hurting stalemate" and "ripeness"?

According to Kriegsberg, 'mediation is successful in so far as it contributes significantly to a de-escalating movement, to mutually acceptable agreement or to reconciliation, and it is responsive to the prevailing condition' (1996, p.220). Then, the US participation can be interpreted as a success since it effectively contributed to the signing of the GFA on 10 April 1998 providing the province with a constitution and the tools to create a proportional devolved assembly and executive committee.

The purpose of this study is not to minimise the contribution of other actors of the peace process but to focus on the ones who were the most reluctant to accept any external intervention and try and understand the impact of such an involvement on Unionist political strategy.

To maximise the chances of reaching an agreement, the duty of the United States, as the one offering assistance, was to take Unionists into account by treating them as a separate actor as equal as the others. This strategy was crucial from the viewpoint of equality of treatment but also from the unionist stance, as they did not trust the British government, and above all the British Foreign Service, to protect their interests. This point appears to be fundamental and it is a central topic of this thesis. The literature has closely examined the relationships between the British and Irish governments along with the Northern Irish Nationalists position in the USA. Yet very little has covered the Unionists, more particularly the UUP, relationship with the White House and the American delegation led by Mitchell during the Clinton era and beyond. This lack of analysis prevents a full understanding of the current peace process as it overlooks the views of the representatives of the majority of the population in Northern Ireland on what is a crucial element of the peace process.

Therefore, three main interrelated questions are addressed in this thesis:

First, the UUP reluctance to accept external involvement is grounded in their sense of being under siege and their fear of the British government's long-term interventions. During the Cold War, this view was largely unchallenged as international intervention was also resisted by the British government and was limited. In the post Cold-War period, the British resistance to external (specifically US) involvement diminished and Unionists were forced then to engage. While this was the structural situation faced by Unionists, the following chapters will explore the impact of a wider international system change. Did Unionists sense any change in the British government position at the end of the Cold War? Did they pro-actively seek to develop a new international strategy? Internally, the literature on the AIA suggests a UUP move after the failure of the Ulster Unionist campaign. Certainly, they sought not to be isolated. Does this however amount to "hurting stalemate" evidence of an internal desire for mediation to resolve the underlying conflict? Alternatively, the mediation process can be seen as externally imposed in opposition to Unionist views. If internal motivation was found to be lacking why did Unionists engage as fully as they did?

Secondly once the UUP engagement began did the nature of that engagement shift over time? Was it simply that they lacked the power to refuse once the British government agreed? Did their policy remain defensive? Did they at any stage come to consider the US involvement as offering them a possibility to extend their influence or was their strategy only one of resistance? If their strategy was one of resistance, was it pro-active or simply reaction?

Thirdly as the UUP-US relationship developed what did the UUP case offer the broader debate on neutrality and leverage? Was the UUP perception of the US a major barrier in practice? Was their response a pragmatic one? Did they engage once they realised they could not stop US involvement? Did US power feature in the relationship and was leverage ultimately more important than neutrality?

These core research questions will be addressed not simply as a generic overview but in the context of a unionist response to 18 specific events ranging from Clinton's first election Campaign, the visa to Gerry Adams, or Trimble's election as UUP leader in September 1995 to Bill Clinton's re-election in November 1996, Labour Victory during the May 1997 general elections, the GFA and the Unionists' perception of the American influence on its signing and finally Mitchell's return to negotiations in September 1999. The basis of this approach is discussed in the following chapter on methodology. This next chapter also sets out a brief historical background, up to the beginning of the Clinton presidency.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH & HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

In seeking a basis to analyse unionist perspectives on US involvement as mediator in the Northern Irish peace process, this study focuses on the stance of the Ulster Unionist Party, as expressed in public debate, in unionist publications and interviews. Their view is essential in understanding the impact of the US mediation, as their political leadership was the one who actively engaged with the US representatives.

The study covers the period between 1992 and 2000 and is therefore fairly recent and still very sensitive. The outcome of the Unionist-US relationship is still a subject of controversy within Unionist politics. Indeed, it is strongly linked to the perception of the degree of interventionism that the US practised in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the UUP leadership's response to it. Consequently, access to some of the relevant documents such as internal memos is limited. Thus, the body of this analysis is limited to the public discourse generated by newspaper articles and official speeches and those aspects of the relationship which the actors involved from the UUP, the US administration, the Irish and British governments have been willing to divulge.

The primary aim of this chapter is to set out the methodological basis for this study. It explains why the Ulster Unionist Party was selected, how the time period has been defined and the reasoning behind the analytical divisions which have been drawn. The data for this study ranges from documentary sources, including newspapers and parliamentary records to the publications of unionist organisations and interviews. The nature of the data and the methodological approach adopted is described along with the basis upon which interpretations of such material can be made.

An essential historical context for this study is to understand the reasons why Ulster Unionists in general did not benefit from an equivalent political platform to Irish nationalists in the US, despite a massive wave of Irish Protestant emigration during the 18th century. While the focus of this thesis is the Clinton era, the absence of a unionist constituency in the USA is clearly of relevance, given the long history of emigration from Ireland. This question provides a fundamental background to the core period of analysis in the dissertation and is an essential aspect that has been little discussed in the literature. This chapter therefore includes a brief historical background and a discussion on that question.

I-METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

A-Research Design

As Robert K. Yin argues: 'In general case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary

phenomenon within some real-life context' (1984, p. 13). Yin's words summarise the foundation of this analysis as being based on a developmental argument in the sense that it examines the development of the relationship between the US and the UUP. The option of a case study approach was also based on the fact that no prior research had been attempted in this area. Thus, available sources were not to be found easily. Finally, the developmental argument required a detailed and contextual study.

However, relying on one case study can be controversial in an analytical sense since, as Rose expresses: 'case-studies, are at best suggestive, not definitive in their conclusion' (1971, p.19). This point is valid when the case study in question is strictly limited in time and location. Richard Rose is right in the sense that the conclusions drawn from the UUP-US relationship are not directly applicable to other case studies. However, they can bring some crucial information in the internal comprehension of the Northern Irish conflict and add to the attempt at strengthening theory more generally.

Furthermore, one case study can actually be composed of several sub-case studies. In that sense, as King, Keohane and Verba argue: "instead of treating the ultimate outcome as the dependent variable, new dependent variables are constructed: for instance each decision in a sequence, or each set of measurable perceptions by decision-makers of others' actions and intentions, becomes a new variable" (1994, 227). This forms the very heart of this project as it is based on the analysis of eighteen major events, which contribute to the study of the changes within the unionist community vis a vis the US involvement and highlight its evolution. The study of the unionist reaction to the US involvement is neither a study of a single event nor a continuous narrative description. It is

rather a review of key issues that dominated public discourse and UUP-US relations during the peace process under Clinton's presidency. Therefore, this thesis looks at the eighteen crucial cases, which are described below. This approach provides a diversity of specific issues and covers the full chronological period. It allows a range of cases to judge any evidence of change over time and allows to some extent an ability to reduce the influence of "outlier" events, which depart from general trends.

1-The choice of a time period

The choice of time period for this thesis was based on the recent changes in international context such as the collapse of the USSR, which indirectly offered perspectives for a new peace process in Northern Ireland. It is also the period under which the US stance shifted from the traditional hands-off position in Northern Ireland to quite an active intervention under Clinton.

Since the unprecedented US involvement had started with Clinton's election, it appeared natural to start this study at the end of 1992. However, to determine its ending was a bit more complex since President Bush had been elected at the end of 2000 and had declared his intention to remain involved in the Northern Irish case. The Bush administration was closer to the Unionists' traditional ideology located in the shades of conservatism. However, the Bush administration left the brief in the hands of the State Department. The tragic events of September 11th and the "war against terrorism" that followed inevitably pushed Northern Ireland down the list of US foreign policy priorities. Moreover, it appears to be too soon to draw conclusions about the effect of Bush's presidency on the Northern Irish peace process.

Kriegsberg divides the process of mediation into four stages, “preparation”, “initiation”, “negotiation” and “implementation” (1996, p. 227). These four stages correspond to the approach that the US administration used and adapted on a practical level to progressively participate in the peace process, and to try and persuade Unionists in general but mostly the UUP in particular to engage with their presence. This division of the peace process period in Northern Ireland also highlights the progress that the US made in that sense. The first period is the one of pre-negotiation that corresponds to the proposition of an alternative agenda; alternative solution and potential reasons to accept their involvement as a third party. This period corresponds to the decision made by the US administration and especially the National Security Council (NSC) to grant the visa to Adams, inviting every actor involved to expose their case in the US and propose assistance in order to counterbalance the visa. This era ended with the submission of Mitchell’s report on decommissioning in January 1996.

The second stage is the period of initiation to help the parties organise the topics of negotiation and set up agendas for talks. This phase began with Mitchell’s appointment by the British and Irish governments to be the Chairperson of the negotiations. During that period of time, Mitchell had to work to be accepted by every side of the unionist political spectrum, as they were not convinced of the benefit of the “intrusion” of an American, even appointed as independent, in the peace process. The third stage is the time when the mediator acts as an intermediary between actors involved, makes suggestions and leads to an analysis of a practical application of the leverage and neutrality theory developed in the first chapter. This stage corresponds to the period from the start of the talks on 10 June 1996 until the signing of the GFA. In this third period, the study will examine the evolution of the relationship between the UUP and

Mitchell during the talks and UUP's relationship with the US administration, above all with Clinton. The last stage is the monitoring of the implementation of the peace agreement. It is crucial in the aftermath of its signing as the return of Senator Mitchell at the end of 1999 to chair the first official review of the agreement shows.

2-The UUP as actors

In looking for a basis to analyse the Clinton administration's relationship with the UUP during the Northern Ireland peace process, this research is limited to the party political leadership, as they were the ones directly involved in the peace talks. Even though Northern Irish politicians, being elected, are clearly influenced in their decision making by wider public opinion, the focus of this study is on those political elites, their strategies and actions.

This thesis focuses on the position of the UUP as they were the largest party in this period of time and their position seemed to have evolved. Contrary to the UUP, the DUP was much more involved in the US through various religious links especially with South East American fundamentalist Protestantism. The biggest illustration of this link is the honorary doctoral degree that Rev. Paisley received from Bob Jones University. Therefore, Rev. Paisley's ideology if not well known in the US was not unknown either. Moreover, the DUP fiercely objected to the US government's involvement in the Northern Irish peace process, refusing to acknowledge the Senator as chairperson of the talks (Mitchell, 1999, p.50). Paisley tried to weaken the peace process by boycotting it and therefore using one of the strategic weapons that Unionists of all shades have used over the years. The DUP engagement with the official US mediation effort

was limited and relatively unchanging in its nature. Therefore, it appeared to be more important to focus in detail on the UUP, then the main Northern Ireland Unionist party, which adopted various strategies, some quite innovative from the Unionist side, to advance their political position in negotiations. The adoption of a much more pragmatic approach by the party leadership, especially after Trimble's election as party leader, was progressively more and more apparent. Thus, it appeared logical, without completely omitting the strategic importance of the DUP and other minor Unionist political parties, to focus on the UUP reaction and way of dealing with the USA's involvement. The first interviewees of this project actually confirmed this point. As described in greater detail below, the first interviews for this research were conducted in the US and therefore, the US side provided a perception of how they dealt with Northern Irish Unionists in general. Two main points were recurrent: the interviewees' difficulty in dealing with the DUP on a diplomatic level and the importance of Trimble's leadership in the establishment of regular bridges of communication.

3-Eighteen events as case studies

The eighteen main events, which characterised the detail of the US involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process, were selected based on the secondary reading, newspapers reports, and the first interviews. These semi-structured interviews gave the respondents the opportunity to describe the events that were the most striking in the evolution of the relationship between the UUP and the US representatives. The different interviewees usually mentioned the same events. Some of these events do not require much justification regarding their impact on the relationship. Some other events, such as the creation of the

UUP North American office in Washington DC in 1995 were more low profile regarding their impact on this relationship.

These selected events are as follows:

- Clinton's first election (Nov. 1992)
- The Downing Street Declaration (Dec. 1993)
- Visa to Gerry Adams (Feb. 1994)
- The IRA cease-fire (Aug. 1994)
- The St Patrick's Day celebration at the White House (Mar. 1995)
- Economic Conference, Washington D.C. (May 1995)

These first six events, justified briefly in the next section and developed in full in chapter three cover the early initiatives from the first Clinton election campaign to Trimble's election as leader. While the detail of each of the cases differ slightly, collectively they allow an examination of the UUP's early hesitancy, their initial refusal to accept US involvement and their very reluctant engagement with the US event to defend their own position.

- David Trimble's election as Leader of the UUP (Sep. 1995)
- Opening of the UUP North American Bureau (Oct. 1995)
- Clinton's First Trip to Northern Ireland (Dec. 1995)
- Mitchell's report on Decommissioning (Jan. 1996)
- Mitchell as Chairman of the talks (Jun. 1996)

The second set of cases, developed in chapter four, cover the period from Trimble's election to Mitchell's appointment as chairman of the Talks. This corresponds to the period when the UUP began a more active strategy towards the US administration in order to defend their position, while still reluctant to see any positive potential in the USA.

- US Presidential election (Nov. 1996)
- Blair's victory in British general election (May 1997)
- IRA ceasefire (Jul. 1997)
- The signing of the GFA (Apr. 1998)
- The "yes" Campaign for the Referendum (May 1998)
- Clinton's trip to Northern Ireland (Sep. 1998)
- Mitchell's return as facilitator in the review of the agreement (Jul.-Dec. 1999)

The final set of cases, discussed in chapter five, covers the period of active negotiation from Blair's election and the second IRA cease-fire to Mitchell's return to Northern Ireland to try and facilitate a review of the then stalemate. In this period they engaged actively with the US and on occasion saw potential to enlist the US in their support.

The next section briefly sets out the reasons for choosing each of the 18 cases.

Clinton's campaign in 1992 is a starting point for this study as his victory triggered the modern US involvement in the Northern Irish peace process. Its

study is essential as it sets out the new administration's motivation for becoming involved and also raised Ulster Unionists' fears regarding this involvement.

The Downing Street Declaration has been selected as it represents a turning point in the US attitude towards Northern Ireland. The US side viewed it as a positive signal regarding the visa to Gerry Adams as from then on Hume offered his support to the visa application. The conciliatory declaration by the Irish and British Prime Ministers and the mild support emanating from the UUP contributed to the US involvement as the US officials perceived it as sign of progress.

The visa granted to Gerry Adams is the first major decision that the US administration made with regards to the Northern Irish issue and definitely underlined a turning point in the US involvement in the Northern Ireland political situation. Such a decision clearly had an impact on Ulster Unionists and obviously requires deeper analysis.

The first IRA cease-fire in 1994 was fundamental as it underlined the will of the Republican movement to engage in peaceful discussions to reach an agreement. The US appeared to have played a role in influencing the Republicans towards this decision as developed in the third chapter. It also made the Ulster Unionist position more delicate in the debate as the cease-fire meant that the inclusion of Sinn Féin in impending peace talks was likely despite Unionists' objections.

The St Patrick's Day celebration is symbolically highly important, as Gerry Adams received international acknowledgement as a politician. It

underlined the British government's weakness in their inability to prevent the invitation. It also demonstrated that Unionists were not ready to engage, with the notable exception of Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) leader Gary McMichael, as they refused to attend the celebration. The boycott was not fruitful and certainly induced Ulster Unionists into changing their strategy, as less than two months after Adams' invitation at the White House, both major Unionist parties sent a delegation to the Washington Economic conference in May 1995.

The Washington Economic Conference is of relevance as the US managed to gather every political shade in Northern Ireland in the same room, and presented the huge investment that could follow if the peace process developed. It appeared to be a significant step forward regarding its involvement, as Mitchell organised the event, being his first formal role, and presented one of the most significant weapons used in the context of mediation: economic investment as a way to influence actors towards peace.

David Trimble's election as leader of the UUP is fundamental for three main reasons. Firstly, a change of leader often has an impact on the strategy of a political party. Secondly, his hard-line background did not initially give much prospect of peace. Thirdly, even though Molyneaux had made some steps toward greater collaboration with the US, Trimble was cited in every interview in the US (whether positively or negatively) as the key player in the negotiations on the Unionist side.

American officials did not see the opening of the Northern American office as a major point in their relationship with the UUP. Some UUP members praised it and others despised it. Even if the role of the office remained

controversial and limited, it was nevertheless a significant event in the relationship between the US and the UUP and therefore it justifies its incorporation within the most illustrative facts in the evolution of the relationship between the US and the UUP.

Clinton's first trip to Northern Ireland was unprecedented since no US president in office had ever made an official visit to Northern Ireland. Moreover, a series of events that took place during the trip underlined a significant shift from both the UUP and the US administration.

Mitchell's report on decommissioning was crucial as it made official the necessity to adopt a twin-track approach with regard to arms and negotiations. It also guaranteed some Unionist demands such as the election of representatives prior to the beginning of the peace talks. Mitchell's role and his high level of credibility led him to the position of chairman of the talks in June 1996. Unionists widely rejected the British and Irish governments' decision at the time. This period is significant, as the UUP, though clearly unhappy, did not openly object even though they expressed some reservations. The fact that the UUP remained in the negotiations was crucial for the peace process.

The inclusion of Clinton's second election is natural, as his defeat may have changed a considerable number of parameters in the peace process. The UUP also had a greater awareness of the US relationship when compared with the Clinton's first election.

The Labour party victory during the general election was worth analysing in light of the UUP's perspectives for three main reasons. Firstly, there was a change in the British leadership and this change was confirmed by the huge

Labour victory that made Unionists less influential in the House of Commons than they had been under Major's premiership. Secondly, Blair had a much more cordial relationship with his American counterpart and thirdly, it is also important to consider the UUP strategy in the run up to this long awaited Labour victory.

The IRA cease-fire in July 1997 and the reintegration of Sinn Féin representatives in the peace talks is essential as it provoked the final DUP/UKUP departure from the talks while the UUP remained.

The choice of discussing the signing of the GFA in April 1998 and the US interaction with the UUP representatives is self-explanatory.

The campaign for the referendum in favour of the "yes" vote to the agreement is also fundamental, as it directly included the population in the peace process. It is also interesting to observe Trimble's reluctance to get the US involved in the campaign as Clinton had planned to do.

Clinton's trip in September 1998 is significant, as it was the second presidential visit in the province. Even though the trip was certainly planned a long time in advance, it coincided with the aftermath of the Omagh bombing and appeared to be designed to boost a chaotic peace process as no institution planned in the GFA had been established by this time. This led to Senator Mitchell's return to review the changes by the end of 1999.

Mitchell's return is significant because Nationalists and pro-agreement Unionists accepted him. It also demonstrated the US administration's willingness

to complete its task by monitoring the implementation of the agreement. The monitoring of the implementation of an agreement is essential in a peace process as it is often argued in conflict mediation theories (Crocker & Hampson, Autumn 1996, p.57).

Collectively these eighteen cases allow a significant analysis of the questions at the heart of this dissertation:

- To what extent did Unionists perceive the changing international environment as being dangerous for their political situation?
- How did the UUP strategy evolve over this time period? What factors are associated with elements of change and elements of continuity?
- Is there evidence that the mediation process itself shifted the Unionist position over these eighteen cases?
- Were these factors, which altered their attitude to the US, internal to the UUP, internal to Northern Ireland, or external?

Individually, none of these eighteen events could offer a definitive answer to these questions. However, taken collectively, they are more persuasive. In addressing the same fundamental questions across all eighteen events it is possible to draw common factors for the analysis, which is at least suggestive in providing some answers to the more fundamental and over-arching questions.

B-Nature of the Data

While a significant level of public discourse took place, there was often an absence of detail and there was limited media coverage of some of the

selected events. In some cases, the UUP have been reluctant to state their position publicly or appeared to be very strongly reluctant to alienate the US administration. Therefore, while almost all of the case studies draw on a variety of sources, party documents, media reports, parliamentary speeches, the corner stone of the data gathering for this thesis was a set of interviews with leading UUP elites and others who interacted with them during this period.

1-Interviewing process

Forty-nine interviews were conducted on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. While in America as a Visiting Scholar, the opportunity arose to interview American officials such as Nancy Soderberg who offered significant insights regarding the US administration's perception of their work with the UUP. Some major figures on the US side such as George Mitchell or Trina Vargo did not wish to be interviewed. Still, the interviews conducted in the US both those named in this thesis some who gave interviews but do not wish to be named offered the possibility to obtain a very complete overview of the US position. These interviews helped sharpen the topic and contributed to the decision to focus on the UUP, as interviewees' answers were almost exclusively dealing with the UUP within the unionist spectrum. The interviewing process provided an unprecedented dimension to this study, as Unionists had remained fairly discrete about it in public. Documents were used to double-check the interviewees' responses, as will be dealt with in the following parts.

The interviewing process also requires a theoretical preparation in order to maximise the quality of the data obtained. To adopt the interviewing process as a main research tool can make the researcher dependent on the potential

interviewees willingness first, to be interviewed, and second to agree to cooperate on the crucial questions of the research and to provide the researcher with substantial information. First, key members of the UUP could have refused to be interviewed. The issue was of relevance as the unionist side had the reputation of being quite reticent to speak to researchers. They actually appeared to be very open to the discussion, with the notable exception of John Taylor who refused an interview, granting a large amount of time and, in some exceptional cases, agreeing to meet for a second interview. Several occasions occurred to interview UUP senior figures and UUP members from the whole spectrum within the party, for instance, David Trimble, Steven King, Lord Molyneux, Lord Maginnis, Lord Laird, Jeffrey Donaldson, and Willie Ross among others.¹

Commencing the interviewing process in the US instead of Northern Ireland appeared to be useful as it helped me gauge the extent of the progresses that the UUP made in the US to advance their position. This was useful, as US officials did not suffer from much pressure regarding Ulster Unionists and generally freely expressed their opinion.

My being French, with no Irish or British background, may have contributed to Unionists' accessibility. Moreover, as described above, contacts with the UUP started in the USA and not in Northern Ireland. This was also of considerable help as I had the chance, thanks to Anne Smith, UUP representative in Washington DC, to observe the UUP's work in the USA as I attended an investment event in Washington D.C. in March 2002. The contacts developed in the USA then opened up interviews in Northern Ireland.

¹ Full list of interviews in appendix one

In addition, this project would not have been complete without interviewing those, apart from US officials, who engaged with the UUP. Therefore, Sinn Féin members, such as Rita O'Hare and Mairead Keane, DUP representative St Clair McAlister, SDLP leader Mark Durkan, PUP representative David Ervine and British and Irish civil servants who do not wish to be mentioned have also been interviewed.

Unlike interviewing processes involving anonymous people, as is often the case in social and ethnographic studies, the group of people that compose the sample of interviews used for this study are part of the political or journalistic contexts. Thus, the respondents were all extremely well trained, and used to being asked questions. This advantage represented a challenge in conducting the interviews. This perception is reinforced by the fact that, contrary to in-depth interviews, which are often described as 'repeated face to face encounters between the researcher and the informants' (Taylor & Bogdan, 1985, p.77), the meeting with leading officials generally occurred only once. Thus, it was necessary to obtain as much useful information in a limited amount of time as possible considering that it would almost certainly be the only opportunity to do so. The approach was logically a face-to-face one based on a structured interview model as 'there is generally little room for variation in responses (...)' (Fontana & Frey, p.649). There are several interpretations of how a structured interview should be conducted, but Fontana and Frey's advice appeared to be very helpful because of their clarity and the degree of comparability between interviews, which their approach allows. Their advice, which also found some echo in Holstein and Gubrium's work, *The Active Interview* (1995) are summarised in the six main points which follow:

- 'Never get involved in long explanations of the study; use standard explanation'
- 'Never deviate from the study introduction, sequence of questions, or question wording'
- 'Never let another person interrupt the interview, do not let another person answer for the respondent or offer his or her opinion on the question'
- 'Never suggest an answer or agree or disagree with an answer. Do not give the respondent any idea of your personal views on the topic of the question'
- 'Never interpret the meaning of a question; just repeat the question'
- 'Never improvise, such as by adding answer categories or making wording changes.'

(2000, p.650)

All these points are common sense at first sight but they do tend to be more delicate to apply to the interviewing process. Even if this method offers some safety for the interviewer, the researcher is not safe from mistake, and cannot control the answers and the purpose behind the type of answers provided.

As Taylor and Bogdan rightly argue: 'no other method can provide the detailed understanding that comes from directly observing people and listening to what they have to say' (1985, p.82). However, the interviewing process is generally an account of past events by people who lived it but which can easily be, deliberately or not, distorted.

Indeed, as Fontana and Frey argue, the mistake or the weakness of the interviewing process can be located in the fact that 'the respondent may embellish a response, give what is described as a "socially desirable" response, or omit certain relevant information. The respondent may also err due to faulty memory' (2000, p.650). Taylor and Bogdan corroborate Fontana and Grey's approach when arguing that 'as a form of conversation, interviews are subject to the same fabrications, deceptions, and distortions (...) that may lend insight into

how they think about the world and how they act, there can be a great discrepancy between what they say and what they actually do' (1985, p.81). In other words, when I interviewed Lord Maginnis about his vision of the US involvement in the peace process in December 2002, his answers may have been completely different from the ones he would have provided at different stages during the peace process.

One of the methodological questions of this thesis was to what extent were the answers relevant to construct a valid project. Would the time gap and potential distortion completely undermine the research? It was obviously going to affect it, but the thesis is based on the evolution of perception of a group of individuals towards another group within a single context. Mason argues that 'the knowledge is at the very least reconstructed, rather than facts simply reported in interview settings. Qualitative interviewing consequently tends to be seen as involving the construction or reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it' (2002, p.63). It appears important not to accept "uncritically" the facts provided by the informants and as Taylor and Bogdan argue every piece of information provided should be examined 'for consistency between different accounts of the same events (1985, p.99).

Therefore, it is indispensable to double-check the interviewees' answers, for instance, through written data that was produced at the time of the event in question. The access to newspaper archives has been of great help, as they provided a certain amount of contemporary information. The *Northern Irish Forum for Political Dialogue* was also very valuable, as it became almost immediately exclusively "unionist" with Sinn Féin non-attendance and the SDLP's quick departure. Thus, it provided some safe location where Unionists

could feel more comfortable and express themselves more freely about the US involvement. UUP members' statements about the US involvement have been very sparse during the peace process until the end of Clinton's second term. Nonetheless, there was sufficient written material to crosscheck much of the views expressed in interviews. Furthermore the interviewees represented a good cross-section of opinion, within a divided UUP and also US, British and Irish officials. Therefore, even within the interview transcripts themselves there existed significant opportunity to cross-reference views expressed by people who had no reason or opportunity to have an agreed story to tell.

This leads to the next issue which deals with the nature of the settings and informants. As already mentioned, the research focused on the UUP political leadership. Therefore, the primary goal was to interview members of the party in order to obtain their opinion of the Clinton administration's involvement and the way they perceived the evolution of their relationship with it. However, it was also important to interview representatives of the Irish-American community, the U.S. administration, British and Irish governments' officials, activists and journalists who covered the peace process to rebalance the data. It also offered the opportunity to make interesting comparisons between 'the different experiences and accounts of the same event and set of interaction' (Mason, 2002, p.66). Such a research strategy allowed: firstly, to double-check of the unionists' position in the eyes of other protagonists, and secondly, an opportunity to investigate the misunderstandings between the US government representatives and the UUP leadership through their different perceptions of particular events. Finally, it helped identify the events that had been striking to them.

The selection of the respondents was based on the choice that the ultimate goal of the thesis was to focus the study on the political leadership, therefore, the most important group of interviewees were leading Unionists figures, and Senior American, British and Irish Civil Servants who liaised with them.

Moreover, some other actors proved to be indispensable such as leading figures of Irish American lobbying group including Niall O'Dowd *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* editor and co-founder of the *Irish American for Clinton/ Gore Association*, Ray O'Hanlon, editor of *The Irish Echo*. They both played an instrumental role in Clinton's first election and consequently in making sure that Northern Ireland would be on the US Foreign policy agenda.

The names of the interviewees are all reported at the end of the thesis in appendix one with the obvious exception of those who only agreed to talk anonymously.

2-Written Sources

The written sources were primarily used to supplement, contextualise and crosscheck the material from interviews. The research also involved the analysis of different types of written documents. This aspect is naturally extremely significant in research as writings endure and then produce an historical insight (Hodder, 2000, p.703). It cannot be separated from its context and then obliges us to do the necessary research on the specific context of publication or writing. This automatically expands our investigation field. The most significant documents analysed were the activities of Unionist political actors from the main political parties including:

- The collection of unionist publications available in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast
- Archives in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
- The newspaper archives in the Linen Hall Library and the Belfast Central Library
- The verbatim records of the Northern Ireland Forum (1996-98)
- The verbatim records of Westminster House of Commons (1994-2000)
- A database of Irish, American and British newspaper articles on the Northern Irish issue that I started to construct from the beginning of the research

Many significant documents regarding the internal and external policy of the UUP are archived in the Linen Hall Library. It offered access to unionist sources regarding the US involvement and provided an excellent insight on the unionist cultural perception of America, especially in some magazines which are not otherwise available in complete collections such as the *New Ulster*, *The Protestant Telegraph* and the Loyalist magazine *Combat*. It also provided the possibility to have access to unionist publications like the UUP magazine published on an irregular basis. All these documents also provided some useful information regarding Unionist elites' self-perception.

C- Data management

As many qualitative researchers argue 'a purely literal reading is not possible, just as a purely objective description is not possible, because what we see is shaped by how we see it' (Mason, 2002, p.149). Therefore, as already expressed above, this research uses interpretative readings of the data as its main concern is in the perception of the interviewees and how they analyse a series of events. The indexing of interviews provided a multilayered interpretation of the

Unionists' relationship with the US representatives that avoids simplification or a caricature of the way they interacted.

The written and interview data have been similarly coded using a thematic division of the information such as the Ulster Unionists' perception of the US prior to Clinton's involvement or the paramilitary ceasefires. As Ryan and Bernard argue: 'themes are abstract constructs that investigators identify before, during and after data collection' (2000, p.780). On the ontological level of the research, the types of data used have been indexed according to the chronological evolution of the peace process focusing on its main events. The classification of the data was founded on the eighteen main cases that are the basis for this analysis.

This classification also contains the advantage that, once the transcription of the interviews was over, the interviewees' answers were categorised according to the event they were dealing with. This method facilitated the browsing of the answers, their evaluation according to the position of the interviewee and the easy comparison of the answers, provided by different people.

The material extracted from written sources was also classified according to the eighteen main cases easing their combined use with the interviews. This organisation facilitated the use of the accurate data according to the topic approached at a given time. This result contributed to a faster and more efficient possibility of comparison between the answers from each actor. This greatly eased the selection of documents according to their relevance at the time of the writing of one aspect of the project.

The arguments presented are logically mostly interpretative or narrative in a sense that this study is limited to the way the actors and other documents interpreted the issue but it would be too presumptuous to consider that only one version is probable on such a topic. However, the basis of the interpretation of interviews and documents is clear to the reader, throughout allowing for a re-interpretation by others.

This thesis begins with the Clinton election campaign of 1992 as that represents the origin of the shift in US activity and also the public awareness of the peace process in Northern Ireland. The continuity of US policy in earlier periods has been well documented, for instance Cronin's book, *Washington's Irish Policy, 1916-1986* (1987), among others. However, despite the absence of an organised Unionist Diaspora or political constituency in the USA mentioned by some authors such as Connor O'Clery in a few pages of the *Greening of the White House*, there is very little analysis of the Unionist leadership vision of America. There is certainly a potential social basis for such a constituency due to the high level of Ulster-Scots emigration to North America. The absence of a political constituency for Ulster Unionists in the USA is therefore briefly discussed as a historical context for the body of the thesis.

The design of this study by dividing the analytical narration into eighteen separate events provides a basis for comparing the UUP engagement with the US administration over a range of issues. This allows a greater degree of analysis to be drawn and a stronger basis for interpretation. The basic data for analysis from almost fifty interviews conducted for the project and an analysis of publicly available publications, newspaper reports and parliamentary records provides a

solid data set for the analysis. Together they provide a solid methodological basis for the research.

This research is meant to be illustrative as it is theory testing rather than theory building and it does not seek to universalise the conclusion. Nevertheless, this study raises interesting questions regarding the theory of 'ripeness' in conflict resolution and international mediation.

II-ULSTER PRESBYTERIAN EMIGRATION TO AMERICA AND THE ABSENCE OF AN AMERICAN-UNIONIST POLITICAL PLAFORM

The significance attached by so many Americans to their roots launched a fairly recent debate about the Scotch-Irish (Americans of Ulster-Scots ancestry) and their possible political impact. The importance of this topic must not be overstated. Yet, it is exemplified by the creation of the *Ulster-Scots Institute* at the University of Ulster in Magee College (Derry) in 2000 promoting the growth of academic relationships between US Universities and Northern Ireland or the foundation of the *Ulster Scots Agency* and the debate that it generated on a political level. DUP MP Gregory Campbell in the *Northern Ireland Forum For Political Dialogue* summarised the historical situation as he saw it: 'In earlier days the tradition moved out from the North of Ireland, as it was then, to America and a diminution, unfortunately, occurred. In the Southeast corner of the United States of America, there is a huge volume of interest. (...) But again, it is untapped, unlike the green Irish- American interest that exists on the East Coast. There has been an indigenous retention of the Irish tradition there. Unfortunately, the people who went out between 200 and 250 years ago became an indigenous

part of the American population and in the early years forgot their Ulster-Scots roots. Only now, in the past 20 or 30 years, is that interest beginning to revive.²

Indeed, the dominant view of Irish emigration to the USA places it in the context of the Famine or post-Famine exodus. The mostly Catholic community was forced to leave Ireland to flee a social catastrophe on a scale never experienced before and which was made all the more tragic by the inaction of the British government. This perspective conceals the fact that the first Irish emigrants to America were actually Protestant. This Protestant emigration mostly occurred during the 18th century, when 70% of emigrants were Presbyterians (Miller, 1985, p.149). This section will focus on the study of Presbyterian emigration from Ulster, as it has been generally overlooked in studies of Irish emigration. This relative lack of analysis is explained by the absence of a significant pro-Unionist Ulster-Scots political constituency in modern America. The lack of political Diaspora has certainly influenced the Ulster Unionists' attitude to the US involvement in Northern Ireland. Some limited comparisons with the 19th century Catholic emigration is provided to highlight the impact of emigration on the strong pro-Nationalist Irish-American political platform and the relative non-existence of a pro-Unionist political platform in the USA right up to the present day.

Despite the strained relationship between Northern Irish Unionists and the American political leadership, modern Unionists tend to believe America has a debt to the Ulster-Scots. However, Unionists do not ferociously defend their key role in American history. For example, David Trimble, leader of the UUP,

² *Northern Ireland Forum For Political Dialogue*, 10 Jan. 1997

has admitted the absence of cultural and political connections between Ulster-Scots and Scots-Irish without expressing concern regarding its impact on the UUP's US agenda.³

Nevertheless, some unionist publications over the past ten years and beyond, based on the cultural promotion of the Ulster-Scots identity, have demonstrated an interest in and a commitment to re-establishing what Unionists see as the forgotten truth.⁴ Considering that by emigrating to the colonies, Ulster-Scots provided a rich heritage to modern America, why have the links not been preserved? Why did Unionists not benefit from a political platform equivalent to the Irish-American one? Answers to these questions can help an understanding of their attitude to the US involvement in the contemporary peace process.

The term Scotch-Irish is confusing regarding the nature of its link with the Ulster-Scots. In fact, the idiom "Scotch-Irish" is American (Leyburn, p. XI, Blethen & Woods, 1997, p.1) and defines the Protestant population who left the north of Ireland during the first wave of transatlantic emigration from the beginning of the 18th century to the early 19th century.

The Irish Protestants adopted it after 1850 to avoid assimilation with the less regarded Irish Catholics arriving in great numbers in America, fleeing the

³ David Trimble, St Regis Hotel, Washington D.C., 14 Mar. 2002

⁴ These publications are of different kind:

Articles: *New Ulster*, "Garden of Waxhaw", winter 1993, "Money is very plenty...", "Ulster Emigrants abroad", winter 2000, *Ulster Defender*, "The Irish in America", Sep. 1994.

Belfast Telegraph, "About the Famine", 27 Nov. 1995, "Scotch-Irish the secret of American Greatness", 30 Nov. 1995

Great Famine (Leyburn, 1962, p.333, Cowan, 1997, p. 23). In this regard then, Scotch-Irish means American Ulster-Scots. This argument is substantial, as the majority of modern Irish-Americans are Protestants. Lord Laird of Artigarvan, former President of the cultural *Ulster Scots Agency* and active member of the Ulster Unionist Party, argued that the Scotch-Irish represented 22 million out of roughly 40 million Irish-Americans.⁵ Although this figure appears over-stated, as it is more than five times the one provided by the American Bureau of Census, it indicates the complexity of dealing with any question of identity.⁶ First, not all-Protestant Irish Americans define themselves as Scotch-Irish. Their faith is not necessarily rooted in their Irish ancestry since Irish Catholics mixed with other migrants of various religious denominations. Second, the figures provided by Laird suggest that some members of the Irish American community are not aware of their Scotch-Irish lineage. The influence of Irish nationalism on the Irish American community is clear in promoting the existence of a single Irish nationhood beyond cultural and religious cleavages. There is little American awareness of the Ulster-Scots' fight for the recognition of their ethnic identity on the island of Ireland to justify partition as a quasi-natural process. In this context, Ulster Unionists felt that America was suffering from amnesia, summarised in Owen Wister's statement, an American, quoted in Marshall's pamphlet *Ulster Sails West*:

Americans are being told in these days that they owe a debt of support to Irish independence, because the Irish fought with us in our own struggle for Independence. Yes, the Irish did, and we do owe them a debt of support. But

Pamphlets: Rev. Ian Paisley (1976, 1995), *America Debt to Ulster*, Rev. Cromie (1976), *Ulster Settlers in America*, Hanna Ronnie (1992), *Land of the Free, Ulster and American Revolution*

⁵ Lord Laird, Holywood Road, 14 Mar. 2003

⁶ According to the figures provided by the US Bureau of Census, the Scotch-Irish represented a little bit less than four and a half million inhabitants in the United States in 1990. See: www.census.gov

it was the Orange Irish who fought in our Revolution and not the Green Irish. (1944, p.54)

In turn, despite the fact that during the 18th century, up to 250 000 Ulster-Scots, mostly Presbyterians, have been estimated to have migrated to the American colonies, Ulster Unionists failed to argue their case among their descendants (Leyburn, 1962, p.157, Miller, 1985, p. 137). The conditions of emigration along with the absence of cultural solidarity cannot offer a holistic explanation of the Ulster Unionists' attitude to the USA but migration generates two main questions. Firstly, 'why does emigration occur and how is it sustained over time? Secondly, 'what happens to the migrants in the receiving society, and what is the political consequence of their presence?' (Schmitter Heisler, 2000, p.77). In examining the impact of Ulster-Scots emigration in the USA, this part is divided in four main subdivisions. Firstly, it will focus on the notion of emigration itself. Secondly, it will deal with the economic motivations of the Ulster-Scots emigrants. The third part will be dedicated to the religious motivations for emigration and the final part will focus on the lack of bridges of communication between Ulster Unionists and the US administration prior to Clinton's election. Collecting these historical factors can provide a basis for understanding the weak political identity and agency of the modern US based Scotch-Irish community and this can assist in an understanding of the Ulster Unionists' attitude to US mediation in Northern Ireland.

A-Emigration: Diverging Perceptions

The term "emigration" defines a permanent or quasi-permanent departure from the homeland to another country. It implies the crossing of national borders.

If so, Ulster-Scots emigrated in geographic terms but not in political ones as they moved to American British colonies. Thus, Ulster-Scots have experienced immigration rather than emigration. In that sense, Catholic emigration differs as Catholics arrived in an independent American Republic.

The Ulster-Scots had better knowledge of the opportunities that America offered compared to the Catholic emigrants during the Great Famine, as the urgency of the situation greatly differed. Emigration also implies a progressive detachment from the mother country. Ulster-Scots did not have to adapt to the weight of old and deeply implemented political structures, as the only existing ones were the colonial ones. They fully integrated into American society and contributed to the definition of American identity itself. Yet, Native Irish emigration took place after the birth of the American Democracy. Therefore, the new emigrants faced a routinised political system in an established Anglo-American dominant society, which resembled the British Ascendancy in Ireland. The native Irish had always been rejected by the dominant elites in Ireland and they met the same exclusion in America. Feeling rejected prevented them from creating a mental distance from their home country but rather created a feeling of nostalgia for Ireland. The emigrants' perception of their departure plays a fundamental part in the formation of a reconstructive identity on arrival in unknown territory. While the conditions of post-Famine departure and arrival created a condition for an active pro-nationalist Irish-American constituency the very different conditions of the 18th century Presbyterian emigration did not do so and indeed their motivation for migration strengthened this tendency further.

B-Economic Motivations for Emigration

Ulster-Scots ancestors came to Ireland at the beginning of the 17th century due to the policy of plantation that the English monarchy had established on the island. This policy was aimed at making Ireland governable and at setting up permanent frontline garrisons in case of invasion. Thus, the migrants were attracted to a substantially better standard of living away from the poor Scottish lowlands. This reality changed with the Ulster economic crisis at the end of the 17th century.

Ulster's 'social and economic dislocation following the Williamite wars' motivated the Ulster-Scots emigration to America (Kirkham, 1997, p.77). Though, Presbyterians benefited from some toleration due to their role in Protestant victory, this would not last. The Ulster-Scots emigration began to be of significant proportion in 1718, though Kirkham has drawn attention to the earlier signs of Ulster-Scots migrating from as early as the 1690s (1997, p.76). 'Rent, prices, and wages formed a mighty triumvirate in determining the extent of northern Irish emigration' (Dickson, 1966, p. 13). Three main economic parameters will be the object of analysis as they played a fundamental role in Ulster-Scot Presbyterians' decision making to leave the island.

1- Land Rack renting

Land renting conditions after the Williamite wars were beneficial as leases could be contracted for thirty years at a very modest rate. Around 1718, the year of the first significant wave of emigration, a large number of leases were ending or being replaced by unaffordable contracts. Kirkham gives the example of the Murray estate in South Donegal where 'nineteen leases (...) were relet in

1720 for a short term of seven years with an overall rise of more than 75%' (1997, p. 88). Even if such a high increase might have been exceptional, the price of the land increased so much that some external witnesses such as Benjamin Franklin who toured in Ireland in 1771 underlined the precarious conditions of farming in Ireland. "Renting one acre of land for a single year costs as much as the purchase price of an acre of fertile, if yet uncleared, American soil" (in Miller, 1985, p. 139). The Ulster-Scots could not afford or refused to pay such a price after years of privileged rates. They were consequently evicted and often replaced by Catholic tenants who accepted these precarious conditions. Indeed, Catholic natives did not have much but they did have their ancestral culture, their religion and the feeling that Ireland was their home beyond English occupation. Therefore, Catholics largely rejected the idea of emigration. Although Ulster-Scots were mostly countrymen, they felt they deserved certain privileges due to their service to the Crown. Therefore, they were not ready to tolerate a poorer standard of life and certainly saw this rack-renting strategy as an injustice from the Crown dominated by Anglican clergymen. The feeling of injustice in Ulster provoked the desire to leave.

Thus, the high price of the land became the main cause of emigration. A series of devastated crops and cattle that had caught the rot appended the situation (Chepesiuk, 2000, p.99). This unsurprisingly triggered an increase in prices of goods around the mid-1710s.

2-Exportation Disadvantages

Since the 1660 *Navigation Act*, which authorised the Irish to trade directly with the colonies, equality with England progressively faded away up to

the detrimental 1699 *Woollens Act* passed by the Irish parliament under pressure from the Crown (Leyburn, 1962, p.159). This act limited the exportation of Irish linen to Wales and Scotland destroying the major part of Irish exports to the profit of English and Scottish manufacturers. 'Ireland was denied the privilege of intercolonial trading, a privilege denied to no other British colony' (Dickson, 1966, p. 7). To the Protestants, this was further proof that their service to the Crown generated little interest on the mainland.

3-Ship owner advertisements and encouraging letters

Advertisements appeared around 1718 to promote the passage to the colonies at low rates or promoting contracts such as indentures as payment,⁷ and such advertising continued throughout the 18th century. One among a host of various examples is the offer by William Smith Jr., on 20 March 1768 and published in the *Belfast News Letter* on 1 July 1768.

The Province of New-York is one of the healthiest Countries in the World, The Inhabitants live to the Age of 80 and 90 Years. [...] There is no provincial Establishment of any one Sect above the rest, nor any general Church Rates, or religious Taxes or Impositions; each Denomination supporting the Worship of God in their own Way, without Force or Penalties, but all by voluntary Contribution. [...] Innumerable Farms may be had at a very easy rate, either by purchase in Fee, or upon Leases. [...] If any are inclined to come over to New York, and become Purchasers, they may apply to the Subscriber.⁸

⁷ Common practice during the 18th and 19th century as most of migrants could not afford the £10 required to cross the Ocean. They made a contract with the ship owner before departing. They obtained a free passage in exchange of a period of "contracted service" once they had arrived in America (Chepesiuk, 2000, p.102).

The offers exclusively targeted Protestants to help build a Protestant America.⁹ William Smith Jr. evokes the absence of Catholic in the Province of New York as a positive aspect.

There are no Catholicks, there being a Law passed when the Earl of Bellamont was Governor, nearly 70 Years ago, that makes it Felony for a Popish Priest to be in the Colony 24 Hours.¹⁰

The frequent advertising of low prices and fertile lands provided the necessary “pull factor” for Ulster-Scots to migrate. Along with these advertisements, encouraging letters from relatives in America enticed the Ulster-Scots to migrate. A letter by John Dunlop, the printer of the Declaration of Independence (1776) to his brother-in-law, who remained in Strabane dating back to 12 May 1785, illustrates this point:

We are told that the Parliament of Ireland means to lay restriction on those who want to come from that country to this. [...] The young men of Ireland who wish to be free and happy should leave it and come here as quick as possible. There is no place in the world where a man meets so rich a reward for good and industry as in America.¹¹

Economic motives for emigration between the two communities are very different. Indeed, the Catholics perceived emigration as compulsory. The Great Famine drove unwilling Catholics to emigrate so as to survive. Figures demonstrate the near-impossibility to find food as the 1846 crop corresponded to 20% of the average estimation prior to the Famine (Miller, 1985, p.282). Thus,

⁸ *Belfast News Letter and General Advertiser*, 1 Jul. 1768, The Central Library, Belfast

⁹ America was mostly composed of Anglicans, but religious toleration was vigorously defended in some regions such as Penn's land later known as Pennsylvania.

¹⁰ *Belfast News Letter and General Advertiser*, 1 Jul. 1768.

the Irish wave of emigration can be portrayed as being generated by “push factors”. The urgency of the situation did not give Catholics much time to make a balanced decision based on accounts and advertising. In America, they mainly gathered in urban slums and some even lived in basements (Miller, 1985, p. 310). The possibilities to find a job were slight due to their bad reputation in a strongly anti-papist America. The rejection of Irish Catholics by the American population is summarised in the proliferation of job notices specifying: “Irish no need apply” in major American cities (Miller, 1985, p.323).

C- Religious Motivation

The religious aspect of Ulster-Scots emigration cannot be avoided. Firstly, it is a part of their cultural heritage and one of the major foundations of the cultural identity of not only Scotch-Irish but also of Ulster-Scots. Several modern articles published in Ulster-Scots cultural magazines such as *New Ulster* or Unionist newspapers corroborate this point, so do pamphlets by Rev. Paisley (1976, 1998) or Rev. Cromie (1976).¹² Secondly, it gives an idea of the nature of the political influence they might have had in the building of modern America. There are two crucial aspects that need to be analysed: firstly, the reality of religious motivations in Presbyterian emigration and secondly, the Ulster-Scots own perception of the role of religion as a reason for leaving.

¹¹ PRONI, T.1336/1/22

¹² See, e.g. *Belfast Telegraph*, “Scotch-Irish, the Secret of American Greatness”, 30 Nov.1995

1-Religious Discriminations

Economic sanctions such as the 1699 *Woollens Act* affected the totality of the Irish Protestant population. Discrimination against Presbyterians became official in the 1704 *Test Act*, even if Catholics were the primary targets of the Act (Leyburn, 1962, p.165). Civil servants were compelled to take communion in Anglican Church for a period of three months after their employment (Chepesiuk, 2000, p.94). Presbyterian marriages 'were declared invalid, and their chapels were closed. They could not maintain schools and hold any office above that of a petty constable' (Bolton, 1910, p. 15). Presbyterian ministers no longer had any legal right to officiate. Thus, persons of indisputable reputation were sued in the Bishop's court as "fornicators" for living with their wives, and their descendants were consequently seen as "bastards" (Leyburn, 1962, p.166, Bolton, 1910, p.63). Presbyterians' desire to leave a land they believed they deserved and a monarchical system they had fervently defended is understandable since this same system reduced them to second-class citizenship. This created concern on an official level, for example, contemporary accounts such as a letter from the Lords of Justices of Ireland to the Lord Lieutenant expressed this preoccupation:

My Lord, we have had account from most parts of the Kingdom especially the North, of very great numbers of Protestants, with their families, shipping themselves off for New England or other parts of the west Indias.¹³

¹³ In Rev. Latimer, 1902, p. 387

The fate of Presbyterians improved with the 1719 *Toleration Act* (Bolton, 1910, p.64, Connolly, 1997, p.26). This date corresponds to the first big wave of Protestant emigration. However, Presbyterians began their massive exodus. The 1673 *Test Act* was not the first discriminatory amendment against Presbyterians. They had previously suffered from severe persecution in Scotland¹⁴ and also in Ireland.

The 1666 *Act of Uniformity* 'made it illegal for anyone not episcopally ordained to administer communion and required that all schoolmasters be licensed by the Anglican Archbishop' (Connolly, 1997, p.25). Thus, the improvement of their status could be provisional, as the failure to abrogate the *Sacramental Test* in 1733 tends to show (Connolly, 1997, p.26).

Religion was obviously mixed with political realities. Presbyterians represented a serious challenge to the preservation of doctrinal domination over Ireland (Kirkham, 1997, p. 86). Bolton claims that the *Test Act* was to reduce Presbyterians 'on a level of disability with the Roman Catholics' (1910, p. 63). So, despite their loyalty, their social status became comparable to the Catholics. To them, this was unbearable. Presbyterians were very influential in some aspects of political and civic life. The *Test Act* consequently provoked the quasi-destruction of the Corporation in Belfast and ten of the twelve aldermen of Derry were ousted (Leyburn, 1962, p.166).

Beyond political considerations, these acts can be interpreted as a lack of freedom to preach freely. As Ulster-Scot Presbyterians had little to gain by

¹⁴ For further information on this point see Chepesiuk (2000) p.70-71.

staying, Ulster became an inferno to flee and for that matter America could be perceived as the “Promised Land”.

2-Religious Interpretation of Departure

This aspect of the analysis is essential as it refers to the migrants’ perception of their departure. As Cowan argues, ‘Myth [...] is not to be despised (...) On the contrary they should strive to understand and analyse the phenomenon as a codification of historical truth’ (1997, p. 15).

Presbyterian ministers wishing to cross the ocean seem to have used religious interpretation of departure with efficacy. Besides, British and Irish local authorities eased their tasks in enacting the discriminatory laws mentioned above. Among contemporary letters evoking the issue, the one by Ezekiel Stewart from Co. Donegal to Judge Michael Ward from Co. Down dating from the 25 March 1729 is interesting.

The Presbyterians ministers have taken share of pains to seduce their poor ignorant hearers by bellowing from their pulpits against the landlords and the clergy, calling them rackers of rents and screwers of tithes, with other reflections of this nature which they know is pleasing to their people; at the same time telling them that God had appointed them to dwell in (naming New England) and desires them to depart thence, where they will be freed from the bondage of Egypt and go to the land of Canaan etc.¹⁵

¹⁵ PRONI, D. 2092/1/3

The style of the letter is very contemptuous towards Presbyterians and seems to reflect the antagonism between the two Protestant traditions. Stewart accuses Presbyterian ministers of using their position within their community to induce the members of their congregation into migrating. This argument seemed to be confirmed as several ministers led their congregation to the new land.

Francis Makemie from Co. Donegal and later known as “the father of American Presbyterianism” left in the early 18th century and contributed to the organisation of the first Presbyterian Church in the colonies (Dickson, 1966, p.20). In 1764, Rev. Thomas Clark of Monaghan who had been arrested several times for refusing to take the oath by kissing the bible finally led his congregation to America (Miller, 1985, p.159). The fact that Ministers led emigration movements reinforced the determination of those who had decided to leave. However, according to a letter from the Lords of Justices of Ireland to the Lord-Lieutenant, dating back to 28 March 1729, Presbyterian Ministers rejected having any responsibility in the phenomenon.

The Dissenting Ministers, in Ulster from whom we have received letters, do for themselves and their Brethren, as far as they know, utterly deny that they solicited, or any way encouraged, the people to depart out of the Kingdom.¹⁶

Still, a short resumé by a Minister is added to the advertising about the Province of New York, mentioned above, to guarantee the truth of the contents and the honorability of the writer. In these circumstances, if Presbyterian ministers made speeches to attract their disciples, their argumentation was well

¹⁶ Letter from 8 Mar. 1729 in Rev. Latimer, 1902, p. 392

founded considering that Presbyterians had to pay the tithe, thereby enriching the Anglican Church of Ireland (Bolton, 1910, p.65, Miller, 1985, p.160). This tithe also increased along with the rent (Bolton, 1910, p.66). Presbyterians had benefited from the *Regium Donum* - annual allocation to Presbyterians since 1672 but this was suspended with the 1704 *Test Act* (Bolton, 1910, p.63, Leyburn, 1962, p.167).

Presbyterians certainly considered that it was better to emigrate and worship freely (Dickson, 1966, p.32) than stay and remain as second-class subjects. They felt that 'their ancestors had struck a sacred bargain with the English monarchy which guaranteed their religious and political "liberties" in return for serving as the King's loyal garrison in the midst of his "papist" enemies' (Miller, 1985, p.159).

Stewart's letter also shows preoccupations concerning Presbyterian emigration. This concern is also expressed in the contemporary letters preoccupied with the decrease of Protestant tenants and the obligation to rent the lands to the Catholics. A 1745 pamphlet quoted in an article about Protestant emigration in Dublin University Magazine dating back to May 1833 confirms it:

Popish tenants are daily preferred and Protestant rejected, either for the sake of swelling a rental, or adding some more duties which Protestants will not submit to. [...]. The Protestants being thus driven out of their settlements, transport themselves, their families, and effects to America, there to meet a more hospitable reception among strangers to their

persons, but friends to their religion and civil principles.' (Dublin University Magazine, May 1833)¹⁷

Nevertheless, some letters from agents or head agents to their Landlords shows that the concern is real.¹⁸

Miller states that the Presbyterians were trying to intimidate the Anglican authorities with the risk of massive emigration to obtain the abolition of the 1704 *Test Act* (1985, p.159). Stewart's suspicion seems well founded as politics played a major part in these religious quarrels. The London and Dublin parliaments did not seem to have taken any effective measures to prevent Presbyterians from departing Ireland as the letter by John Foster, acting Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, to the Chief Secretary, Sir Richard Heron dating back as late as 25 October 1778 shows. Foster implores the authorities to make economic reforms in order to reduce emigration:

The moment American troubles cease, emigration from hence will probably begin. Thousands will leave a country sinking into ruin, where industry is cramped and the natural means of wealth cut off. But if the strongest prospect of every commercial benefit, by a certainty of being allowed to make full use of every natural advantage of this island, be given to us before that time, those thousands may be induced to stay at home and enrich themselves and their mother country in their native soil.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Dublin City Magazine*, "On Protestant Emigration", Vol. 1, No.5, May 1833, pp. 471-83

¹⁸ PRONI, T.2541/IA1/10/51, Letter from James Hamilton, head agent on the Earl of Abercon's estates in Co. Tyrone and Donegal to the landlord, 4 Aug. 1772
Public Record Office, Northern Ireland, T.1893, Letter by George Portis, agent on the Co. Antrim estate of Earl of Donegal to his landlord of on 4 May 1773. These letters are both from the end of the 18th century, which corresponds to end of the massive movement of emigration.

Even if the Ulster-Scots emigration was explained more by economic factors than by religious discrimination, it is clear that the attraction of having greater religious freedom in their New World contributed to their waves of emigrants. They had the prospect of moving to a flourishing new land where they could live in total harmony with their principles thanks to religious toleration. During the Famine, Catholics who had not much to lose moved to America with the feeling they had not much to gain either. The post-famine emigration was different as economic prospects considerably improved for Catholics at the end of the 19th century. Yet, the trauma of the first massive wave of emigration shaped the Irish-American cultural identity, as the first wave of Ulster-Scots emigration shaped their social and political attitudes towards integration into American society.

America was a material and spiritual “Eldorado” for Ulster-Scots. They mostly felt emigration was a positive experience as they benefited from the low price of the lands and adapted to the conditions of life. Moreover, their assimilation to other cultural groups was facilitated by shared religious beliefs. America was a wild land where everything had to be built including moral values. Leyburn estimated that Scotch-Irish ‘next to English [were] the largest community in [America]’ (1962, p.188). Their number gave them the opportunity to contribute to the establishment of the institutions according to their own perception of religion and politics (then strongly intermingled). Thus, it is clear that even if there were some “push factors” behind the Ulster-Scots motives for emigrating, they benefited from a higher amount of “pull factors”.

¹⁹ PRONI, D.562/832

The Ulster-Scots and Catholics were still alienated from the British government for different reasons. This frustration considerably influenced Ulster-Scots in strongly participating in the American War of Independence against the British. The Catholics could not act in the same way, as Rev. Paisley (1976) and Cromie (1976) expressed it, they were not there. Actually Catholics were in America in small number, as religious freedom in America appeared to be the privilege of Protestant denominations. Besides, when Irish Catholic emigration took place mostly during the second half of the 19th century, emigrants chiefly perceived it as involuntary. Their view was then based on “push factors” but very little on “pull factors”, except from the perspective of survival. Their arrival did not offer the same perspective of success and the rejection by the American population slowed down their assimilation prospects and contributed to the birth of Irish-American nationalism in support of Irish independence.

3-Widening Political Gap

The American war of independence had some support from the Protestant population in Ireland (Hanna, 1992, p.66). The *Belfast News Letter*, then a more radical paper, was the first newspaper to publish the full version of the 1776 American Declaration of Independence.²⁰ The leading political figures in the United Irishmen such as Wolfe Tone, Emmet or Neilson supported the war of independence. These men, mostly from a Presbyterian background, were the ancestors of those who would fight for the Union less than a century later. As Lecky expressed it, ‘the defection of the Presbyterians from the movement of

²⁰ J. McIntyre, Interview, 19 Mar. 2003

which they were the main generators, and the great and enduring change which took place in their sentiments are facts of the deepest importance in Irish history (...)’ (1919, p. 386). If this event obviously had major consequences on Irish history, it also may have affected the Ulster Presbyterian’s relation with their American cousins since the latter were Republican and the former had renewed their support for British monarchy.

The progressive growth of Irish Catholic nationalism both in Ireland and America certainly confirmed this perception and explains the absence of links between America and the province. In spite of common original aspirations, America did not integrate the change of perspectives of cultural identity among Ulster Presbyterians. In turn, Ulster Presbyterians rejected any form of Republicanism that they progressively saw as part of the Catholic threat. The widening gap between Ulster-Scots Presbyterians in Ireland and Scotch-Irish political views in the USA prevented the creation of a culturally based Unionist political support in the USA comparable to the pro-Nationalist one. Indeed, beyond the ideological break up that the United Irishmen triggered, the Ulster-Scots perception of emigration does not reflect the definition of Diaspora. The fact that they acted as pioneers, benefited from the use of lands, low prices and religious freedom did not create the feeling of longing for the Mother Country as they felt they had been pushed to leave. Contrary to the Catholic Irish who perceived their Mother Country as being under external domination, and therefore not responsible for their fate, the Ulster-Scots perceived Ireland as being part of the British possession. Therefore, they loathed assimilation with the government or the land that altogether embodied Ireland to them. The will to remain in touch with their relatives and friends who remained in Ireland lasted as long as they were alive. But poor communication channels along with the

newly acquired American independence led to the natural end of the links between the cross-Atlantic cousins. Scotch-Irish quickly perceived themselves as Americans, as they felt they strongly contributed to its creation, and they did not want to return to Ireland. Their contact with Ulster-Scots might have been maintained as long as the Ulster Scots supported the cause of the American independence, but they were then cut. America had become independent from England and was sympathetic to Nationalist ideas whether Protestant or Catholic. It then became a place where it would be difficult to advocate what the Americans had fought against, the maintaining of Ireland within the British Empire.

D- Ulster Unionists and the US Government before Clinton's election

The emergence of the strongly anti-Catholic Orange Order re-affirming Protestant supremacy, the threat from the Catholic majority and the failure of the 1798 rebellion, attracted sympathy of fearful Protestants and also some United Irishmen opposed to the Catholic emancipation. The idea of full integration within the United Kingdom would grant them the security they were expecting and the assurance of their privileged position. In some cases, the British government had enacted a banishment act against the members of the 1798 rebellion. Lord Castlereagh, then Chief Secretary in Dublin and strong contributor to the 1800 Act of Union, wrote a letter on 29 October 1798 expressing his support for the exile of the United Irishmen to the United States.

‘[...] The necessary orders have in consequence been given to prevent any of these persons from proceeding to America till the King's further

pleasure is signified on the subject. I fear these gentlemen are yet likely to prove an embarrassment to us. Exclusive of the eighty whose names are set forth in the banishment bill, from two to three hundred persons are now confined in different parts of the kingdom. (...) The majority of our prisoners are not more dangerous than the general class of American settlers. Were it not that the loyal would be disgusted and indignant at their being at large in this kingdom, the greater part of them might be discharged without much danger to the state. It would be very desirable for many reasons to get rid of them as speedily as possible²¹

By becoming the refuge of hundreds of United Irishmen, Unionists perceived America as a shelter for British traitors. Thus, the United Irishmen movement and its aborted rebellion proves to be a turning point in the Ulster Presbyterianism position vis a vis London but indirectly also vis a vis the U.S. One of the biggest symbols of the ideological gap between Irish-Americans, Protestants and Catholics alike, and Unionists is the celebration of the centenary of the United Irishmen rebellion in the U.S. in 1898 (Wheelan, 1998, p.110). After US independence the United States became the land of exile for Irish Nationalists and therefore, America was not seen as a place to seek help in order to maintain Northern Ireland within the Union.

Unionists in Ireland along with the British officials were since the middle of the 19th century aware of the increasing strength of the Irish-American community in their support for the Irish Nationalist cause.

Indeed, since the beginning of the arrival of Catholic Irish in America dating back to the 1820's, in other words, thirty years prior to the Great Famine,

²¹ PRONI, Mic.224/41, vol. 79, ff 65-6, 29 Oct. 1798

pro-Irish nationalist political associations came into being. The most famous one was the *Fenian Brotherhood*, a secret society founded in 1858 by John O'Mahony. It nurtured strong links with the *Irish Republican Brotherhood* which can be perceived as a private army of resistance against the British domination in Ireland during the 19th century. The Fenian Brotherhood was actually configured as a small army since in 1860, it benefited from support among Irish-Americans and they received 500000 dollars to buy arms and weapons (Wilson, 1996, p.6). This example illustrates the importance of Irish-America as being the financial and military shoulder of the Irish Nationalist movement.

The Irish-American support was not limited to informal actions, as, since the beginning of the 20th century, Irish-Americans, due to their presence in cities and therefore close to the centre of power, constituted a political strength that the US administration could not ignore. The formation of an Irish-American commission in favour of the establishment of an Irish Republic illustrates this strong political activism.

During the post-World War I period, the *American Commission on Irish Independence* was created during the *Irish Race Annual Conference* in Philadelphia in February 1919 to put pressure on President Woodrow Wilson to make him declare his support for an independent Ireland (Carroll, 1985, p. 4). This generated an isolated movement among Ulster Unionists that tried to counter-attack the powerful Irish-American lobby. This attempt is confirmed by the existence of a Unionist pamphlet, *America and the Irish Question: A short account of the visit of the Delegation* (1920), which dates back to the time of partition reporting the progress made by an Ulster Unionist delegation during a trip to America. Some limited contacts were restored during World War II, as

Northern Ireland became a pivotal base in the Battle of the Atlantic. The aftermath of the War generated the creation of some organisations such as the *Ulster Historical Foundation* or *Ulster American Folk Park* but once again the effort as much as the interest was clearly limited on the Unionist side.

During the 1990 US census, around 40 million people claimed their roots in Ireland (Arthur, 1991, p.143). Among these forty million clearly not everyone shares an interest in the Northern Irish issue. According to Roger MacGinty, around two million still have a very strong sense of Irish identity. 'Most interest in Northern Ireland from the Irish-American community has been in favour of Irish nationalism' (1996, p.32). The people who supported Clinton's candidature during the 1992 campaign confirm this affirmation. Even prior to that, every link nurtured in the US was either pro-Nationalist or pro-Republican. John Hume efficiently represented the constitutional nationalists thanks to his considerable popularity and powerful connections, such as his friendship with Senator Edward Kennedy. Republicans also found a strong support through the creation of organisations such Irish Northern Aid, better known as NORaid or Father McManus' Irish National Caucus (INC), to quote two of the most famous ones.

Unionists did not benefit from the same potential platform due to historical reasons but also did not try and expose their case as their connections were fairly limited. No public organisation appears to have offered open support to the Unionist case in America except the small northern Virginia *Ulster-Scots Society*. Its representative, Maureen Mercker, declared on US television that the problem was 'poor Catholic education and that the Republic of Ireland was an imperialist nation' (O'Clery, 1996, p.135). This type of statement on American

television, while sitting next to an extremely conservative US political figure, Pat Buchanan, obviously could not help the Unionists' image in the USA.

Besides, Unionists were not paying much attention to Washington and they were right in the sense that Washington did not have any particular interest in Northern Ireland either. Nevertheless, they were alarmed from time to time by the Nationalist potential in America such as the statement by Jimmy Carter during the 1976 presidential campaign in favour of a greater American involvement in the Northern Irish issue on Human Rights and for the unification of the island. This declaration provoked the fury of Unionists summed up by James Molyneaux: "the irresponsible opportunism of this peanut politician had undone much of what has been achieved in persuading Americans to stop supplying arms to the IRA" (O'Clery, 1996, p.136). This statement also summarised the Unionists' outlook on America as they exclusively focused their limited activity on the US territory to stress the violent consequences of supporting the IRA and tried to convince people to stop financially supporting the IRA campaign. Lord Maginnis recalled this aspect when talking about his first trip to America in 1983:

I was the only person who had ventured to America with the late Harold McCusker.

He had a lot of contacts in America and he was the first to say that [...] there was the Irish American lobby and they were doing untold damage.²²

Some Unionists were very much aware of the Irish American lobby's capacity. During an interview, Jeffrey Donaldson mentioned straight away that 'there is a strong Irish American lobby in the US that is particularly active on

²² Lord Maginnis, UUU Headquarters, 6 Dec. 2002

political level whereas it is no way as strong as the Jewish lobby it is nevertheless quite influential'.²³

Nevertheless, the attitude of successive presidential American administrations, whether Republican or Democratic, demonstrated the limited influence that this lobby had on US Presidents. This was the traditional attitude of the American presidency due mostly to the strong relationship with the British government. Thus, in spite of his statement quoted above, Jimmy Carter did very little regarding Northern Ireland once elected. Reagan's resistance to the Irish American lobby to use his influence over Thatcher during the dramatic event of the Hunger Strike in 1980-81 is another proof of Britain's deeply rooted links with the US administration. More importantly, it seems that during Reagan's Presidency, the US mostly backed the British on the Northern Irish issue with the signature of the Anglo-American supplementary extradition treaty in June 1985. This supplementary treaty includes a retroactive clause in article 4 permitting the extradition of suspects who entered the US territory prior to the signing of this agreement or IRA paramilitaries who had benefited from political status until then.²⁴ The Reagan administration's attitude went along with the war on international terrorism that the President had launched. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that Reagan played a role in the Northern Irish issue as he is said to have had some influence on Thatcher over the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement²⁵.

²³ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn office, 15 Apr. 2003

²⁴ Supplementary Treaty, Jun. 1985, art.4: "This Supplementary Treaty shall apply to any offence committed before or after this Supplementary Treaty enters into force, provided that this Supplementary Treaty shall not apply to an offence committed before this supplementary treaty enter into force which was not an offence under the laws of both Contracting Parties at the time of its commission."

²⁵ "At a meeting in California, Shultz [then Head of US State Department] and Reagan told the Prime Minister of their desire to see progress in Anglo-Irish discussions and offered American financial support in the event of an agreed political initiative." Garret Fitzgerald quoted in Wilson (1996, p. 246).

If this cannot be denied, it was nevertheless an informal involvement followed by financial investment with the signing of a resolution to provide the International Fund for Ireland with 50 million US dollars. The US Congress approved this resolution by 380 “yes” to 1 “no” (Guelke, 1996, p.532). Moreover, Thatcher made clear in her autobiography that she had signed this agreement with the Republic of Ireland in order to reduce Sinn Féin’s electoral advance and to gain a better collaboration with Dublin on security matters, as already discussed in chapter one (Thatcher, 1993, p.415). This way of thinking is in harmony with Reagan’s view of the international situation. The closeness between the US and UK governments protected the Unionists from any serious danger emanating from the Irish American lobby until Clinton’s election.

Unionists never had a deep interest in the US and therefore let the British Embassy deal with anything regarding Northern Ireland. The situation changed with the end of the Cold War, the decreasing importance of the Anglo-American special relationship, and the election in 1992 of Bill Clinton.

Unionists generally ignored and let the British Foreign Service deal with the Northern Ireland issue in a land perceived as utterly pro-nationalist. The Anglo-American special relationship protected them from any official US involvement. Therefore, when Clinton was elected, the strong support that he received from Irish America along with his supposedly pro-nationalist suggestions, such as the visa to Gerry Adams, naturally led to a hostile if subdued reaction.

CHAPTER THREE

CLINTON'S FIRST TERM: INITIAL UNIONIST REACTION TO US INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the Clinton administration's involvement, Unionist representatives never seriously contemplated an American political agenda in order to counter-balance the pro-Nationalist Irish-American activity in the United States. As Jeffrey Donaldson argued: 'the vast majority of Americans are not terribly interested in Northern Ireland and they are not terribly interested in a Foreign policy issue that does not have a direct bearing on their day to day life but of course from this distance it appeared to Unionists that [...] the whole of America had this pro-nationalist view which was not accurate at all.'¹ The last part of Donaldson's statement about broader unionist views of the USA embodies the general unionist perception of the US position prior to, and certainly even more so, at the beginning of the Clinton administration's involvement.

Their fear also appeared to be well founded as major figures in American politics such as Senator Edward Kennedy or Daniel Patrick Moynihan had expressed serious criticisms of the way that the British government had handled

¹ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

the explosive situation in the province. It obviously indirectly targeted Unionists and reinforced their opinion of America being hostile to the unionist position.

Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter one, Unionists were not able to prevent the American administration from being involved since the British Government also appeared to be powerless. Therefore, they had a choice between accepting and rejecting it with consequences that the unionist community would have to endure. The situation dramatically changed between the beginning of Clinton's Presidency and the signing of the GFA. This transformation took place in spite of Unionists' initial strong opposition to any external involvement and their perception of the US as being sympathetic to Irish nationalists. Indeed, President Clinton made several promises during the election campaign that seemed to favour the nationalist side. The promise to grant a visa to Gerry Adams and the intention of appointing a peace envoy were the most unacceptable ones from a unionist standpoint. It was perceived as an unwelcome interference and as being inevitably against their interests.

As Dr. King highlighted, at the beginning of the 1990s Unionists saw the US involvement as a nationalist agenda.² However, the aim of this chapter is to see whether their position evolved over the years of negotiations or remained unchanged. This chapter deals mostly with the preparation of the US involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process and the reaction it generated among the UUP.

² Dr. Steven King, Ulster Unionist Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

Clinton's first term has been divided between two chapters to highlight the UUP initial reaction to the US involvement and its strategy until Trimble's election as leader of the party in October 1995.

As discussed in chapter one, mediation requires a high level of patience and persuasion to induce every actor, or at least, the main ones, to appreciate the beneficial outcome and agree to the presence of a third party.

When the third party in question turns out to be the only remaining super power, as was the case with the United States, it may often seem better to agree with its involvement rather than see the super power shift to support the adversary's position (Touval, 1992, p.239). Still, the American administration certainly agreed with softly "imposing" their involvement in Northern Ireland on the United Kingdom while never fully siding with Nationalists or the Republic of Ireland against London. This chapter examines the UUP's initial reaction to the US involvement. The first point is to analyse the root of the UUP's decision to progressively accept the US involvement. Why did not they react more quickly? What type of strategy did they initially adopt? To what extent was it successful? And in case of passivity, what factors motivated them to launch a new and more adaptive strategy? Did they perceive an impasse that would coincide with a "hurting stalemate" that was unperceived until then?

The remainder of the chapter is divided into five main parts, each covers one of the key events which marked the US involvement in Northern Ireland: the Clinton Election Campaign; the Visa to Gerry Adams; the paramilitary cease

fires; the 1995 St Patrick's Day at the White House; and the Economic Conference in May 1995.

I-CLINTON'S ELECTION, NOVEMBER 1992

A- Unionists and the 1992 US Election Campaign

An analysis of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign is essential to understand his early involvement in the Northern Ireland issue and the reaction that his election generated among unionist elites.

Unionists knew of the weight of the militant Irish-American connection in fund raising and gun running for the IRA through organisations such as NORAID.³ As Lord Maginnis remarked, they were aware that 'there was the Irish-American lobby and they were doing untold damage.'⁴ But, as Conor O'Clery argues, 'Unionists never regarded Washington as an important city. The British government was doing the job for them. From 1921, the State Department considered Northern Ireland as an internal problem of the United Kingdom. Most presidents had the same consideration. The US would not do anything unless the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland agreed with it.'⁵ Thus, as mentioned in chapter one, the "special relationship" between London and Washington was protecting Unionists from any undesired Irish-American interference at least on the strictly political level.

³ This connection turned out to be very efficient at least until the beginning of the eighties when in '1981 a district court judge ruled that NORAID was "an agent of the IRA providing money and services for other than relief purposes"' (Guelke, 1996, p.524).

⁴ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

⁵ Conor O'Clery, New York City, 10 May 2002

Moreover, as far as Unionists were concerned, Northern Ireland was a British internal issue. International opinion was of little significance since it could not influence British policy. Besides, as Unionists were British citizens, their view was that British embassies and foreign services had a duty to handle the situation. Unionists did not have to act because they simply did not need to. This traditional Unionist “indifference” changed, though not immediately, with Clinton’s arrival on the American national political scene.

The first point to examine is Unionists’ interpretation of Bill Clinton’s reasons for wishing to become involved in Northern Ireland. Among all the Unionist officials interviewed for this thesis, the vast majority asserted Clinton’s need for Irish-American support to win the presidential election. This point is obviously differently presented according to whether the interviewee was pro- or anti-GFA. Two statements from interviews made in the aftermath of Clinton’s intervention illustrate Unionist disparity on that matter. First, David Vance’s position as deputy leader at the time of the interview of the strongly anti-GFA United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP) was very disapproving with regard to the basis of US involvement:

I think there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that the Clinton administration recognised the importance of the “so called” Irish-American vote and its important delivering democrat victories. I think this is the primary driver of what we’ve all seen over the past ten years.⁶

⁶ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

The second statement is from Barry White, then UUP coordinator at Westminster:

(...) Why people were sceptical about Clinton was that he was after the Irish-American vote. There aren't too many Irish-American votes taking our side. But he was an honest broker. We couldn't have asked for more to be fair.⁷

These two quotes were obviously made years after Clinton's first election as President. There was no significant contemporary reaction. As Prof. Paul Bew underlined: 'no official declaration were made by the UUP until 1994 as they did not expect such an involvement' (here referring to Adams' visa).⁸

These two reactions exemplify Unionists' perception of Irish-American influence on Clinton's Northern Ireland policy. Vance argues that the necessity of attracting Irish-American votes pushed the American President into having a nationalist agenda, consequently bearing some of the responsibilities for what Vance sees as the failure of the *Belfast Agreement*. For the UKUP, it represents proof of Clinton's lack of sincere interest in the Northern Ireland issue and evidence that he was promoting a nationalist agenda. On the other hand, White, a young pro-Trimble Unionist, accepts the Irish-American vote as a necessity for Clinton, but immediately points out Clinton's sincere interest and neutral position and praises it.

⁷ Barry White, Westminster UUP office, 14 Feb. 2003

⁸ Prof. Paul Bew, Queen's University, Belfast, 18 Dec. 2003

The UKUP represented the traditional opposition to external involvement in Northern Ireland. Its delegation constantly tried to undermine Mitchell's position during the talks and finally walked out of the negotiations in July 1997. On the other hand, Barry White's statement, which represents the pro-GFA UUP public position, demonstrates a much more pragmatic approach to US involvement.

Beggan and Indurthy argue that 'historically, the Democrats have always been more in tune to the Irish situation because of the Irish component of their party' (1999, p.13). Nevertheless, some academics contest the importance of the Irish-American votes as a major factor in Clinton's involvement in Northern Ireland. Indeed, Roger MacGinty underlines the fact 'that Democrats could no longer automatically rely on the increasingly wealthy Irish-American vote which has been attracted by Reagan's economic policies' as a way to dismiss the necessity for Clinton to base his campaign on seeking the Irish-American vote (1997, p. 34). However, MacGinty's approach strongly minimizes the notion of cultural identity in American elections exemplified in the position pro-US Republicans, such as Ray O'Hanlon, who supported Clinton during the election campaign. Furthermore, it is clear that during the primary election, Clinton like his Catholic opponent, Jerry Brown, was interested in winning the Irish Catholic vote (O'Grady, 1996, p. 3). 'They have supported the successful candidate in the past seven presidential elections, they vote in greater number than the general population and they are concentrated in states with large representation in the presidential Electoral College. Thus, it is assumed that candidates who respond to Catholic concerns, one of which is Northern Ireland can reap a significant electoral windfall' (Wilson, 1997, p. 24). The fact that no candidate used this

political strategy prior to 1992 can be explained by the importance of Anglo-American relationship, having more weight from a cost-benefit calculation standpoint and is also due to complacency as Irish-Americans were regarded as a safe Democratic vote until the first Reagan election.

Unionists put a pro-Irish nationalist label on candidate Clinton but without paying much attention to it. As King remarked: 'Clinton made his first promises about Northern Ireland when he still was not a serious candidate.'⁹ Nevertheless, Clinton had managed to mobilise an Irish-American support group, called Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore campaign group. The group sought to ensure the presence of the Northern Ireland issue on the US foreign agenda through their support for Clinton/Gore. Niall O'Dowd, co-founder of the Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore (IAFCG) underlined:

Around the early 1990s, late 1980s, we became aware that there was a will to get involved in the US. I met with Bill Clinton when he was then candidate and from that things started to change.¹⁰

The formation of the group with the support of major Irish-American political figures such as Congressman Bruce Morrison and Senator Kennedy indicates the strong influence of Irish-Americans on Clinton's campaign.

⁹ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003. King's point is confirmed by the fact that Clinton voiced his position on Northern Ireland during the primary election when facing the catholic Californian governor, Jerry Brown, in New York at a 'forum on Irish issues in the Sheraton Hotel in Manhattan' in April 1992 (O'Clery, 1996, p. 6, Beggan & Indurthy, 1999, p.13).

¹⁰ Niall O'Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

The IAFCG became “Americans for a New Ireland Agenda” (ANIA) after Clinton’s election to continue the pressure on the new president to fulfil his promises. Ray Flynn, then Mayor of Boston, and Former Connecticut Congressman, Bruce Morrison, co-signed a letter in February 1993 setting out the fundamental points they wished the Clinton administration to agree to in their involvement in the Northern Irish issue. This statement of purpose is composed of five key points:

- The appointment of a special envoy
- The elimination of foreign interference in the US judicial system (which is clearly a reference to a London attempt at getting a so called “terrorist on the run” deported to the United Kingdom)
- Attention to human rights abuses in NI
- Continuation of visa opportunities for Irish citizens, ‘to halt the practice of denying visas to Irish political leaders solely on ideological ground.’ This is a reminder of the promise to grant a visa to Gerry Adams.
- Support for the McBride principles and Investment¹¹

It seems that Clinton partly used the Irish-American agenda as a guideline in the long term for his involvement in Northern Ireland with issues such as the envoy, the visa to Gerry Adams or even the adoption of the McBride principles on a federal level.

¹¹ Flynn Raymond L. & Morrison Bruce A., “Irish-Americans For Clinton/ Gore”, *Five Recommendations on Irish Issues*, 5 Feb. 1993

Nevertheless, a later summary of his policy in November 1994 was unsurprisingly much more economically centred as it was diplomatically more acceptable.¹²

Unionists justified their fear of Clinton's presidency by the importance of the Irish-American lobby in the new incumbent's campaign and the extent of the lobby's influence over his decision to become involved in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the Unionists' preoccupation during his campaign and at the beginning of his presidency must not be overstated. As King argued, '[the promises] were made when he was not a strong candidate. He promised the envoy, a visa to Adams. So, nobody was thinking that he would seriously honour his promises.'¹³ Thus, Unionists initially did not interpret Clinton's promises as serious threat.

Two points confirm King's position. Firstly, Unionist publications scarcely covered Clinton's victory. The Unionists' position was highlighted in only two articles published in the Belfast biggest daily newspaper, *The Belfast Telegraph*, following Clinton's victory on 3 November 1992. The title of the first article, published on 4 November, is explicit: "Ulster View Raises Fear on Clinton" and the article deals with Clinton's pledge to send a peace envoy during the election campaign. The second article introduces what is going to be the DUP

¹² Here is a document released by the Office of the Press Secretary, "Supporting Peace in Northern Ireland, White House Statement, 1 Nov. 1994. It is composed of seven major initiatives:

- The White House conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Commerce Secretary Brown's attendance at the Belfast Investment Conference
- Increased funding for the International Fund for Ireland
- Enhanced department of Commerce programs for Ireland and Northern Ireland
- The US Information agency's expanded programs for the island
- National endowment of democracy expansion in Northern Ireland
- US agency for international development review of working with the international fund for Ireland

¹³ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

attitude during the whole peace process toward the US involvement. The article entitled ““Hands off”, Paisley warns Clinton” reports part of a speech that Paisley made in Westminster:

I certainly would not welcome the proposals that the new president has made that he is going to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland by sending a special envoy to beat our heads together and make us see a United Ireland as he wants us to see it.

A second indicator of the UUP’s low-key response is that, unlike Paisley, the UUP leadership did not emit any official comment and no individual quotation was found in the media on Clinton’s election.

B- The British government and Clinton’s election, indirect consequences on the Ulster Unionists position

The ultimate protection of Unionist interests was the Anglo-American “Special Relationship” which constantly overcame Irish-American pressure on the US government for an intervention in Northern Ireland.

The British government rejected the idea of a peace envoy in Northern Ireland. Jonathan Caine, Sir Patrick Mayhew’s former personal adviser, reports: ‘(...) When asked about this during the Conservative Party conference, Sir Patrick asked by the *Financial Times*, replied by saying Northern Ireland needs a

US envoy like it needs a hole in the head.’¹⁴ In addition, the British government openly favoured Bush Senior’s re-election getting involved in a manner that, although officially denied by Major after Clinton’s victory, infuriated Clinton’s team. Nancy Soderberg, senior member of the foreign policy team during the 1992 campaign, stated: ‘during the campaign Major had been helping the campaign for Bush. The tricks they used did not help the relationship with Clinton.’¹⁵ The issue was with how some members of the British Conservative Party interfered in the US election campaign in assisting Bush’s team. Jonathan Caine acknowledged that ‘some officials from the Conservative Party [...] went to the US and advised the Republican Party on election campaigning’¹⁶. [...] The most serious allegation is actually [...] that the British Home Office at the request of the Bush administration actually looked for evidence of Bill Clinton being involved in anti-Vietnam activity when he was a student in Oxford.’¹⁷ Caine also argues that the British government also shared the idea that ‘Bill Clinton got a strong interest because of the Irish vote. [...] The Clinton’s pledge was viewed with some alarm and some apprehension (...)’.¹⁸

John Major denies any knowledge in his autobiography of the “conspiracy” mentioning that ‘it was a staffers’ feud, and never an issue between the two of [them]’ (1999, p. 498). Yet, it is hardly believable that it did not do any damage to the Anglo-American relationship.

¹⁴ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

¹⁵ Nancy Soderberg became Security council staff director during Clinton’s first presidency, New York City, 14 May 2002

¹⁶ Two members of the Conservative Party, Sir John Lacy and Mark Fullbrook effectively travelled to America to help the Bush campaign. But, according to Downing Street, they acted on their own (Wilson, 1997, p.34).

¹⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

¹⁸ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Arthur states that the impact of the issues between the Conservative government and the new American administration should not be exaggerated (2000, p.156). Albeit it might have been a staffer's issue, the importance of "staffers" such as Soderberg in the decision-making process invalidates Major's point. Caine's analysis also contradicts Major's will to minimise the issue.

It soured the relations between the conservative government and the incoming US administration. I think that in that respect it was rather clumsy. It was a very good lesson for a government who tries to involve himself in internal affairs of other countries. (...) This was a Conservative Party matter rather than a government matter but in the case the two became indivisible. So, it was damaging, there's no doubt about that.¹⁹

Thus, beyond Irish-American strong mobilisation to support Clinton's victory, the British government appears to have, at least informally, sought to prevent it. Therefore, if the main argument for previous American administrations' non-interference in Northern Ireland was their strong relationship with London, then, this argument was weakened for two intermingled reasons. Firstly, as argued above, British interference in the American presidential election seriously damaged the personal relationship between Clinton and Major. Secondly, the new international context, discussed in the first chapter, weakened Britain's importance as an American ally in the immediate post-Cold War era. As Cox highlights, the end of the Cold War 'made it possible for a "Third Party", the US, to play a far more decisive role in Northern Irish affairs' (2000, p.251)

¹⁹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Thus, Irish-American support for the new US administration and tense relations between the US and British governments placed Unionists in a very delicate position. Indeed, just as Unionists had benefited from the US-UK “special relationship”, they were exposed to the consequences that a soured relationship would generate in the Northern Ireland context.

Nonetheless, Paisley was the only one to publicly react to Clinton’s election promises. The UUP seemed to ignore the threat. This lack of reaction is well described by Lord Maginnis’ depiction of the unionist mentality prior to 1992 ‘The Unionists in Northern Ireland were never actually challenged in a political or international sense. They lived an insular life (...) People were pretty well insulated from the outside world.’²⁰ Their lack of political skills and their lack of experience in dealing with real political pressure did not help to react or to measure “the level of danger” they were facing. “No” appeared to be enough of an answer. They could not see that, in terms of cost-benefit calculation, Northern Ireland could be an advantageous place for an America seeking to redefine its foreign policy in the immediate post-Cold War world.

C- The cost-benefit aspect, the American perspective and further Unionist weakening

‘No state or organisation gets involved on only altruistic purpose’ (Bercovitch, 1996, p.4). Zartman and Touval also argue that the motivation to be involved in mediation is based on a “cost-benefit calculation” (1996, p.451) and that otherwise no third party would intervene (1996, p. 446).

²⁰ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

Until Clinton's involvement, Unionists had benefited from the advantage that a potential involvement in Northern Ireland did not offer any benefit to external powers being 'a low-level conflict on the periphery of western Europe' (Guelke, 1996, p. 521). Nevertheless, with the changes of international context, Northern Ireland offered new perspectives.

On an international level and directly linked to the Unionists' position in Northern Ireland, Clinton 'did what no other American President had done or dared to do: upset British sensibilities by intervening into what they and others up to now regarded as a very British matter' (Cox, 1998, p.63). There was no particular reason in the view of Clinton's advisers to provide the United Kingdom with special treatment. 'America's interest no longer coincided with Britain's interests, as the unfolding of the Bosnia crisis in the spring 1992 showed' (O'Grady, 1996, p.6). The British government could not defend the Unionists' position (which corresponded to theirs on sovereignty matters) and the latter position was consequently weakened.

Moreover, as Hazleton puts it, the Northern Ireland issue 'offered an opportunity for charting a new foreign policy direction. (...) Intervention in Northern Ireland appeared to be more "do-able" and promised to be comparatively inexpensive' (2000, p. 108). This new foreign policy was symbolised by candidate Clinton's speech at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on 13 August 1992, "we must tear down in our thinking the gap between domestic and foreign policy" (in Thompson, 2001, p.162). This statement corresponds to the necessity for the United States to reshape its foreign policy in a new world where 'no longer eastern internationalists or Atlanticists control the foreign policy agenda [and where] no longer are domestic and foreign affairs

perceived or handled as 'separate' in practice as well as in theory' (Miller, 1994, p. 622). Northern Ireland embodied the perfect example of internal and international affairs being intermingled. Therefore, as Steven King said, if there was no strategic interest in being involved in the Northern Irish issue, there definitely was a political one.²¹

Besides, on the economic aspect, Senator Mitchell and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown often stated that Northern Ireland could represent 'a bridgehead into the European market' (Dumbrell, 2001, p.218). This point can also be interpreted as a diplomatic strategy to offer positive perspectives on US involvement to reluctant actors such as the UUP, as the primary goal of the third party is to ultimately 'bring the parties toward an agreement acceptable for everybody' (Zartman & Touval, p.445). Brown and Mitchell's attitude also contains the "carrot" element mentioned in chapter one. This carrot could potentially influence Unionists, to whom Ulster "was not for sale", as it could represent some relief for a local economy in deep crisis. Rev. Reynolds, an Ulster Unionist activist in the US, argued that Unionists did not want American money.²² Nevertheless, unionist politicians could hardly ignore the potential economic advantages. Evidence of this was seen in their participation at the Economic Conference in May 1995 in Washington. A striking example of the awareness of American potential investments and the importance of the conference appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* article, "America's interest" in the viewpoint column of this unionist newspaper:

²¹ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

²² Rev. Charles Reynolds, Trinity College Dublin, 3 Sept. 2002

This newspaper has consistently argued that economic investment is the greatest service which the US can make in the search of peace in Northern Ireland. These are all potent selling points and Ulster Businessmen and trade representatives must ensure that the message gets across. This is an unique opportunity to sell Ulster to a huge audience with the influential backing of the US President.²³

However, despite some positive sounds about economic investment, there was very little unionist reaction and almost no UUP elite public reaction to the Clinton election –not even from those who were later anti-GFA. There is no evidence that any element of the UUP saw it as an opportunity. To the limited extent that they were engaged they saw it a threat. The second key event in the US involvement, the Adams' visa, reinforced that view.

II- PREPARATION FOR INVOLVEMENT, A VISA FOR GERRY ADAMS, AND THE IMPACT ON THE UUP STRATEGY

Before granting the visa to Gerry Adams, the US administration took several steps, such as the establishment of diplomatic structures, to engage in the Northern Ireland peace process. Unionists generally ignored these progressive steps. In their defence, this progress was very low key. O'Grady and Wilson point out that Clinton's administration did not have an active Irish agenda for about the first eighteen months of his first term (O'Grady, 1996, p.4, Wilson, 1997, p.25). Unionists may have thought that Clinton's promises would not be fulfilled. Therefore, Gerry Adams's visa provoked the fury of the British and

²³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "America's interest, Clinton's strategy, why Ulster must take full advantage", 22 May 1995

Unionists who were ill prepared for it. Paul Bew says that Unionists were not expecting it.²⁴

However, even if the UUP did not expect the Adams visa decision, it came at the end of a period of preparation. So, it is necessary to examine this first eighteen months of the administration to put the visa decision in its American context, as their first significant public decision

A- Preparation to Involvement

Guelke states that 'initially the Clinton administration disappointed the Irish-American lobby. No peace envoy was appointed and when Gerry Adams applied for a visa to visit the United States in November 1993, it was refused' (1996, p.533). Arthur also asserts that 'the early months of the Clinton administration proved a disappointment for the Irish republican lobby in Washington' (2000, p.156). The low level of coverage, from Clinton's inauguration in January 1993 until January 1994, in the *Belfast Telegraph* about Clinton and Northern Ireland reflects the limited concern that Unionists had for the transatlantic activities at this time. The non-existence of any Senior UUP statement about the US administration during that period of time is another piece of evidence. Ulster Unionists seem to have taken the US administration's apparent passivity as confirmation that the promises would not be honoured.

Firstly, Anne Smith, UUP representative in Washington, stated that the UUP thought that 'Bill Clinton was very recently involved and the opinion was

²⁴ Prof. Paul Bew, Queen's University, Belfast, 18 Dec.2003

rather nationalist. The people who advised him were pretty much nationalists.'²⁵ Soderberg corroborated Smith's statement as she openly admitted her nationalist sympathies: 'during the first year, I was very much SDLP and anti-Sinn Féin. Because of Kennedy's connection the whole Unionist community assumed that I was pro-Sinn Féin/ IRA.'²⁶

Secondly, it appears that Unionists could not or rather did not want to make a clear distinction between those Americans with pro-constitutional nationalist sympathies and those who supported Sinn Féin. The revelation of secret talks between Hume and Adams in 1992 was logically interpreted as the confirmation of the existence of this pan-nationalist agenda. It also demonstrated for them that Hume was sympathetic to the idea of a united Ireland. The strong role that Hume played in Adams obtaining the visa seemed to confirm it. Thus, the Unionists' reluctance to acknowledge the legitimacy of even a constitutional nationalist position made it more difficult to see any positive side to US intervention.

In addition to the pressure from the Irish-American lobby, and in contrast to the highly violent preceding decades, a relatively positive atmosphere was emerging in Northern Ireland in the early nineties, creating a space for a US role. Peter Brooke's declaration that Great Britain had "no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" which was addressed to Irish Republicans²⁷ signalled the launch of a new British policy.

²⁵ Anne Smith, St Regis Hotel, Washington DC, 18 Apr. 2002

²⁶ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

²⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Brooke's declaration seemed to imply that some within the British government knew that they could not solve the issue without including Irish Republicans in the talks.

Moreover, the relationship between Dublin and London considerably improved with the election of John Major as Prime Minister and his close relationship with Taoiseach Albert Reynolds.

However, the UUP position underestimated the importance of preparation for future negotiations. As Raiffa argues, first you need to "know yourself", in that context, your possibilities, the logistics you can use, know the situation in which you are planning to be involved, 'give a thought to the negotiating conventions' and 'iterate and set your aspiration level' (1982, p. 126-127). In fact, at this time, the US administration was very active on Northern Ireland. The team including Nancy Soderberg, former Senator Kennedy's Foreign policy advisor was formed. Nancy Soderberg set the tone of Clinton's early policy in Ireland: 'In April 1992, Clinton promised the world to the Irish-Americans in New York City. So, [Irish-American activists] came to me when I was at the White House.'²⁸ Soderberg's point could imply that the US administration saw itself as acting in support of the nationalists as a payback for Irish-American electoral support at first, rather than adopting an immediate even-handed approach.

²⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

Clinton decided to run his Northern Ireland policy from the NSC by bringing the issue into the White House rather than leaving it in the hands of the rather anglophile State Department. Jean Kennedy Smith, Senator Kennedy's sister, was appointed as American Ambassador in Dublin. Her appointment counter-balanced the weight of anglophile US ambassador Ray Seitz at St James Court. Unionists utterly disliked her -Maginnis calling her "a pseudo-diplomat".²⁹ Unionists' opinion of Kennedy Smith never changed. King claimed that US involvement became really helpful 'once Jean Kennedy Smith went away'.³⁰

Niall O'Dowd also confirms that early efforts were made: 'Basically, we [ANIA] created a group of four people who were committed to bring the Americans in the peace process and we did this by calling pressure on Sinn Féin and getting guarantees from them about the IRA. And then, going to the White House and saying you know we have this deal on the table and you should be interested.'³¹ So, the US administration was in indirect contact with Sinn Féin through ANIA briefings.

Therefore, when Guelke declares that Clinton's attitude toward Northern Ireland initially disappointed the Irish-Americans, it is valid regarding the non-active but supportive Irish-Americans but not for those such as O'Dowd who knew the evolution of the situation behind closed doors. O'Dowd himself confirmed it: 'we knew that Irish policy was being decided by Clinton and by a

²⁹ *Sunday Times*, "Nice Try or Sudden Conversation", 22 Sep. 1996. There was not any official statement by UUP leaders in the *Belfast Telegraph* when Jane Kennedy Smith was appointed or official comment about Jean Kennedy Smith's arrival in Dublin in June 1993.

³⁰ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

³¹ Niall O'Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

very special group around him and we had potentially created that situation by putting in front the idea of an IRA cease-fire. We were quite happy to do that.’³²

Unionists, who would have always been fearful of any deal behind their backs since the 1985 AIA, did not pay much attention to the evolution of the situation on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Steven King’s argument about unionist assumptions that Clinton promises would not be kept is a good enough argument. However, it seems that precursor signs, such as Kennedy Smith’s appointment, did not encourage the Ulster Unionists into preparing a “counter-offensive” to make their point at the White House. Indeed, Kennedy Smith’s appointment did not generate any official Ulster Unionist reaction in the *Belfast Telegraph* of March 1993 even though her name had been mentioned in articles on 1 March and 16 March 1993.³³ It is important to specify that Kennedy Smith did not have any prior experience in diplomacy and the post in Phoenix Park was often considered as a quasi-honorary position. The appointment of the inexperienced Kennedy Smith could have been interpreted as a reward for Ted Kennedy’s support during the presidential campaign and nothing more. Besides, she was not appointed to London so Unionists were out of her diplomatic jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the UUP may have been more preoccupied about the appointment of a peace envoy as reflected in the *Belfast Telegraph* with reports such as the article “Clinton backs off, Ulster envoy issue is dodged”.³⁴ These

³² Niall O’Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

³³ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Kennedy is tipped”, 1 Mar. 1993

Belfast Telegraph, “Envoy warning sent to Clinton”, 16 Mar. 1993

³⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton backs off, Ulster envoy issue is dodged”, 17 Mar. 1993

articles contained reassuring information for the Ulster Unionists who then could believe that the promises were only electoral promises.

Ulster Unionists retained their traditional position of leaving the British to defend their case outside the Union. This point is characteristic of James Molyneaux's integrationist view towards Northern Ireland. As White argues:

Direct rule was not ideal, far from it, but it was comfortable and you know, if Ulster was British and we were getting the most of what we wanted (This is not the way I think, this is the way I imagine [the former leadership] thought). They felt comfortable; why they should bother. The IRA was still very active and as long as they remained active they obviously could not be in any sort of political institution. So, why bother?³⁵

White's words embody the traditional unionist strategy of just saying "no" to anything and fits Lord Laird's description of Molyneaux's strategy during his leadership, 'his idea was to dose every fire with water, keep it all calm, keep our passion low' which meant seeking to indefinitely contain the situation rather than try and solve it.³⁶ This point is crucial in the sense that the UUP's attitude was based on the fact that the party was never really forced to make moves. First, the UUP dominated the Northern Ireland political situation for fifty years during the Old Stormont Regime. Second, the initially hated "direct rule" became the most comfortable situation. As long as the IRA was active, the best solution for the UUP was to let the British contain the situation on the security aspect and paralyse any perspective of a power-sharing government and any attempt at a united Ireland. The US involvement and

³⁵ Barry White, former UUP coordinator at Westminster, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

³⁶ Lord Laird, Offices Holywood road, Belfast, 14 Mar. 2003

potential influence on the Irish Republicans put this situation in jeopardy, by creating a new dynamic away from the status quo.

In addition, as already discussed in chapter one, any impending third-party would have been perceived as favouring the Nationalist side in the Northern Ireland case as the Unionists' priority was to preserve the status quo. So, if the United States appeared to be one-sided it was partly due to the Clinton administration's determination to move the situation beyond the status quo and this matched the Nationalist agenda. This argument is not in contradiction with the will to accommodate Unionists. But, as seen above, in the Unionists' mind, status quo preserved the Union. Molyneaux, contrary to younger and more pragmatic figures like Maginnis, Trimble or Donaldson, still believed in the possibility to maintain the status quo indefinitely. As Caine argues it:

The temptation for Unionists has always been if we hold out, things might be better, but if you look at the history from 1969 onwards every time Unionism sort of dug in and said no, they've ended up a few years down the line in a far weaker position. The moment dictated that they had to get involved.³⁷

Indeed, for instance, the resignation of the UUP MPs following the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was as Sean Neeson, former Alliance Party leader, put it: 'simply to have an election based on the agreement,'³⁸ weakened their position as they lost a seat to the SDLP's Seamus Mallon. Thus some Unionists, such as Trimble or Donaldson as mentioned above, understood that if they did not actively engage, the process would continue without fully taking

³⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

³⁸ Sean Neeson, Alliance Party Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

their position into consideration. The very limited unionist input in the Downing Street Declaration confirmed it.

B- Ripeness: a crucial aspect of intervention

Ripeness can be defined as the time when a conflict has reached a turning point and it is possible to bring about some changes (Kriegsberg, 1991, p.4). In the Northern Ireland situation, it appears that the turning point for the US involvement was the Joint Declaration on 15 December 1993.

1-The Joint Declaration, a pivotal moment for US involvement

The White House welcomed the Joint Declaration as a positive step forward in the search for peace in Northern Ireland. The declaration was based on Hume's idea (Major, 1999, p. 447). It was clearly based on the Hume-Adams document that Dublin had re-written. However, Major could not acknowledge he was even indirectly talking to Sinn Féin. Therefore the public position was to ignore Adams' input.³⁹

The DUP unsurprisingly rejected it as the title on the front page of the *Belfast Telegraph*, "Furious Paisley lashes "sell out"", on 15 December 1993 shows.

³⁹ See Mallie and McKittrick (1996), *The Fight for Peace, The Secret History Behind the Irish Peace Process*, which includes a Sinn Féin draft (also known as Hume-Adams), dating back to June 1992, appendix I, p.375

However, the UUP adopted a more reserved approach avoiding any stormy declaration about it but expressing their resentment through their silence.

The Downing Street Declaration was 'a carefully balanced statement of principles and assurances designed to communicate that a permanent cease-fire would guarantee inclusion in future all-party talks' (Hazleton, 2000, p.109). Setting out this eventuality played the role of the detonator for US involvement. Indeed, things appeared to be moving quickly, *The Observer* had leaked the existence of a secret channel of communication between Major and the IRA on 5 November 1993, even if this had a minimal effect on Unionists as Jonathan Caine confirmed:

I expected at the time that the consequences would be greater than it actually was but then I think on the Unionists side a lot of them would have said something like: oh, well, tell us something that we did not know. (...) Jim Molyneaux decided in a comment (...) to be conciliatory and to say that this link went back decades and successive governments.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, as Unionists tended to accept it as a fact, it was an opportunity for Americans to open dialogue with Sinn Féin as well since, after all the British themselves were, though indirectly, in contact with them.

Furthermore, the ANIA used it as a confirmation of their argument that an Irish Republican cease-fire was imminent. This was clearly efficient, as Nancy Soderberg expresses it:

⁴⁰ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

By the fall, about December, I picked up that there was actually something going on. Irish-Americans kept on coming telling me there was about to have a cease-fire. So, we said that we wanted to see something. They said there would be something. I began to really notice a consistent message. And the Joint Declaration on 15 December, by the same time John Hume who had been opposing any visa for Adams changed his position, supporting it. That really turned my attention to it.⁴¹

The Joint Declaration can also be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the impossibility for the British forces to eradicate the IRA. It also underlines that the IRA cannot win either as the renewal of the principle of consent highlights. This implicit acknowledgement of the “mutually hurting stalemate” between the IRA and the British government represented a problem for the traditional unionist position as the British were shifting from a containment strategy to a more “conciliatory” one and therefore were less and less supportive of the status quo.

The Downing Street Declaration was also a sign of the positive relationship between London and Dublin enriched by a very good personal relationship between both Prime Ministers (Major, 1999, p. 452-453). The Unionists negative or coldish reaction to it was expected since it renewed the idea of an Irish dimension within Northern Irish affairs. The UUP’s reserved approach on the declaration was the fruit of Molyneaux being consulted on several aspects of the declaration. Thus, the UUP could not, this time, accuse the British of conspiring behind their back. It was also a sign of a tacit acceptance, if

⁴¹ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

Moreover, John Hume’s huge importance in granting the visa is confirmed in an interview with Mark Durkan on 8 March 2000 in Derry: ‘I can remember a meeting. Nancy Soderberg was clearly under pressure because J. Hume was clearly saying that the visa should be granted.’

an extremely reluctant one, that the Irish government had somehow to be included.

The British conciliatory approach along with the Irish government and the report of an imminent cease-fire favoured the visa for Gerry Adams as the US took advantage of a positive context to do the “unthinkable” without paying much attention to the highly expected unionist fury.

2-Gerry Adams' visa

Gerry Adams had been denied access to the USA twice since Bill Clinton's election.⁴² 'The Downing Street Declaration led to the hasty announcement by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy of a conference on Northern Ireland' (O'Grady, 1996, p.4). The conference was to take place in New York on 1 February 1994 and every party would be invited including Sinn Féin and more importantly Gerry Adams.

The US administration was extremely divided about the visa. Soderberg argued:

The entire US government were strongly opposed such as the FBI, State Department. The British were reluctant and asked to think about it. We actually did it and they were the most furious. To me, it was just quite tiring because it

⁴² It is worth noting that the two preceding applications for a visa had been done at the Belfast American consulate, directly linked to the American embassy at St James Court. The then strongly anglophile Ambassador, Ray Seitz, was strongly opposed to the visa. He fervently criticised it. Gerry Adams was allowed to apply in Dublin as Sinn Féin headquarters is located on Parnell Square.

just looked as if the world had ended and it is the first time that US ever blocked against the UK.⁴³

Even Soderberg herself who played a crucial role in influencing the President in his decision to grant the visa was not convinced at first:

'I would have initially done anything but grant the visa, an open dialogue, discussion or send an envoy or anything. This was in a context when Israeli had signed an agreement with PLO with non-equivalent conditions. They had to make them [SF/IRA] do something before the visa. The other option was that the visa was to be granted because it was one of the electoral campaign promises. (...) Ultimately, there was a logic that Clinton agreed with, which was that if we give the visa and Adams delivers peace then it would content anybody. If he does not it will help us show the rest of the world he's a fraud and help us to shut up sources of funding. For the president, it was a win-win situation either way.'⁴⁴

Soderberg did not mention Ulster Unionists once in this context. It tends to demonstrate the low level of preoccupation of the US about the Unionists' reaction.

Unionists would always be opposed to the visa. Thus, the only option was to go forward in spite of the potential anger. Major and Mayhew along with the British Embassy were also powerless regarding Washington's decision despite strong demonstration of their irritation. This point is confirmed by the report of a

⁴³ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁴⁴ Nancy Soderberg, interview, New York City, 14 May 2002.

press conference given by Mayhew in Cookstown, "We did our best", he said: 'it is forty eight hours of very great and one-sided publicity.'⁴⁵

Mayhew's words demonstrate limits of London's power. As Caine put it the new British strategy was to 'to take the better out of the worse, the United States is by far and away the most powerful influence on earth and in the tradition of British diplomacy you face the situation and try to make the best of it by trying to mould them much more to match our point of view.'⁴⁶

The British viewed the situation as a demonstration that the American administration was biased. Caine argues that 'at the time, the US sided with whom they traditionally did. They used to side with the nationalists and the Irish against the British Government.'⁴⁷ Caine's point of view is very interesting as the US government's traditional position contradicts it. The best US answer to this accusation is the leak in *The Observer*, previously mentioned, of the secret channel between Downing Street and the Republicans. As O'Hare argued, 'the US were saying that the British were talking to Republicans so this gave to the US administration the right to do so as well.'⁴⁸ Dr. Carol Rittner, member of the executive board of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, confirmed it in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

⁴⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, "We did our best: Mayhew", 2 Feb. 1994

⁴⁶ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁴⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁴⁸ Rita O'Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2003

Our decision was influenced by the fact the British government and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, had been talking to Sinn Féin privately for a number of years. If they can talk to Sinn Féin why can't we?⁴⁹

According to Zartman, a potential third party has to see signs of will from each side involved to move toward negotiations. This often happens when each side has 'no more faith in victory' (1995, p.17). At the beginning of the US involvement, the American administration appeared to primarily see three sides to the equation: that is Sinn Féin and the British and Irish governments. The expected rejection by Unionists of any involvement led the US administration to ignore them or rather assimilate them to the British government and use the Unionists' traditional position of non-involvement to their own advantage. When the UUP became ready to apply an autonomous foreign agenda, the US then incorporated them in their strategy. This only took place after the shock of the Adams' visa when the possibility of getting rid of this unwelcome third party vanished as even London proved to be powerless. This was repeatedly confirmed during the following months as for example the British failed to prevent Adams from being invited for the St Patrick's day at the White House in 1995.

This was the first time that the UUP openly reacted in the media. Donaldson stated in the *Belfast Telegraph* that 'the visit to New York by Mr Adams was "a master stroke" for his party.'⁵⁰ He added: "they now have more scope than ever to expound their message of hate against the Unionist people without having made one single concession, never mind rejected the use of violence."

⁴⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Allowing visit to US appropriate, says Clinton", 1 Feb. 1994

⁵⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Major is urged to examine Irish role", 1 Feb. 1994

Unionists were detaching themselves from the British government in spite of their common indignation about the visa.

The UUP initial reaction was to boycott the conference on peace in Northern Ireland because of the presence of Sinn Féin delegates for as Maginnis argued: “as a constitutional politician, I have to defend the greater number of people who are against violence, I cannot betray their trust by giving some sort of credibility to Adams.”⁵¹ Lord Alderdice, former leader of the Alliance Party (AP), was the only Unionist representative attending the conference but he left as soon as Adams started talking (O’Clery, 1996, p.113).

The conference took place in spite of the Unionist boycott. The traditional “empty chair” attitude, which had already demonstrated strong signs of weakness, was useless with the American administration because Ulster Unionists in general did not have any means of pressurizing them. Prof. John McCarthy from Fordham University (NY) declared in the *Belfast Telegraph*, that Unionists “had missed the boat”. More importantly regarding changes within unionism, this strategy was immediately questioned within the UUP. David Burnside, UUP MP for South Antrim, declared in the same article that they had made a blunder as they could have organised their own press conference.⁵²

Thus, these interrogations about the efficiency of the boycott regarding the visa forced the UUP into rethinking their strategy. The UUP reacted almost immediately in the aftermath of the conference, as an article in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 3 February 1994, “Unionists set up tour to counter Sinn Féin”,

⁵¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Will the Unionist boycott break any ice?”, 1 Jan. 1994

⁵² *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionists deny giving boost to Sinn Féin”, 2 Feb. 1994

shows. The title demonstrates the reactive attitude of Unionism. It is also worth noting that in the article, James Molyneaux did not appear among the delegation meant to go to Washington. The members were Jeffrey Donaldson who played a great part in delivering the Unionist message as will be discussed later, David Trimble, (who ultimately did not take part in the trip), Ken Maginnis, and the Rev. Martin Smyth, Grand Master of the Orange Order. Molyneaux's attitude of avoiding confrontation in the USA is representative of the unionist old school - ignoring and refusing dialogue. Soderberg confirmed his refusal to communicate when she discussed the necessity of entering into dialogue with the UUP:

After the visa issue we were very conscious of the fact that Unionists were suspicious of it so we thought to proactively return to them. And the British encouraged us to do that. The problem was at that point, there was no leadership in the Unionist community; Molyneaux was away catching up butterflies from Australia. We could not get him on the phone, he just would not engage.⁵³

Soderberg justifies American difficulties in starting a dialogue with the UUP on the absence of leadership. If this affirmation seems to be confirmed by Molyneaux's attitude in choosing not to join the delegation, in spite of his position within the party, it also demonstrates the lack of US comprehension over the traditional unionist attitude. Indeed, what Soderberg calls an absence of leadership is a symbolic gesture to signify the leadership's refusal to engage. Moreover, it also demonstrates Molyneaux's lack of understanding of the US political expectations, as he himself justified his refusal to commit by stating: 'I was not a great advocate of political tourism.'⁵⁴

⁵³ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁵⁴ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

It also reveals the beginning of changes within the UUP and the growing division between two streams: firstly, the traditional one, that Caine described through his depiction of Molyneaux's personality:

Molyneaux [who] would rather see Northern Ireland governed like a region of England. This was one of his Enoch Powell traits, which is sometimes to be found on the old fashioned right, very anti-American, very hostile to the US involvement. Jim was and would never have been comfortable with the White House.⁵⁵

and secondly, the reformist stream, generally of a younger generation, and its progressive awareness of the necessity to engage. As Jeffrey Donaldson argues:

They were, I think, quite terrified seeing Gerry Adams given considerable airtime on US radio and television coast to coast and in an unchallenged way propagating his propaganda. And it was felt it had to be challenged. So, initially, myself and some others, promoted the idea within the UUP that we should be at least visiting the US on a more regular basis to talk to influencers on Capitol Hill and in the Clinton administration to try and provide some balance to what we regarded obviously as a very partisan message that Gerry Adams was delivering.⁵⁶

Donaldson's statement also confirms the importance of the visa in the UUP decision to change their strategy. Indeed, the fact that the US President could grant a visa to Adams without fearing most of his administration and British disapproval showed Unionists that the US could ignore their potential anger. Moreover, from the US standpoint, the choice of granting the visa to

⁵⁵ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

Adams could even become beneficial in terms of their future relationship with Unionists as it gave the US administration an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity.

The visa challenged Jim Molyneaux's strong attachment to the comfort of direct rule. Adams was in New York on the speculation that a cease-fire would take place in the near future. If violence ended, the Joint Declaration guaranteed the possibility of inclusive talks. This scenario would put an end to Unionists' comfort with the status quo since, whether they liked it or not, the simple fact that Adams was allowed into the USA demonstrated that the status quo was being more and more questioned.

Moreover, the British government would have no interest in rejecting the inclusive talks on the basis of an end to political violence as it could lead to a stabilisation of the political situation with all the advantages that implied, for instance, the end of a strong British army commitment. If Molyneaux was not able to see or acknowledge the progressive transformation of the Northern Ireland political situation, others such as Donaldson, Jim Nicholson, Maginnis and a few more started encouraging the idea of regular trips to the US to counterbalance Sinn Féin. This new vision within the UUP confirms that the visa and its emotional effect on Unionists played a huge part in the change of UUP strategy towards the US administration. The US was still seen as biased, but the UUP saw a need for the first time to advocate their case.

On that matter, bias seems to have encouraged the UUP to engage dialogue and such an attitude confirms the point made in chapter one that the

primarily reluctant actor can change their position. First, as mentioned earlier, there are offers that cannot be refused (Touval, 1992, p.232), second, the cost-benefit calculation may demonstrate that acceptance of the US involvement along with proper Unionist engagement may be more effective and beneficial. On that matter, beyond neutrality lies leverage. The US had demonstrated that they could act without worrying about the consequences. Instead of choosing a frontal defiance, there might be a possibility to take advantage of this leverage. In that case, the UUP could benefit from the US influence on Gerry Adams and through him, the IRA.

Donaldson argued: 'There were very regular visits, perhaps 3-4 times a year which, I know, it does not seem very regular but it was an attempt to match the frequency of visits by Adams and senior Sinn Féin members.' Thus, those trips were primarily reactive to Republican trips. Once again, the UUP demonstrated that their interest in the US was minimal and depended on the Irish Republican attitude, as it was the main reason for contacts in the first place. These trips were reported in the *Ulster Unionist Information Institute Bulletin*. For example, an article by Jim Nicholson "Hitting the American Trail" reports the progress made by the UUP in meeting with Vice-President Gore and meeting senior Irish-Americans to expose their case and obtain a more balanced view from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁷

Not only did the UUP have to promote their vision of the Northern Ireland issue but they also had to present an alternative to the Paisleyite message. As Tony Culley-Foster, the Irish-American businessman who financed the creation

⁵⁷ See *Ulster Unionist Information Institute*, "Visit by Ulster Unionist team to USA", March 1994, "Hitting the American Trail", Jun. 1994.

of the UUP North American Bureau in Washington DC, said: 'The Americans [were] ignorant of the Ulster Unionists and the Protestant community. Their vision was Ian Paisley.'⁵⁸ Ian Paisley had the benefit of having nurtured strong connections with the American fundamentalist Bob Jones University, in North Carolina and also has established some Free Presbyterian congregations in the USA. The bickering between the two main Unionist parties is visible in the *Ulster Unionist Information Institute* bulletin with the quotation from the *Washington Post*: "the red Carpet treatment given to the Ulster Unionist leaders was in striking contrast to the cold shoulder given to the Rev. Paisley (...)." ⁵⁹ The goal of these articles was clearly to persuade the Ulster Unionist electorate that these visits were well founded. Moreover, the prospect of American economic investments in accordance with potential negotiations may also have weighted the balance.

Ulster Unionist publications, while critical of the US, were in clear contrast with those from the *Protestant Telegraph*. For example, the article published in May 1994, "DUP delegation take Ulster's case to the USA" exposed the "perfidy of the two governments".⁶⁰ Another more striking example is a document by Sammy Wilson, then DUP press officer, dating back to 17 March 1993 entitled "American interference in Northern Ireland lashed".⁶¹

Donaldson also mentioned that 'they were given access to a very high level, like Vice-President Gore, senior officials in the State Department and we began interfacing with Congressmen and Senators particularly the Senate Foreign

⁵⁸ Tony Culley-Foster, Jury's Doyle Hotel, Washington DC, 14 Mar. 2002

⁵⁹ *Ulster Unionist Information Institute*, "What they said...", Jun. 1994

⁶⁰ *Protestant Telegraph*, "DUP delegation take Ulster's case to the USA", May 1994

⁶¹ DUP Press Release, Alderman Sammy Wilson Office, Press Officer, "American Interference in Northern Ireland lashed", 17 Mar. 1993

Affairs Committee or Foreign Relation Committee.’⁶² This corresponds to an *a posteriori* acknowledgement of the US attempt at showing their even-handedness by offering the same opportunities to any actor. Thus, the US actually treated everybody willing to engage equally. Therefore, when Unionists have accused Americans of pro-Irish Republicanism, the reason appeared to be that Ulster Unionists could not stand the fact that “terrorists” benefited from the same level of access as “democratic” politicians. Steven King argued: ‘there has been too much of carrots rather than stick. The US gave things unconditionally’.⁶³ From a Unionist perspective, the fact that the visa to Gerry Adams was granted without any official prerequisite is an illustration of this “carrot” approach. But it can also be interpreted as a way to show to Gerry Adams the potential advantage of engaging in the peace process.⁶⁴ In granting this visa, the American administration obviously used the carrot strategy but they also insinuated the “stick”. Indeed, it was the first of potentially even better treats for the Sinn Féin leader, but it could also be the last. So, the American administration gave a taste of what could be viewed as a first experience of potential rewards for Sinn Féin.

The reaction by the UUP to the Adams’ visa is instructive not so much for the negative reaction to the decision itself which was hardly unexpected; but rather because it marked a key turning point for the UUP. Up to the visa decision, they essentially ignored the USA and their increasing interest in Northern Ireland. They assumed nothing would happen or if it did the British Government could defend their interests. Their shock at the visa decision persuaded some UUP

⁶² Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

⁶³ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

⁶⁴ It is important to notice that no official direct contact between the US administration and Gerry Adams took place during his journey. Members of the White House started official communication with the Sinn Féin leader after the first IRA cease-fire on 30 August 1994, as it will be more extensively studied below.

members that they needed a more active US strategy, though one which was essentially reactive at this time, seeking to counteract Sinn Féin activity in the USA. The image of the US is also still largely negative. The strategy is to block US activity. There is no evidence that they saw any potential for positive engagement.

III-THE IRA CEASE-FIRE, AUGUST 1994

The IRA proclaimed a cease-fire on 30 August 1994, followed six weeks later by a loyalist cease-fire on 13 October. Loyalist thinkers perceived the role of loyalist paramilitaries as being directly linked to the IRA activities. The loyalist declaration of cease-fire contained a “no first strike policy” (Sinnerton, 2002, p.168) as stated: ‘The permanence of our cease-fire will be completely dependant upon the continued cessation of all nationalist/republican violence, the sole responsibility for a return to war lies with them’.⁶⁵

The role of the Irish-Americans is said to have been decisive in the IRA decision to implement a cease-fire. Indeed, as reported in the *Belfast Telegraph*, an ANIA delegation came to Ireland and met Sinn Féin officials on 26 August 1994.⁶⁶ These four men, including Niall O’Dowd and Congressman Bruce Morrison, went there to deliver a message from the White House stating that the US administration would not be interested in any temporary cease-fire and that Clinton was siding with Dublin and London on that matter.

⁶⁵ Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) Cease-fire Statement, 13 October 1994 (see CAIN web service for full text)

⁶⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Cease-fire Countdown”, 25 Aug. 1994

The IRA had implemented a ten-day cease-fire during the time of their stay. The Unionists' reaction to the visit of the US delegation was very negative. Jim Wilson, then UUP Secretary, said: "the stand taken by the unionist parties (...) and the decision to give the visiting Yanks a wide berth had been fully justified by comments they have made."⁶⁷ The harsh answer from the UUP reflected the party's strong suspicion toward the Irish-American delegation and demonstrates the continuing strength of the traditional unionist attitude as the use of the derogatory expression "yanks" illustrates.

The US administration saw the cease-fire as a very positive development and hoped it would lead to greater British flexibility; as Soderberg said: 'it was much easier for the British to actually listen and try and accommodate the terms of the IRA. As long as they had bombs going off, they were terrorists.'⁶⁸ Some British officials also acknowledged the US administration's role in the cease-fire, as Caine argues:

A lot of work was done with the US administration more specifically in 1994. It's obvious the US had some influence on Irish Republicans; there are key figures in the US administration. I think Nancy Soderberg was one of the key players, the National Security Council, Tony Lake, people like Kennedy and other Congressmen had influence. They obviously have an influence with them.⁶⁹

However, other cease-fires had been declared during the conflict, therefore no one could be then absolutely sure that this one would last.

⁶⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Talk Cliff-hanger", 26 Aug. 1994

⁶⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁶⁹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

The UUP's immediate reaction to the IRA statement was to be very suspicious as Molyneaux immediately started talking about decommissioning: "How are they going to justify retailing the weapons of war if they have stopped the war? That is the question the IRA have got to answer."⁷⁰ This topic was to become the biggest, most controversial and unsolved issue during the peace process negotiation.

In the polls conducted by the *Belfast Telegraph* and published on 2 September 1994, 65% of the Protestant population believed that the cease-fire was the outcome of a deal, and only 9% believed it was permanent.⁷¹ This point was an immediate concern for the UUP, as Trimble expressed in an article from the *Belfast Telegraph*: 'one consequence is that the Unionists should not worry about the cease-fire as such. Peace is not a threat to us. If anything it is advantage.'⁷² The mere fact that Trimble had to argue that "peace" was not a threat to traditional unionist perspectives typified by Molyneaux's idea of the safety of the status quo. Thus, Trimble had to reassure his people of the fact that a republican step forward did not automatically imply a weakening of the unionist position. This point is crucial to understand the unionist attitude. They felt so much under threat that even peace itself had become a menace. This perception largely explains their reluctance to engage with the peace process in general and not just the US dimension of it.

The IRA's decision to implement the cease-fire at that particular time, and the recognition of a US role, helped create the conditions for the UUP diplomatic engagement with the US.

⁷⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Molyneaux urges weapons gesture", 31 Aug. 1994

⁷¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "What Ulster People think?", 2 Sep. 1994

⁷² *Belfast Telegraph*, "IRA's War machine must be dismantled", 9 Sep. 1994

The US administration made a very measured statement highlighted the positive role the US strategy as facilitator played in the announcement of an IRA cease-fire. Myers, the White House Press Secretary, stated on the 31 August 1994:

At the time we said that we hoped that [the visa to Gerry Adams] would encourage the peace process, (...) it was always with the intended purpose of a permanent end to the hostilities of the IRA renouncing the use of violence and moving on to a political process, to a permanent and negotiated settlement. And that's in effect what happened today. (...) We think we've taken steps that we hope would facilitate the process and we're very pleased with the result today. (...) And I think that the President believes that's this is a very significant step. It's a watershed, as the statement says, in a very old and very stubborn conflict.⁷³

This new attitude was also unavoidable since the US administration was intent on building its own agenda as the phone call from Al Gore to Adams on 2 October 1994 or more importantly Adams' invitation to the White House for St Patrick's Day, 1995, demonstrated.⁷⁴

IV-ST PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION AT THE WHITE HOUSE, MARCH 1995

The progressive inclusion of Sinn Féin logically led, at least initially, to the de-escalation of IRA violence. Republicans always previously argued that the use of weapons was necessary since Sinn Féin did not have access to negotiations even if they had a democratic representation through elected MPs

⁷³ Federal information Service Systems, White House Briefing, 31 Aug. 1994

⁷⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, "U.S., Ending Ban, Will Talk With Sinn Féin", 4 Oct. 1994

such as Gerry Adams.⁷⁵ Unionists were apprehensive about a potential secret deal involving the IRA, the US and Irish governments. Dick Spring, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, had to publicly deny any secret pact with the IRA and asked Unionists to support the peace process.⁷⁶ So to Unionists, the “IRA [had] to say that it [was] permanent”⁷⁷ otherwise the negotiations would take place under the lurking spectrum of violence, which from the Unionists perspective meant that there would be no negotiation at all. Unionists also argued that the cease-fire should not generate rewards for the IRA as they should never have launched an armed campaign. Donaldson, then Honorary Secretary of the UUP, in a *Belfast Telegraph* article entitled “UUP Chief greets truce”, declared: “the party would make it absolutely clear that there can be no reward in terms of political concessions being an end to violence.”⁷⁸ It is worth noting that the title of this article does not mention a “cease-fire” but a “truce”, whereas the IRA had declared a “complete cessation of violence”.

The UUP did not perceive it this way and were very cautious about the meaning of the IRA statement. The use of this term implies a minimisation of the IRA statement.

⁷⁵ Rita O’Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2003. It is also worth mentioning that Adams was not an MP anymore having lost his seat during the 1992 election.

⁷⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Back the peace process, Spring urges Unionists”, 1 Sep. 1994

⁷⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, Jim Nicholson quoted in “Premiers divided over what the IRA really means”, 1 Sep. 1994

⁷⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, “UUP chief greets truce”, 31 Aug. 1994

The end of the ban on official US contacts with Sinn Féin took place with Al Gore's phone call to Adams on 2 October 1994. This clearly contradicted the UUP position as the White House justified the lifting of the ban 'to reward Mr. Adams for his role in arranging the cease-fire announced by the IRA on Aug. 31'.⁷⁹ American officials' approach demonstrates the lack of influence that Unionists had over the White House and the lack of understanding of the US administration's motivations. Ken Maginnis declared: "the phone call was the result of intense pressure from the Irish-American lobby and not the result of a softening of the US policy".⁸⁰ Maginnis' argument highlights somewhat of a shift in UUP leadership attitude, making a distinction between the US administration and the Irish-American lobby, and presenting the US administration as a victim rather than a "perpetrator". This distinction was necessary for the UUP to justify the maintenance of their contacts with the White House. This demonstrates the limited capacity to manoeuvre for the UUP, which had to accept certain facts on the ground and interpret them in a positive light for their own supporters. Thus, instead of being officially furious and boycotting the US invitation as they did after the first Adams visa, the UUP sent a delegation lead by Ken Maginnis who discussed the issue with Al Gore. Thus, the US administration played a diplomatic game as the Sinn Féin leader receives a phone call and the UUP a meeting, as counter-balance and to keep them in the process. Nonetheless, the UUP did accept the invitation and so were drawn, even in a limited way, into the process.

⁷⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, "U.S., Ending Ban, Will Talk With Sinn Féin", 4 Oct. 1994

⁸⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Loyalists on cease-fire knife-edge", 4 Oct. 1994

During the week of the White House visit, Ken Maginnis agreed to appear on the *Larry King Live* show on CNN along with Gerry Adams, as long as there would not be any direct debate (O'Clery, 1996, p.176). This point has often been seen as a media victory for the Sinn Féin leader who appeared very relaxed and full of confidence facing a rather nervous, aggressive adversary. Thus, Adams was seen as a peacemaker, and Maginnis, because of his refusal to directly speak to Adams and to shake hands, reinforced the US prejudice toward Unionists (O'Clery, 1996, p.176).

Nevertheless, the *Belfast Telegraph* analysis of the debate did not regard it as a failure:

Combined with Adams' assertions that it is "time to put out the hand of friendship and shake hands and move forward", this initial "don't-come-near-me" stance adopted by Maginnis may have been a mistake in terms of how an American audience might have judged the intriguing encounter. (...) The Sinn Féin leader's constant refrain that he is looking forward rather than at the past, may have had an effect on an American audience but Maginnis' constant questioning and Adams' answers during the debate will almost certainly have given the States pause for thought.⁸¹

⁸¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Adams ducks and dives", 5 Oct. 1994

If this cannot be denied, it was nevertheless an informal involvement followed by financial investment with the signing of a resolution to provide the International Fund for Ireland with 50 million US dollars. The US Congress approved this resolution by 380 “yes” to 1 “no” (Guelke, 1996, p.532). Moreover, Thatcher made clear in her autobiography that she had signed this agreement with the Republic of Ireland in order to reduce Sinn Féin’s electoral advance and to gain a better collaboration with Dublin on security matters, as already discussed in chapter one (Thatcher, 1993, p.415). This way of thinking is in harmony with Reagan’s view of the international situation. The closeness between the US and UK governments protected the Unionists from any serious danger emanating from the Irish American lobby until Clinton’s election.

Unionists never had a deep interest in the US and therefore let the British Embassy deal with anything regarding Northern Ireland. The situation changed with the end of the Cold War, the decreasing importance of the Anglo-American special relationship, and the election in 1992 of Bill Clinton.

Unionists generally ignored and let the British Foreign Service deal with the Northern Ireland issue in a land perceived as utterly pro-nationalist. The Anglo-American special relationship protected them from any official US involvement. Therefore, when Clinton was elected, the strong support that he received from Irish America along with his supposedly pro-nationalist suggestions, such as the visa to Gerry Adams, naturally led to a hostile if subdued reaction.

CHAPTER THREE

CLINTON'S FIRST TERM: INITIAL UNIONIST REACTION TO US INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the Clinton administration's involvement, Unionist representatives never seriously contemplated an American political agenda in order to counter-balance the pro-Nationalist Irish-American activity in the United States. As Jeffrey Donaldson argued: 'the vast majority of Americans are not terribly interested in Northern Ireland and they are not terribly interested in a Foreign policy issue that does not have a direct bearing on their day to day life but of course from this distance it appeared to Unionists that [...] the whole of America had this pro-nationalist view which was not accurate at all.'¹ The last part of Donaldson's statement about broader unionist views of the USA embodies the general unionist perception of the US position prior to, and certainly even more so, at the beginning of the Clinton administration's involvement.

Their fear also appeared to be well founded as major figures in American politics such as Senator Edward Kennedy or Daniel Patrick Moynihan had expressed serious criticisms of the way that the British government had handled

¹ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

the explosive situation in the province. It obviously indirectly targeted Unionists and reinforced their opinion of America being hostile to the unionist position.

Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter one, Unionists were not able to prevent the American administration from being involved since the British Government also appeared to be powerless. Therefore, they had a choice between accepting and rejecting it with consequences that the unionist community would have to endure. The situation dramatically changed between the beginning of Clinton's Presidency and the signing of the GFA. This transformation took place in spite of Unionists' initial strong opposition to any external involvement and their perception of the US as being sympathetic to Irish nationalists. Indeed, President Clinton made several promises during the election campaign that seemed to favour the nationalist side. The promise to grant a visa to Gerry Adams and the intention of appointing a peace envoy were the most unacceptable ones from a unionist standpoint. It was perceived as an unwelcome interference and as being inevitably against their interests.

As Dr. King highlighted, at the beginning of the 1990s Unionists saw the US involvement as a nationalist agenda.² However, the aim of this chapter is to see whether their position evolved over the years of negotiations or remained unchanged. This chapter deals mostly with the preparation of the US involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process and the reaction it generated among the UUP.

² Dr. Steven King, Ulster Unionist Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

Clinton's first term has been divided between two chapters to highlight the UUP initial reaction to the US involvement and its strategy until Trimble's election as leader of the party in October 1995.

As discussed in chapter one, mediation requires a high level of patience and persuasion to induce every actor, or at least, the main ones, to appreciate the beneficial outcome and agree to the presence of a third party.

When the third party in question turns out to be the only remaining super power, as was the case with the United States, it may often seem better to agree with its involvement rather than see the super power shift to support the adversary's position (Touval, 1992, p.239). Still, the American administration certainly agreed with softly "imposing" their involvement in Northern Ireland on the United Kingdom while never fully siding with Nationalists or the Republic of Ireland against London. This chapter examines the UUP's initial reaction to the US involvement. The first point is to analyse the root of the UUP's decision to progressively accept the US involvement. Why did not they react more quickly? What type of strategy did they initially adopt? To what extent was it successful? And in case of passivity, what factors motivated them to launch a new and more adaptive strategy? Did they perceive an impasse that would coincide with a "hurting stalemate" that was unperceived until then?

The remainder of the chapter is divided into five main parts, each covers one of the key events which marked the US involvement in Northern Ireland: the Clinton Election Campaign; the Visa to Gerry Adams; the paramilitary cease

fires; the 1995 St Patrick's Day at the White House; and the Economic Conference in May 1995.

I-CLINTON'S ELECTION, NOVEMBER 1992

A- Unionists and the 1992 US Election Campaign

An analysis of Bill Clinton's presidential campaign is essential to understand his early involvement in the Northern Ireland issue and the reaction that his election generated among unionist elites.

Unionists knew of the weight of the militant Irish-American connection in fund raising and gun running for the IRA through organisations such as NORAID.³ As Lord Maginnis remarked, they were aware that 'there was the Irish-American lobby and they were doing untold damage.'⁴ But, as Conor O'Clery argues, 'Unionists never regarded Washington as an important city. The British government was doing the job for them. From 1921, the State Department considered Northern Ireland as an internal problem of the United Kingdom. Most presidents had the same consideration. The US would not do anything unless the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland agreed with it.'⁵ Thus, as mentioned in chapter one, the "special relationship" between London and Washington was protecting Unionists from any undesired Irish-American interference at least on the strictly political level.

³ This connection turned out to be very efficient at least until the beginning of the eighties when in '1981 a district court judge ruled that NORAID was "an agent of the IRA providing money and services for other than relief purposes"' (Guelke, 1996, p.524).

⁴ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

⁵ Conor O'Clery, New York City, 10 May 2002

Moreover, as far as Unionists were concerned, Northern Ireland was a British internal issue. International opinion was of little significance since it could not influence British policy. Besides, as Unionists were British citizens, their view was that British embassies and foreign services had a duty to handle the situation. Unionists did not have to act because they simply did not need to. This traditional Unionist “indifference” changed, though not immediately, with Clinton’s arrival on the American national political scene.

The first point to examine is Unionists’ interpretation of Bill Clinton’s reasons for wishing to become involved in Northern Ireland. Among all the Unionist officials interviewed for this thesis, the vast majority asserted Clinton’s need for Irish-American support to win the presidential election. This point is obviously differently presented according to whether the interviewee was pro- or anti-GFA. Two statements from interviews made in the aftermath of Clinton’s intervention illustrate Unionist disparity on that matter. First, David Vance’s position as deputy leader at the time of the interview of the strongly anti-GFA United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP) was very disapproving with regard to the basis of US involvement:

I think there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that the Clinton administration recognised the importance of the “so called” Irish-American vote and its important delivering democrat victories. I think this is the primary driver of what we’ve all seen over the past ten years.⁶

⁶ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

The second statement is from Barry White, then UUP coordinator at Westminster:

(...) Why people were sceptical about Clinton was that he was after the Irish-American vote. There aren't too many Irish-American votes taking our side. But he was an honest broker. We couldn't have asked for more to be fair.⁷

These two quotes were obviously made years after Clinton's first election as President. There was no significant contemporary reaction. As Prof. Paul Bew underlined: 'no official declaration were made by the UUP until 1994 as they did not expect such an involvement' (here referring to Adams' visa).⁸

These two reactions exemplify Unionists' perception of Irish-American influence on Clinton's Northern Ireland policy. Vance argues that the necessity of attracting Irish-American votes pushed the American President into having a nationalist agenda, consequently bearing some of the responsibilities for what Vance sees as the failure of the *Belfast Agreement*. For the UKUP, it represents proof of Clinton's lack of sincere interest in the Northern Ireland issue and evidence that he was promoting a nationalist agenda. On the other hand, White, a young pro-Trimble Unionist, accepts the Irish-American vote as a necessity for Clinton, but immediately points out Clinton's sincere interest and neutral position and praises it.

⁷ Barry White, Westminster UUP office, 14 Feb. 2003

⁸ Prof. Paul Bew, Queen's University, Belfast, 18 Dec. 2003

The UKUP represented the traditional opposition to external involvement in Northern Ireland. Its delegation constantly tried to undermine Mitchell's position during the talks and finally walked out of the negotiations in July 1997. On the other hand, Barry White's statement, which represents the pro-GFA UUP public position, demonstrates a much more pragmatic approach to US involvement.

Beggan and Indurthy argue that 'historically, the Democrats have always been more in tune to the Irish situation because of the Irish component of their party' (1999, p.13). Nevertheless, some academics contest the importance of the Irish-American votes as a major factor in Clinton's involvement in Northern Ireland. Indeed, Roger MacGinty underlines the fact 'that Democrats could no longer automatically rely on the increasingly wealthy Irish-American vote which has been attracted by Reagan's economic policies' as a way to dismiss the necessity for Clinton to base his campaign on seeking the Irish-American vote (1997, p. 34). However, MacGinty's approach strongly minimizes the notion of cultural identity in American elections exemplified in the position pro-US Republicans, such as Ray O'Hanlon, who supported Clinton during the election campaign. Furthermore, it is clear that during the primary election, Clinton like his Catholic opponent, Jerry Brown, was interested in winning the Irish Catholic vote (O'Grady, 1996, p. 3). 'They have supported the successful candidate in the past seven presidential elections, they vote in greater number than the general population and they are concentrated in states with large representation in the presidential Electoral College. Thus, it is assumed that candidates who respond to Catholic concerns, one of which is Northern Ireland can reap a significant electoral windfall' (Wilson, 1997, p. 24). The fact that no candidate used this

political strategy prior to 1992 can be explained by the importance of Anglo-American relationship, having more weight from a cost-benefit calculation standpoint and is also due to complacency as Irish-Americans were regarded as a safe Democratic vote until the first Reagan election.

Unionists put a pro-Irish nationalist label on candidate Clinton but without paying much attention to it. As King remarked: 'Clinton made his first promises about Northern Ireland when he still was not a serious candidate.'⁹ Nevertheless, Clinton had managed to mobilise an Irish-American support group, called Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore campaign group. The group sought to ensure the presence of the Northern Ireland issue on the US foreign agenda through their support for Clinton/Gore. Niall O'Dowd, co-founder of the Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore (IAFCG) underlined:

Around the early 1990s, late 1980s, we became aware that there was a will to get involved in the US. I met with Bill Clinton when he was then candidate and from that things started to change.¹⁰

The formation of the group with the support of major Irish-American political figures such as Congressman Bruce Morrison and Senator Kennedy indicates the strong influence of Irish-Americans on Clinton's campaign.

⁹ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003. King's point is confirmed by the fact that Clinton voiced his position on Northern Ireland during the primary election when facing the catholic Californian governor, Jerry Brown, in New York at a 'forum on Irish issues in the Sheraton Hotel in Manhattan' in April 1992 (O'Clery, 1996, p. 6, Beggan & Indurthy, 1999, p.13).

¹⁰ Niall O'Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

The IAFCG became “Americans for a New Ireland Agenda” (ANIA) after Clinton’s election to continue the pressure on the new president to fulfil his promises. Ray Flynn, then Mayor of Boston, and Former Connecticut Congressman, Bruce Morrison, co-signed a letter in February 1993 setting out the fundamental points they wished the Clinton administration to agree to in their involvement in the Northern Irish issue. This statement of purpose is composed of five key points:

- The appointment of a special envoy
- The elimination of foreign interference in the US judicial system (which is clearly a reference to a London attempt at getting a so called “terrorist on the run” deported to the United Kingdom)
- Attention to human rights abuses in NI
- Continuation of visa opportunities for Irish citizens, ‘to halt the practice of denying visas to Irish political leaders solely on ideological ground.’ This is a reminder of the promise to grant a visa to Gerry Adams.
- Support for the McBride principles and Investment¹¹

It seems that Clinton partly used the Irish-American agenda as a guideline in the long term for his involvement in Northern Ireland with issues such as the envoy, the visa to Gerry Adams or even the adoption of the McBride principles on a federal level.

¹¹ Flynn Raymond L. & Morrison Bruce A., “Irish-Americans For Clinton/ Gore”, *Five Recommendations on Irish Issues*, 5 Feb. 1993

Nevertheless, a later summary of his policy in November 1994 was unsurprisingly much more economically centred as it was diplomatically more acceptable.¹²

Unionists justified their fear of Clinton's presidency by the importance of the Irish-American lobby in the new incumbent's campaign and the extent of the lobby's influence over his decision to become involved in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the Unionists' preoccupation during his campaign and at the beginning of his presidency must not be overstated. As King argued, '[the promises] were made when he was not a strong candidate. He promised the envoy, a visa to Adams. So, nobody was thinking that he would seriously honour his promises.'¹³ Thus, Unionists initially did not interpret Clinton's promises as serious threat.

Two points confirm King's position. Firstly, Unionist publications scarcely covered Clinton's victory. The Unionists' position was highlighted in only two articles published in the Belfast biggest daily newspaper, *The Belfast Telegraph*, following Clinton's victory on 3 November 1992. The title of the first article, published on 4 November, is explicit: "Ulster View Raises Fear on Clinton" and the article deals with Clinton's pledge to send a peace envoy during the election campaign. The second article introduces what is going to be the DUP

¹² Here is a document released by the Office of the Press Secretary, "Supporting Peace in Northern Ireland, White House Statement, 1 Nov. 1994. It is composed of seven major initiatives:

- The White House conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Commerce Secretary Brown's attendance at the Belfast Investment Conference
- Increased funding for the International Fund for Ireland
- Enhanced department of Commerce programs for Ireland and Northern Ireland
- The US Information agency's expanded programs for the island
- National endowment of democracy expansion in Northern Ireland
- US agency for international development review of working with the international fund for Ireland

¹³ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

attitude during the whole peace process toward the US involvement. The article entitled ““Hands off”, Paisley warns Clinton” reports part of a speech that Paisley made in Westminster:

I certainly would not welcome the proposals that the new president has made that he is going to interfere in the affairs of Northern Ireland by sending a special envoy to beat our heads together and make us see a United Ireland as he wants us to see it.

A second indicator of the UUP’s low-key response is that, unlike Paisley, the UUP leadership did not emit any official comment and no individual quotation was found in the media on Clinton’s election.

B- The British government and Clinton’s election, indirect consequences on the Ulster Unionists position

The ultimate protection of Unionist interests was the Anglo-American “Special Relationship” which constantly overcame Irish-American pressure on the US government for an intervention in Northern Ireland.

The British government rejected the idea of a peace envoy in Northern Ireland. Jonathan Caine, Sir Patrick Mayhew’s former personal adviser, reports: ‘(...) When asked about this during the Conservative Party conference, Sir Patrick asked by the *Financial Times*, replied by saying Northern Ireland needs a

US envoy like it needs a hole in the head.’¹⁴ In addition, the British government openly favoured Bush Senior’s re-election getting involved in a manner that, although officially denied by Major after Clinton’s victory, infuriated Clinton’s team. Nancy Soderberg, senior member of the foreign policy team during the 1992 campaign, stated: ‘during the campaign Major had been helping the campaign for Bush. The tricks they used did not help the relationship with Clinton.’¹⁵ The issue was with how some members of the British Conservative Party interfered in the US election campaign in assisting Bush’s team. Jonathan Caine acknowledged that ‘some officials from the Conservative Party [...] went to the US and advised the Republican Party on election campaigning’¹⁶. [...] The most serious allegation is actually [...] that the British Home Office at the request of the Bush administration actually looked for evidence of Bill Clinton being involved in anti-Vietnam activity when he was a student in Oxford.’¹⁷ Caine also argues that the British government also shared the idea that ‘Bill Clinton got a strong interest because of the Irish vote. [...] The Clinton’s pledge was viewed with some alarm and some apprehension (...)’.¹⁸

John Major denies any knowledge in his autobiography of the “conspiracy” mentioning that ‘it was a staffers’ feud, and never an issue between the two of [them]’ (1999, p. 498). Yet, it is hardly believable that it did not do any damage to the Anglo-American relationship.

¹⁴ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

¹⁵ Nancy Soderberg became Security council staff director during Clinton’s first presidency, New York City, 14 May 2002

¹⁶ Two members of the Conservative Party, Sir John Lacy and Mark Fullbrook effectively travelled to America to help the Bush campaign. But, according to Downing Street, they acted on their own (Wilson, 1997, p.34).

¹⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

¹⁸ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Arthur states that the impact of the issues between the Conservative government and the new American administration should not be exaggerated (2000, p.156). Albeit it might have been a staffer's issue, the importance of "staffers" such as Soderberg in the decision-making process invalidates Major's point. Caine's analysis also contradicts Major's will to minimise the issue.

It soured the relations between the conservative government and the incoming US administration. I think that in that respect it was rather clumsy. It was a very good lesson for a government who tries to involve himself in internal affairs of other countries. (...) This was a Conservative Party matter rather than a government matter but in the case the two became indivisible. So, it was damaging, there's no doubt about that.¹⁹

Thus, beyond Irish-American strong mobilisation to support Clinton's victory, the British government appears to have, at least informally, sought to prevent it. Therefore, if the main argument for previous American administrations' non-interference in Northern Ireland was their strong relationship with London, then, this argument was weakened for two intermingled reasons. Firstly, as argued above, British interference in the American presidential election seriously damaged the personal relationship between Clinton and Major. Secondly, the new international context, discussed in the first chapter, weakened Britain's importance as an American ally in the immediate post-Cold War era. As Cox highlights, the end of the Cold War 'made it possible for a "Third Party", the US, to play a far more decisive role in Northern Irish affairs' (2000, p.251)

¹⁹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Thus, Irish-American support for the new US administration and tense relations between the US and British governments placed Unionists in a very delicate position. Indeed, just as Unionists had benefited from the US-UK “special relationship”, they were exposed to the consequences that a soured relationship would generate in the Northern Ireland context.

Nonetheless, Paisley was the only one to publicly react to Clinton’s election promises. The UUP seemed to ignore the threat. This lack of reaction is well described by Lord Maginnis’ depiction of the unionist mentality prior to 1992 ‘The Unionists in Northern Ireland were never actually challenged in a political or international sense. They lived an insular life (...) People were pretty well insulated from the outside world.’²⁰ Their lack of political skills and their lack of experience in dealing with real political pressure did not help to react or to measure “the level of danger” they were facing. “No” appeared to be enough of an answer. They could not see that, in terms of cost-benefit calculation, Northern Ireland could be an advantageous place for an America seeking to redefine its foreign policy in the immediate post-Cold War world.

C- The cost-benefit aspect, the American perspective and further Unionist weakening

‘No state or organisation gets involved on only altruistic purpose’ (Bercovitch, 1996, p.4). Zartman and Touval also argue that the motivation to be involved in mediation is based on a “cost-benefit calculation” (1996, p.451) and that otherwise no third party would intervene (1996, p. 446).

²⁰ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

Until Clinton's involvement, Unionists had benefited from the advantage that a potential involvement in Northern Ireland did not offer any benefit to external powers being 'a low-level conflict on the periphery of western Europe' (Guelke, 1996, p. 521). Nevertheless, with the changes of international context, Northern Ireland offered new perspectives.

On an international level and directly linked to the Unionists' position in Northern Ireland, Clinton 'did what no other American President had done or dared to do: upset British sensibilities by intervening into what they and others up to now regarded as a very British matter' (Cox, 1998, p.63). There was no particular reason in the view of Clinton's advisers to provide the United Kingdom with special treatment. 'America's interest no longer coincided with Britain's interests, as the unfolding of the Bosnia crisis in the spring 1992 showed' (O'Grady, 1996, p.6). The British government could not defend the Unionists' position (which corresponded to theirs on sovereignty matters) and the latter position was consequently weakened.

Moreover, as Hazleton puts it, the Northern Ireland issue 'offered an opportunity for charting a new foreign policy direction. (...) Intervention in Northern Ireland appeared to be more "do-able" and promised to be comparatively inexpensive' (2000, p. 108). This new foreign policy was symbolised by candidate Clinton's speech at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on 13 August 1992, "we must tear down in our thinking the gap between domestic and foreign policy" (in Thompson, 2001, p.162). This statement corresponds to the necessity for the United States to reshape its foreign policy in a new world where 'no longer eastern internationalists or Atlanticists control the foreign policy agenda [and where] no longer are domestic and foreign affairs

perceived or handled as 'separate' in practice as well as in theory' (Miller, 1994, p. 622). Northern Ireland embodied the perfect example of internal and international affairs being intermingled. Therefore, as Steven King said, if there was no strategic interest in being involved in the Northern Irish issue, there definitely was a political one.²¹

Besides, on the economic aspect, Senator Mitchell and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown often stated that Northern Ireland could represent 'a bridgehead into the European market' (Dumbrell, 2001, p.218). This point can also be interpreted as a diplomatic strategy to offer positive perspectives on US involvement to reluctant actors such as the UUP, as the primary goal of the third party is to ultimately 'bring the parties toward an agreement acceptable for everybody' (Zartman & Touval, p.445). Brown and Mitchell's attitude also contains the "carrot" element mentioned in chapter one. This carrot could potentially influence Unionists, to whom Ulster "was not for sale", as it could represent some relief for a local economy in deep crisis. Rev. Reynolds, an Ulster Unionist activist in the US, argued that Unionists did not want American money.²² Nevertheless, unionist politicians could hardly ignore the potential economic advantages. Evidence of this was seen in their participation at the Economic Conference in May 1995 in Washington. A striking example of the awareness of American potential investments and the importance of the conference appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* article, "America's interest" in the viewpoint column of this unionist newspaper:

²¹ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

²² Rev. Charles Reynolds, Trinity College Dublin, 3 Sept. 2002

This newspaper has consistently argued that economic investment is the greatest service which the US can make in the search of peace in Northern Ireland. These are all potent selling points and Ulster Businessmen and trade representatives must ensure that the message gets across. This is an unique opportunity to sell Ulster to a huge audience with the influential backing of the US President.²³

However, despite some positive sounds about economic investment, there was very little unionist reaction and almost no UUP elite public reaction to the Clinton election –not even from those who were later anti-GFA. There is no evidence that any element of the UUP saw it as an opportunity. To the limited extent that they were engaged they saw it a threat. The second key event in the US involvement, the Adams' visa, reinforced that view.

II- PREPARATION FOR INVOLVEMENT, A VISA FOR GERRY ADAMS, AND THE IMPACT ON THE UUP STRATEGY

Before granting the visa to Gerry Adams, the US administration took several steps, such as the establishment of diplomatic structures, to engage in the Northern Ireland peace process. Unionists generally ignored these progressive steps. In their defence, this progress was very low key. O'Grady and Wilson point out that Clinton's administration did not have an active Irish agenda for about the first eighteen months of his first term (O'Grady, 1996, p.4, Wilson, 1997, p.25). Unionists may have thought that Clinton's promises would not be fulfilled. Therefore, Gerry Adams's visa provoked the fury of the British and

²³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "America's interest, Clinton's strategy, why Ulster must take full advantage", 22 May 1995

Unionists who were ill prepared for it. Paul Bew says that Unionists were not expecting it.²⁴

However, even if the UUP did not expect the Adams visa decision, it came at the end of a period of preparation. So, it is necessary to examine this first eighteen months of the administration to put the visa decision in its American context, as their first significant public decision

A- Preparation to Involvement

Guelke states that 'initially the Clinton administration disappointed the Irish-American lobby. No peace envoy was appointed and when Gerry Adams applied for a visa to visit the United States in November 1993, it was refused' (1996, p.533). Arthur also asserts that 'the early months of the Clinton administration proved a disappointment for the Irish republican lobby in Washington' (2000, p.156). The low level of coverage, from Clinton's inauguration in January 1993 until January 1994, in the *Belfast Telegraph* about Clinton and Northern Ireland reflects the limited concern that Unionists had for the transatlantic activities at this time. The non-existence of any Senior UUP statement about the US administration during that period of time is another piece of evidence. Ulster Unionists seem to have taken the US administration's apparent passivity as confirmation that the promises would not be honoured.

Firstly, Anne Smith, UUP representative in Washington, stated that the UUP thought that 'Bill Clinton was very recently involved and the opinion was

²⁴ Prof. Paul Bew, Queen's University, Belfast, 18 Dec.2003

rather nationalist. The people who advised him were pretty much nationalists.’²⁵ Soderberg corroborated Smith’s statement as she openly admitted her nationalist sympathies: ‘during the first year, I was very much SDLP and anti-Sinn Féin. Because of Kennedy’s connection the whole Unionist community assumed that I was pro-Sinn Féin/ IRA.’²⁶

Secondly, it appears that Unionists could not or rather did not want to make a clear distinction between those Americans with pro-constitutional nationalist sympathies and those who supported Sinn Féin. The revelation of secret talks between Hume and Adams in 1992 was logically interpreted as the confirmation of the existence of this pan-nationalist agenda. It also demonstrated for them that Hume was sympathetic to the idea of a united Ireland. The strong role that Hume played in Adams obtaining the visa seemed to confirm it. Thus, the Unionists’ reluctance to acknowledge the legitimacy of even a constitutional nationalist position made it more difficult to see any positive side to US intervention.

In addition to the pressure from the Irish-American lobby, and in contrast to the highly violent preceding decades, a relatively positive atmosphere was emerging in Northern Ireland in the early nineties, creating a space for a US role. Peter Brooke’s declaration that Great Britain had “no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland” which was addressed to Irish Republicans²⁷ signalled the launch of a new British policy.

²⁵ Anne Smith, St Regis Hotel, Washington DC, 18 Apr. 2002

²⁶ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

²⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

Brooke's declaration seemed to imply that some within the British government knew that they could not solve the issue without including Irish Republicans in the talks.

Moreover, the relationship between Dublin and London considerably improved with the election of John Major as Prime Minister and his close relationship with Taoiseach Albert Reynolds.

However, the UUP position underestimated the importance of preparation for future negotiations. As Raiffa argues, first you need to "know yourself", in that context, your possibilities, the logistics you can use, know the situation in which you are planning to be involved, 'give a thought to the negotiating conventions' and 'iterate and set your aspiration level' (1982, p. 126-127). In fact, at this time, the US administration was very active on Northern Ireland. The team including Nancy Soderberg, former Senator Kennedy's Foreign policy advisor was formed. Nancy Soderberg set the tone of Clinton's early policy in Ireland: 'In April 1992, Clinton promised the world to the Irish-Americans in New York City. So, [Irish-American activists] came to me when I was at the White House.'²⁸ Soderberg's point could imply that the US administration saw itself as acting in support of the nationalists as a payback for Irish-American electoral support at first, rather than adopting an immediate even-handed approach.

²⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

Clinton decided to run his Northern Ireland policy from the NSC by bringing the issue into the White House rather than leaving it in the hands of the rather anglophile State Department. Jean Kennedy Smith, Senator Kennedy's sister, was appointed as American Ambassador in Dublin. Her appointment counter-balanced the weight of anglophile US ambassador Ray Seitz at St James Court. Unionists utterly disliked her -Maginnis calling her "a pseudo-diplomat".²⁹ Unionists' opinion of Kennedy Smith never changed. King claimed that US involvement became really helpful 'once Jean Kennedy Smith went away'.³⁰

Niall O'Dowd also confirms that early efforts were made: 'Basically, we [ANIA] created a group of four people who were committed to bring the Americans in the peace process and we did this by calling pressure on Sinn Féin and getting guarantees from them about the IRA. And then, going to the White House and saying you know we have this deal on the table and you should be interested.'³¹ So, the US administration was in indirect contact with Sinn Féin through ANIA briefings.

Therefore, when Guelke declares that Clinton's attitude toward Northern Ireland initially disappointed the Irish-Americans, it is valid regarding the non-active but supportive Irish-Americans but not for those such as O'Dowd who knew the evolution of the situation behind closed doors. O'Dowd himself confirmed it: 'we knew that Irish policy was being decided by Clinton and by a

²⁹ *Sunday Times*, "Nice Try or Sudden Conversation", 22 Sep. 1996. There was not any official statement by UUP leaders in the *Belfast Telegraph* when Jane Kennedy Smith was appointed or official comment about Jean Kennedy Smith's arrival in Dublin in June 1993.

³⁰ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

³¹ Niall O'Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

very special group around him and we had potentially created that situation by putting in front the idea of an IRA cease-fire. We were quite happy to do that.³²

Unionists, who would have always been fearful of any deal behind their backs since the 1985 AIA, did not pay much attention to the evolution of the situation on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Steven King's argument about unionist assumptions that Clinton promises would not be kept is a good enough argument. However, it seems that precursor signs, such as Kennedy Smith's appointment, did not encourage the Ulster Unionists into preparing a "counter-offensive" to make their point at the White House. Indeed, Kennedy Smith's appointment did not generate any official Ulster Unionist reaction in the *Belfast Telegraph* of March 1993 even though her name had been mentioned in articles on 1 March and 16 March 1993.³³ It is important to specify that Kennedy Smith did not have any prior experience in diplomacy and the post in Phoenix Park was often considered as a quasi-honorary position. The appointment of the inexperienced Kennedy Smith could have been interpreted as a reward for Ted Kennedy's support during the presidential campaign and nothing more. Besides, she was not appointed to London so Unionists were out of her diplomatic jurisdiction.

Furthermore, the UUP may have been more preoccupied about the appointment of a peace envoy as reflected in the *Belfast Telegraph* with reports such as the article "Clinton backs off, Ulster envoy issue is dodged".³⁴ These

³² Niall O'Dowd, *Irish Voice* and *Irish America* Offices, New York City, 13 May 2002

³³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Kennedy is tipped", 1 Mar. 1993

Belfast Telegraph, "Envoy warning sent to Clinton", 16 Mar. 1993

³⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton backs off, Ulster envoy issue is dodged", 17 Mar. 1993

articles contained reassuring information for the Ulster Unionists who then could believe that the promises were only electoral promises.

Ulster Unionists retained their traditional position of leaving the British to defend their case outside the Union. This point is characteristic of James Molyneaux's integrationist view towards Northern Ireland. As White argues:

Direct rule was not ideal, far from it, but it was comfortable and you know, if Ulster was British and we were getting the most of what we wanted (This is not the way I think, this is the way I imagine [the former leadership] thought). They felt comfortable; why they should bother. The IRA was still very active and as long as they remained active they obviously could not be in any sort of political institution. So, why bother?³⁵

White's words embody the traditional unionist strategy of just saying "no" to anything and fits Lord Laird's description of Molyneaux's strategy during his leadership, 'his idea was to dose every fire with water, keep it all calm, keep our passion low' which meant seeking to indefinitely contain the situation rather than try and solve it.³⁶ This point is crucial in the sense that the UUP's attitude was based on the fact that the party was never really forced to make moves. First, the UUP dominated the Northern Ireland political situation for fifty years during the Old Stormont Regime. Second, the initially hated "direct rule" became the most comfortable situation. As long as the IRA was active, the best solution for the UUP was to let the British contain the situation on the security aspect and paralyse any perspective of a power-sharing government and any attempt at a united Ireland. The US involvement and

³⁵ Barry White, former UUP coordinator at Westminster, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

³⁶ Lord Laird, Offices Holywood road, Belfast, 14 Mar. 2003

potential influence on the Irish Republicans put this situation in jeopardy, by creating a new dynamic away from the status quo.

In addition, as already discussed in chapter one, any impending third-party would have been perceived as favouring the Nationalist side in the Northern Ireland case as the Unionists' priority was to preserve the status quo. So, if the United States appeared to be one-sided it was partly due to the Clinton administration's determination to move the situation beyond the status quo and this matched the Nationalist agenda. This argument is not in contradiction with the will to accommodate Unionists. But, as seen above, in the Unionists' mind, status quo preserved the Union. Molyneaux, contrary to younger and more pragmatic figures like Maginnis, Trimble or Donaldson, still believed in the possibility to maintain the status quo indefinitely. As Caine argues it:

The temptation for Unionists has always been if we hold out, things might be better, but if you look at the history from 1969 onwards every time Unionism sort of dug in and said no, they've ended up a few years down the line in a far weaker position. The moment dictated that they had to get involved.³⁷

Indeed, for instance, the resignation of the UUP MPs following the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was as Sean Neeson, former Alliance Party leader, put it: 'simply to have an election based on the agreement,'³⁸ weakened their position as they lost a seat to the SDLP's Seamus Mallon. Thus some Unionists, such as Trimble or Donaldson as mentioned above, understood that if they did not actively engage, the process would continue without fully taking

³⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

³⁸ Sean Neeson, Alliance Party Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

their position into consideration. The very limited unionist input in the Downing Street Declaration confirmed it.

B- Ripeness: a crucial aspect of intervention

Ripeness can be defined as the time when a conflict has reached a turning point and it is possible to bring about some changes (Kriegsberg, 1991, p.4). In the Northern Ireland situation, it appears that the turning point for the US involvement was the Joint Declaration on 15 December 1993.

1-The Joint Declaration, a pivotal moment for US involvement

The White House welcomed the Joint Declaration as a positive step forward in the search for peace in Northern Ireland. The declaration was based on Hume's idea (Major, 1999, p. 447). It was clearly based on the Hume-Adams document that Dublin had re-written. However, Major could not acknowledge he was even indirectly talking to Sinn Féin. Therefore the public position was to ignore Adams' input.³⁹

The DUP unsurprisingly rejected it as the title on the front page of the *Belfast Telegraph*, "Furious Paisley lashes "sell out"", on 15 December 1993 shows.

³⁹ See Mallie and McKittrick (1996), *The Fight for Peace, The Secret History Behind the Irish Peace Process*, which includes a Sinn Féin draft (also known as Hume-Adams), dating back to June 1992, appendix I, p.375

However, the UUP adopted a more reserved approach avoiding any stormy declaration about it but expressing their resentment through their silence.

The Downing Street Declaration was 'a carefully balanced statement of principles and assurances designed to communicate that a permanent cease-fire would guarantee inclusion in future all-party talks' (Hazleton, 2000, p.109). Setting out this eventuality played the role of the detonator for US involvement. Indeed, things appeared to be moving quickly, *The Observer* had leaked the existence of a secret channel of communication between Major and the IRA on 5 November 1993, even if this had a minimal effect on Unionists as Jonathan Caine confirmed:

I expected at the time that the consequences would be greater than it actually was but then I think on the Unionists side a lot of them would have said something like: oh, well, tell us something that we did not know. (...) Jim Molyneux decided in a comment (...) to be conciliatory and to say that this link went back decades and successive governments.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, as Unionists tended to accept it as a fact, it was an opportunity for Americans to open dialogue with Sinn Féin as well since, after all the British themselves were, though indirectly, in contact with them.

Furthermore, the ANIA used it as a confirmation of their argument that an Irish Republican cease-fire was imminent. This was clearly efficient, as Nancy Soderberg expresses it:

⁴⁰ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

By the fall, about December, I picked up that there was actually something going on. Irish-Americans kept on coming telling me there was about to have a cease-fire. So, we said that we wanted to see something. They said there would be something. I began to really notice a consistent message. And the Joint Declaration on 15 December, by the same time John Hume who had been opposing any visa for Adams changed his position, supporting it. That really turned my attention to it.⁴¹

The Joint Declaration can also be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the impossibility for the British forces to eradicate the IRA. It also underlines that the IRA cannot win either as the renewal of the principle of consent highlights. This implicit acknowledgement of the “mutually hurting stalemate” between the IRA and the British government represented a problem for the traditional unionist position as the British were shifting from a containment strategy to a more “conciliatory” one and therefore were less and less supportive of the status quo.

The Downing Street Declaration was also a sign of the positive relationship between London and Dublin enriched by a very good personal relationship between both Prime Ministers (Major, 1999, p. 452-453). The Unionists negative or coldish reaction to it was expected since it renewed the idea of an Irish dimension within Northern Irish affairs. The UUP’s reserved approach on the declaration was the fruit of Molyneaux being consulted on several aspects of the declaration. Thus, the UUP could not, this time, accuse the British of conspiring behind their back. It was also a sign of a tacit acceptance, if

⁴¹ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

Moreover, John Hume’s huge importance in granting the visa is confirmed in an interview with Mark Durkan on 8 March 2000 in Derry: ‘I can remember a meeting. Nancy Soderberg was clearly under pressure because J. Hume was clearly saying that the visa should be granted.’

an extremely reluctant one, that the Irish government had somehow to be included.

The British conciliatory approach along with the Irish government and the report of an imminent cease-fire favoured the visa for Gerry Adams as the US took advantage of a positive context to do the “unthinkable” without paying much attention to the highly expected unionist fury.

2-Gerry Adams' visa

Gerry Adams had been denied access to the USA twice since Bill Clinton's election.⁴² 'The Downing Street Declaration led to the hasty announcement by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy of a conference on Northern Ireland' (O'Grady, 1996, p.4). The conference was to take place in New York on 1 February 1994 and every party would be invited including Sinn Féin and more importantly Gerry Adams.

The US administration was extremely divided about the visa. Soderberg argued:

The entire US government were strongly opposed such as the FBI, State Department. The British were reluctant and asked to think about it. We actually did it and they were the most furious. To me, it was just quite tiring because it

⁴² It is worth noting that the two preceding applications for a visa had been done at the Belfast American consulate, directly linked to the American embassy at St James Court. The then strongly anglophile Ambassador, Ray Seitz, was strongly opposed to the visa. He fervently criticised it. Gerry Adams was allowed to apply in Dublin as Sinn Féin headquarters is located on Parnell Square.

just looked as if the world had ended and it is the first time that US ever blocked against the UK.⁴³

Even Soderberg herself who played a crucial role in influencing the President in his decision to grant the visa was not convinced at first:

'I would have initially done anything but grant the visa, an open dialogue, discussion or send an envoy or anything. This was in a context when Israeli had signed an agreement with PLO with non-equivalent conditions. They had to make them [SF/IRA] do something before the visa. The other option was that the visa was to be granted because it was one of the electoral campaign promises. (...) Ultimately, there was a logic that Clinton agreed with, which was that if we give the visa and Adams delivers peace then it would content anybody. If he does not it will help us show the rest of the world he's a fraud and help us to shut up sources of funding. For the president, it was a win-win situation either way.'⁴⁴

Soderberg did not mention Ulster Unionists once in this context. It tends to demonstrate the low level of preoccupation of the US about the Unionists' reaction.

Unionists would always be opposed to the visa. Thus, the only option was to go forward in spite of the potential anger. Major and Mayhew along with the British Embassy were also powerless regarding Washington's decision despite strong demonstration of their irritation. This point is confirmed by the report of a

⁴³ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁴⁴ Nancy Soderberg, interview, New York City, 14 May 2002.

press conference given by Mayhew in Cookstown, "We did our best", he said: 'it is forty eight hours of very great and one-sided publicity.'⁴⁵

Mayhew's words demonstrate limits of London's power. As Caine put it the new British strategy was to 'to take the better out of the worse, the United States is by far and away the most powerful influence on earth and in the tradition of British diplomacy you face the situation and try to make the best of it by trying to mould them much more to match our point of view.'⁴⁶

The British viewed the situation as a demonstration that the American administration was biased. Caine argues that 'at the time, the US sided with whom they traditionally did. They used to side with the nationalists and the Irish against the British Government.'⁴⁷ Caine's point of view is very interesting as the US government's traditional position contradicts it. The best US answer to this accusation is the leak in *The Observer*, previously mentioned, of the secret channel between Downing Street and the Republicans. As O'Hare argued, 'the US were saying that the British were talking to Republicans so this gave to the US administration the right to do so as well.'⁴⁸ Dr. Carol Rittner, member of the executive board of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, confirmed it in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

⁴⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, "We did our best: Mayhew", 2 Feb. 1994

⁴⁶ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁴⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁴⁸ Rita O'Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2003

Our decision was influenced by the fact the British government and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, had been talking to Sinn Féin privately for a number of years. If they can talk to Sinn Féin why can't we?⁴⁹

According to Zartman, a potential third party has to see signs of will from each side involved to move toward negotiations. This often happens when each side has 'no more faith in victory' (1995, p.17). At the beginning of the US involvement, the American administration appeared to primarily see three sides to the equation: that is Sinn Féin and the British and Irish governments. The expected rejection by Unionists of any involvement led the US administration to ignore them or rather assimilate them to the British government and use the Unionists' traditional position of non-involvement to their own advantage. When the UUP became ready to apply an autonomous foreign agenda, the US then incorporated them in their strategy. This only took place after the shock of the Adams' visa when the possibility of getting rid of this unwelcome third party vanished as even London proved to be powerless. This was repeatedly confirmed during the following months as for example the British failed to prevent Adams from being invited for the St Patrick's day at the White House in 1995.

This was the first time that the UUP openly reacted in the media. Donaldson stated in the *Belfast Telegraph* that 'the visit to New York by Mr Adams was "a master stroke" for his party.'⁵⁰ He added: "they now have more scope than ever to expound their message of hate against the Unionist people without having made one single concession, never mind rejected the use of violence."

⁴⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Allowing visit to US appropriate, says Clinton", 1 Feb. 1994

⁵⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Major is urged to examine Irish role", 1 Feb. 1994

Unionists were detaching themselves from the British government in spite of their common indignation about the visa.

The UUP initial reaction was to boycott the conference on peace in Northern Ireland because of the presence of Sinn Féin delegates for as Maginnis argued: “as a constitutional politician, I have to defend the greater number of people who are against violence, I cannot betray their trust by giving some sort of credibility to Adams.”⁵¹ Lord Alderdice, former leader of the Alliance Party (AP), was the only Unionist representative attending the conference but he left as soon as Adams started talking (O’Clery, 1996, p.113).

The conference took place in spite of the Unionist boycott. The traditional “empty chair” attitude, which had already demonstrated strong signs of weakness, was useless with the American administration because Ulster Unionists in general did not have any means of pressurizing them. Prof. John McCarthy from Fordham University (NY) declared in the *Belfast Telegraph*, that Unionists “had missed the boat”. More importantly regarding changes within unionism, this strategy was immediately questioned within the UUP. David Burnside, UUP MP for South Antrim, declared in the same article that they had made a blunder as they could have organised their own press conference.⁵²

Thus, these interrogations about the efficiency of the boycott regarding the visa forced the UUP into rethinking their strategy. The UUP reacted almost immediately in the aftermath of the conference, as an article in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 3 February 1994, “Unionists set up tour to counter Sinn Féin”,

⁵¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Will the Unionist boycott break any ice?”, 1 Jan. 1994

⁵² *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionists deny giving boost to Sinn Féin”, 2 Feb. 1994

shows. The title demonstrates the reactive attitude of Unionism. It is also worth noting that in the article, James Molyneaux did not appear among the delegation meant to go to Washington. The members were Jeffrey Donaldson who played a great part in delivering the Unionist message as will be discussed later, David Trimble, (who ultimately did not take part in the trip), Ken Maginnis, and the Rev. Martin Smyth, Grand Master of the Orange Order. Molyneaux's attitude of avoiding confrontation in the USA is representative of the unionist old school - ignoring and refusing dialogue. Soderberg confirmed his refusal to communicate when she discussed the necessity of entering into dialogue with the UUP:

After the visa issue we were very conscious of the fact that Unionists were suspicious of it so we thought to proactively return to them. And the British encouraged us to do that. The problem was at that point, there was no leadership in the Unionist community; Molyneaux was away catching up butterflies from Australia. We could not get him on the phone, he just would not engage.⁵³

Soderberg justifies American difficulties in starting a dialogue with the UUP on the absence of leadership. If this affirmation seems to be confirmed by Molyneaux's attitude in choosing not to join the delegation, in spite of his position within the party, it also demonstrates the lack of US comprehension over the traditional unionist attitude. Indeed, what Soderberg calls an absence of leadership is a symbolic gesture to signify the leadership's refusal to engage. Moreover, it also demonstrates Molyneaux's lack of understanding of the US political expectations, as he himself justified his refusal to commit by stating: 'I was not a great advocate of political tourism.'⁵⁴

⁵³ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁵⁴ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

It also reveals the beginning of changes within the UUP and the growing division between two streams: firstly, the traditional one, that Caine described through his depiction of Molyneaux's personality:

Molyneaux [who] would rather see Northern Ireland governed like a region of England. This was one of his Enoch Powell traits, which is sometimes to be found on the old fashioned right, very anti-American, very hostile to the US involvement. Jim was and would never have been comfortable with the White House.⁵⁵

and secondly, the reformist stream, generally of a younger generation, and its progressive awareness of the necessity to engage. As Jeffrey Donaldson argues:

They were, I think, quite terrified seeing Gerry Adams given considerable airtime on US radio and television coast to coast and in an unchallenged way propagating his propaganda. And it was felt it had to be challenged. So, initially, myself and some others, promoted the idea within the UUP that we should be at least visiting the US on a more regular basis to talk to influencers on Capitol Hill and in the Clinton administration to try and provide some balance to what we regarded obviously as a very partisan message that Gerry Adams was delivering.⁵⁶

Donaldson's statement also confirms the importance of the visa in the UUP decision to change their strategy. Indeed, the fact that the US President could grant a visa to Adams without fearing most of his administration and British disapproval showed Unionists that the US could ignore their potential anger. Moreover, from the US standpoint, the choice of granting the visa to

⁵⁵ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

Adams could even become beneficial in terms of their future relationship with Unionists as it gave the US administration an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity.

The visa challenged Jim Molyneaux's strong attachment to the comfort of direct rule. Adams was in New York on the speculation that a cease-fire would take place in the near future. If violence ended, the Joint Declaration guaranteed the possibility of inclusive talks. This scenario would put an end to Unionists' comfort with the status quo since, whether they liked it or not, the simple fact that Adams was allowed into the USA demonstrated that the status quo was being more and more questioned.

Moreover, the British government would have no interest in rejecting the inclusive talks on the basis of an end to political violence as it could lead to a stabilisation of the political situation with all the advantages that implied, for instance, the end of a strong British army commitment. If Molyneaux was not able to see or acknowledge the progressive transformation of the Northern Ireland political situation, others such as Donaldson, Jim Nicholson, Maginnis and a few more started encouraging the idea of regular trips to the US to counterbalance Sinn Féin. This new vision within the UUP confirms that the visa and its emotional effect on Unionists played a huge part in the change of UUP strategy towards the US administration. The US was still seen as biased, but the UUP saw a need for the first time to advocate their case.

On that matter, bias seems to have encouraged the UUP to engage dialogue and such an attitude confirms the point made in chapter one that the

primarily reluctant actor can change their position. First, as mentioned earlier, there are offers that cannot be refused (Touval, 1992, p.232), second, the cost-benefit calculation may demonstrate that acceptance of the US involvement along with proper Unionist engagement may be more effective and beneficial. On that matter, beyond neutrality lies leverage. The US had demonstrated that they could act without worrying about the consequences. Instead of choosing a frontal defiance, there might be a possibility to take advantage of this leverage. In that case, the UUP could benefit from the US influence on Gerry Adams and through him, the IRA.

Donaldson argued: 'There were very regular visits, perhaps 3-4 times a year which, I know, it does not seem very regular but it was an attempt to match the frequency of visits by Adams and senior Sinn Féin members.' Thus, those trips were primarily reactive to Republican trips. Once again, the UUP demonstrated that their interest in the US was minimal and depended on the Irish Republican attitude, as it was the main reason for contacts in the first place. These trips were reported in the *Ulster Unionist Information Institute Bulletin*. For example, an article by Jim Nicholson "Hitting the American Trail" reports the progress made by the UUP in meeting with Vice-President Gore and meeting senior Irish-Americans to expose their case and obtain a more balanced view from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁷

Not only did the UUP have to promote their vision of the Northern Ireland issue but they also had to present an alternative to the Paisleyite message. As Tony Culley-Foster, the Irish-American businessman who financed the creation

⁵⁷ See *Ulster Unionist Information Institute*, "Visit by Ulster Unionist team to USA", March 1994, "Hitting the American Trail", Jun. 1994.

of the UUP North American Bureau in Washington DC, said: 'The Americans [were] ignorant of the Ulster Unionists and the Protestant community. Their vision was Ian Paisley.'⁵⁸ Ian Paisley had the benefit of having nurtured strong connections with the American fundamentalist Bob Jones University, in North Carolina and also has established some Free Presbyterian congregations in the USA. The bickering between the two main Unionist parties is visible in the *Ulster Unionist Information Institute* bulletin with the quotation from the *Washington Post*: "the red Carpet treatment given to the Ulster Unionist leaders was in striking contrast to the cold shoulder given to the Rev. Paisley (...)." ⁵⁹ The goal of these articles was clearly to persuade the Ulster Unionist electorate that these visits were well founded. Moreover, the prospect of American economic investments in accordance with potential negotiations may also have weighted the balance.

Ulster Unionist publications, while critical of the US, were in clear contrast with those from the *Protestant Telegraph*. For example, the article published in May 1994, "DUP delegation take Ulster's case to the USA" exposed the "perfidy of the two governments".⁶⁰ Another more striking example is a document by Sammy Wilson, then DUP press officer, dating back to 17 March 1993 entitled "American interference in Northern Ireland lashed."⁶¹

Donaldson also mentioned that 'they were given access to a very high level, like Vice-President Gore, senior officials in the State Department and we began interfacing with Congressmen and Senators particularly the Senate Foreign

⁵⁸ Tony Culley-Foster, Jury's Doyle Hotel, Washington DC, 14 Mar. 2002

⁵⁹ *Ulster Unionist Information Institute*, "What they said....", Jun. 1994

⁶⁰ *Protestant Telegraph*, "DUP delegation take Ulster's case to the USA", May 1994

⁶¹ DUP Press Release, Alderman Sammy Wilson Office, Press Officer, "American Interference in Northern Ireland lashed", 17 Mar. 1993

Affairs Committee or Foreign Relation Committee.’⁶² This corresponds to an *a posteriori* acknowledgement of the US attempt at showing their even-handedness by offering the same opportunities to any actor. Thus, the US actually treated everybody willing to engage equally. Therefore, when Unionists have accused Americans of pro-Irish Republicanism, the reason appeared to be that Ulster Unionists could not stand the fact that “terrorists” benefited from the same level of access as “democratic” politicians. Steven King argued: ‘there has been too much of carrots rather than stick. The US gave things unconditionally’.⁶³ From a Unionist perspective, the fact that the visa to Gerry Adams was granted without any official prerequisite is an illustration of this “carrot” approach. But it can also be interpreted as a way to show to Gerry Adams the potential advantage of engaging in the peace process.⁶⁴ In granting this visa, the American administration obviously used the carrot strategy but they also insinuated the “stick”. Indeed, it was the first of potentially even better treats for the Sinn Féin leader, but it could also be the last. So, the American administration gave a taste of what could be viewed as a first experience of potential rewards for Sinn Féin.

The reaction by the UUP to the Adams’ visa is instructive not so much for the negative reaction to the decision itself which was hardly unexpected; but rather because it marked a key turning point for the UUP. Up to the visa decision, they essentially ignored the USA and their increasing interest in Northern Ireland. They assumed nothing would happen or if it did the British Government could defend their interests. Their shock at the visa decision persuaded some UUP

⁶² Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

⁶³ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

⁶⁴ It is important to notice that no official direct contact between the US administration and Gerry Adams took place during his journey. Members of the White House started official communication with the Sinn Féin leader after the first IRA cease-fire on 30 August 1994, as it will be more extensively studied below.

members that they needed a more active US strategy, though one which was essentially reactive at this time, seeking to counteract Sinn Féin activity in the USA. The image of the US is also still largely negative. The strategy is to block US activity. There is no evidence that they saw any potential for positive engagement.

III-THE IRA CEASE-FIRE, AUGUST 1994

The IRA proclaimed a cease-fire on 30 August 1994, followed six weeks later by a loyalist cease-fire on 13 October. Loyalist thinkers perceived the role of loyalist paramilitaries as being directly linked to the IRA activities. The loyalist declaration of cease-fire contained a “no first strike policy” (Sinnerton, 2002, p.168) as stated: ‘The permanence of our cease-fire will be completely dependant upon the continued cessation of all nationalist/republican violence, the sole responsibility for a return to war lies with them’.⁶⁵

The role of the Irish-Americans is said to have been decisive in the IRA decision to implement a cease-fire. Indeed, as reported in the *Belfast Telegraph*, an ANIA delegation came to Ireland and met Sinn Féin officials on 26 August 1994.⁶⁶ These four men, including Niall O’Dowd and Congressman Bruce Morrison, went there to deliver a message from the White House stating that the US administration would not be interested in any temporary cease-fire and that Clinton was siding with Dublin and London on that matter.

⁶⁵ Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) Cease-fire Statement, 13 October 1994 (see CAIN web service for full text)

⁶⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Cease-fire Countdown”, 25 Aug. 1994

The IRA had implemented a ten-day cease-fire during the time of their stay. The Unionists' reaction to the visit of the US delegation was very negative. Jim Wilson, then UUP Secretary, said: "the stand taken by the unionist parties (...) and the decision to give the visiting Yanks a wide berth had been fully justified by comments they have made."⁶⁷ The harsh answer from the UUP reflected the party's strong suspicion toward the Irish-American delegation and demonstrates the continuing strength of the traditional unionist attitude as the use of the derogatory expression "yanks" illustrates.

The US administration saw the cease-fire as a very positive development and hoped it would lead to greater British flexibility; as Soderberg said: 'it was much easier for the British to actually listen and try and accommodate the terms of the IRA. As long as they had bombs going off, they were terrorists.'⁶⁸ Some British officials also acknowledged the US administration's role in the cease-fire, as Caine argues:

A lot of work was done with the US administration more specifically in 1994.

It's obvious the US had some influence on Irish Republicans; there are key figures in the US administration. I think Nancy Soderberg was one of the key players, the National Security Council, Tony Lake, people like Kennedy and other Congressmen had influence. They obviously have an influence with them.⁶⁹

However, other cease-fires had been declared during the conflict, therefore no one could be then absolutely sure that this one would last.

⁶⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Talk Cliff-hanger", 26 Aug. 1994

⁶⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁶⁹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

The UUP's immediate reaction to the IRA statement was to be very suspicious as Molyneaux immediately started talking about decommissioning: "How are they going to justify retailing the weapons of war if they have stopped the war? That is the question the IRA have got to answer."⁷⁰ This topic was to become the biggest, most controversial and unsolved issue during the peace process negotiation.

In the polls conducted by the *Belfast Telegraph* and published on 2 September 1994, 65% of the Protestant population believed that the cease-fire was the outcome of a deal, and only 9% believed it was permanent.⁷¹ This point was an immediate concern for the UUP, as Trimble expressed in an article from the *Belfast Telegraph*: 'one consequence is that the Unionists should not worry about the cease-fire as such. Peace is not a threat to us. If anything it is advantage.'⁷² The mere fact that Trimble had to argue that "peace" was not a threat to traditional unionist perspectives typified by Molyneaux's idea of the safety of the status quo. Thus, Trimble had to reassure his people of the fact that a republican step forward did not automatically imply a weakening of the unionist position. This point is crucial to understand the unionist attitude. They felt so much under threat that even peace itself had become a menace. This perception largely explains their reluctance to engage with the peace process in general and not just the US dimension of it.

The IRA's decision to implement the cease-fire at that particular time, and the recognition of a US role, helped create the conditions for the UUP diplomatic engagement with the US.

⁷⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Molyneaux urges weapons gesture", 31 Aug. 1994

⁷¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "What Ulster People think?", 2 Sep. 1994

⁷² *Belfast Telegraph*, "IRA's War machine must be dismantled", 9 Sep. 1994

The US administration made a very measured statement highlighted the positive role the US strategy as facilitator played in the announcement of an IRA cease-fire. Myers, the White House Press Secretary, stated on the 31 August 1994:

At the time we said that we hoped that [the visa to Gerry Adams] would encourage the peace process, (...) it was always with the intended purpose of a permanent end to the hostilities of the IRA renouncing the use of violence and moving on to a political process, to a permanent and negotiated settlement. And that's in effect what happened today. (...) We think we've taken steps that we hope would facilitate the process and we're very pleased with the result today. (...) And I think that the President believes that's this is a very significant step. It's a watershed, as the statement says, in a very old and very stubborn conflict.⁷³

This new attitude was also unavoidable since the US administration was intent on building its own agenda as the phone call from Al Gore to Adams on 2 October 1994 or more importantly Adams' invitation to the White House for St Patrick's Day, 1995, demonstrated.⁷⁴

IV-ST PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION AT THE WHITE HOUSE, MARCH 1995

The progressive inclusion of Sinn Féin logically led, at least initially, to the de-escalation of IRA violence. Republicans always previously argued that the use of weapons was necessary since Sinn Féin did not have access to negotiations even if they had a democratic representation through elected MPs

⁷³ Federal information Service Systems, White House Briefing, 31 Aug. 1994

⁷⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, "U.S., Ending Ban, Will Talk With Sinn Féin", 4 Oct. 1994

such as Gerry Adams.⁷⁵ Unionists were apprehensive about a potential secret deal involving the IRA, the US and Irish governments. Dick Spring, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, had to publicly deny any secret pact with the IRA and asked Unionists to support the peace process.⁷⁶ So to Unionists, the “IRA [had] to say that it [was] permanent”⁷⁷ otherwise the negotiations would take place under the lurking spectrum of violence, which from the Unionists perspective meant that there would be no negotiation at all. Unionists also argued that the cease-fire should not generate rewards for the IRA as they should never have launched an armed campaign. Donaldson, then Honorary Secretary of the UUP, in a *Belfast Telegraph* article entitled “UUP Chief greets truce”, declared: “the party would make it absolutely clear that there can be no reward in terms of political concessions being an end to violence.”⁷⁸ It is worth noting that the title of this article does not mention a “cease-fire” but a “truce”, whereas the IRA had declared a “complete cessation of violence”.

The UUP did not perceive it this way and were very cautious about the meaning of the IRA statement. The use of this term implies a minimisation of the IRA statement.

⁷⁵ Rita O’Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2003. It is also worth mentioning that Adams was not an MP anymore having lost his seat during the 1992 election.

⁷⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Back the peace process, Spring urges Unionists”, 1 Sep. 1994

⁷⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, Jim Nicholson quoted in “Premiers divided over what the IRA really means”, 1 Sep. 1994

⁷⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, “UUP chief greets truce”, 31 Aug. 1994

The end of the ban on official US contacts with Sinn Féin took place with Al Gore's phone call to Adams on 2 October 1994. This clearly contradicted the UUP position as the White House justified the lifting of the ban 'to reward Mr. Adams for his role in arranging the cease-fire announced by the IRA on Aug. 31'.⁷⁹ American officials' approach demonstrates the lack of influence that Unionists had over the White House and the lack of understanding of the US administration's motivations. Ken Maginnis declared: "the phone call was the result of intense pressure from the Irish-American lobby and not the result of a softening of the US policy".⁸⁰ Maginnis' argument highlights somewhat of a shift in UUP leadership attitude, making a distinction between the US administration and the Irish-American lobby, and presenting the US administration as a victim rather than a "perpetrator". This distinction was necessary for the UUP to justify the maintenance of their contacts with the White House. This demonstrates the limited capacity to manoeuvre for the UUP, which had to accept certain facts on the ground and interpret them in a positive light for their own supporters. Thus, instead of being officially furious and boycotting the US invitation as they did after the first Adams visa, the UUP sent a delegation lead by Ken Maginnis who discussed the issue with Al Gore. Thus, the US administration played a diplomatic game as the Sinn Féin leader receives a phone call and the UUP a meeting, as counter-balance and to keep them in the process. Nonetheless, the UUP did accept the invitation and so were drawn, even in a limited way, into the process.

⁷⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, "U.S., Ending Ban, Will Talk With Sinn Féin", 4 Oct. 1994

⁸⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Loyalists on cease-fire knife-edge", 4 Oct. 1994

During the week of the White House visit, Ken Maginnis agreed to appear on the *Larry King Live* show on CNN along with Gerry Adams, as long as there would not be any direct debate (O'Clery, 1996, p.176). This point has often been seen as a media victory for the Sinn Féin leader who appeared very relaxed and full of confidence facing a rather nervous, aggressive adversary. Thus, Adams was seen as a peacemaker, and Maginnis, because of his refusal to directly speak to Adams and to shake hands, reinforced the US prejudice toward Unionists (O'Clery, 1996, p.176).

Nevertheless, the *Belfast Telegraph* analysis of the debate did not regard it as a failure:

Combined with Adams' assertions that it is "time to put out the hand of friendship and shake hands and move forward", this initial "don't-come-near-me" stance adopted by Maginnis may have been a mistake in terms of how an American audience might have judged the intriguing encounter. (...) The Sinn Féin leader's constant refrain that he is looking forward rather than at the past, may have had an effect on an American audience but Maginnis' constant questioning and Adams' answers during the debate will almost certainly have given the States pause for thought.⁸¹

⁸¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Adams ducks and dives", 5 Oct. 1994

It is also important to recall what a significant step it was for a senior UUP figure to be on the same show as Adams and the strong pressure that Maginnis faced, knowing the show would be broadcast in Ireland but not on British public television.⁸²

Firstly, such a television show would have been unthinkable in Northern Ireland even if Adams had not been banned from the British media. Secondly and more importantly, Maginnis' attitude had to correspond to the unionist community expectations, as they were the ones voting for his party rather than to the American audience. Adams was also in the same situation but the huge difference was that he was comforted in his strategy of going stateside due to the big support that the Irish Nationalist cause benefited from in the US.

One of the major difficulties for US politicians was the lack of understanding of the Unionists' behaviour. This can be seen in their reaction to the framework documents published in February 1995. From the UUP standpoint, the documents were unacceptable as they 'undermined the principle of consent', 'once again Dublin ducked the issue of Articles 2 and 3', 'the proposal of a North/South body would be an embryonic all-Ireland government' and finally 'the Northern Ireland assembly would become subservient to Dublin'.⁸³ 'By April, the UUP would not accept the Joint Framework Documents even as a basis for negotiations' (Major, 1999, p.467). In doing so, they were once again seen as the trouble-makers especially since Major stated that they

⁸² Section 31 of the Irish 1960 *Broadcasting Authority Act* was lifted in January 1994 (Wilson, July 1997), but the 1988 British broadcasting ban on Sinn Féin was lifted following the IRA ceasefire at the end of August 1994 (Cunningham, 2000, p.93).

⁸³ *Ulster Unionist Information Institute*, "Response to the Framework Document", May 1995

could not find major substantial points of disagreement and therefore 'their objections (...) were centred on the tone and use of what they styled 'green' language or 'Hume-speak' (1999, p.468). The US administration welcomed the Framework Documents, Clinton stating: 'the framework document opened the way for "all parties to have a dialogue on the future of Northern Ireland."'”⁸⁴

John Major depicts the UUP and Sinn Féin reactions: 'Though Sinn Féin would have great difficulty with the Framework Documents, Gerry Adams had the wit to welcome them, so as to drive deeper the wedge between Unionists and the government' (1999, p.467). The Sinn Féin leader continued his party's progress with the official invitation to attend the Saint Patrick's Day celebration on 17 March 1995 at the White House to meet with Bill Clinton. Unionists boycotted the White House celebration due to Adams' presence. Gary McMichael from the UDP, affiliated to the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), was the only unionist representative present at the event. This was possible because loyalists could take a less hard-line position on this issue. They were affiliated to paramilitaries and they did not have a very large popular constituency.

An illustrative example is the comment in a PUP article dealing with a Loyalist delegation to the US in February 1995, 'Irish-Americans discovered [...] people who could articulate a Unionist philosophy and not use the word "no"'”⁸⁵. This "freedom" certainly raised their status in the United States where they had greater possibilities to make speeches or express pro-US statements

⁸⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "US politicians in chorus of approval", 23 Feb. 1995

⁸⁵ *Combat*, "Loyalist visit to the U.S.A.", Feb. 1995.

without taking much of a political risk. As already mentioned above and confirmed by William McGimpsey, cousins of the McGimpseys who immigrated to the US about two decades ago, “[loyalists] were fabulous. All hostility totally dissolved. They were the first ones. That changed the US opinion. They listened, that was very effective.”⁸⁶ McGimpsey overlooks the fact that, unlike the UUP, Loyalists had a limited electoral base. This allowed them to adopt a more flexible strategy, in accordance with American officials’ expectations. Even though they were also taking risks, loyalist parties affiliated to paramilitaries had less to lose than traditional unionist parties and a lot to gain in coming to America.

The symbolism of the St Patrick’s Day celebration was more important than the meeting with Clinton since Adams had already been officially invited to the White House and met with the President on 6 December 1994 (Thompson, 2000, p.178). The UUP reasons for not joining the celebration were made clear by Jim Wilson, then Party Secretary: “In any case, our policy on meeting Sinn Féin is quite clear. We do not accept invitations to participate in meetings or contribute on the media in circumstances where members of Sinn Féin are sharing a platform or a studio or in a situation involving dialogue with them.”⁸⁷

Mayhew was at the White House in early March to try and convince the US officials to cancel the invitation.⁸⁸ John Major also made an attempt at showing British disapproval of US officials talking to Sinn Féin.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ William McGimpsey, New York, 21 Mar. 2002

⁸⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton given cold shoulder by Unionists”, 17 Mar. 1995

⁸⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Adams denies deal for fund-raising visit”, 11 Mar. 1995

⁸⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Prime Minister sends secret letter to Clinton”, 13 Mar. 1995

Belfast Telegraph, “Why Peace must work for a beleaguered Bill Clinton”, 22 May 1995

It was a significant victory for Adams to be invited to the White House on such a symbolic day and a disaster for Unionists and London whose diplomatic efforts had been vain.

In such a context, the UUP could not afford to ignore the US anymore, as once again London had been powerless to stop a US decision. The UUP had ultimately only excluded itself. Clinton shook hands with Adams on St Patrick's Day without having officially met any Ulster Unionist representatives first. In spite of repeated attempts by the US administration to contact Ulster Unionists, as Soderberg argued: 'we just kept calling', their reaction was of little importance as they were refusing to engage.⁹⁰ The UUP may also have been influenced by the reaction within Northern Ireland to Ken Maginnis appearance on CNN with Adams. There was little negative reaction from the UUP grassroots to Maginnis' decision. Rather it reinforced the general pressure on the UUP to engage with the US. Thus, they were responsible for their political marginalisation. This certainly explains their decision to attend the economic conference in Washington, with the consequences of sharing the same (though huge) space with Sinn Féin representatives on 25 May 1995 about two months after the St Patrick's day event.

⁹⁰ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

V- ECONOMIC CONFERENCE, WASHINGTON DC, MAY 1995

Conor O'Clery argues that, the organisation of the Washington DC economic conference was 'a great mechanism for bringing everybody in the same room.'⁹¹ The presence of all the parties involved in the conflict in the same venue in Washington was unprecedented in the history of the Northern Ireland troubles.

The issue of US economic investment was signalled as early as December 1994 when Commerce Secretary Ron Brown made the first visit by a White House cabinet official to Northern Ireland to attend an economic conference organised by the British government and to 'identify concrete new opportunities for increased business link between the US and Northern Ireland ' (Thompson, 2000, p.177). The British authorities refusal to allow Sinn Féin's participation, considerably reduced the number of American investors attending the conference and consequently limited its impact. This also clearly indicated the inevitable connections between political and economic spheres even when Clinton was emphasising the economic aspect.

A third party involvement can either be advisory, limited to offering suggestions or directive as it uses its leverage to impose some measures to reach an agreement (Rubin, 1981, p. 14-15). The US strategy was clearly advisory at this time as its presence was designed to facilitate discussion between the parties not to impose a specific solution. Nothing else was possible in any case

⁹¹ Conor O'Clery, New York City, 10 May 2002

especially with the British and the Unionists who already had difficulties with the US involvement. Soderberg said about the role of economics in the peace process: 'to make it work on the ground you have to focus on the job. The one thing that everybody values around in Northern Ireland, they need to bring jobs so you have to be able to talk to both sides.'⁹² In organising this conference in Washington, the American administration used their economic leverage to introduce political issues and provided a neutral space that, for the first time, took the Northern Ireland question outside the British and Irish context.

Rita O'Hare argued: '[Unionists] finally attended it' when they saw that pressure on the US government to prevent access by Sinn Féin was in vain.⁹³ Such an attitude underlines the changes in the UUP strategy; the "boycott" was not working as they were constantly left outside and this weakened their position. Moreover, it was another confirmation of their lack of leverage on the US administration, even with British support. Changes in the UUP strategy were not internally driven but were forced by the external context. They did not change deliberately and did not have a positive or pro-active strategy of their own. They simply felt they had no choice but to engage.

The use of economic tools as a political device had already been used in the Northern Ireland case by two previous American administrations. Jimmy Carter promised financial assistance to any progress toward peace in Northern Ireland during his famous statement on 30 August 1977. 'It is still true that a peaceful settlement would (...) enhance the prospects for increased

⁹² Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁹³ Rita O'Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2003

investments.’⁹⁴ The proposal did not really bear fruit as no agreement took place in the aftermath. Reagan welcomed the signature of the AIA by signing the congressional resolution granting 50 million dollars financial assistance for both parts of Ireland through the International Fund for Ireland (Guelke, 1996, p.532). The post-AIA financial contribution did not encourage the parties and Unionists in particular into accepting the agreement as they strongly rejected it. The difference with Clinton’s approach is in the organisation of a conference that brought politicians and investors together and provided a forum where potential projects could be discussed. This was unprecedented. It was a significant diplomatic tool for the Americans to show that their leverage and influence could be positive. Clinton stated: ‘There must be a Peace dividend in Northern Ireland and the border counties so that everyone is convinced that the future belongs to those who build, not those who destroy.’⁹⁵ It also forced Unionists into participating, as they wanted to represent their community and encourage investment in Unionist areas.

Senator George Mitchell was appointed as “Adviser to the President and Secretary of State for Economic Initiatives in Ireland and Northern Ireland” on 1 December 1994 (O’Grady, 1997, p.5). Soderberg’s words confirm the ambiguity of Mitchell’s role from day one, ‘I worked out the terms of his appointment, which was economic although we all knew that was ambiguous.’⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Extract from the Presidential speech on 30 August 1977

⁹⁵ United States Information Service, US Embassy, London, Clinton Says “Peace Dividend” needed in Northern Ireland”, address to the conference on trade in Ireland, 25 May 1995, Washington DC, 26 May 1995

Despite the probable sincerity of some US officials when insisting that nothing was planned in advance,⁹⁷ as diplomacy requires flexibility and adaptability, the intention of making Mitchell play a bigger role was already existent. The mixture of politics and economics is even more flagrant in Clinton's speech, when he praised the Joint Framework Documents even though the Unionist parties attending still opposed them: 'With the Joint Framework Document, [Prime Minister Major and Bruton] are paving the way for a new and hopeful era of reconciliation.'⁹⁸

The first meeting and handshake between Mayhew and Adams took place during the conference. It created a scandal and fury among Unionists and, according to Major, 'forced Molyneaux to withdraw' (1999, p.468).⁹⁹ Molyneaux denied it, stating: 'it was not really a situation where we were going to negotiate. It was a kind of high profile road show' insisting on the lack of importance on the diplomatic matter.¹⁰⁰ Major's argument insinuates that the American approach pushed Unionists out. The handshake between Mayhew and Adams was a further step in the international acknowledgement of Sinn Féin as a key player in the Northern Ireland peace process (even though this handshake would never had occurred without Major's reluctant agreement).

⁹⁶ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁹⁷ Private interview

⁹⁸ Official Text, 26 May 1995, United States Information Service, US Embassy London

⁹⁹ It is worth noting, as Major eludes it, that Mayhew also met with Loyalist representatives for the first time during this conference and therefore played the card of inclusive approach in the name of the British government.

¹⁰⁰ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

The meeting and handshake was discussed in newspapers as early as 17 May in the *Belfast Telegraph* with an article entitled: "Mayhew to meet Adams".¹⁰¹ So, Unionists were not taken by surprise. Even so, the announcement by Sir Patrick of his intention to meet with Adams was viewed as such when Ulster Unionists along with the SDLP 'condemned Sir Patrick for announcing his decision to invite the Sinn Féin party leader to meet him in a press statement released just minutes after members of both parties met the Prime Minister in London' the previous week.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, the announcement was made a week before the conference. Unionists were informed and had to make their own decision. Thus, the party leaders decided to boycott, but could not present it as a reaction to a sudden or unexpected US or British action. Even though Molyneaux like Paisley 'were the only two main party leaders in the province this week after they both decided to boycott the Washington investment conference',¹⁰³ their delegates including Peter Robinson, DUP deputy leader and UUP members Jeffrey Donaldson and MEP Jim Nicholson attended the conference. This demonstrates the restricted possibilities of avoiding contact with the American administration and the near impossibility of completely ignoring the event, as even the DUP sent delegates.

¹⁰¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, Mayhew to meet Adams, 17 May 1995, also see, *Belfast Telegraph*, "Adams tribute to US supporters", 22 May 1995 and *Belfast Telegraph*, "Hand-shake all round", 23 May 1995

¹⁰² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Ulster Unionists and SDLP accuse Ministers of sabotage", 25 May 1995

¹⁰³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "DUP pushes forum plans", 22 May 1995

There were indeed “some speculations that the UUP would not attend due to Gerry Adams presence but they declared that it was too important to be heard.”¹⁰⁴

Molyneaux had already met with some difficulties within his party and had been severely questioned after the publication of the Framework Document in February 1995 ‘for his critics, both within and beyond the UUP, the documents were evidence of the limitations of Molyneaux’s strategy of influencing events from behind the scene at Westminster (Morrow, 2000, p.28). His resignation in August 1995 led to the organisation of internal elections and the victory of the least expected candidate: David Trimble, whose choice appeared to have considerably transformed the UUP strategy with the US, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

The fact that the UUP remained fixed to their traditional position on external mediation during the first one and a half years of Clinton’s first term is partly justified by their unwillingness to deal with what they saw as a pro-nationalist administration and the apparent inactivity of the new US administration on Northern Ireland affairs. This latter point obviously ignores the shuttle diplomacy and the appointment of people who would later become key actors in their Northern Ireland policy such as Nancy Soderberg, or Jean Kennedy Smith as Ambassador to Dublin. Nevertheless, if such moves were

¹⁰⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionist Team for Clinton economy talks”, 6 May 1995

retrospectively highly significant, they tended to be perceived initially by Unionists as minor decisions and were certainly seen as favours to the Irish-American community. Despite the wider public discourse and the high profile involvement of Irish-Americans with links to Clinton such as Niall O'Dowd and Bruce Morrison, the UUP saw no room for a positive US involvement and did not really expect one in any case.

The granting of the first visa to Gerry Adams appears to be a turning point, and it prompted a sudden and very prominent discourse by Unionists about the US position, and the *Belfast Telegraph* reflected this. Unionists saw the visa decision as the ultimate proof of a US pro-nationalist agenda. Gerry Adams was acclaimed in America and this trip was seen as a huge media success for Sinn Féin. Unionists had been invited but refused to attend the conference. Therefore, they remained out of the picture.

Adams' two-day trip to New York triggered the idea that a counter-offensive was necessary for two main reasons. First, the British had proved incapable of keeping the US out of the Northern Ireland conflict. Unionists had limited choices and at least some in the UUP understood that they needed to engage with the US to counterbalance nationalist activity. The UUP engagement with the US was a reaction to Sinn Féin and not a deliberate or pro-active initiative emanating from the party. Second, the UUP's American strategy was not necessarily a reflection of a more moderate position but rather a pragmatic recognition of the fact that the US administration would engage in Northern Ireland whether Unionists agreed with it or not. The UUP had two choices. They could either refuse to engage systematically or boycott any US action for peace

and be simply ignored, as the US could just acknowledge London as the sovereign representative of the British community in Northern Ireland. For the reason discussed in chapter one and because the British government had failed to block the Adams visa, the UUP were very reluctant to trust London to play a role for them. Alternatively, the UUP could engage and try to influence the US administration, via dialogue.

The weakness of a strategy of boycott or reliance on the British Government became even more obvious as the US involvement developed. The failure to prevent Sinn Féin invitations to the White House, the Economic conference, the warm US welcome for the cease-fire and the peace process in general despite UUP reservations convinced Senior Figures in the UUP that whatever the electoral risk or internal opposition, they had to engage with the US if only from a defensive position. However, even at this time, there is no evidence of any senior voices in the UUP who saw any positive role for US mediation. There is no evidence that the UUP perceived this as a means of breaking a political stalemate or solving the conflict. US mediation was a threat that needed to be countered by engaging with it.

This period also indicates the usefulness of American leverage. The UUP certainly did not see the US as a neutral mediator. Had the US given in to British pressure on the Adams visa and the White House invitation or their welcome for the IRA cease-fire, then the UUP would have felt little pressure to engage. By holding to their position the Clinton team managed to nudge the UUP towards engagement.

If some party representatives and members were aware of the dilemma under Molyneaux's leadership, as the leader made some trips to the US, he still retained his integrationist position relying heavily on his connections at Westminster. The choice to actively engage became much more obvious with Trimble's election as the new leader and this will be analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CLINTON'S FIRST TERM: THE IMPACT OF TRIMBLE'S ELECTION ON UUP STRATEGY TOWARDS US INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The change of leader within a party is often associated with a change of trajectory or a renewal of strategy. Therefore, the first question raised in this chapter is about the impact of Trimble's election as UUP leader on the UUP-US relationship. Did Trimble's election contribute to the adoption of a much more pragmatic approach and a more active and less reactionary engagement with the US? If it is so, did the UUP come to regard the US involvement as offering the possibility to extend their influence, perceiving this involvement as potentially positive?

This chapter examines five further key events in the UUP-US relationship: David Trimble's election as new UUP leader; the creation of the UUP Northern American Bureau; Clinton's first trip to Northern Ireland; George Mitchell's report on Decommissioning; and Mitchell's appointment as Chairman of the talks.

Collectively these events can allow us to examine how the UUP responded to the intensification of the US engagement up to the start of formal negotiations in 1996.

I-DAVID TRIMBLE'S ELECTION AS LEADER OF THE UUP, THE IMPORTANCE OF A NEW LEADERSHIP IN NEGOTIATION PROGRESS

David Trimble was elected as the new leader of the UUP in September 1995, facing during the last round of voting, the well known John Taylor and winning by 466 votes to 333 (McDonald, 2000, p. 156). Major wrote in his biography "none of his fellow MPs had voted for him" (1999, p. 468). Within the UUP, Maginnis was aghast at the result even though he preferred Trimble to Taylor as a leader. Chris McGimpsey was appalled: "my first reaction to his victory was deep disappointment and concern. Trimble had a lot of friends in the loony right" (McDonald, 2000, p.157). The reactions to the election of a former Vanguard Movement member, with the reputation of being a hard-liner, (a reputation that Trimble appeared to have cultivated himself by going to Drumcree during the summer of 1995 and walking hand in hand with Ian Paisley) were quite negative. Trimble also had the support of some loyalists including Billy Wright, the notorious Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF) leader. The *Belfast Telegraph* depicted him as the "loyalist champion" thanks to his performance in Drumcree.¹ This hard-line reputation along with his support for the Orange Order during the 1995 Drumcree march triggered alarmed reactions among the British and Irish governments. The headlines of articles covering Trimble's victory reflect the general atmosphere; for instance, in the *Belfast*

¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Portrait of Trimble", 7 Sep. 1995

Telegraph, "Trimble shock victor in the Unionist ballot."² Jonathan Caine's words echo the feeling of panic that the election generated among some parts of the administration in Northern Ireland:

The Friday evening when he was elected I personally raised a glass and went back to Northern Ireland on Monday and was told by one of the ministers that he even choked on his corn flakes on Saturday morning. This shows the horror that the fact that David had been elected leader within the Northern Ireland Office. It seems crazy these days. It was like, this is the end of any hope for the peace process.³

Retrospectively, during the interviews conducted for this project, reactions have been, in their great majority, very positive about Trimble's role. Most respondents also said that Molyneaux did not have the personality to lead the negotiations at an international level, being foremost a local politician with no international focus. Molyneaux himself admitted that his perception of politics greatly differed from what the US administration expected, arguing:

During the trips [UUP members] would not meet the leading figures, so it was not profitable. They shook hands with the president but there was no solid diplomacy. I did not prevent anybody going but I am not a socialite and it does not bring solid achievement.⁴

Nancy Soderberg confirms this retrospective perception: 'it really took the election of David Trimble to have a partner.'⁵ Niall O'Dowd, even though he was never well acquainted with the UUP leader, stated: 'I think he's an

² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble shock victor in the Unionist ballot", 9 Sep. 1995

³ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 25 Jun. 2003

⁴ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

⁵ Nancy Soderberg, New York, 14 May 2002

interesting political figure and I think throughout this period, people, including myself, underestimated him.⁶ Academics such as Arthur also considered Trimble's election as a positive turning point in the peace process. 'It was not until David Trimble became leader in 1995 that Ulster Unionism displayed a similar vision and a willingness to take risks' (Arthur, 2000, p. 110).⁷

The renewal of leadership in the context of the peace process can provide the opportunity to renew dialogue and boost interactions between key players. The change of leadership benefited the US administration in spite of the right wing reputation of the new leader. The National Security Council perception of the situation, as set out by Soderberg, was that prior to the Trimble election, 'The problem was at that point, there was no leadership in the Unionist community, Molyneaux (...) just would not engage.'⁸ This point raises two fundamental arguments. First, it emphasises the significance of the leader and his reputation in negotiations. Second, it also stresses the importance of the leader's strategy.

A-New leadership, importance in negotiation and impact in the launching of a new strategy

A change of leadership can boost negotiations and some major successes like De Klerk's replacement of Botha in South Africa are precedents (Zartman, 1995, p.16). However, in the Unionist case, Trimble's coming to power with

⁶ Niall O'Dowd, New York, 13 May 2002

⁷ Apart from Trimble himself, the only UUP representative who insisted on Molyneaux's primary role in the visits to America was Jeffrey Donaldson who did not mention Trimble's contribution once on that matter. It is worth mentioning that the interview with Donaldson took place on 15 April 2003, only two months before his decision to leave the UUP whip along with Burnside and Smyth.

⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

such a negative reputation made him seem the worse possible choice for the UUP and was consequently interpreted as a bad omen for the peace process. In reality, such a negative image was to Trimble's advantage as he was expected to take hard-nosed decisions or positions. Therefore, any step forward or accommodative policy would be welcomed as a proof of the new leader's goodwill. Thus, no actor involved in the conflict expected much from him; this gave him the advantage of surprise. Trimble offered a more pragmatic and rational image of Unionism in spite of some recurrent blunders.⁹ Major confirms the surprise effect when he argues that 'Trimble was proving to be a more flexible and adept leader than we had imagined' (1999, p. 480). This new approach was obvious through different elements.

First, Trimble proposed to the DUP that they seek a common position immediately after his election. This reveals a greater awareness that the Unionist community were weakened through division while facing a more and more cohesive nationalist community. The discord grew up during the 1990s and was reported in the newspapers, such as the *Belfast Telegraph*, "Stop bickering leaders told".¹⁰ The first meeting between Trimble and Paisley took place on 18 September 1995 when Trimble proposed that they stopped attacking each other.¹¹ Trimble went even further suggesting to Paisley an eventual fusion of both parties. Paisley unsurprisingly rejected the proposal saying there was too big of a gap between the parties. Paisley added that he was kingmaker because Trimble

⁹ Among the several remarks that the UUP leader made that created a scandal, David Trimble declared in March 2002 that Ireland was a "pathetic sectarian state". He subsequently refused to apologise. This attitude can appear nonsensical at first; yet, it also deals with the requirements of the voters and the counter-attack to DUP accusation of "selling out" the Union.

¹⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Stop bickering leaders told", 2 Aug. 1994, also, "Orange order castigates Unionists for personal attacks", 2 Aug. 1994, "Paramilitaries rap Unionists for "Bickering"", 1 Aug. 1994, "Stop being Negative, Leaders told", 4 Aug. 1994, "Unionists urged to form a united body", 11 Aug. 1994

¹¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Let's be friends, says Trimble", 18 Sep. 1995

was the only candidate associated with him.¹² The new leader sought to be portrayed as someone who forgets old divisions for the sake of the Unionist community. Paisley's party could therefore be perceived as the destabilising figure whose selfish electoral interest is prioritised over the concerns of the community.

Secondly, Trimble had an historic meeting with Irish Prime Minister, John Bruton, in Dublin to ask for clarification about the Republic of Ireland's position on decommissioning. His attitude, that the DUP heavily criticised, marked a new approach in the relationship between the UUP and the Irish government. Trimble's attitude demonstrated his willingness to engage. It also symbolises his rupture with the traditional "heads in the sand type of leader" to quote Ken Maginnis.¹³ However, Trimble kept some traditional approach as he declared about the twin-track approach on 11 November 1995: "We certainly would not have any contact with the Irish government or Sinn Féin."¹⁴

Finally and more importantly with regard to this study but in keeping with the above moves, Trimble proved to be aware of the USA's increasing influence in the peace process. As King argued 'David Trimble realised that Dublin and Washington, which were traditionally hostile, could be used to have influence on Sinn Féin and the SDLP.'¹⁵ As discussed in chapter one, this approach is fundamental as mediators are accepted only if they are seen as being capable of bringing benefits (Zartman & Touval, 1997, p.451). Instead of passively witnessing nationalist activities in the US and avoiding involvement, Trimble

¹² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Paisley rebuffs Trimble "merger"", 11 Sep. 1995

¹³ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

¹⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "We only meet British- Trimble", 10 Nov. 1995

¹⁵ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

(even though obviously not alone) put forward the idea that the UUP could use some US connections as a means of putting indirect pressure on Nationalists and more specifically on Republicans. Trimble argued: 'We thought that we should take an interest and our primary interest was to try to make the US administration and President Clinton himself conscious of the fact that there was another side. So, the object was to get a real balance.'¹⁶ Instead of only accepting the US involvement because it was unavoidable, the leader chose to adopt a positive attitude in underlining potential advantages largely ignored until then.

As seen in chapter one, a partial mediator can contribute to some influence as it can put pressure on its closest ally (Touval & Zartman, 1985, p.257). David Trimble demonstrated his willingness to meet with the American administration soon after his election. The new leader was reported to be expecting an invitation from the White House, in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 11 September 1995.¹⁷ Trimble commented:

I was aware when I became Leader that Molyneaux had been left with the strong impression that he'd been promised the next time he went he would get the president. So, when I was setting up the first visit I made as party leader and speaking before hand to the US administration, they were offering a meeting with the Vice-President. I "said no wait a minute, Jim Molyneaux was promised and I therefore insist..."¹⁸

This determination to engage did not reflect compromises on core issues of substance. Trimble was willing to present his position as Lord Laird quoted him:

¹⁶ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

¹⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "US political traffic grows", 11 Sep. 1995

¹⁸ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

Look we are not going back, we are not neglecting the facts, we are not leaving the ring, everybody has got an argument, and we are going to argue with them. We've got a very good case, we are going to take it everywhere what we need is self-confidence to take it anywhere.¹⁹

This new attitude of accepting dialogue with the US but like a fight rather than as a search for compromise is visible in the trips that Trimble made in the USA during Clinton's first presidency, starting with the first one in November 1995. As Soderberg expressed it, "[Trimble] was certainly very, very sceptical but he would at least engage and that was what turned it around."²⁰

B-Trimble's first meetings with American Representatives

1. The US approach of the new leader, fact-finding mission?

The organisation of Ambassador Crowe²¹ and Nancy Soderberg's two-day trip to Northern Ireland on 3 October 1995, in other words, less than a month after Trimble's election, suggests a US desire to engage as soon as possible with Trimble. This trip was officially meant to break the deadlock over the weapons issue²² but was also an opportunity to meet with the new leader. It can be interpreted as a "fact finding mission" to find out more about Trimble. It is also worth noting that Trimble met with Soderberg and Crowe whereas Paisley declined the invitation, claiming he had an engagement in Cardiff.²³

¹⁹ Lord Laird, Holywood road, Belfast, 14 Mar. 2003

²⁰ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

²¹ Ambassador Crowe was appointed on 13 May 1994 to replace Ambassador Seitz at St James' Court

²² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton's Team bids to break Deadlock", 3 Oct. 1995

²³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton's Team bids to break Deadlock", 3 Oct. 1995

Whereas Trimble asked Clinton to express a clear position on decommissioning, DUP deputy leader, Robinson declared that the White House interference annoyed Unionists.²⁴ This point underlines the widening gap between the UUP's new strategy and the DUP's more traditional approach. Instead of understanding the US involvement as inevitable and trying to make the best of it, the DUP stubbornly kept on resisting the US involvement seeing dialogue as synonym to compromise, and articulating the "no surrender" spirit.

2. Trimble: First trip to America as leader

Trimble made his first official visit to Washington DC in November 1995. The new leader's position was complex. First, he had to justify his going to the USA to a sceptical party and constituency. He had to communicate with the US administration but also with deeply unwelcoming Irish-American representatives. As Tony Culley-Foster argues: 'The Americans were ignorant of the Ulster Unionists and the Protestant community. Their vision was Ian Paisley. (...) On the International stage, the face of Unionism was Paisley.'²⁵ Trimble also had to show an alternative face of Unionism to Paisley's fundamentalism.

Thus, this trip in terms of public relations was a very sensitive exercise for Trimble. Trimble's lack of any previous experience in international politics reinforced the intricacy of his task. However, according to Tony Culley-Foster, Mairead Keane and Rita O'Hare, both successively responsible for the "Friends of Sinn Féin" Washington and then New York office, he seems to have learnt

²⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble puts challenge to White House, 4 Oct. 1995

²⁵ Tony Culley-Foster, Jury's Doyle Hotel, Washington DC, 14 Mar. 2002

quickly.²⁶ During this first visit, Trimble had to reflect the unionist community's hostility to US involvement. Culley-Foster claimed that the first message that the new leader intended to deliver in coming to Washington was that the US administration had to remain outside Northern Ireland:

In fact, David Trimble had come to tell the Americans that they were in charge of their own destiny. (...) His reaction was very threatening (...). Unionists had to know what they had to say, David Trimble was not used to the American approach. David Trimble's strategy was to come here to say that Ulster Unionists were not afraid of the US and the Irish-Americans.²⁷

This message is significant as it reveals that, despite Trimble's awareness that US involvement would not end, he believed that his duty as a Unionist representative should reflect his community's stance. Thus, instead of interpreting Trimble's behaviour as a sign of Unionist misunderstanding of their capacity to prevent US intervention, it could be simply a sign of Trimble's initial limited room to manoeuvre as he faced his community's deeply rooted fear of external intervention.

The publication of an advertisement in the *New York Times* entitled "A Welcome to David Trimble, The David Duke of Ireland" (a reference to the leader of the Ku Klux Klan), may also have justified his initial aggressive approach. The Irish-American Unity Conference, one of whose members was Niall O'Dowd, paid for its publication.²⁸ However, David Trimble diplomatically reacted to the ad stating: "it does not reflect the real desire for dialogue we see

²⁶ Tony Culley-Foster, telephone interview, 24 Apr. 2002, Mairead Keane, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2002, Rita O'Hare, Sinn Féin Headquarters, Dublin, 4 Sep. 2002

²⁷ Tony Culley Foster, Jury's Doyle Hotel, Washington, 14 Mar. 2002

²⁸ *New York Times*, opened page advertising, "A Welcome to David Trimble, the David Duke of Ireland", 1 Nov. 1995

from the invitations to speak and to debate that we have received from Irish-Americans groups across the country.”²⁹

The hostility was also clear during his meeting with the International Relations Committee on Capitol Hill as recalled by Republican Congressman for Rhode Island, Peter King:

Every one of us, when we met Trimble, we congratulated his selection, (...) having said that, it was the most unpleasant, not productive meeting ever held. Trimble was incapable of any social graces, any interaction. He was there basically to lecture. I think he believed all that propaganda, all Irish-Americans had this romantic view of Ireland and he was going to straighten this up.³⁰

Trimble’s prejudice against the US representatives was also due to their lack of interest in the unionist position on the conflict. O’Dowd confirmed it:

I wasn’t that interested in the British government or Unionists (...). We knew we wouldn’t have much influence on them. We were totally focused on the White House and Sinn Féin and trying to create that dynamic.³¹

The UUP team had to face political “enemies”. Among them were Peter King and Ben Gilman, both very close to Gerry Adams, and Senator Kennedy’s nephew, Congressman Joe Kennedy (RI). Trimble did not count many supporters or at least sympathisers in the room. Trimble reacted the way the Unionist community expected him to respond: he refused to adopt a compromising stance.

²⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Klan jibe enrages Unionists”, 31 Oct. 1995

³⁰ Peter King, Capitol Hill, 20 Apr. 2002

³¹ Niall O’Dowd, New York, 13 May 2002

The next part of the interview with Peter King is even more telling as the congressman compares Trimble's attitude to David Ervine's.

I remember, at one stage, Jim Walsh, who really had not been involved in the Irish issue that long. Jim was a very nice guy. He was appointed chairman of the Friends for Ireland Committee by the Speaker. Jimmy had asked for it. Yes, Gilman had a rough time with Trimble and I had a rough time with Trimble and Joe Kennedy and others, Jim would be considered maybe as more conciliatory. Walsh tried to put peace to it. My best recollection of the question was: "Mr Trimble, we all know, how complex the situation is and how difficult it could be to find common ground but is it safe to say that all politicians should avoid what could indicate a religious bias, religious attack? Do you agree with that?" Trimble's answer was "no". Trimble was trying to make it as an intellectual point and not a religious issue. But what he just said was no to Walsh. Whatever he said after, nobody listened to it. If you would have a loyalist over like David Ervine, I suppose much less educated than Trimble, I suppose more prone to support terrorism, Ervine would have taken that question and he would have won everybody in the room and said of course there's no room for religious hatred.³²

King's comparison between Trimble and Ervine displays the UUP's difficulty to convey the subtleties of Northern Ireland politics to the US representatives. First, King made no allowance for the enormous disparity between the two men in terms of electoral influence. David Trimble could jeopardise his image in the eyes of his electorate and party supporters.

The toughness of the meeting also underlines the fundamental lack of comprehension between Irish-American representatives and Unionists on political style as Unionists have always engaged in confrontational politics rather

³² Peter King, Capitol Hill, 20 Apr. 2002

than accommodative ones. For Unionists, dialogue is not necessary, or if it is, it is a weapon and not a diplomatic tool. For instance, O'Clery, describing Molyneaux's reaction during his first meeting with Ted Kennedy, stated that: 'Jim Molyneaux came in 1994. He first met Ted Kennedy. The Senator asked him: "What can I do for you?" J. Molyneaux was very surprised because he expected tension and aggressivity. This is not the way it works [in the US].'³³ As a Northern Irish official argued, in coming to the US, Trimble 'realised that here, in the US, politics was a performance act.'³⁴

The *Sunday Tribune* reported this first trip under the title of "Trimble defiant after US clash", saying that the Unionist team did not make any friends on Capitol Hill due to this aggressive behaviour.³⁵ Trimble was also reported to say that US involvement "complicate [d] life" but acknowledged that there was no possible turning back and that the US "d[id] have a role" to play due to the way "some Irish-Americans have behaved in terms of supporting, financially and militarily, terrorism in Northern Ireland."³⁶ It is worth noting that Trimble considered that the US necessity to be involved laid with their indirect responsibility for political violence not their possible role as mediator. The US government was perceived as having a debt towards the Northern Ireland population, however it did allow for the possibility that the UUP could be influential and alter US attitudes. Regardless of Trimble's personal thoughts, this argument directly targeted the unionist community. As Steven King argued 'he had in a sense to establish his credibility with his domestic audience. He was going to a place, which was a hostile one in the Unionist mind, so he had to find

³³ Conor O'Clery, New York City, 10 May 2002

³⁴ Private Interview with Northern Irish Official

³⁵ *Sunday Tribune*, "Trimble defiant after US clash", 5 Nov. 1995

³⁶ *Sunday Tribune*, "Trimble defiant after US clash", 5 Nov. 1995

a way to make it acceptable.³⁷ Trimble used a negative but striking argument to turn it to his advantage. Another statement reported in the article confirms this strategy: "We want that influence exerted in positive ways and that won't happen if we don't engage in discussions with the administration."³⁸ Thus, Trimble introduced the idea to his own community that Unionists had no choice but to engage. Firstly, the UUP had to neutralise or to dilute the nationalist influence in the USA and secondly, they had to obtain the support they deserved from the US administration due to the US indirect responsibility for political violence, as the UUP saw it.

This first unpleasant trip did not stop Trimble. He was to become a regular visitor to Washington during the peace process. Trimble even chose to come to the Saint Patrick's Day celebration at the White House in March 1996 (the first UUP leader to do so), where he brought a pair of Linen Pyjamas for Clinton and the first lady as a typical present from Northern Ireland. Donaldson stated: "it beats a bowl of Shamrock any day."³⁹ This statement reflects certain unionist self-confidence, never seen before in any statement and underlines the changes in the UUP attitude under Trimble's leadership. The fact that the UUP delegation came to the White House on such a symbolic day for the Irish community also demonstrated the evolution of the UUP's strategy since what they did in 1996 would have been unthinkable in 1995. It is worth noting that Adams, despite being in America, was not invited to the White House reception due to the Canary Wharf bombing in February 1996.

³⁷ Dr. Steven King, interview, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

³⁸ *Sunday Tribune*, "Trimble defiant after US clash", 5 Nov. 1995

³⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Leaders share jovial encounter", 21 Mar. 1996

Therefore the dilemma of sharing the same space with the Sinn Féin leader did not exist. This certainly facilitated Trimble's decision to attend.

II-THE UUP NORTHERN AMERICAN OFFICE, A SYMBOLIC STEP FORWARD?

The UUP office in Washington was not Trimble's idea. The decision to open it was made under Jim Molyneaux's leadership. David Trimble acknowledged that 'the basis of that had actually been laid in the year before I became leader.'⁴⁰ However, the office came into being in October 1995. Thus, it is often associated with the changes that took place in the UUP-US relationship following Trimble's election and is certainly worth examining in that context.

The office was said to have been created in reaction to the opening of the Sinn Féin office in Washington DC (O'Hanlon, 1999, p. 226). Trimble was very clear on its function: "we are not going to be a major player there in terms of trying to exercise influence and we are not trying to. Our operation is just a "me too" sort of thing, pointing out to people when you think of this issue think of us as well" (Birney & O'Neill, 1997, p.247). However, Tony Culley-Foster stated that he found it difficult to convince Molyneaux in January 1995 when he made the offer to donate an office space to the UUP:

Molyneaux is an extreme right wing conservative Unionist. He is very suspicious of the US involvement. Plenty of people at all levels were against the Unionist and British positions. Unionists felt besieged. The first month of 1995, I had a

⁴⁰ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

dinner with Jim Molyneaux. It was the first meeting with the UUP. Molyneaux had difficulties articulating good responses. The only answer was to maintain the Union. There was no other answer regarding Northern Ireland. The question was how to provide the possibility to Bill Clinton to engage in dialogue. Molyneaux had the power to make a decision but the USA would have been involved anyway. So, better take a position.⁴¹

Culley-Foster's words underline that this office was an American initiative and that the international context by and large forced the UUP into accepting the offer. The party had no initial intention of opening it. Nevertheless, Donaldson declared: 'That was my proposal that we establish a bureau in Washington and with the help of some sympathetic American businessmen we were able to establish the bureau.'⁴² Johnston also stated that: '[Donaldson] was behind the setting up of the Washington office.'⁴³ This obviously contradicts the idea of the office being an American initiative. However, an analysis of the initial unionist behaviour toward US involvement tends to support the view that the US administration, through Culley-Foster as intermediary, was the instigator rather than the UUP. Such a fact does not deny Donaldson's active support in its establishment.

According to Anne Smith, the party representative in Washington, some party members regarded the project as useless given that they perceived the US as Nationalist supporters.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Tony Culley Foster, Jury's Doyle Hotel, Washington, 14 Mar. 2002, about the information in terms of date and the setting of the office see *Ulster Review*, "Unionism Goes Stateside, Anne Smith reflects on the last visit to America by David Trimble", Spring 1996.

⁴² Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

⁴³ Paul Johnston, British Consulate General, New York City, 8 Feb. 2002

⁴⁴ Anne Smith, St Regis Hotel, Washington, 18 Apr. 2002

Thus, its creation was interpreted as a symbolic UUP acknowledgement of a potentially helpful American role. As Soderberg argues, ‘the opening of the office is a recognition that (...) DC was worth engaging, we saw it as very positive action. Had they not, we still would have been talking to them, reaching them. Yet, the fact that they were doing that indicated they wanted to talk back.’⁴⁵ Donaldson confirms Soderberg’s point: “Our investment in the bureau was an indication to the US administration that we were taking them seriously in terms of their interest, you know, in the Northern Ireland peace process.”⁴⁶

The party’s restricted budget, £105,000 per year in 1995, limited the office’s potential.⁴⁷ The prospect of securing funding in the US was certainly not as high as for Sinn Féin. Therefore they could not afford a team of lobbyists with an office near Capitol Hill. Besides, Anne Smith only worked (and still does) one day per week for the UUP, which made it very difficult to compete with the Sinn Féin office. As Bill McGimpsey states: “There was no real perception, no real reaction. It was not a big deal and it had very little impact. But it was the manifestation of the UUP change so it was important to implement it.”⁴⁸ The US media hardly covered its inauguration.

According to Anne Smith, the UUP North American office strategy was to focus their efforts on the “Hill”.⁴⁹ The very modest budget of the UUP did not give much opportunity to widen the field of work. Besides, their competency in lobbying Capitol Hill has been questioned. Soderberg maintained that ‘Unionists

⁴⁵ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁴⁶ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

⁴⁷ Tony Culley Foster, Jury’s Doyle Hotel, 14 Mar. 2002

⁴⁸ William McGimpsey, New York City, 21 Mar. 2002

⁴⁹ Anne Smith, Jury’s Doyle Hotel, Washington DC, 14 Mar. 2002

never knew how to lobby the Hill.⁵⁰ However, it is difficult to imagine how one person who works for the UUP only one day per week in the outskirts of Washington can compete with the lobbying capacity of Sinn Féin.

A Northern Irish civil servant declared:

It was very difficult with the background. They need a professional representation with experts in lobbying and very intensive. They should be located here. The UUP made a start but they need a full time team. Anne is in an impossible position. It is back in the party headquarters. Sinn Féin closed its office in Washington DC, the SDLP does not have any representation. No party has enough money.⁵¹

Anne Smith acknowledged those difficulties: 'we don't have a pool of articulate people. There is not enough funding and so there is no apparent ability. We receive invitation for David Trimble from everywhere. The problem is that you can't do that once. It has to be constant.'⁵² Anne Smith was very clear about her limitations, 'I lobby the congress and the administration but they are not going to do anything for us. Sometimes, some of them have a Scotch-Irish ancestry, we recognise them because of their names and the location of their ancestors.'⁵³ Smith refused to provide names of supporters, so did Laird. Paul Johnston, Head of the Northern Ireland Section in the British Information Service (BIS) at the British Consulate General in New York, declared: 'no politician would describe himself as Unionist. Some congressmen were more sympathetic because some were against negotiating with the terrorists.'⁵⁴ This

⁵⁰ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁵¹ Northern Irish Civil Servant, Private Interview

⁵² Anne Smith, St Regis Hotel, Washington DC, 20 Apr. 2002

⁵³ Anne Smith, St Regis Hotel, Washington DC, 20 Apr. 2002

⁵⁴ Paul Johnston, British Consulate General, New York City, 8 Feb. 2002

point underlines the very limited practical effect of the office and its fairly limited potential support on the US political stage.

Nevertheless, Anne Smith played an important role in organising UUP leaders' trips to the USA and organising receptions in their honour. Such an organisation was significant as it was previously non-existent and revealed the UUP's adoption of a somewhat more active strategy toward US involvement. But as Soderberg underlined: 'Anne was not someone on the level of Trimble (...). The real conversation was directly with Trimble on the phone.'⁵⁵

Despite the dialogue being directly established with Trimble himself, the UUP leader certainly played an active role in maintaining the office in Washington as a symbolic and diplomatic tool. Irish-Americans generally appreciated Anne Smith, even the most ideologically hostile to Ulster Unionists, such as Peter King who said: '[she] puts a pleasant face to Unionism'.⁵⁶ Besides, the opening of the office played a role in convincing the unionist community to accept the US involvement as Steven King argued 'once it was there it had to be accepted and it therefore changed the Unionist position'.⁵⁷

Trimble as a new leader was not particularly popular among Irish-Americans. However, Soderberg clearly underlined that her meetings with him were very constructive as 'he was actually quite easy to deal with, he has a good sense of humour, smart, putting ideas down. [Unionists] were, from a political standpoint, clearly nervous about what this all meant. They were clearly

⁵⁵ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁵⁶ Peter King, Capitol Hill, 20 Apr. 2002

⁵⁷ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

suspicious about us and Gerry Adams and made it clear that they did not want to go quickly.’⁵⁸

The UUP had elected Trimble as new leader therefore the US had to accommodate him. This point is crucial because as soon as the UUP started engaging, the US had to take them into account. The “empty chair” strategy did not offer this advantage. Thus, their engagement became more active. It resulted in an increase in their level of influence in the peace process as elements of Clinton’s first trip to Northern Ireland indicate it. Indeed, this trip can be interpreted as a turning point in the US administration’s relationship with the UUP.

III-CLINTON’S FIRST TRIP TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Despite ‘one American president in four [having] traced his roots to Ulster, (...) Clinton was the first sitting president ever to set foot in Northern Ireland (...).’⁵⁹ Its meaning was not purely historical. It was also a decisive moment in the relationship between the US administration and the UUP. Moreover, the trip was also significant in introducing former Senator Mitchell as Head of the International Independent Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) in charge of writing a report about the benefits of a potential twin-track strategy to start all-inclusive negotiations. The media also extensively covered the journey.

⁵⁸ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁵⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, “Clinton Exhorts Ulster To Drop ‘Old Grudges’”, 1 Dec. 1995

The *Belfast Telegraph* printed a daily special edition exclusively reporting the whole presidential stay. Derry Guild Hall Press published a book in 1997 narrating the major moments of the journey.

The impact of the trip on the UUP strategy and mostly on Trimble's position has received very little coverage. As a result, the opening goal of this analysis is to demonstrate how and to what extent the President's first trip contributed to the UUP leadership's greater acceptance of a formal relationship with the White House. The second objective is to analyse the visit's impact on the adoption of twin-track strategy, and the choice of George Mitchell as head of the commission, this being finally agreed when Clinton was just hours away from arriving in London.

A-Clinton's visit's impact on the Ulster Unionist Party

Clinton's first visit to Northern Ireland was not unanimously regarded as a success. The *Wall Street Journal Europe* proclaimed it useless, in relation to a positive contribution to the Northern Ireland peace process.⁶⁰ An article in *Fortnight* magazine put Clinton's speeches in the Middle East in parallel with the ones given in Northern Ireland and insisted on the similarity of the clichés used on both occasions revealing Clinton's very constrained potential input to the province.⁶¹ These opinions partly resulted from the media frenzy depicting Bill Clinton as the only "saviour" of a peace process that the decommissioning issue

⁶⁰ *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, "Clinton Can't Bring Peace to Northern Ireland", 30 Nov.1995

⁶¹ *Fortnight*, "No use relying on Uncle Bill", Jan. 1996, p. 19-20

had deeply endangered.⁶² The US administration felt profoundly concerned about it. Soderberg argued: "White House Officials were somewhat dismayed by the increasingly melodramatic rhetoric which portrayed Mr. Clinton's visit as a last ditch effort to "save" the process."⁶³ This was not the intention of the US President's visit as it is an impossible challenge for any third party involvement. Nevertheless, the mere fact of Clinton's presence could be and had been a boost when people seemed discouraged by the lack of progress. One of the American administration's aims in coming was to demonstrate the sincerity and even-handedness of its engagement, regardless of the speculation about the benefits to Clinton as the US presidential election was scheduled for the following year.

Clinton achieved some success. David Ervine expressed: 'he left with more friends than he had when he came here.'⁶⁴ These friends were necessarily made on the unionist side since the huge majority of the nationalist community supported Clinton's involvement. The attitude that the US administration adopted after Trimble's election along with the UUP's more active engagement made such progress possible. In fact, the US administration had decided to turn its interest toward Unionists without much success under Molyneaux's leadership. Soderberg argued 'after the visa issue we were very conscious of the fact that Unionists were suspicious of it so we thought to proactively return to them. And the British encouraged us to do that. The problem was at that point, there was no leadership in the Unionist community.'⁶⁵

⁶² The pressure was also coming from Capitol Hill as a letter, on 19 September 1995, exhorted the President to help maintain the process, 'Mr President, it was your leadership which moved the parties forward at previous setbacks in the Irish peace process. Be assured of our bipartisan support of your efforts.' Thirty representatives including major Irish-American figures like Peter King, Richard Neil and Ben Gilman signed it. Thus, Irish-Americans may have played a strong role in influencing the media to depict the President as the unique recourse.

⁶³ *Fortnight*, "Constructive Engagement", Dec. 1995

⁶⁴ David Ervine, Stormont, 15 May 2000

⁶⁵ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

Trimble's election became an opportunity for the US to show that they were even-handed and therefore an honest broker. Clinton had to persuade the UUP leadership that they were making the right choice in engaging. The DUP would indubitably retain their position as the DUP six page letter admonishing the US administration's Irish policy, given to Gore during Paisley's visit to the US shows.⁶⁶ Trimble also had to assist the US in persuading unionist voters of the potentially constructive outcome of this engagement. Unionists' suspicion of anything outside their community is profoundly rooted in their history that shaped this "behind the barricade mentality." A Northern Irish civil servant reported a very evocative example:

There was a debate Belfast City council in December 1995 on whether [Clinton] should be allowed to switch on the Christmas tree lights. Some people were against it. This was a tremendous publicity that any country would have prayed for. No, not in Northern Ireland. (...) It was thought that it might be a privilege given to the US president.⁶⁷

Barry White's personal experience summarises the impact of the trip on the Unionist community: 'Unionists did not really want to have him there because they felt he was coming on behalf of the Republicans. My father is a typical Unionist, not hard-line, moderate Unionist, by the end of the trip he was Bill Clinton's biggest fan.'⁶⁸

Beside the success of his speeches that touched both communities, Clinton used the trip to particularly appeal to Unionists. Soderberg described: 'whatever treatment we would give to the Irish, we would make sure that

⁶⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "DUP slams US Irish Policy", 27 Oct. 1995

⁶⁷ Private Interview with Northern Irish Official

⁶⁸ Barry White, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

Unionists got one more. We really bothered to make sure they knew that they were getting engaged at a higher level.’⁶⁹ Soderberg’s words reflect the US understanding of the Unionists refusal to agree to being treated on the same level as Republicans. Thus, a slightly better, but symbolically significant, treatment than Republicans rewarded the UUP’s desire to engage. Steven King confirmed the American strategy: ‘Once the visa issue was out of the way, there was a conscious effort to build communication. We were granted a higher position than others, like when Clinton travelled to Northern Ireland, he met with Gerry Adams on Falls Road but David Trimble was travelling in the President’s car.’⁷⁰ Trimble’s presence in the presidential limousine up to the Europa Hotel conferred some credence on the new leader, symbolically demonstrated the importance of the unionist community support in the peace process, and contributed to a greater international focus by the UUP. This event was also covered in the *Belfast Telegraph* as being a significant gesture from the US administration, quoting Trimble: “It is appropriate for the President to acknowledge the Ulster Unionists, Northern Ireland largest party, this way.”⁷¹

Contrary to the UUP leadership, Robinson expressed strong resentment vis a vis the Presidential visit. Robinson declared in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

We have the President arranging what at this moment in time is something like a NORAID tour going round all the nationalist areas he can find. (...) If [the meetings] are arranged with Sinn Féin, we will not be present. If the President wants to meet with the leader of our party in a private setting, I’m sure that could be arranged.⁷²

⁶⁹ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

⁷⁰ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

⁷¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Trimble Hitches on Presidential Limo”, 1 Dec. 1995

⁷² *Belfast Telegraph*, “DUP gives Clinton tough advice”, 16 Oct. 1995

Thus, if the US wanted to touch a part of the Unionist political community they had to find some kind of arrangement with the UUP as the DUP would always show more reluctance to it. This certainly explains the US delegation's gesture in offering a ride to the UUP leader. It was also an indication of the potential reward that would be conferred on those who engaged.

The evolution in public opinion can influence a leader's shift from one position to the other (Hauss, 2001, p.45). Thus, the fact that 67% of the Protestant population thought that 'Clinton's efforts have been moving the peace process forward' was significant.⁷³ Clinton's trip made the US involvement more acceptable to the unionist population and consequently helped the UUP leadership openly collaborate, if not fully, with the US administration. As Hazleton expresses it, 'following Clinton's 1995 Christmas visit to Belfast, Protestants, outside Ian Paisley's hard-line Democratic Unionist Party, were willing to concede greater impartiality on Washington's part' (2000, p.115). The DUP strategy remained unchanged as an article in the *Protestant Telegraph* published in January 1996 entitled "Clinton faced with the truth" shows. The article is an account of the meeting between Rev. Paisley and Clinton during the President's first trip to Northern Ireland. Once again, the American President is placed in a position of ignorance and needs to listen to Rev. Paisley's message.⁷⁴

⁷³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton scores huge success for peace visit, opinions on the future, policing and the Clintons", 18 Jan. 1996

⁷⁴ *Protestant Telegraph*, "DUP delegation take Ulster's case to the USA" May 1994
Protestant Telegraph, "Clinton faced with the truth", Jan. 1996

B-The Presidential visit, the twin-track initiative and Mitchell's second role

A key aspect of the visit was the official American support for the adoption of the twin-track initiative. The problem of decommissioning had been a delicate issue since the implementation of the cease-fires in 1994. Unionists along with the British government did not want any talks prior to paramilitary disarmament. 'Mr. Trimble said that he would never agree to take part in talks until the Irish Republican Army had agreed to start giving up the weapons.'⁷⁵ On the Republican side, decommissioning prior to any agreement was out of question.

Interestingly enough, Trimble declared that the "US [could not] remain neutral" on the decommissioning issue, asking the President to pressurise Republicans to decommission.⁷⁶ First, Trimble implicitly acknowledged US fairness. Secondly, his strategy was to take advantage of this "neutrality" to ask the US President to back the UUP in its bid for IRA decommissioning. Trimble appeared to try and take advantage of the willingness of the US to be an honest broker. This new attitude was in contrast to the UUP traditional position and widened the gap between the UUP and the DUP. It also demonstrated the UUP willingness to adopt a much more active attitude vis a vis US involvement.

⁷⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, "Clinton Exhorts Ulster To Drop 'Old Grudges'", 1 Dec. 1995

⁷⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Pressurise Sinn Féin", 6 Oct. 1995

Decommissioning also represented a major disagreement between London and Dublin. Bruton came to London to strike a deal with Major. Both Prime Ministers made a Joint Statement at 10 pm to announce their support for a twin-track approach and the creation of the IICD and the designation of George Mitchell to chair it and submit a report on the issue by mid-January (Major, 1999, p.483). The Irish and British governments seemed to have used Clinton's visit to make a declaration that could have been rejected in a different context. So, the presidential trip put pressure on both governments but especially on London who had been holding out for decommissioning prior to talks. As Caine argues, 'if Clinton was coming over, to put his weight behind the peace process, it is quite useful to produce evidence that you are moving rather than show the static aspect. So, the timing of the twin track approach is not entirely coincidental. There is no reason for them not to take advantage of the boost.'⁷⁷

Clinton announced his support for the twin-track approach. By doing so, the US President underlined his support for the governments' line and put pressure on local actors. It is worth remembering that 'the conservative government was rapidly losing its majority' and was therefore more vulnerable to the Unionists' position 'as the potential leverage of the Unionists was growing in proportion' (Morrow, 2000, p.29). In this regard, Clinton also appealed to the IRA exhorting it to accept the twin-track.⁷⁸

George Mitchell's appointment to chair the IICD was crucial. Mitchell was previously well known as Clinton's Economic Special Adviser on Ireland. He also organised the Economic Conference that took place in Washington in

⁷⁷ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

⁷⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton Plea to IRA, Take twin-track, urges President", 29 Nov. 1995

May 1995 as described in chapter three. If the choice was a symbolic gesture to express gratitude to Clinton for his help, it may also have guaranteed a positive report about the twin-track, which would almost certainly be supported by the three governments. In addition, it could introduce a future special envoy, appointed by the two concerned sovereign governments and therefore be more acceptable, or at least less objectionable, to reluctant Unionists. Nevertheless, Dermott Nesbitt argued 'The unionist population was very sceptical of George Mitchell being appointed.'⁷⁹

IV-MITCHELL'S REPORT ON DECOMMISSIONING

If Sinn Féin had not been allowed to take part in negotiations without the IRA decommissioning, the talks would have been obviously non-inclusive and would almost certainly have failed. It would consequently have increased the probability of a return to violence.

The remaining Ulster Unionists fear of international intrusion was chiefly linked to the nomination of Senator Mitchell to chair the IICD. The presence of two other foreign representatives, John De Chastelain, a Canadian General and Harri Holkeri, a former Finish Prime Minister was meant to balance the US involvement. An American official confirmed it: 'Mitchell was appointed to write stuff on decommissioning in Fall 1995 just before Clinton's first trip to Northern Ireland, they appointed De Chastelain and Holkeri as a sign of fairness

⁷⁹ Dermott Nesbitt (UUP), Stormont, 16 Mar. 2000

towards Unionists.’⁸⁰ Dublin and London anticipated the difficulty in obtaining the Unionists’ agreement for an American representative even if officially in an “independent commission”. More importantly, Mitchell’s nomination sounded like a reminder of Clinton’s promise to send a special envoy. From a unionist standpoint, his previous appointment as Clinton’s economic advisor on Ireland seriously reduced his neutrality.

When Mitchell’s report on decommissioning was released on 24 January 1996 (Cunningham, 2001, p. 98), its “stark point” was that “success in the peace process cannot be achieved solely by reference to the decommissioning of arms”.⁸¹ This statement was instrumental regarding the way the peace process had to be conducted in order to survive. The document also offered an alternative to both sides’ demands and re-affirmed the twin track approach as the only viable solution:

The parties should consider an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge. (...) If the peace process is to move forward, the current impasse must be overcome. While both sides have been adamant in their positions, both have repeatedly expressed the desire to move forward. This approach provides them that opportunity.⁸²

Trimble expressed reservations about the content of the report: “I don’t know whether the report has changed anything” but the UUP did not reject it as the DUP did.⁸³ Trimble in the same article said that decommissioning was not

⁸⁰ Private interview with US Official

⁸¹ IICD Report, para. 51

⁸² IICD Report, para. 34

⁸³ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Trimble condemns the Republic over documents ‘leaks’”, 24 Jan. 1996

only a “verbal commitment” but also an “action”. Trimble could indeed refer to the second principle bidding the parties to demonstrate ‘absolute commitment’ (...) to the total disarmament of all party paramilitary organisations’⁸⁴. Nonetheless, ‘that commitment does not include decommissioning prior to such negotiations.’⁸⁵ This statement implied that decommissioning was not a prerequisite but also did not prevent decommissioning prior to negotiations even if there was little chance of seeing any weapon handed over prior to talks. So, although the UUP said that ‘it would be “unthinkable” to simply abandon the requirement for decommissioning before all-party talks’ they also expressed their satisfaction at the prospect of elections prior to negotiations.⁸⁶

A key question is why the UUP finally agreed to start the negotiations without the IRA having given up a single weapon, renouncing one of their fundamental principles?

As Barry White argues, ‘I think it is typical David Trimble pragmatism. They say that politics is the art of the possible. You have to do what is possible (...). I understand it was basically that [decommissioning] was not going to happen.’⁸⁷ Maginnis’ argument also confirms this point: ‘you try to get an agreement, if there is something that is the best you can deliver you then can’t turn around and walk away from it and say if we had had better we might have negotiated something more valuable.’⁸⁸

⁸⁴ IICD Report, paragraph 20, principle b.

⁸⁵ IICD Report, paragraph 25.

⁸⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Nationalists warm to proposals”, 24 Jan. 1996

⁸⁷ Barry White, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

⁸⁸ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

Another crucial point in the IICD report was the positive view of elections. 'Elections held in accordance with democratic principles express and reflect the popular will. If it were broadly acceptable, with an appropriate mandate, and within the three-strand structure, an elective process could contribute to the building of confidence.'⁸⁹ Trimble argued that if the UUP accepted the report 'that was because Mitchell also opened the door to something else that we wanted. And that was, that the talks negotiation would be founded on an electoral mandate and we had put that to Mitchell. It was not reflected as strongly in the Mitchell's report as we thought it was going to be but it did provide the basis for the British government which had announced that there would be an election to Northern Ireland'⁹⁰

The recommendation of elections as a positive measure to build confidence between parties was a proposition that Trimble had made in September 1995 to defy Sinn Féin. Besides, if they obtained representatives, Sinn Féin would hold a mandate that would allow Ulster Unionists to engage in talks, at least indirectly, with them.⁹¹ This was certainly a tactic, but seeing it as another delaying move device by Unionists, Nationalists utterly opposed the idea. Pat Doherty, then Sinn Féin Vice-President declared: "Such a proposal outlined by Mr Trimble cannot bring peace. What is required is a new democratic accommodation involving all the people of Ireland."⁹² Tommy Gallagher, then the SDLP constituency representative for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, stated about the proposal of an elected assembly: "The immediacy [to advance peace]

⁸⁹ IICD Report, para. n. 56

⁹⁰ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

⁹¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble proposes SF talks in an Assembly", 23 Sep. 1995

⁹² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Sinn Féin 'no' to assembly", 2 Nov. 1995

should not be distracted from by silly tactical games.”⁹³ John Major endorsed the idea of elections prior to the beginning of the peace talks. This position was immediately conceived as a sign of favouring Unionists. An article in the *Belfast Telegraph* says that Major had to reassure Irish Prime Minister Bruton and John Hume on that point.⁹⁴ Cunningham suggested that Major’s moves in favour of elections was certainly motivated by the hope to see Unionists move forward (2001, p.98).

The new UUP leadership was aware of the impossibility of defending the status quo. It also appears to be a game of calculation. Trimble obtained a mention of the possibility of an election in Mitchell’s report. In that context, Clinton played a constructive role in backing Major about the election and indirectly putting pressure on the Nationalists to accept it, as Trimble would need a “popular mandate” to remain in the negotiations.⁹⁵ Michael Ancram, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) minister, meeting the US President at the White House said that if elections were organised, Unionists could accept talks prior to decommissioning.⁹⁶ Thus, the White House backed Trimble. This success from an Ulster Unionist perspective also represented the fruit of the UUP’s active engagement in the negotiation and their possible effectiveness. The US was no longer simply seen as a threat by the UUP but in some regards at least a possible vehicle to pressurise Sinn Féin.

Not only did the DUP reject the report but they also expressed opposition to the setting up of an independent international commission, to check the hand

⁹³ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Assembly calls a tactic: SDLP”, 7 Nov. 1995

⁹⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Major seeks way to salvage plan for forum”, 25 Jan. 1996

⁹⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton throws weight behind election proposal”, 31 Jan. 1996

⁹⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton throws weight behind election proposal”, 31 Jan. 1996

over and destruction of weapons. Paisley viewed the creation of the commission as internationalising “an issue which is at the very heart of the British government’s sovereign jurisdiction and its recommendations were always going to be used as a stick with which to beat those who do not accept the legitimacy of Sinn Féin/IRA.”⁹⁷ Thus, the DUP clearly announced its rejection of any peace talks since, as underlined in Mitchell’s report, the paramilitaries would not decommission prior to the beginning of the negotiations.

An explosion in the business area of Canary Wharf in London on 9 February 1996 put an end to one and a half years of IRA cease-fire. Major’s government received the blame for slowing down the pre-negotiation. The British government appeared to have been willing to go for what could be called the “isolation tactic” which meant to ostracise Sinn Féin as long as possible. On the other hand, the White House decided to keep close contact with Gerry Adams who was allowed in the US for the 1996 St Patrick’s Day, despite the resumption of the IRA campaign.

The UUP did not need to fear any controversy about their participation as Sinn Féin was excluded. Still, Sinn Féin’s absence was likely to imperil the talks. The party scored 15.7% in the Forum election on 30 May 1996. It was Sinn Féin’s best result ever obtained (O’Clery, 1996, p.243, Major, 1999, p.490). Such an electoral outcome reinforced the dilemma that their exclusion from the talks had engendered. It raised the democratic question, of 15.7% of the Northern Irish voting population not being represented in the peace talks making Sinn Féin’s absence even more critical than in 1974. Such a situation would inevitably lead to a questioning of the validity of an eventual agreement if one was achieved. As

⁹⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, “No talks until guns handover”, 24 Jan. 1996

a result, parallel negotiations with Sinn Féin were necessary to reintegrate them into the peace process.

V-MITCHELL'S APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE TALKS

This period saw the effective introduction of an international third-party in the peace talks, with Mitchell's appointment as chairman for the negotiations. Dublin and London jointly appointed Mitchell as chairman of the talks providing the legitimacy that any case involving a third-party requires as discussed in chapter one. Yet, despite the UUP greater engagement with the Americans, they were still extremely suspicious regarding US intentions. This appointment was viewed as a sign of American interference at a time when the UUP relations with the White House were tense due to Clinton's refusal to suspend official diplomatic links with Sinn Féin despite Trimble's request.⁹⁸ As Major perceived it, they saw Clinton's administration as susceptible to being easily influenced by Irish-American pressure (Major, 1999, p.483). In addition, Unionists may have perceived the Irish-American pressure on the US administration as even greater since Clinton was then running for a second term.

One American official claimed that 'the team was separated from the US government. They were appointed independently, they had no relation and no reports were sent. The US government was informed by the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain, the loyalists but not them.'⁹⁹ However, MacGinty's argument that 'George Mitchell's position as chair of the multi-party talks also means that the

⁹⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Envoy throws doubt on Clinton and Adams talks", 12 Feb. 1996

Belfast Telegraph, "Clinton Stands by Adams", 13 Feb. 1996

⁹⁹ Private interview with US official

White House has a direct line of communication to the heart of the Northern Irish talks' is practically unchallengeable (1997, p.14). It was clearly vital to Mitchell's team to be deemed independent to emphasize the fairness of their suggestions. As Caine argues 'given the circumstances and given who they were, it was in their interest to operate in such a way that they showed independence.'¹⁰⁰ Still, the presence of David Pozorski, a State Department official, in Mitchell's team leads to questions about its absolute independence from the US administration (De Chastelain, 1999, p.439). However, even if the American official is certainly right in stating that the team never transmitted any official report to the White House, it is implausible that Mitchell did not keep Clinton informed on a regular basis. It even seems to be one of the aspects that encouraged Mitchell's appointment as chairman, as Caine argues that 'having an American who was in a direct line with the President would be useful'.¹⁰¹ Even Ulster Unionists knew it, as Donaldson argued that 'undoubtedly, with Senator Mitchell chairing the talk-process, (...) he was the direct connection with the US administration.'¹⁰²

Thus, Mitchell's appointment produced two distinct attitudes in the Unionist political community. The UUP kept silent with the notable exception of the then deputy leader John Taylor who said that to appoint a Serbian-American to lead the talks about the future of Croatia would be the same (Mitchell, 1999, p. 47). The DUP and the UKUP rejected the appointment (Mitchell, 1999, p. 46-47). The UUP suspicion was based on three main factors. Steven King mentioned the first one, 'we did not know him. We only had his CV which presented him as

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

¹⁰² Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

a democratic liberal which did not seem very positive to us.’¹⁰³ This statement is exaggerated as Mitchell had made several trips to Northern Ireland prior to this appointment, first as economic advisor and second as head of the commission on decommissioning. Thus, the UUP knew Mitchell. The dilemma was, as Nesbitt argues, that ‘the Unionist population was sceptical about George Mitchell getting involved, they did not want him at all and they did not want the international opinion involved.’¹⁰⁴ Secondly, the UUP feared the extent of Mitchell’s power as chairman of the negotiation. And thirdly, they worried about the Irish-American influence through the White House connections with Mitchell’s team.

Nevertheless, among the ten parties that had representation in the Forum, seven were in favour of George Mitchell, two, the UKUP and the DUP, were against and the UUP made no statement (Mitchell, 1999, p. 47). Trimble’s silence actually saved George Mitchell. If Trimble had joined McCartney and Paisley, Mitchell would have had to leave, but as having been appointed by Dublin and London, this would certainly have led to the collapse of the peace process. Trimble did not want the blame to be put on the Unionist community (Mitchell, 1999, p.47). Thus, political requirements led the UUP to accept Mitchell as chairman of strand two of the talks. As Steven King argued, they agreed with his role once they had ‘watered down his position to the extent that it did not matter very much whether he chaired or not.’¹⁰⁵ Two articles in the *Belfast Telegraph* reflect King’s views. One article reports that ‘Mr. Trimble claimed a negotiating victory, saying he had deprived Mr. Mitchell of the role of political “supremo” at the talks’ another article the following week reports that

¹⁰³ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

¹⁰⁴ Dermott Nesbitt, Stormont, 16 Mar. 2000

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

the 'UUP seek to dilute Mitchell's power.'¹⁰⁶ The second article contradicts the first as Trimble had not managed to diminish Mitchell's power by June 19th. An allusion is also made in another article from the *Belfast Telegraph* stating that Clinton 'remained optimistic about the multi-party negotiations on Northern Ireland despite efforts to diminish the chairmanship role of George Mitchell.'¹⁰⁷

Mitchell himself explains that Trimble did not want him to establish the agenda and was against granting him power to establish strategies and write reports (Mitchell, 1999, p.47). The agreement or disagreement on Mitchell's chairmanship within the unionist political community highlights the division within unionism. Trimble tried to find a profitable solution without necessarily being more moderate in his personal convictions. An American official described him: 'Trimble is more complicated, he's an extreme hard-liner but he had to make some decisions at some point. He did it.'¹⁰⁸ Paisley represented, along with McCartney, a traditional Unionism based on the fear of the selling out of the Union. Both parties played on the primal panic within the unionist community to block the peace process like Rev. McCrea shouting at Trimble in front of the camera: "Ulster is not for sale" (McDonald, 2000, p. 169).

Both sides of Unionism knew that Mitchell's departure would automatically cause the collapse of the process not only because of Mitchell's status but also as Caine argues: 'finding a chairman for Strand 2 was just incredibly difficult.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "DUP fights on as Mitchell takes the Chair", 12 Jun. 1996

Belfast Telegraph, "Trimble in talks battle", 19 Jun. 1996

¹⁰⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble calls off America visit", 14 Jun. 1996

¹⁰⁸ Private interview

¹⁰⁹ Jonathan Caine, interview at Westminster, 20 Oct. 2003

The row over his nomination lasted until and even beyond the official beginning of the talks on 10 June 1996. Even though the talks started on that date, very little progress was made as the acceptance of Mitchell as a chairman took time. And then he left to assist Clinton in his campaign against Bob Dole.¹¹⁰ Mitchell's role effectively started after Clinton's second election therefore the way he handled his duty will be analysed in the following chapter.

CONCLUSION

The UUP appeared to have evolved their position in this period, displaying a progressive realisation that they would not be able to block or ignore the US administration as a third party. When elected leader of the UUP, Trimble was seen as a hard-liner but this reputation had a positive impact on his strategy. The US, British and Irish governments welcomed any potentially "conciliatory" decision he made since he was not expected to be so "flexible".

Nevertheless, the gradual engagement with the US, demonstrated by decisions, such as the creation of the Northern American office or Trimble's willingness to visit Washington almost immediately after his election, does not mean that reluctance to accepting US involvement had vanished. Therefore, the first Clinton presidency represents a gradual acceptance of the US playing a role in the peace process and some realisation that they could use it to their own benefit. It was not an easy journey and even if Ulster Unionists demonstrated a much more diplomatic attitude in some major events covered in this chapter, they

¹¹⁰ Mitchell George (1999), *Making Peace*, pp- 76-83

also, from time to time, came back to their traditional position, that is to say, boycott or protest.

Chapter four outlined a number of events where the US established their strong wish to be involved despite British reluctance and pressure. When the UUP responded by accepting a US role, however reluctantly, the Clinton team sought to re-assure them of their neutrality. Trimble's welcome to Washington, some of Clinton's activities during his first visit to Northern Ireland and the US support for twin-track decommissioning and elections intended to persuade the UUP of their neutrality. Ultimately there is evidence of a more positive UUP engagement. They went beyond simply seeking to limit US involvement and sought to use the US to pressurise Sinn Féin and the IRA.

Nonetheless, the US still took some decisions that the UUP resented or rejected. The most obvious case at the end of Clinton's first term is the UUP reaction to Mitchell's appointment as chairman of the negotiations. Their official silence masked serious efforts to diminish Mitchell's role within the talks. Yet, they accepted his remaining as chairman and were the only major Unionist party to do so.

The more active Unionist involvement was based on a new pragmatic approach that the rejection of a mediator would weaken their position. Mitchell's role as a mediator was fully legitimate as jointly guaranteed by the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The US backed Mitchell providing him with necessary leverage to secure his position as chairman. Thus, from a UUP standpoint, rejection was foolish and negative. This was a period of growing

acceptance by the UUP of a new international engagement that had been avoided for so long, and which had, prior to this, always been perceived as inevitably against Unionists' interests. Resistance to US mediation remained but now it was balanced with aspects of more balanced engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE

CLINTON'S SECOND TERM: THE US-UUP RELATIONSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF MEDIATION

INTRODUCTION

Bill Clinton's first term saw the progressive development of US involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process and its growing acceptance as a legitimate third party. His second term highlighted two main aspects of conflict mediation: firstly, participation in and contribution to the peace process through Senator Mitchell as chairman of the negotiations, complemented by Clinton's personal interventions and secondly, the monitoring of the implementation of the agreement.

While Clinton's second term began in January 1997 no real progress was made in terms of negotiation until after Blair's victory at the May 1997 General Election, and the renewal of the IRA cease-fire in July 1997 which allowed Sinn Féin to re-enter the negotiations. Sinn Féin's involvement triggered the launch of real inclusive talks.

According to Chester Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson, a potential third party can contribute to the resolution of a conflict in two ways. First, the third party can intervene 'through direct action and diplomatic initiatives' (1996, p.56). As Hazelton pointed out: 'in Northern Ireland, the British and Irish

governments jointly assumed the responsibility for this role, allowing the Clinton administration to intervene only on selected areas and/or as a last recourse' (2000, p.118).

The "third party" in Northern Ireland had the peculiarity to be actually composed to some extent of three governments, London, Dublin and to a lesser extent Washington DC. All three governments were contested in this role. The British government did not accept that their position was one of an interested actor, but portrayed themselves as a neutral mediator, whereas Northern Irish politicians from both sides clearly saw them as an actor and not as a possibly neutral intermediary. The Irish government's role was still a sensitive issue for Unionists who had struggled against it having any right to have a say in Northern Ireland's internal affairs. Indeed, while the Irish government always claimed to act in everyone's best interest, Fianna Fáil governments in particular also saw themselves as defenders of nationalist interests. Finally, the US government was the real external actor but, as explored in chapter four, its pro-nationalist reputation had generated hostilities among Unionists of all shades.

The second role for a third party that Chester Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson advocate is to define 'the parameters of tolerable behaviour and legitimise the principles by which settlement and membership in the global system can be achieved' (1996, p.56). As Hazleton rightly argues, 'it was in this area that Clinton administration concentrated most of its efforts' (2000, p. 118).

This chapter's main focus is to analyse the evolution of the interaction between the UUP and the US administration focusing on both Mitchell's and

Clinton's roles during the talks and after the agreement. It will examine how the UUP sought to take advantage of their relatively "cordial" relationship with the US once they were tolerated as a third party.

In particular, why did the UUP accept the US role as mediator whereas the DUP and the UKUP decided to bluntly reject it? Why did they decide to remain in the talks despite the DUP and UKUP walking out, knowing that they risked greater electoral threat within their own community? To what extent did the USA's potential leverage, once their official impartiality was observed, influence the UUP decision to stay and sign the agreement? On a wider debate of international mediation, to what extent does leverage promote success?

These questions will be addressed in this time period by an examination of six main events: Bill Clinton's re-election in November 1996; Labour's victory in Britain during the May 1997 general elections; the July 1997 IRA cease-fire and Sinn Féin entering the talks; the Good Friday Agreement and the American influence; Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland in September 1998; and finally, Mitchell's return to negotiations in September 1999.

I- THE UUP AND THE US ADMINISTRATION UNTIL SINN FEIN'S INCLUSION IN THE TALKS

A- Clinton re-election, November 1996

Clinton's re-election generated extensive media coverage in the *Belfast Telegraph* in sharp contrast to the coverage of the first election. As examined in chapter three, Clinton's first victory did not provoke much of a reaction within the unionist political community in general and almost none from the UUP. The greater coverage indicates the changes that occurred between November 1992 and November 1996, as perceived by a unionist daily newspaper. Clinton's re-election also ensured the continuation of a US role in the peace process in Northern Ireland, since it could have been pushed aside in the aftermath of a Dole victory. Mitchell's position as chairperson would have been considerably weakened if not undermined. Mitchell himself assured the Irish public that Clinton would remain strongly involved in the Northern Ireland issue if he won the elections.¹

The DUP and UKUP re-affirmed their position on the US President. Peter Robinson, DUP deputy leader, had even called the US President, "the White House groper" (McKay, 2000, p.18). More crucially, despite the impression that Clinton had convinced a majority of Unionists of his fairness during the 1995 trip to the province, this perception had faded away.

¹ *Irish Times*, "North still Clinton priority says Mitchell", 1 Nov. 1996

Original suspicion returned, articulated around the IRA break of cease-fire and Clinton's refusal to suspend diplomatic contacts with Sinn Féin leaders. 'The White House [...] quashed reports from London that Mr. Adams was being denied a visa to return to the US. Clinton administration officials have continued to talk to Mr. Adams, even after the first IRA bomb [9 February 1996].'² As McDonald states, this situation made 'the White House closer to Sinn Féin than the Irish Government, which had blocked more official meetings with Adams until the IRA cease-fire was restored' (2000, p.167).

In an article entitled "Unionists trust no other Leader", the *Sunday Times* reported the result of a survey conducted among 100 delegates at the Ulster Unionist Party Conference in October 1996.³ 'Although David Trimble, the party leader, claimed that American policy-makers were now taking Unionist concerns on board, delegates appeared unimpressed, with 80% saying they did not trust President Bill Clinton.'⁴ This survey occurred three weeks prior to the US presidential election and displayed the interviewees' lack of enthusiasm for his re-election. David Trimble was unable to convince active party members of US even-handedness.

At that stage of the electoral campaign, Clinton was likely to be re-elected as 'Dole [was] so far behind in the polls'.⁵ Edmund Curran, then *Belfast Telegraph* editor, asked in an article entitled, "Where do we stand?", 'if, as expected, President Clinton is re-elected to the White House for another four years, what will it mean to Northern Ireland?' This article is interesting for two

² *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, Who can deliver?, IRA Bombings Create Quandary for Adams And Irish Peace Process, 20 Feb. 1996

³ *Sunday Times*, "Unionists trust no other leader", 20 Oct. 1996

⁴ *Sunday Times*, "Unionists trust no other leader", 20 Oct. 1996

⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, "Dole tries to deliver Clinton knock out", 7 Oct. 1996

reasons. First, Curran wrote it from Washington. It means that a major unionist paper considered that the US involvement justified the expense of someone covering the story from the USA. It was in sharp contrast to the relative apathy that Clinton's 1992 victory had generated in unionist newspapers. Secondly, the author insisted that 'Clinton's re-election [was] vital to Ulster and the Peace Process.'⁶ Such a position diverged from the tone of the limited 1992 coverage which reflected unionist worries about a Clinton administration potential intervention.⁷

Clinton's victory was expected. However, the Irish-American vote was not a high profile part of the second electoral campaign. Despite Thompson's account of the creation of "the Irish-Americans for a Democratic Victory" to support Clinton's re-election and to ensure the continuation of the Irish agenda (2000, p.191), articles published during the 1996 election campaign highlighted the lower profile of the Northern Ireland issue. Mitchell himself declared that 'it [was] not a major factor in the American presidential campaign.'⁸ Mitchell had flown back to the US to help Clinton during the last stage of his campaign (Mitchell, 1999, pp.76-83).⁹ Edmund Curran corroborated Mitchell's statement indicating that 'not surprisingly, Northern Ireland is not an issue in this election.'¹⁰ This is not surprising in many respects. The US was already involved in Northern Ireland and Clinton was clearly going to stay involved if re-elected. This was widely accepted and Irish-American organisations did not need to

⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Where do we stand?", 5 Nov. 1996

⁷ See *Belfast Telegraph*, "Ulster View Raises fear on Clinton", 4 Nov. 1992, *Belfast Telegraph*, "'Hands off', Paisley warns Clinton", 4 Nov. 1992

⁸ *Irish Times*, "North still Clinton priority says Mitchell", 1 Nov. 1996

⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, "Dole tries to deliver Clinton knock out", 7 Oct. 1996, 'Mr Clinton looked for help from George Mitchell, his Northern Ireland envoy. Mr Mitchell played being Mr Dole in practice debates, preparing Mr Clinton for what Democrats expect will be a combative performance from the Republican challenger.

¹⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Where do we stand?", 5 Nov. 1996

lobby for it. Furthermore, Clinton did not require an ethno-electoral base to ensure victory in major states as he already had it. America had a strong economy. Therefore Clinton had proven his capacity as a leader to his supporters. His charisma led him to win the election but the Democratic Party lost the majority in Congress.¹¹ Nonetheless, Clinton's record secured him an even larger percentage of the Irish-American vote than he had achieved in 1992.

Furthermore, Lake stated in a speech three weeks before the election that: 'President Clinton remained firmly committed to helping Northern Ireland claim its future rather than its past.'¹² Among other statements on the issue, Al Gore was reported on 19 November 1996 to have 'promised that Clinton's administration would continue to play "a strong role" along the path of peace'.¹³ In addition, Lake argued "the [talks] will succeed most fully if all the parties-including Sinn Féin - are sitting at the same table. That is the firm belief of the British and Irish governments. It is also the firm belief of the United States."¹⁴

Anti-peace process UUP members still nurtured strong suspicions on the US president's real intention. Willie Ross declared that '[they] just saw him as a guy who was trying to get re-elected using the Irish situation and the Northern Irish for his own political benefit.'¹⁵ Ross' stance is very close to Vance's standpoint that 'the media were entirely directed at informing the domestic

¹¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Charisma Tops Poll", 6 Nov. 1996

¹² *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 8 Oct. 1996, Anthony Lake Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs remarks to the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

¹³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Voice of America, Gore's anger: IRA's ceasefire Breach was an outrage", 19 Nov. 1996

¹⁴ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, 8 Oct. 1996, Anthony Lake Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs remarks to the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

¹⁵ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

audience in the USA that Northern Ireland was a great foreign policy victory for president Clinton.¹⁶

On the pro-peace process side, Trimble, Donaldson and Molyneaux flew to Washington at the beginning of December to discuss the Northern Ireland issue with Vice-President Gore and Tony Lake.¹⁷ The US administration reportedly used this trip to persuade Trimble to accept “inclusive talks” which meant that the US intended to keep focused on their initial agenda despite the IRA being active again since February 1996.¹⁸ Even so, this trip also emphasises the great changes in the Ulster Unionists’ attitude. Trimble flew stateside less than a month after Clinton’s re-election, confirming Ulster Unionist interest in dynamically engaging with the US administration. Jeffrey Donaldson stated in the *Belfast Telegraph*: “we welcome this early opportunity to put our viewpoint to the new Clinton’s administration on the current political situation in Northern Ireland.”¹⁹ Likewise, Trimble’s declaration that “the US approach to the peace process was sound” deeply contrasted with the UUP initial approach on the US involvement.²⁰ The *Belfast Telegraph* news that the ‘UUP delegation [hoped] to be the first from Northern Ireland to meet the President since his re-election’ expresses the dramatic shift in the UUP’s US strategy.²¹ Trimble even praised ‘President Bill Clinton’s envoy, former Senator George Mitchell’.²²

¹⁶ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

¹⁷ *Financial Times*, “Trimble calls for ‘inclusive’ talks”, 5 Dec. 1996

¹⁸ *Financial Times*, “Trimble calls for ‘inclusive’ talks”, 5 Dec. 1996

¹⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton to get Ulster Briefing”, 30 Nov. 1996

²⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton to get Ulster Briefing”, 30 Nov. 1996

²¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Clinton to get Ulster Briefing”, 30 Nov. 1996

²² *Belfast Telegraph*, “Where do we stand?”, 5 Nov. 1996

Belfast Telegraph, “Tip for the Top, the White House pundits point to Mitchell”, 7 Nov. 1996

When Clinton was re-elected, continued unionist hostility could be observed. But, among some elite in the UUP and in the *Belfast Telegraph*, signs of a much greater acceptance of the reality of the US role were visible.

The changes in the new administration were officially announced on 7 December 1996. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, 'Mr Clinton [had] not picked a new team, but [had] essentially re-shuffled the old faces.'²³ Still, Lake and Soderberg's departure was a big change since they were the US administration's most active members on the Northern Ireland issue. As discussed in the previous chapters, Soderberg had been instrumental in influencing the President to make the decision to grant the visa to Adams. She was also known for her strong links with Hume.

Sandy Berger moved 'from number two at the NSC to the top spot.'²⁴ Even if Berger had been depicted as the "real chief of Foreign Policy" (Thompson, 2001, p.192), he seemed to have played a minor part in Northern Ireland affairs. He is for example very seldom mentioned with regard to Northern Ireland in British and Irish newspapers during his time at the head of the NSC. His role seems to contrast with the ones that Lake and Soderberg played in creating the favourable context for the US involvement. Berger did not need to do what his predecessors had done. Thompson provides another plausible explanation by stating that, to Berger, the Northern Ireland issue was 'going nowhere' even though he kept on being constantly informed by Mitchell about the evolution of the situation (2000, p.193).

²³ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton seems to wilt under prospect", 7 Dec. 1996

²⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton seems to wilt under prospect", 7 Dec. 1996

The fact that no other unfamiliar official was appointed was certainly reassuring for still highly suspicious Ulster Unionists. Besides, and more crucially, it also indicates a shift in the US administration Irish policy. With Mitchell remaining chairperson of the talks, the US administration could deal with the peace process in Northern Ireland itself rather than at the White House, as was the case during the previous four years. The UUP and the British government's greater flexibility vis a vis the US position within the peace process certainly helped this shift.

Despite their potential strong leverage, the US possibilities were considerably limited until May 1997 showing that leverage is not enough. Mitchell argued that Unionists absolutely wanted decommissioning to be completed before starting the negotiations (1999, p.88). The disagreement over decommissioning led to a stall in the talks as the Major government's tiny majority in the parliament conferred the UUP with the power to 'bring his government down by joining the opposition at anytime' (Mitchell, 1999, p.88). During a second interview, Caine confirmed it arguing that 'obviously between 1992 and 1997 the UUP would be quite important because of the small Conservative majority.'²⁵

Ulster Unionist influence on Major's government is also highlighted in contemporary newspaper headlines, such as the conservative *Daily Telegraph's* heading "Unionist threat to topple Major" and "Major saves himself with Ulster deal."²⁶ Ross reinforces it adding that '[Ulster Unionists] votes were not going to

²⁵ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 21 Oct. 2003

²⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, "Unionist threat to topple Major", 18 Nov. 1996

Daily Telegraph, "Major saves himself with Ulster deal", 24 Nov. 1996

be free.’²⁷ Nevertheless, Caine tried to minimise it claiming that ‘a number of people [had] over exaggerated the importance that the UUP had on John Major’s policy,’ and arguing that in spite of this narrow majority ‘John Major still went ahead with the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Documents.’²⁸ Caine does not mention that Molyneaux actually supported the Downing Street Declaration. Besides, if Caine’s viewpoint is reasonable, it does not consider the fact that, by January 1997, the British General Election was only four months away and Blair’s victory was highly probable. Trimble declared as early as December 1996 that ‘a Labour victory in next year’s general election would not materially affect the Northern Ireland peace process.’²⁹ Such a declaration suggests the very restricted influence that Major’s government had over the actors in the peace process. It also indicates that the UUP leader was at least ready to face the reality that the Labour Party would win.

Mitchell says that it took four months to prepare the agenda for the talks indicating the difficulty in obtaining a consensus (1999, p.84). Mitchell’s portrait of his task as chairman is an example of the limited possibilities for US action in the slow and very difficult progress of the talks until Blair’s election. This point along with the fact that Dublin and a much weakened British government were in charge of diplomatic initiatives seriously endangered the peace process. Sean Neeson highlights this: ‘the first year of the talks was totally frustrating, 1996-97, there was discussion over standing orders and things like that, that went on, dragged on, for many, many months.’³⁰

²⁷ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

²⁸ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 21 Oct. 2003

²⁹ *Financial Times*, “Trimble calls for ‘inclusive’ talks”, 5 Dec. 1996

³⁰ Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

A US official even goes further: 'Tony Blair's election with a landslide victory against John Major changed the political landscape. (...) Important evidence is the fact that since March 1997 there was no more talks. Major's possibilities were limited because of his lack of majority,' adding that 'the huge majority gave Blair the possibility to do more or less what he wanted. He might have been able to implement a certain amount of reforms without the Unionists' agreement. Unionists knew it and accelerated the peace process since they did not want to see some disadvantaged reforms implemented.'³¹

'The Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue was suspended by the Government [on March 10th] until after the general election.'³² Thus, inertia in the talks marked the first six months of Clinton's second term. It demonstrates that despite its strong leverage, the US was powerless in a situation where the British government itself was incapable of ensuring the progress of the talks. It indicates the necessity for the third party to obtain the active support of all major actors engaged or else the mediator's capacity is seriously limited. Blair's victory appears to have had a major impact on their resumption, in some changes in the US position and also the UUP strategy, as discussed in the next section.

B- Blair's victory and its impact on the UUP-US relationship

Trimble declared 'We were comfortable with the incoming Labour government. The fact that it had a better relationship with Washington was not really something that entered too much into account in our vision.'³³

³¹ Private Interview with US official

³² *Daily Telegraph*, "Ulster forum put on hold", 11 Mar. 1997

³³ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, 8 Apr. 2004

However, the majority of respondents interviewed for this dissertation identified Blair's election with a 'majority of 179 seats' (Arthur, 2000, p. 246) as a momentum for change in the Northern Ireland peace talks. Thus, the goal of this subdivision is to examine to what extent the change of government facilitated the US role and therefore influenced the UUP strategy. A brief discussion on the Ulster Unionists' perception of the new Labour government is necessary to gauge its impact on the potential role of the US at this time.

1-Ulster Unionists and the new Labour government

Thompson's argument that Blair shared the same viewpoint as his predecessor is valid (2000, p. 194). The Labour party policy evolved from a policy of a united Ireland by consent towards a much more pro-constitutional status quo position during Blair's time in the shadow cabinet. This evolution is confirmed in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* reporting that 'Tony Blair, the Labour leader, indicated [on 13 December 1996] that his party had finally abandoned its Northern Ireland policy of encouraging "unity by consent" in favour of abiding by the wishes of the majority in Ulster.'³⁴ Major's words reflect this consensual approach of both governments: 'Coming into the government, [Blair] promised a continuity of approach, and he stood by all the agreements we had made' (1999, p. 493). According to Trimble, 'on the consent principle Blair was stronger than Major, on decommissioning Blair was weaker than Major.'³⁵ Thus, the changes were not ideological but rather strategic.

³⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, "Blair's speech signals a shift to 'majority consent' Ulster policy", 14 Dec. 1996

³⁵ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

Blair's huge majority at Westminster, as an American official argued, 'gave [him] the possibility to do more or less what he wanted. He might have been able to implement a certain amount of reforms without the agreement of the Unionists.'³⁶ Even if the US official declaration is somewhat exaggerated, Blair did not endure the Unionists' pressure as much as Major (especially by the end of his term) did.

The Unionists' reaction to Blair's victory varied. Ross argued that this victory 'was wholly detrimental to the Unionist position.'³⁷ As discussed in chapter one, Unionists traditionally have distrusted the British government's intentions in Northern Ireland. One US official's words confirmed this perception: 'there was a strong distrust between the Unionists and the British.'³⁸ David Vance's words summarise the Unionists' general approach: 'the conservative administration, predominantly Thatcher's administration, did take a slightly tougher approach in relation to trying to defeat the terrorists.'³⁹ Thus, Unionists traditionally perceived the Conservative Party as more sympathetic to their position than the Labour party albeit, as Vance recalled it, 'that is not to forget that the process of appeasing terrorists began then. And Tony Blair has followed on that dishonourable process of appeasement. So, what has to be remembered in that British policy? Britain does not have any friend only interests.'⁴⁰ Thus, from a Unionist standpoint, the Conservative or Labour parties' positions regarding Northern Ireland were not that different. As Maginnis argued 'I don't think it matters which government it is now. We've

³⁶ Private Interview with US official

³⁷ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

³⁸ Private Interview with US official

³⁹ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

⁴⁰ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

stopped being naïve and believing that because people tell us things that they are naturally true. We're having to negotiate and to put safeguard. We've learnt how to negotiate.'⁴¹

McDonald says that Trimble made a risky choice in attending the Labour annual conference in Blackpool on 2 October 1996 where he gave a well-regarded speech detaching himself from his reputation of being a hard-liner. This participation, the first by a UUP member in twenty years, broke with the traditional relationship with the conservative party and led to the beginning of a new relationship with the Labour Party (2000, p.175). Trimble confirmed it: 'With regard to the incoming Blair administration, we had had quite a lot of contacts with Blair in the run up to the 1997 election and we were quite comfortable with him and his approach (...). Blair was absolutely clear and immovable on what people call the consent principle.'⁴² The UUP strategy demonstrated strong pragmatism as they anticipated the Labour Party victory. McGimspey argued, "I knew that Labour would be in government within six months and I thought that Trimble should go to Blackpool" (McDonald, 2000, p.175). Thus, contrary to the traditional Unionist attitude, the UUP leadership crucially demonstrated their pragmatism if not new friendship with a potential Labour government, as no other option was available.

A Labour government could actually benefit Unionists. Their virtual influence over the Tories was also a source of strong pressure as they were expected to use their power over them and obtain what they wanted. An

⁴¹ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

⁴² David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

illustration of this pressure is visible in Willie Ross' critical analysis of Trimble's attitude toward the conservative government.

Whenever he came to the office as leader in September 1995, the government of John Major at that time was waiting two years, two parliamentary years before the next general election. He could not really have survived that without the good will of Ulster Unionists votes in the commons.[...] Unfortunately, within a matter of weeks, two or three weeks, David Trimble said that he wanted an election in the Northern Ireland assembly so that he could talk to Sinn Féin. As soon as the government heard that they said "we are now off the hook", then they would talk for a year and at that time the general election would be over. David Trimble walked straight into the trap.⁴³

Willie Ross omits that despite the Unionists' potential leverage over Major, it could not lead anywhere as the suspension of the talks in March 1996 demonstrated. Unionists' leverage could just act negatively to collapse the talks. They could not achieve positive measures.

Tony Blair's election as the new Prime Minister may also have acted to break with the routine of the situation that lead to the stalemate, and boost negotiations (Zartman, 1995, p. 16). The interesting point during that period of time is the UUP attitude. Indeed, the UUP would have traditionally welcomed a stalled process as their only motivation was to preserve the status quo and the collapse of the talks might have this effect. It seems that Trimble came to the conclusion that the Labour Party despite their more pragmatic relationship with Unionists would not allow the status quo to continue. This was clearly visible in their wish to see the restoration of an IRA cease-fire. They were also a new

⁴³ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

reforming government. As Sean Neeson rightly argues 'once the Labour came into power, it was a new impetus, fresh blood.'⁴⁴ The UUP knew they could not prevent all reforms and walking away or adopting a negative attitude would only weaken their position with the new government. Ultimately, as with the crucial US involvement the UUP had little choice but to continue with a policy of active engagement. Moreover, it could also bring them some benefits as shall be demonstrated in the next subdivision.

2- The Ulster Unionist Party and the new Anglo-American relationship

The new Blair-Clinton relationship was not necessarily seen as a threat to Unionists' interests as the new government was in a stronger position to influence the White House into pressuring Irish Republicans. One possible indication of the Labour government's better position was Clinton's direct address to Irish Republicans in a speech at Westminster in May 1997: "You can't say we'll talk and shoot. We'll talk when we're happy and shoot when we're not."⁴⁵

Moreover, as regularly mentioned, the UUP knew that the US involvement was inevitable. The change of government reinforced this reality. Clinton and Blair had a cordial relationship.

⁴⁴ Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

⁴⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton and Blair forge new partnership", 30 May 1997

Arthur clearly indicates Clinton's greater personal involvement in the Northern Ireland issue: 'no sooner had Blair become Prime Minister than he received a call from President Clinton at 4 a.m. on 2 May with a request for fresh negotiations on Ireland' (2000, p.246).

The Labour Party's coming to power after four years of the US administration's progressive involvement and four years of witnessing the quarrels with the Tories certainly represented a serious advantage for Blair. The shift is symbolically illustrated in a quotation by first Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam, in her book, *Momentum*: 'Now, at an important moment in the talks process, the British, Irish and US governments stood together, shoulder to shoulder on the road to peace in Northern Ireland' (2002, p.204). It emphasised the closer collaboration between the three governments instilling greater leverage among the circle of "mediators".

Mowlam's visit to Washington at the end of May 1997 was not only another sign of the British Government's greater acknowledgement of the importance of the US role in the negotiations, but also a reminder that the US should cooperate as well. Indeed, Mowlam's key objective was to ask the US administration to assist the British government in obtaining an IRA announcement of a new cease-fire, to re-integrate Sinn Féin as the talks were supposed to resume at the beginning of June 1997. Mowlam declared: "Any assistance we get to move Sinn Féin and the peace process would be very much appreciated."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Emotional Mo Faces US Visit", 23 May 1997

Barry White argued that the UUP had rather cordial relationships with the Labour Party prior to Blair's victory - 'David Trimble and John Major did not have as strong a relationship as David Trimble and Tony Blair.'⁴⁷ Donaldson confirmed that the UUP saw some advantages in the situation: 'Tony Blair and Bill Clinton had a good relationship and I think that helped to improve the US administration's attitude toward the Northern Ireland peace process.'⁴⁸

Therefore, although the election of a Labour government might have been expected to heighten unionist fears and lead to a crisis, this did not happen. The UUP saw no other option apart from an engagement and some in the UUP, such as Trimble and Donaldson, hoped that an improved Anglo-American relationship would result in greater US pressure on Sinn Féin and the IRA. Again the UUP assumed that the US could be moved toward a position more supportive of their interests. No longer was the US simply assumed to be a threat.

C- The IRA cease-fire and Sinn Féin entering the talks

The three governments presented a common front at the time of the second IRA cease-fire. A British official declared that Blair "[felt] the atmospherics in relation to the Irish government, the American government and the other parties [were] good" and added that the British Prime Minister "counted the support of the US President, Bill Clinton [...] to be a crucial factor in the international pressure which could bring about a cease-fire."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Barry White, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

No shade of Unionism welcomed the cease-fire. Their position was naturally the reflection of the strategy they had launched since the beginning of the peace talks. This cease-fire certainly resulted in an increasing gap between pragmatic and hard-line streams of Unionism. It also contributed to the UUP's deeper isolation from the rest of the unionist community.

Mo Mowlam used a more conciliatory approach than her predecessor organising two meetings with Sinn Féin, one on 21, and the other on 28 May 1997 (Thompson, 2001, p.194). Moreover, Mowlam's firmness in putting pressure on the actors to find an alternative to the deadlock on decommissioning seemed to have pushed Ulster Unionists into a more conciliatory approach. An internal UUP document entitled "Pathways to Peace" dated 4 March 1997 stipulated that 'to tolerate [Sinn Féin/IRA] presence [in the talks could] also be interpreted as tolerating their actions.'⁵⁰ Still in the same document, the author (anonymous) does not mention decommissioning but just that 'Unionists hope that there will be an opportunity to explore the views recently expressed by John Hume and others, that the talks can continue without Sinn Féin/IRA.'⁵¹ This statement of position within the party reflects the UUP's total opposition to Sinn Féin's presence at the negotiation table. In that sense, the issue was not about a timing of decommissioning, but an absolute rejection of negotiating with "terrorists". Decommissioning was not the sole reason for the UUP opposition to 'inclusive talks'. Nevertheless, this document was written when the talks were about to be suspended, therefore, when discussions were leading nowhere.

⁵⁰ Ulster Unionist Party, "Pathways to Peace within the Union", 4 Mar. 1997

⁵¹ Ulster Unionist Party, "Pathways to Peace within the Union", 4 Mar. 1997

Once the Labour government took power and announced that it would seek to proceed on the basis of including Sinn Féin within the talks, the UUP position shifted. This is at least what transpires from Trimble's official declaration about UUP expectations from Republicans. In an interview given to BBC radio on 25 June 1997, Trimble stated: "Our view is that there has to be substantial decommissioning of weapons immediately after entry into talks, that is before entry into substantive negotiations."⁵² This declaration suggests that the UUP was officially ready to let Sinn Féin join the talks in exchange for a demonstration of IRA good will. This was a clear shift from their previous rejection of any Sinn Féin involvement.

As Mowlam describes it, the IRA cease-fire triggered the announcement by the DUP and the UKUP that 'they were going to pull out of the talks' (2002, p. 114) leaving the UUP alone to follow them or not. The cease-fire declaration therefore accentuated the existing division and defined every one's role in the peace process. Indeed, as discussed in chapter one, according to Zartman, each actor adopts a specific position within negotiations (1995, p.18). If Zartman's framework is applied to the Northern Ireland peace process, the DUP and UKUP form the group of destabilisers within the Unionist community as 'they are against every proposal and want to see the problem settled (...) in a context of will and power rather than compromise' (1995, p.18). Opposite to them, were the UUP and PUP which can be portrayed as the stabilisers as they 'search for an agreement at any price to avoid the consequences of a non-settlement' (1995, p.18). The term "any price" has to be carefully taken in the context of the UUP and PUP as the UUP would certainly not have stayed under any condition but their position as stabilisers was based on their realisation that their choices were

⁵² *The Independent*, "Unionists query new peace plan", 25 Jun. 1997

clearly limited and that they certainly really wanted to avoid the “consequences of a non-settlement” which would have served the UKUP and the DUP’s interests within the Unionists community. Indeed, if the UUP was primarily hesitant, the PUP demonstrated huge support for the talks and was perhaps critical in Trimble’s decision to stay. Ervine stated that “every time Unionism runs from the talks table it runs to a worse circumstance” adding that “no one will defend the right of unionists better than a unionist.”⁵³

As expected, the DUP reacted aggressively, delighted to see the prospect of the end of the talks. Robinson declared on 19 July 1997: “I think the certainty is that the talks process is all but over” adding that “if Sinn Féin/IRA are injected into the talks process, it’s certain that there will be no unionist sitting around that table with them.”⁵⁴ This statement demonstrates that the DUP expected their walking out to provoke the collapse of the talks. They also certainly expected the UUP to quit too. But Trimble declared on the 21 July: “we are not going to walk out, but we’ll continue to try and find an agreement.”⁵⁵ If Robinson was right in declaring that “the talks could not go on without Unionists”⁵⁶, they could go on without the DUP.

Blair and Ahern had welcomed the cease-fire as a new possibility to boost the talks. ‘In Washington, President Bill Clinton hailed the announcement as a moment of great possibility, and said: “On the basis of this cease-fire, implemented unequivocally, my administration will work with Sinn Féin as with the other political parties.”’⁵⁷

⁵³ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionists must talk warns, PUP”, 21 Jul. 1997

⁵⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “PM welcomes end to violence”, 19 Jul. 1997

⁵⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, “We Won’t Quit Talks”, 21 Jul. 1997

⁵⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Crunch talks as the arms debate rages”, 21 Jul. 1997

⁵⁷ *The Observer*, “Cease-fire: in Ireland braces itself for Peace”, 20 Jul. 1997

McCurry, the White House Press Secretary, stated:

We hope and believe that this is the moment of opportunity. (...) At the same time, the President has been quite clear in saying that the institution of the cease-fire should be permanent and unequivocal. (...) We laud those unionists and loyalists elements that have been refrained from violence on themselves over these many months. And we hope that restraint will continue to adhere.⁵⁸

It is worth noting that journalists asked two questions directly referring to Unionists' reactions to the new cease-fire and the role that the US administration intended play toward the Unionist community. No such questions were asked during the briefing of the White House on 31 Aug. 1994, and unionists were then called Protestants.⁵⁹ Such an attitude suggests a noticeable improvement of knowledge of Ulster Unionism in the US certainly due to the UUP agreement to engage with the US administration and their efforts to bring their case to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

All the attention was on Trimble and the UUP after the DUP and UKUP's departure. The UUP leadership's decision to remain in the talks needs to be placed in the context of that time. First, the UUP was then by far the biggest Unionist party. They had won 10 seats at the last Westminster election whereas the DUP only had two.⁶⁰ The *Belfast Telegraph* argued that: 'two of the unionist parties, representing about 18% at the general election have walked out, but so long as the UUP, with 28%, remains, the peace process can continue in

⁵⁸ White House Press Secretary, Micheal McCurry, Holds Regular News Briefing, 21 Jul. 1997

⁵⁹ See Ch. 3, p. 139

⁶⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Ulster's new MPs", 3 May 1997

some form.’⁶¹ Indeed, the UUP had won 1/3rd of the seats during the local elections on 21 May. As Mitchell argued, it was a positive event as the UUP accepted him as the chairman of strand two and also the preliminary agenda (Mitchell, 1999, p.104). Thus, the UUP benefited from a popular mandate that provided legitimacy for their remaining in the process.

However, as Mowlam argued: the DUP walk-out ‘would clearly make things worse for David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party. He would be facing Sinn Féin without a united front of unionism and, whatever he did, [Paisley] and [McCartney] would snipe at him viciously’ (2002, p.115). Nevertheless, this isolated position was both advantageous and inconvenient. Trimble could use his precarious situation to gain a more conciliatory attitude to the unionist position from others. He could also play on his instrumental position to make demands and consequently reinforce his level of leverage. Ulster Unionists had not decided to remain in the talks to be conciliatory but to ensure the representation of the unionist position to maximise the benefits from the process, and because they thought they had no choice. This was the case as soon as the IRA announced the cease-fire as ‘Blair came under pressure from Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble to toughen up the British and Irish governments’ proposals requiring the hand over of the IRA weapons during the all-party talks due to start on 15 September, or face a walkout by his party capable of wrecking the talks’⁶². The UUP boycott of the talks for two days when they resumed on the 15 September illustrates it (Thompson, 2001, p.197).

⁶¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Staying put at Stormont; Peace train: A chance to test Sinn Féin”, 24 Jul. 1997

⁶² *The Observer*, “Cease-fire: in Ireland braces itself for Peace”, 20 Jul. 1997

Trimble's "tactic" was also, at least officially, to pressure the other actors and especially to persuade the British government to exclude Sinn Féin from the negotiations and the US to support such a move or at least not oppose it. The DUP and UKUP, as they had walked, did not have any means of pressuring the government. These changes in the Unionists strategy were also clarified in the *Belfast Telegraph*:

The most hopeful sign that all is not lost, however, is Mr Trimble's comment: "We are not in the mode of walking out." Others have done so, or are on the starting blocks, and on past performance the UUP would have been part of a mass boycott. Times have changed, however, and there is an acceptance in Glengall Street that there is a wider audience judging its reaction to what appears to the outside world to be a Sinn Féin change of heart. Whatever Unionists may think of the permanence of the IRA cease-fire, they have to avoid the accusations of intransigence that would surely follow a collapse of the talks process.⁶³

Trimble's wider audience presumably includes the USA. A walkout would not be understood outside the Unionist community. After the failure of the AIA, the UUP was strategically pre-disposed to remain at talks if possible. The US dimension increased the cost of walking-out. Trimble argued, "we are not prepared to tolerate Sinn Féin being portrayed as a party of peace and Unionists as a problem." He added that "the truth is that Unionists are genuine democrats, but if they are outside the process that truth will not be recognised."⁶⁴

⁶³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Time for leadership; Tactical moves: Bilateral talks may be the way forward for Trimble", 22 Jul. 1997

⁶⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Unionists go in", 17 Sep. 1997

Trimble's words were still impregnated in the unionist traditional rhetoric: "we are not going to run away from [Sinn Féin]. We are not there to negotiate with them but to confront them."⁶⁵ It is also important to notice that Ulster Unionists refused to have direct contacts with Sinn Féin members, with Mitchell playing the intermediary between both parties (Mitchell, 1999, p.123). The UUP strategy at the beginning of the talks was clearly meant to obtain Sinn Féin's expulsion as reported in the *Belfast Telegraph*.⁶⁶

However, the British government followed a different agenda demonstrating the Unionists lack of leverage on Blair. They continued their conciliatory approach in announcing the reduction of the number of troops in Northern Ireland on 28 July 1997 with White House backing.⁶⁷ The reduction of the troops can be viewed as a reward for the cease-fire. This attitude contrasts with the former Conservative approach that the cease-fire was a duty not a privilege. Moreover, Blair was about to meet Adams at Downing Street and envisaged shaking hands with him, which was a gesture of the highest value in terms of Adams' acknowledgement as a politician.⁶⁸

Equally crucial, the US administration announced that the IRA was no longer on the list of terrorist organisations at the beginning of October 1997. Such a decision generated fury among the UUP. 'Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist party security spokesman, accused the Clinton administration of being

⁶⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Unionists go in", 17 Sep. 1997

⁶⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble to Face Adams, Date is fixed for clash on IRA links", 19 Sep. 1997

Belfast Telegraph, "Stormont showdown, Ulster Unionists in bid to have Adams ejected from talks", 23 Sep. 1997

Belfast Telegraph, "Lack of Proof means Sinn Féin stays", 25 Sep. 1997

Belfast Telegraph, "Trimble accuses Mo over Talks", 25 Sep. 1997

⁶⁷ *The Independent*, "Troop levels reduced on Ulster streets", 29 Jul. 1997

⁶⁸ *Sunday Time*, "Blair set to meet Adams for Ulster talks boost", 5 Oct. 1997

“slow to learn”, saying it had been caught out and embarrassed by the ending of the last IRA cease-fire, in February 1996.⁶⁹ The fact that the official announcement took place a day after Trimble’s visit to the US also demonstrates the limited influence that the UUP had in the USA. Moreover, the US would never have made such a decision without the British government’s consent. The British and US governments seem to have prepared a context that made Sinn Féin exclusion implausible. It consequently reduced the UUP room to manoeuvre, as the DUP and UKUP were then preparing ‘for a province wide campaign against the process’.⁷⁰ Perhaps more importantly, ‘leading Unionists, marshalled by Willie Ross, MP for Londonderry East and head of the party’s executive, [were] manoeuvring against the party leader’⁷¹ accusing ‘his party of “retreating” on the issue of decommissioning’.⁷²

Why then did the UUP remain in the talks? From a detractor’s viewpoint, Willie Ross argued that “ego” was at the origin of Trimble’s decision to stay, as ‘he could not bring himself to admit that he may have made a mistake.’⁷³ However, Trimble’s options were extremely limited.

For example, his isolation within the unionist political spectrum, with only Alliance Party and the loyalist parties’ support, was a heavy burden, as any mistake could be lethal in terms of constituency support. Therefore, he needed to provide hints of a real progress but with indication of firmness. But Trimble

The Observer, “Blair’s dilemma: Should he shake hands with Adams?”, 12 Oct. 1997

⁶⁹ *Financial Times*, “Anger as US drops IRA from banned terrorist list”, 9 Oct. 1997

⁷⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionist Row Rages”, 30 Sep. 1997

⁷¹ *Financial Times*, “Shaking hands all round: Trimble holds the key to Ulster peace deal”, 14 Oct. 1997

⁷² *Belfast Telegraph*, “Unionist Row Rages”, 30 Sep. 1997

⁷³ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

‘[told] his colleagues, by way of reassurance, that just as the IRA’s cease-fire is tactical, so were the talks in which the Ulster Unionists are engaged.’⁷⁴ This quotation of Trimble’s state of mind is crucial as it embodies the leader’s pragmatism. As Caine argues: ‘the history of unionist protest over the past twenty years has hardly been very successful. So, the other option is to get involved in the negotiation to get the best deal possible.’⁷⁵

Besides, on the international level, as a senior British official stated it, Trimble “would lose the respect of world opinion if after all this hard work he took his bat away now.”⁷⁶ In addition, if the talks collapsed the blame would be put on the UUP, which had positioned itself as being pro-negotiation rather than the DUP, which was attending the talks without supporting them from day one. Therefore, as Steven King argued, ‘the US impact was important in 1997 when the talks started and everybody was concerned about the blame game. Nobody wanted to be blamed for the failure. If we had been blamed the US would have talked to London which would then had come to see us.’⁷⁷ Therefore, if the UUP were certainly not satisfied with the conciliatory approach that the new government had taken, they had no choice but to demonstrate flexibility.

In fact, at that stage of the process, David Trimble had no choice but to remain in the negotiation not only to keep his credibility but also to preserve what Unionists could still protect. Such a precarious position seems to have been the lot of Trimble during the negotiations, facing external and internal pressure up to the end of the negotiation that led to the Good Friday Agreement. The UUP

⁷⁴ *Financial Times*, “Shaking hands all round: Trimble holds the key to Ulster peace deal”, 14 Oct. 1997

⁷⁵ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 21 Oct. 2003

⁷⁶ *The Observer*, “Ceasefire in Ireland braces itself for Peace”, 20 Jul. 1997

⁷⁷ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

clearly felt they had no choice but to remain involved. Walking away seemed the worse option. Their engagement at this time was still largely defensive and reactionary. However, there are signs of a more positive attitude to US mediation. A number of senior UUP figures thought that in the post-election context that Tony Blair may be able and willing to seek to pressure the US. They also hoped that an improved Anglo-American relationship might make this possible and see some US pressure on Sinn Féin. Nonetheless, these strategic hopes were tentative at this time.

II- THE SIGNATURE OF THE GFA, THE US INFLUENCE: AN ULSTER UNIONIST PERSPECTIVE

This section does not intend to provide a detailed account of the talks but focuses on the final period, running to the Agreement in April 1998. London and Dublin's joint publication and, with the US official support, of the one page document, *Proposition on Heads of Agreement*, on 12 January 1998 'to add some much needed impetus' illustrates the unproductiveness of the discussions up to that point (Hennessey, 2000, p.115).⁷⁸

Besides, newspaper articles also underlined the slow progress. For instance, the *Belfast Telegraph*, on 16 December 1997, reported that 'the SDLP appealed to talks chairman George Mitchell (...) to help kick-start the Stormont negotiations'.⁷⁹ Moreover, the Ulster Unionists' position on the institutional

⁷⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton plans 'push for peace' Ulster trip", 8 Feb. 1998 'American support for the outline settlement now being discussed by parties at the talks would not be deflected even if the republicans pulled out, he said, adding that there would be "no way back."'

⁷⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Mitchell Faces New Talks Push", 16 Dec. 1997 and also *Belfast Telegraph*, "Mitchell in pledge to back talks", 17 Dec. 1997

future of the province still strongly diverged from the SDLP as late as April, as summarised in the *Daily Telegraph*:

The Ulster Unionists and SDLP could not agree on how an Ulster assembly should operate. David Trimble, the UUP leader, was pushing for a committee-style body with minimalist powers that would restrict Sinn Féin's impact while Mr Hume advocated a cabinet-style model exercising collective responsibility on the Westminster model. There was also disagreement on the proposed make-up of cross-border institutions. The UUP said it wanted limited contact with the Republic but the SDLP and Sinn Féin argued for north-south structures rooted in an inter-governmental council made up of ministers in Belfast and Dublin.⁸⁰

This extract dates back to 1 April 1998, eight days before the talks' deadline. The two positions described above were then utterly irreconcilable. However, Trimble's team signed the Good Friday Agreement nine days later.

The agreement contained the formation of a local government with a First Minister as chief of the Executive branch jointly holding office with a Deputy First Minister from the minority to create a balance of power. Ministerial posts are proportionally attributed to parties.⁸¹ The accord also creates a North-South Ministerial council to discuss subjects of common interest between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and cross-border authorities in a limited number of areas.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, "Blair acts over Ulster impasse", 1 Apr. 1998

⁸¹ Belfast Agreement, Strand I, Art. 15 and 16

⁸² Belfast Agreement, Strand II, Art. 1 and 2

Therefore, in spite of the effective replacement of the AIA, the affirmation of the principle of consent to constitutional change and the amendment of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, the type of institutions implemented were close to the nationalist aspirations. Why then did the UUP finally sign it?

The UUP justified its support for the agreement in a pamphlet entitled "Understanding the Agreement" published in May 1998 aimed at convincing the Unionist electorate to vote "yes" at the referendum. The pamphlet insisted that the inclusion of the principle of majority consent to constitutional change made the Union more secure. It also highlighted the amendment of articles two and three of the Irish constitution, arguing that 'the UUP has persuaded the Republic to change [them] in such a way as to remove the territorial claim.'⁸³ It claimed that there was an effective Unionist veto over the North and South Council 'because all decisions must be by agreement.' It also argued that the GFA represented the effective overthrow of the Framework documents and of the AIA. The GFA also dealt with the issue of decommissioning which is 'to get under way during the summer and be finished by May 2000'. It also insisted on the importance of the British-Irish Council as 'it locks Northern Ireland into a British isles framework.' It says that the existence of a Unionist veto in the assembly ensures Unionists have a say on every decision but omits to mention that the system also ensures a minority veto. Ultimately, it highlights Tony Blair's letter to Trimble in which he assured 'that if the provisions [that all parties are committed to "non violence and exclusively peaceful and democratic means"] in the Agreement are not strong enough he will introduce the necessary

⁸³ UUP Publication, "Understanding the Agreement, an Ulster Unionist Perspective", May 1998

legislation', emphasising the idea that 'the UUP will not serve in the Executive Committee with any party which is not genuinely committed to peace.'

The description of the advantages that the Agreement would bring for Unionists is based on the interpretation that Unionists can block every institution whenever they want to, and to retreat from their position if they are dissatisfied. This point is highly significant as it demonstrates that the UUP had to defend their involvement in the peace process by arguing that it gave them the opportunity to hinder any unsatisfactory progress. There was very little promotion of the idea that the agreement could be more positive or that it brought "peace" to Northern Ireland. Some Ulster Unionists, such as Lord Laird did argue that 'the organisation that actually set [them] free is the Belfast Agreement',⁸⁴ and remain convinced that it was the best deal that they could get. However, other interviewees, generally doubtful about or opposed to the agreement, argued a combination of exhaustion, pressure from the British, Irish and above all from Clinton and Mitchell led to the signing of the GFA. This is the case for Donaldson, saying that:

I was there on the day. I know about the phone calls that were made by Bill Clinton. I think he did put pressure. George Mitchell put enormous pressure. (...). He needed an answer from the UUP. But it was the pressure (...) and the party signed up to a flawed agreement which hasn't worked in the sense that we are in a situation where there is continuing political instability and political institutions have now been suspended on four occasions.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Lord Laird, Offices Holywood road, Belfast, 14 Mar. 2003

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

A- Ulster Unionist negotiating team by the end of 1997: an increasing isolation

The UUP were not optimistic about the prospect for the negotiations due to resume at the beginning of January 1998. Donaldson declared in December, "I will be urging the party leader to revisit the whole question of our continued participation in these talks in circumstances in which it is obvious that the process is completely over-shadowed by daily concessions to the IRA".⁸⁶ Then, Four UUP MPs out of ten, William Ross, William Thompson, Roy Beggs and Clifford Forsyth 'withdrew support for the party's participation in the Stormont talks' on 22 December 1997 increasing Trimble's isolation within the party.⁸⁷ The withdrawal of support by these four MPs also meant that 40% of the UUP MPs were then against the agreement. This figure added to the DUP and UKUP withdrawal emphasised Trimble's increasing isolation.

The death of Billy Wright on 27 December 1997 also undermined Trimble's position. His assassination in the Maze Prison endangered the peace process, as the prisoners whose opinion is highly influential in the PUP and then UDP were about to withdraw their support from the peace process.

"[Trimble] was under a lot of pressure but he needed to keep the smaller loyalist parties in the talks, so that he could say he still had the support of a majority of Unionist voters" (Mowlam, p.182-83). The withdrawal of support from four of his MPs accentuated his dependence on the small parties.

⁸⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, "New Pressure for Trimble over Talks", 19 Dec. 1997

⁸⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "UUP Rebels in Talks Threat", 22 Dec. 1997

David Trimble, Lord Maginnis and John Taylor's visit to the UVF detainees on 6 January 1998 at the Maze Prison speaks for itself.⁸⁸ Without the PUP and UDP leaders continued support for the UUP, David Trimble would have lacked the necessary assistance to reach an agreement.

Trimble's increasingly contested position was a problem for the negotiations that, as Zartman argues, 'require recognised leaders on each side who are capable of making and holding an agreement and also capable of talking both forward to each other and backward to their followers' (1995, p.19).

The wave of violence that followed Billy Wright's death and the temporary exclusion of the UDP and Sinn Féin because of alleged breaches of the UFF and IRA cease-fires practically obstructed the talks in January and February.⁸⁹ The UUP threatened to quit if Sinn Féin were re-admitted to the talks. Trimble argued: "because we have prevented them from using the talks the way they wanted, they are now venting their spleen on our constituencies and our towns. There can be no question now of their returning to the talks. I will make that clear to the Prime Minister when I meet him over the course of this week." Trimble added that Tony Blair would "have brought this process to an end" if Sinn Féin were re-admitted.⁹⁰ Sinn Féin implied a potential return to violence if they were not re-admitted to the talks. Adams argued that a peace process "which

⁸⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Trimble bid to win over Maze", 6 Jan. 1998, it is worth noting that Trimble's controversial action found some legitimacy in the fact that Mo Mowlam herself visited the paramilitary prisoners on both sides on 9 January 1998. Her visit was also heavily criticised by the UKUP, the DUP and the "rebel" faction from the UUP. The Secretary of State's action was a focus for the media and certainly alleviated the pressure on Trimble. See, *Belfast Telegraph*, "Mo Gets Set For Maze", 8 Jan. 1998

⁸⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, "Loyalist group has to quit talks", 27 Jan. 1998

⁹⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, "Unionist threaten to quit talks", 24 Feb. 1998

excludes Sinn Féin cannot deliver the inclusive and broadly based workable agreement which is necessary to end the cycle of conflict and violence.”⁹¹

Thus, the peace process had reached a stalemate and required “external intervention” and new suggestions to progress. The term “external intervention” included the British and Irish governments who also played a major role in intervening in the final week of the talks on some actors’ request. As Neeson describes: ‘John [Alderdice] made a famous speech and asked Blair “get here and get here quickly” so it was Blair’s intervention and Bertie Ahern’s intervention was probably the most influential thing that happened this week.’⁹² Furthermore, Neeson argued: ‘Clinton played a very particular role as well.’⁹³ Most Unionist interviewees, pro or anti-agreement, affirmed that Mitchell and Clinton also played a major role in the signing of the agreement.

B- Mitchell and Clinton’s relations with the Ulster Unionist team

The interpretation of the US participation greatly diverges according to the interviewee’s position on the agreement.

The more the interviewee is against the agreement the more he will insist on the strong US pressure on Trimble’s team. The pro-agreement interviewees would tend to minimise or perhaps simply not exaggerate the US contribution,

⁹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, “Mitchell warns of more bloodshed”, 19 Feb. 1998

⁹² Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

⁹³ Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

though usually positively acknowledging their participation. Such an analysis is obviously linked to the interviewees' attitude to Trimble and his team.

1- Mitchell's pressure on the Ulster Unionist team

'Three years after President Clinton gave [Mitchell] a six-month assignment here,'⁹⁴ all actors involved certainly knew him very well as, once the mediator gets involved, he 'operates in a complex arena of interdependent relations' (Bercovitch, 1992, p.25). As Hopmann simply puts it, the mediator's role is to help reach an agreement (1996, p.227). Therefore, Mitchell unsurprisingly strongly encouraged the actors to sign the agreement on 10 April 1998.

The mediator can play an advisory or directive role (Rubin, 1981, p.14, Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, 1994, p.201). Although the nuance between the two notions can be indistinguishable in practice, there is a huge difference between strongly suggesting and forcing the signing of an agreement. The diverging opinions expressed during the interviewing process are often based on the nature of Mitchell's role during the negotiations.

Beyond the significance of *The Propositions on Heads of Agreement* that, according to Trimble, the UUP accepted "as the basis for a subsequent negotiation and discussion"⁹⁵, Mitchell's announcement on 25 March 1998 that

⁹⁴ *Portland Press Herald* (Maine), "D-Day closes in for Mitchell, Northern Ireland Peace Process", 29 Mar. 1998

⁹⁵ National Press Club Morning Newsmaker, David Trimble, Leader of Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist Party, 17 Mar. 1998

the deadline for the talks was 9 April 1998 was important in bringing focus to the final phase of the negotiations. According to Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, a deadline should be imposed to increase the pressure on the participants and can accelerate the progress toward an agreement (1994, p.206). Mitchell also retrospectively acknowledged its efficiency in arguing that, its 'existence (...) could not guarantee a success but it made success possible' (1999, p.1138). However, Blair had already imposed a deadline for the end of the talks of May 1998 at the beginning of his premiership. As Mowlam describes it, it showed '[they] were serious and wouldn't allow the talks to be strung out indefinitely' (2002, p.110). Contrary to Willie Ross' affirmation that '[Mitchell] came down, he said, "look I am going off for Easter, this thing has got to be sorted out in a short period of time," Mitchell did not impose this deadline but supplied a more accurate date. It was suggested and agreed among the negotiating teams. Trimble indicated it in an interview in Washington on 18 March 1998: "we agreed a few weeks ago that we would try to accelerate the negotiations, and we set Easter as the target; the target is actually Easter."⁹⁶ In any case, if Mitchell had really imposed a date as Ross suggested it, then the difference would have been a matter of weeks with Blair's deadline. It certainly put pressure on the participants and perhaps accelerated the signing of the agreement, but they were free to reject it as 'whether the parties lead or are led to lead decision to stop fighting and on what terms belongs to them' (Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 1999, p.54).

From the UUP perspective, their negotiating team could not go beyond the deadline as they had agreed with it and the three governments supported it. Moreover, if, as Arthur argues, the UUP isolation within the Unionist community explains the UUP team's hesitation during the peace process (1999, p.481),

⁹⁶ National Press Club Morning Newsmaker, David Trimble, Leader of Northern Ireland's Ulster

Trimble may paradoxically have been satisfied with the deadline. His team's increasing isolation was not playing in the Ulster Unionists' favour as they were facing a united Nationalist front. So, if Trimble played the game of threatening to walk out of the talks, his position could have been further weakened in the wider Unionist community. He would have actually had more to gain in getting an agreement settled on time.

One of the primary goals of a mediator is to gain the trust of all actors involved in the process (Rubin, 1981, p.36, Zartman, 1995, p.23). Mitchell seems to have managed to win the respect of the Unionists who had remained in the process in spite the huge controversy that his appointment triggered. Conor O'Clery argued: 'Unionists quickly realised that George Mitchell was a very serious politician and that he would never agree with a decision unacceptable for the Unionists.'⁹⁷ A Northern Irish civil servant confirms O'Clery's viewpoint arguing that due to 'George Mitchell's personal integrity, his endless patience, he gradually got [Unionists] into acceptance.'⁹⁸ Anti-agreement Unionist political figures unsurprisingly attacked his personality and presence within the talks. Vance argued that: 'Senator Mitchell [had] created a disaster; he [had] not consulted parties such as [his] and was disconnected from a large part of the Unionists.'⁹⁹ In this present case, it is worth noting that as a UKUP member, Vance disregards that his party put itself in the situation of being out of reach as they deliberately walked out. Nevertheless, Vance is right in arguing that Mitchell was not in touch with a part of the Unionist political community but the fault lies on the Unionist parties refusing to engage rather than Mitchell, who, as

Unionist Party, 17 Mar. 1998

⁹⁷ Conor O'Clery, New York, 10 May 2002

⁹⁸ Private Interview, Northern Irish Civil Servant

a mediator, could not force them into establishing dialogue. As Mitchell argued himself in his book, *Making Peace*, if the UKUP and the DUP had remained involved, it would have been impossible to reach an agreement (1999, p.110). From an anti-agreement viewpoint, this can underline the level of pressure that the pro-agreement parties and especially the UUP faced but it also highlights the responsibility of the UKUP and DUP's decision to leave the talks.

The members of the UUP who opposed the nature of the agreement such as Beggs who declared that 'there was no way to support an agreement so open to interpretation on both sides'¹⁰⁰ or Jeffrey Donaldson, who walked out of the negotiations at the last minute and who left the party in January 2004, do not openly criticise Mitchell's personality. On that matter, Beggs provides a very diplomatic analysis, arguing: '[Mitchell] always impressed my colleagues and me as a very genuine and sincere man. Unfortunately, there never has been a proper understanding of the worst elements in Republicanism.'¹⁰¹ Thus, the MP, who remained in the UUP, insists that Mitchell's efforts were genuine, but his misunderstanding of Republicanism's most extremist elements prevented Mitchell from playing an efficient role from a Unionist standpoint.

The pro-agreement Loyalists such as David Ervine were very enthusiastic about Mitchell, saying that the agreement had been reached 'thanks to the talent and the integrity of George Mitchell.'¹⁰²

Such a declaration seems natural from the PUP whose inclusion in the talks was brought about by the inclusive strategy that the US strongly advocated.

⁹⁹ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

¹⁰⁰ Roy Beggs, UUP office, Larne, 30 Jan. 2004

¹⁰¹ Roy Beggs, UUP office, Larne, 30 Jan. 2004

UUP members who fully supported the agreement have a more nuanced opinion. Lord Maginnis expressed the view that Mitchell ‘was a good humoured, patient individual (...) he was very balanced.’¹⁰³ He added a very important point that depicted the Unionist general belief: ‘there is nobody in this world (...) who would be totally acceptable to our side’¹⁰⁴ in other words nobody would have been suitable. Therefore, a part of the Unionist political leadership would always find something wrong, whether it was Mitchell or not, because, as Beggs argues ‘[Unionists] don’t want any interference’ though acknowledging ‘the valuable contribution that has been made to Northern Ireland through the massive funds to support the peace building and we acknowledge the contribution by the International Fund for Ireland.’¹⁰⁵ It is worth noting that Unionists initially opposed the creation of the Fund in 1985, but no longer opposed it in any significant way.

Beyond the generally positive comments about Mitchell’s personality, Unionists are often divided on the role that Mitchell played during the final week and more crucially the last hours prior to the signing of the agreement. Ervine’s standpoint that ‘there would not have been any agreement without him’¹⁰⁶ is also shared, though, from a different perspective, by anti-agreement Unionists arguing that Mitchell turned out to be a strong source of pressure. Willie Ross argued: ‘I was told at one stage that [Mitchell] gave Trimble fifteen minutes to make up his mind.’¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² David Ervine, Stormont, 15 May 2000

¹⁰³ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

¹⁰⁴ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

¹⁰⁵ Roy Beggs, UUP office, Larne, 30 Jan. 2004

¹⁰⁶ David Ervine, Stormont, 15 May 2000

¹⁰⁷ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

Jeffrey Donaldson confirms this viewpoint as he saw the US pressure as a major factor in the signing of the Belfast Agreement, arguing: 'I was there on the day (...) George Mitchell put enormous pressure. He basically gave David Trimble an ultimatum in the mid-afternoon that he was going to convene the parties to decide on the agreement.'¹⁰⁸ Mitchell's pressure was expected since his role was to persuade the actors to sign the agreement. Caine confirmed it when stating: 'that was of the role of George Mitchell to try and facilitate the agreement. It does not surprise me that the pressure was enormous.'¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, Donaldson omits the fact that Mitchell presented a draft on Tuesday prior to the signing of the agreement. Steven King argues 'the governments gave their document, presented to us as Mitchell's document.'¹¹⁰ This point is confirmed in the *Daily Telegraph*, reporting that 'George Mitchell, the Northern Ireland talks chairman, finally issued his draft outline of an Ulster settlement at midnight last night despite major differences between unionist and nationalist negotiators over keys aspects of the proposed deal.'¹¹¹ The article mentions that two texts by British and Irish governments were included in Mitchell's document. It also mentions that one of the biggest disagreements related to the type of cross-border bodies to be set up. For that matter, Steven King affirms: '[Mitchell] was helpful in the sense that he realised that David Trimble could not sell it and informed the Prime Ministers about it.'¹¹² Trimble corroborates this:

¹⁰⁸ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

¹⁰⁹ Jonathan Caine, Westminster, 21 Oct. 2003

¹¹⁰ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

¹¹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, "Mitchell outlines the split on Ulster", 7 Apr. 1998

¹¹² Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

What I was most critical of were bits of this report which were dealing with cross border relations, relations between Britain and Ireland where he had been given a paper which he was told was the agreed position of the British and Irish governments and my astonishment when I saw it was on a Monday afternoon after I had discussed the issue over the phone with the prime minister on Saturday and Sunday and having agreed with him on something quite different. (...) I don't blame Senator Mitchell for that, I blame primarily the Northern Ireland office because I told the Senator of my conversation with the Prime Minister and he actually had an interview with the British and Irish civil servants who said to him that this was the position of the government.¹¹³

As Zartman and Touval argue, mediation is not aimed at helping one of the participants to win' as its goal is 'to bring the parties toward an agreement acceptable for everybody' (1996, p.445). In that case, Mitchell played in favour of Unionists in arguing their case and demonstrating his even-handedness prioritising the viability of the agreement over its signing at any price. Thus, when Mitchell put pressure on the UUP to sign the agreement on April 10th, he had gained some credibility for not proposing an accord that would contradict Unionists' interest. Nevertheless, Willie Ross argued that 'David Trimble accepted because he had been mentally battered for a long time, he just gave up.'¹¹⁴ This statement highlights three major points. First, the pressure on Trimble was too intense, second and as a result, exhaustion was an important factor in explaining the signing of the agreement. It denies the role of other participants to the negotiations and UUP pro-agreements leading figures.

¹¹³ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, 8 Apr. 2004

¹¹⁴ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb.2004

For instance, Maginnis, who had not taken part in the negotiations, 'pointed out that the Agreement gave the unionist community control of its own destiny for the first time in twenty five years' (Hennessey, 2000, p.169) and even more crucially John Taylor's support as Hennessey rightly argues that 'without his deputy leader's support, Trimble would have been unable to have defended the Agreement' (2000, p.169). Leonard, an American researcher at the Alliance Party, confirmed Hennessey's last argument, declaring in an interview that: 'the key person is John Taylor, he was a key persuader at the last minute to go for it.'¹¹⁵

Ross' answer depicts the UUP negotiating team as completely disconnected from the rest of the party and ignores the importance of what Zartman calls "internal negotiations" which can be either horizontal or vertical. As Zartman puts it, 'the negotiating team has to negotiate with the hierarchy', as will be discussed further in the fifth part of this chapter (1995, p.21). Ross does not mention as reported in the *Sunday Times*, that 'the Ulster Unionist council convincingly endorsed the Stormont agreement by a majority of 540 to 210 at its meeting in Belfast' on 18 April 1998.¹¹⁶ Ross also argued that Mitchell along with the British and Irish governments favoured any immediate accord to a durable one.¹¹⁷ This idea finds some echo in Donaldson's words: 'in my opinion, we should have delayed until after Easter 1998 and sorted out the remaining problems in the agreement. And if we had done that, this agreement might have worked.'¹¹⁸ Donaldson's standpoint changes the deadline into a pistol without bullets. It could have been indefinitely postponed increasing the risk of the

¹¹⁵ Allan Leonard, Research Officer, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

¹¹⁶ *Sunday Times*, "Unionists say yes to peace deal", 19 Apr. 1998

¹¹⁷ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

¹¹⁸ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

collapse of the talks. Besides, Donaldson ignores the schedule imperatives as summarized in the *Portland Press Herald*, 'there's not much flexibility in the April 9 deadline. An early April accord is vital if the Republic of Ireland and British-controlled Northern Ireland are to hold referendums on a settlement in late May, and for elections to a prospective Northern Ireland legislature to be held in June. These steps are considered essential before the usually explosive sectarian parade season enters full swing in July.'¹¹⁹

From the pro-agreement viewpoint, Mitchell's role is not perceived as being that prominent. Lord Maginnis stated that 'it's very hard, it's for history to assess (...) George Mitchell's real contribution.'¹²⁰ King argued that Mitchell 'did not broker the deal. It is pretty much an Anglo-Irish deal.'¹²¹ Trimble stated:

I appealed the Prime Minister to take a direct personal involvement which he then did, Bertie Ahern, came up as well and actually for the last few days of the talks, they were conducted by Blair and Ahern with the principal parties and without that direct involvement of both Blair and Ahern there would not have been an agreement. But that is not a criticism of the senator's work, because chairing the talks and getting to the point that we were nearly there is itself a very significant achievement.¹²²

A US official's words echo this statement: 'the agreement bases were already there since the Sunningdale and the AIA showed some solutions. The part of the job done by Mitchell's team was more limited than what people

¹¹⁹ *Portland Press Herald* (Maine), "D-Day closes in for Mitchell, Northern Ireland Peace Process", 29 Mar. 1998

¹²⁰ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

¹²¹ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

¹²² David Trimble, UUP Head quarter, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

think.’¹²³ His job rather consisted, to use Hopmann’s terminology, in being a “process facilitator” that is to say that he ‘has no influence on the substance of the agreement he just makes things workable’ (1996, p.231).

Thus, Unionist politicians have a very varied opinion of Mitchell’s role in the signing of the GFA. The more anti-agreement elements insist on Mitchell’s leverage on the negotiating team, whereas the pro-agreement elements tend to highlight their own initiative in order to keep the credit for their achievement. Pro-agreement unionists do not accept that the US participation was an important point of pressure that led to the signing of the agreement.

Nevertheless, as discussed above, the mediator’s main role is to help people reach an agreement. He possesses some leverage to impel the parties into signing the settlement. Mitchell possessed two main tools. First, he benefited from his formal position in the sense that he ‘responds to the parties by shaping the statement or the future agreement’ (Hopmann, 1996, p239). Mitchell used his powers after discovering that Unionists would not accept the document circulated on 5 April 1998.¹²⁴ Second, he could use his power of “coercion” to persuade the parties to sign it. As Donaldson mentioned, Mitchell used a high degree of pressure on David Trimble.¹²⁵

How could Mitchell be so influential over the parties without any backing? Vance accused him of being ‘the “bras droit” of Bill Clinton.’¹²⁶ Zartman and Touval argue that ‘from the beginning the mediator’s leverage is at

¹²³ Private Interview with US official

¹²⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Sticking Point, Mitchell’s attempt to keep talk process on track”, 6 Apr. 1998

¹²⁵ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

¹²⁶ David Vance, Stormont Castle, 15 May 2000

the mercy of the contestants' (1996, p.455). An illustration is Steven King's words about the way the UUP 'watered down [Mitchell's] position to the extent that it did not matter very much whether he chaired or not'¹²⁷ as discussed in the previous chapter. However, it disregards informal leverage that can become instrumental in the final stages of striking a deal. As Hopmann states, the choice of a mediator is based on two main criteria, 'the personal skills and the weight of the state or organisation they represent' (1996, p.221). Mitchell's team, although being officially independent, benefited from the British, Irish and above all US administration support. Hopmann's point finds some echo in Bercovitch's argument that the leverage of the mediator depends on his position within his own country, 'the leeway given to them in determining policies' and very importantly for this thesis, on the 'resources, capabilities and political orientation of their countries' (1992, p.13). Mitchell benefited from President Clinton's full backing which sensibly increased in the last crucial hours before the signing of the agreement.

The position of anti-Agreement Unionists towards Mitchell is clear. They emphasise his leverage as a means of explaining the UUP decision. Equally, it is clear why pro-GFA UUP would wish to minimise Mitchell's role in this regard. Nonetheless, it is obvious that Mitchell played at least some role in adding to the pressure on the UUP to sign an agreement they were not fully satisfied with, to say the least. However, it is also interesting that Mitchell managed to do this while still maintaining good relations with the UUP. This can be partly explained by his strong position as Clinton's envoy and being the appointee of the two governments. However, it also suggests that a skilful mediator, with a powerful position, can both use leverage to good effect and remain a useful mediator

¹²⁷ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

between antagonistic sides, even when the UUP did not initially support his appointment.

2- *Clinton's influence on the UUP*

Bill Clinton's role needs to be separately analysed as he played a distinct part in becoming personally involved in the peace process. He intervened on multiple occasions showing his support for London and Dublin and therefore reinforcing the unity of the second level of the "third-party bloc." Clinton had tremendous leverage to pressure the actors with rewards such as economic investments or to log blames for failure. The *Sunday Times* reported two days after the signing of the agreement that 'Clinton may also underwrite the deal with a promise of £100 million of American investment in the province over the next five years.'¹²⁸

Just as Mitchell's level of influence over the signing of the agreement had generated various opinions, Clinton's constant interest in Northern Ireland along with his personal involvement during the final moments prior to the signing of the agreement has triggered different perceptions.

UUP members have developed opinions of the US participation in the GFA that are not necessarily linked to their stance regarding the agreement. Their position on the US participation also depends on the degree of support they had initially shown for it. Donaldson's position is the most illustrative one.

¹²⁸ *Sunday Times*, "Resurrection?", 12 Apr. 1998

Despite being one of the strongest opponents of the GFA, his being the first co-ordinator of the US bureau does not allow him to be publicly as judgmental as he may have been otherwise since it would discredit his strong advocacy of a US agenda.

Among the moderate or pro-agreement elements of the UUP, there are those who praised Clinton for his contribution to the Belfast Agreement such as Barry White, reflecting the Ulster Unionist Party official line, who argued that 'there are many people who claim credit for the agreement but the person who had a very key role was Clinton.'¹²⁹ Other pro-agreement officials are more nuanced in their judgement. Steven King recognised that 'for Clinton, it was a very personal involvement'¹³⁰ or Maginnis argued that 'it's for history to assess Clinton's real contribution.'¹³¹

On the anti-agreement side, Lord Molyneux declared that '[Clinton] genuinely wanted to help.'¹³² Jeffrey Donaldson argued: 'actually I think that overtime Bill Clinton (....) developed a very strong affection for Northern Ireland that was way beyond the political thing'¹³³ whereas Willie Ross maintained that Clinton 'wasn't really interested in the Ulster Unionists. He just went along being informed by the British government and the Nationalists north and south.'¹³⁴ Donaldson's statement is not surprising as he was one of the most ardent advocates of the Unionist American agenda as covered in the previous

Belfast Telegraph, "Clinton pledges £100m package", 11 Apr. 1998

¹²⁹ Barry White, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

¹³⁰ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

¹³¹ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

¹³² Lord Molyneux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

¹³³ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Office, Lisburn, 15 Apr. 2003

¹³⁴ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

chapter. Ross' perception of the situation may be accurate in the sense that Clinton's engagement, as previously observed, was to back the British and Irish governments but Ross goes further and sees it as anti-Unionist and pro-Nationalist.¹³⁵

However, Steven King argued that: 'the second presidency was much more balanced. In terms of policy his position was clear, they were insisting on the principle of consent (...).'¹³⁶ In fact, Clinton's deep interest in Ireland, defining himself as Irish-American, certainly motivated his position in the conflict. This feeling does not necessarily imply a pro-Irish nationalist attitude. Nancy Soderberg argued: '[Clinton] never had a particular nationalist agenda. The perception was opposite so it was the perception that did shift not his particular position.'¹³⁷ Still, King seems to be right when he perceived a shift between the first and second presidency regarding the US administration attitude vis a vis Northern Ireland, but it seems that this change of strategy has more to do with priorities rather than ideological considerations. The first phase was to convince the IRA to call a cease-fire and get Sinn Féin included within the talks. Once this had been done, the US President could act across a range of issues and actors and therefore re-balance the US approach.

A major factor in Clinton's interventionist attitude in the Northern Ireland issue was the greater flexibility that the Labour government offered on the US level of participation in the peace process. Ulster Unionists, by and large, did not suffer from the renewal of "special relationship" between Downing Street and the White House as Trimble and his advisors had prepared themselves for the

¹³⁵ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

¹³⁶ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

¹³⁷ Nancy Soderberg, New York City, 14 May 2002

much expected 1997 Labour victory. This collaborating relationship is visible through contemporary articles. For example, in the conservative *Sunday Times* an article on 15 February regarding a possible trip by Adams to the USA and meeting with the President, suggested that 'Tony Blair and Clinton must decide whether an Adams' visit to the White House could encourage a new IRA ceasefire, followed by Sinn Féin's readmission to talks, or whether Adams's exclusion would help to save the peace process.' It added that 'London, Washington and Dublin have to decide between three options: encouraging Adams to visit America and acceding to him meeting Clinton; encouraging the Adams visit to America but pushing for Clinton to decline a meeting; or pushing for Adams to be refused entry to America.'¹³⁸ Another article in the *Sunday Times* argued that 'Tony Blair has Bill Clinton by the short and curlies and no Kennedy will tear these two apart. The Taoiseach has toughened up in response to the realisation that the Republic could not cope if Sinn Féin achieved hegemony in the North by displacing Hume's party and started to foment civil strife on a massive scale.'¹³⁹ The more left-wing newspaper, *The Independent*, also comments: 'As the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and President Bill Clinton were all dragged into the deepening crisis, the key words in Belfast appeared to be "incontrovertible evidence".'¹⁴⁰ Such accounts from both British political tendencies would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the US involvement. This analysis of the shift over the years is repeated in an article in *The Independent* stating that 'every public declaration made by Mr Clinton, Mr Ahern and Mo Mowlam last week appeared almost as if it had been carefully orchestrated and jointly rehearsed. In John Major's time acrimony

¹³⁸ *Sunday Times*, "Adams gambles on meeting with Clinton", 15 Feb. 1998

¹³⁹ *Sunday Times*, "Putting our Hope in Rational Republicans", 15 Feb. 1998

¹⁴⁰ *The Independent*, "Threats throw Ulster peace into turmoil", 14 Feb. 1998

always lurked behind the diplomatic smiles.’¹⁴¹ Unionists noticed the change, as Dermott Nesbitt commented: ‘the US government has been another leg to the British and Irish governments to put the peace process forward and they worked, I presume, quite well because as we know in the real world of politics, communication is always taking place.’¹⁴² Therefore, Clinton’s involvement was very difficult to contravene as its legitimacy relied on the two sovereign states involved in the negotiations.

The fact that all parties involved in the Peace Process attended the celebration of the 1998 St Patrick’s Day at the White House demonstrated Clinton’s personal importance in the talks. To be present was also an acknowledgement by all actors of his role in the peace process as the 1998 St Patrick’s Day was an event that enabled President Clinton to pressurise ‘the parties to reach an agreement, injecting a sense of urgency to the negotiations. He has held out the prospect of U.S. economic support if they do.’¹⁴³ Clinton used his leverage to work with the British and Irish governments and also with Mitchell. He used the promise of economic investments to induce Northern Irish leaders to sign up to an agreement. Clinton was in the shadow of Blair, Ahern and Mitchell whenever they had to pressurise the parties over the last hours before the signing.

The different accounts of the night preceding the signing of the agreement in the early hours of 10 April 1998 converge towards the fact that Clinton’s personal intervention had been instrumental in reaching the agreement.

¹⁴¹ *The Independent*, ‘A clear call to all the President’s Ulstermen’, 22 Mar. 1998

¹⁴² Dermott Nesbitt, Stormont Castle, 16 Mar. 2000

¹⁴³ *International Herald Tribune*, ‘For Clinton, a Personal Investment in the Success of the Ulster Peace Talks’, 10 Apr. 1998

Accounts in 10 April's newspapers underlined the fact that President Clinton had remained awake during the whole night.¹⁴⁴ *The Guardian* affirmed that at 4:15 in the morning, Tony Blair made a phone call to Clinton to ask him to intervene and then 'after a call from Clinton, Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble [accepted] reassurances given by Blair and agrees to enter the session' which led to the signing of the agreement.¹⁴⁵ This account suggests that Clinton's phone call to Trimble saved the GFA and that the US President had leverage over the unionist leader. *The Independent* repeated, though more explicitly, the story on 11 April reporting that 'Tony Blair (...) had called in Mr Trimble for a meeting which had been incendiary. (...) But then, apparently, Mr Blair produced his trump card: the special relationship with Bill Clinton.'¹⁴⁶ These reports provided the US President with a lot of credit regarding the GFA and are certainly exaggerated to some extent, as it is unbelievable that a simple phone call could have changed the UUP position so decisively. An American official rightly declared: 'it had been dramatic couple of weeks and dramatic 48 hours and I don't think one phone call would be decisive.'¹⁴⁷

Trimble's version is focused on the help that Clinton granted him in putting pressure on the governments to obtain some reassurances:

¹⁴⁴ Eg: *The Associated Press*, "Clinton works through night on Northern Ireland peace talks", 10 Apr. 1998

The Guardian, "The Peace Deal: 'This agreement offers a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning...'; How critical minutes ticked away: Countdown/ Emotions went from hope to despair and back", 11 Apr. 1998

The Independent, "Irish Peace Talks: Deal not possible without Clinton rather historical", 11. Apr. 1998

The Independent, "Irish Peace Talks: Long Good Friday for men of honour", 11 Apr. 1998

¹⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, "The Peace Deal: 'This agreement offers a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning ...'; How critical minutes ticked away: Countdown/ Emotions went from hope to despair and back", 11 Apr. 1998

¹⁴⁶ *The Independent*, "Irish Peace Talks: Long Good Friday for men of honour", 11 Apr. 1998

¹⁴⁷ Private Interview with US Official

Clinton started to talk to me in general terms about what a good thing that would be for Northern Ireland. Just a moment I am going to tell you where we are, our problem is, I described what the problem was, I said there is a solution to the problem, I told him what the solution was, and the Prime Minister should give an assurance. It would be useful Mr. President if you were to tell the other parties to crawl back and create the space. He said we can't change the text of the agreement now, it's all fully negotiated. 'No but what you can do' and I told him about the assurance we were seeking, and he said 'we will do that' and we did get that letter from the Prime Minister that contained those assurances, we arranged for the letter to be published and distributed to the parties before the final session of the agreement and it was hugely significant and none of the other parties on that day or indeed since have denounced the letter or the contents of that letter. I actually attribute that to the involvement of the president and I think that he did precisely what I asked him to do in terms of speaking to the other major parties, that's my perspective on the final stage of the talks.¹⁴⁸

Neeson's version of the situation likewise does not put any emphasis on Bill Clinton's phone call as he argues:

Clinton played a very particular role as well. He says he stayed up all night. It was true, he did. He was on the phone with everybody and when we got the document on Friday morning (...) Unionists did not know what to do, Donaldson had walked out, others were having serious reservations as well. And then, around about half three or so, Mitchell decided, look we hang on here all day so I am calling a meeting. It was at four and at that stage Trimble rather reluctantly decided to buy into the whole thing.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, 8 Apr. 2004. As a matter of record, Sinn Féin repeatedly denounced the letter by the Prime Minister.

¹⁴⁹ Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 9 Jul. 2003

Neeson contradicts Trimble's description of the event. The fact that the letter was indeed published the next day demonstrates that Trimble knew that he would obtain it before he signed the agreement. Thus, his reluctance to the signing may not have been as strong as Neeson claimed but rather embodied a tactical attitude. Barry White's reinforces the point:

It was Clinton's intervention to Gerry Adams and Tony Blair that made the difference (...). As a result that helped us to get a side-letter from Tony Blair to David Trimble about decommissioning and so on. It counted not necessarily because he was the President of the United States, because everyone knew he understood the situation. It was not the case of I am that person you will do this, he understood the situation, his intervention was sincere, genuine, everyone believed that, that's why it was so vital.¹⁵⁰

The pro-agreement Ulster Unionists understandably do not want Clinton's importance to be overstated as their role as negotiators would be diminished. Therefore, it remains very difficult to know to what extent Clinton had an effect on the UUP decision, but it certainly is exaggerated to focus on the leverage that Clinton had over the UUP, as it might not have been so substantial. However, Clinton surely had some impact especially with his capacity to pressurise Blair. Yet, Trimble's position was so delicate that his room to manoeuvre was narrow. He could either sign the agreement or reject it with the probability of ending his political career, reinforcing the DUP position within the Unionist community and possibly being blamed for a return to violence in the province. Negotiators often make decisions on a cost-benefit calculation and in this context, it appeared that a post-agreement outcome was more beneficial than the collapse of the talks. Clinton certainly reinforced this view with the UUP. It is also clear that pro-GFA

¹⁵⁰ Barry White, Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

do not present the final days as them fighting against a US threat. The US role is either minimised or the UUP focus on their successful efforts to persuade Clinton and Mitchell to take their views on board and go back to the Nationalists and/ or the governments.

Clinton's role has been effective and did not stop at the moment of the signing of the GFA. Mitchell stated that "It's a significant accomplishment but I don't think anyone should be under the illusion that the problems of Northern Ireland have been solved with this act," he said. "There's a long way to go."¹⁵¹

One of the crucial questions in the aftermath of the signing of an agreement is 'how to disengage from a mediating role without endangering the carefully brokered settlement?' (Zartman & Touval, 1997, p. 459). In that respect, the US remained involved in the particularly sensitive phase of implementation of the agreement, to monitor the progress and help consolidate it. The UUP kept on collaborating with Clinton and then had to cope with Mitchell's return during the 1999 review of the agreement as it will be studied in the final part of this chapter.

V- MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT: UNIONISTS' PERCEPTION OF THE US ROLE

Most of the literature on the Northern Ireland peace process and the US involvement stopped at the signature of the GFA ignoring the active role that the US administration - especially Bill Clinton and George Mitchell - carried on

¹⁵¹ *Sunday Times*, "Resurrection?", 12 Apr. 1998

playing in its aftermath. This last part attempts at addressing this point within the Ulster Unionist-US relationship context.

The implementation of the agreement is the final phase of the peace process (Sisk, 1996, p.24). This period can be long and is always critical as it is the empirical application of the agreement. Nevertheless, the US administration and Trimble's support for the agreement did not imply that the UUP was to use the US card. In fact, they often rejected it.

The post-agreement relationship between the US and the pro-agreement Ulster Unionists will be analysed in the light of three main events, Clinton's participation in the "yes" campaign, his second trip to the province in September 1998 and Mitchell's return at the end of 1999 to facilitate the review of the changes within the content of the *Belfast Agreement*.

A- Ulster Unionists' rejecting of Clinton's participation in the "yes" campaign

The preparation of a referendum illustrates two major points in the Northern Ireland case. Firstly, the political elites support for the agreement is not sufficient to validate its implementation. Secondly, it marks a symbolic democratic validation as the population took responsibility for it thus becoming full actors in process. On that matter, the United States put strong efforts into campaigning in favour of the "yes" along with the British government. The US were therefore siding with Nationalists of all distinctions, and the pro-agreement

Unionists, which represented about '72% of the Ulster Unionist council members that voted for the accord.'¹⁵²

Mitchell's role as chairman of the talks was over, but Clinton remained actively involved in the Northern Irish peace process stating his intention of visiting the province to encourage the "yes" vote at the referenda by the end of May as early as 9 February 1998, in other words two months prior to the signing of the agreement¹⁵³ and was also reported on several occasions afterwards.¹⁵⁴

Contrary to the nationalists, the UUP were opposed to this offer. Trimble reportedly stated: "I can quite understand his desire to be away from Washington," making a direct allusion to Clinton's political difficulties at home with the Lewinsky scandal.¹⁵⁵ Jim Rodgers, then UUP Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, said: "Quite clearly he is intending to come here to try to influence as well as interfere in our affairs and I think he has as many problems of his own in America."¹⁵⁶

Such demonstrations of hostility from the Ulster Unionists Party was quite unusual as, following Trimble's election and the party strategy reorientation, they commonly remained cautious in public about their opinion of the US involvement.

¹⁵² *Sunday Times*, "Unionists say yes to peace deal", 19 Apr. 1998

¹⁵³ *Financial Times*, "Hopes rise for Clinton backing on terror", 9 Feb. 1998

¹⁵⁴ see: *Sunday Times*, "Ahern ups peace stakes", 15 Mar. 1998, *Financial Times*, Clinton may campaign in N Ireland for peace deal, 17 Mar. 1998, *The Independent*, 'Irish Peace Talks: Deal not possible without Clinton rather historical', 11 Apr. 1998, *Sunday Times*, "Resurrection?", 12 Apr. 1998

¹⁵⁵ *Financial Times*, "Clinton to take a tough line on terror", 9 Feb. 1998

¹⁵⁶ *Financial Times*, "Clinton to take a tough line on terror", 9 Feb. 1998

Why did pro-agreement Unionists express such reluctance to Clinton's offer as he would be campaigning for the "yes" thus on their side?

Firstly, as mentioned above, Trimble had signed the agreement with some hesitancy and often underlined that he would fully support it only if the IRA totally decommissioned. His position did not favour a total engagement in favour of the GFA. A UUP document entitled *Implementing the Agreement* and dated May 1998 concludes by saying: 'Republicans must demonstrate a genuine commitment to peace and the only way they can do this is by decommissioning. Only in this context will the people of Northern Ireland be convinced that militant republicans have turned from violence to democracy.'¹⁵⁷ Thus, the UUP was campaigning on the basis of conditional support for the agreement. Trimble's choice was certainly a political tactic designed to attract the hesitant or mild anti-agreement giving them some guarantee of his firmness. However, as much as Trimble did not have much choice but sign it, his position was clearly limited on the nature of the "yes" campaign that he would lead.

Secondly, 'parties on the extreme seem to de-legitimise agreement-building and upset the negotiations either by trying to maintain the integrity of their extreme position or by trying to discredit or eliminate the negotiating middle' (Zartman, 1995, p.341). As an American official argued, 'the UKUP and the DUP did not want to have anything to do with the peace process. They would have made it impossible to get the agreement.'¹⁵⁸ Since the anti-agreement parties had failed to prevent its signing, they were trying to persuade the Unionist population to vote against it. Anti-agreement Ulster Unionists such as MPs

¹⁵⁷ Ulster Unionist Party, *Implementing the Agreement*, May 1998

¹⁵⁸ Private interview with US Official

Willie Ross and Willie Thompson favoured the UKUP and DUP game. Thus, Trimble was facing intra- and inter-party struggles in the campaign for the GFA.¹⁵⁹ Part of the “no” campaign strategy was designed to discredit the agreement by arguing that Trimble had signed it under huge pressure and US pressure is discussed below.

Thirdly, as Neeson argued ‘The referendum was basically Hume and Trimble and that is how it was perceived publicly.’¹⁶⁰ The Nobel Peace Prize given to Hume and Trimble to reward them for their efforts for peace in October 1998 later reinforced this point.¹⁶¹ Thus, from a Unionist standpoint, it was difficult to distinguish anti-Trimble members within his party from the anti-agreement activists. This point will be discussed in more detail in the subsection dedicated to Mitchell’s return to overview the review of the agreement by the end of 1999.

Fourthly, contrary to the Ulster Unionists’ general avoidance of any comment about the US involvement once the talks had started, the DUP strongly reiterated its opposition to it and used it against the UUP. For example, out of a total of 71 Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue sessions, the DUP expressed criticism vis a vis the US, during twelve sessions for instance Eric Smyth’s declaration that ‘There is no evidence from television from America that

¹⁵⁹ Regarding the UUP internal division, see, *Belfast Telegraph*, “UUP divided over Peace Deal Claim”, 13 Apr. 1998 and *Sunday Times*, “Unionists say yes to peace deal”, 19 Apr. 1998

¹⁶⁰ Sean Neeson, AP Headquarters, Belfast, 3 Jul. 2003

¹⁶¹ *Daily Telegraph*, “World hails Ulster's Nobel duo”, 17 Oct. 1998

Daily Telegraph, “The men who put peace on the map of Ulster”, 17 Oct. 1998

The Independent, “Nobel prize rewards courage of Ulster's architects of peace”, 17 Oct. 1998

The Guardian, “Two loners who together helped put Ulster on the path to peace Nobel Award: The paths of John Hume and David Trimble through 30 years of the Troubles provide a fascinating illustration of how Northern Ireland has been transformed. But might yesterday's prize make their lives more difficult?”, 17 Oct. 1998

they are friends of the Unionist people.’¹⁶² The UUP did not even mention the US involvement during any session.¹⁶³ Among anti-agreement UUP members, Molyneaux declared that ‘the US played a large part in persuading some parties to sign and defend the Agreement, thereby weakening those parties and alienating their electorate.’¹⁶⁴ Ross stated that Clinton’s involvement in the campaign ‘was completely wrong, it was not his business at the end of the day. He was recommending something that was going to do harm to the unity of the United Kingdom and to do harm to the Unionist population of Northern Ireland.’¹⁶⁵

Trimble’s declaration about the timing of a presidential visit corroborates his awareness of a sense of anti-Americanism among the Unionist community. “It would be better to come to celebrate a positive outcome rather than become embroiled in controversy beforehand.”¹⁶⁶ Such an attitude also corresponds to the consciousness of the Unionist population’s traditional reluctance to external interference. Clinton’s possible trip in the province may have damaged the pro-agreement support among Unionists. Trimble’s declaration in the *International Herald Tribune* reinforced this idea, “I would not want people here to feel they are being dictated to by some foreign power.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² DUP Representative, Eric Smyth, Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue, 3 Oct. 1997

¹⁶³ The information was found using the keywords, United States, America, Clinton and Mitchell excluding Irish America. The analysis of the content of the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue in this project as Sinn Féin never took part to the discussion and the SDLP left very soon after its creation, leaving it to the Unionists. Thus, the discussion took place exclusively between Unionists of all political shades as the DUP and UKUP did not leave it when they walked out of the talks.

¹⁶⁴ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

¹⁶⁵ William Ross, Europa Hotel, Belfast, 2 Feb. 2004

¹⁶⁶ *Sunday Times*, “Unionists say yes to peace deal”, 19 Apr. 1998

¹⁶⁷ *International Herald Tribune*, “Clinton Visit Unwelcome As Irish Prepare for Vote”, 21 Apr. 1998

It seems that the US administration also sensed Trimble's potential difficulties as the visit was postponed until September 1998. However, the US President took advantage of his presence at the G8 world economic summit in Birmingham on 15 and 16 May 1998 to reiterate, along with Tony Blair, his support for peace in Northern Ireland,¹⁶⁸ making clear that he did not want to be seen as interfering in a vote for the people of Ireland.¹⁶⁹ Clinton concluded an interview stating:

I just want every single person in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic to know that we will support the peace process and the people who do it, and anybody who returns to violence we will not befriend, because this is the chance of our lifetimes, anyway to do this. And I hope it will not be squandered.¹⁷⁰

Clinton re-emphasised his position in a statement made the day prior to the referenda:

This Friday you can turn the common tragedy of Northern Ireland's past into a shared triumph for the future. (...) As you face the future, you can count on America (...). May you make the right choice for peace, for your children, for your future?¹⁷¹

Besides assisting Blair, Clinton's second task, was to put some weight on the "yes" side by raising the prospect of further economic investment, which was an acceptable measure in both communities. 'In a television interview with Mr

¹⁶⁸ See: *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton will join Blair's push for Ulster 'Yes' vote", 16 May 1998, *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton and Blair warn voters of 'nightmare scenario'", 18 May 1998, *The Times*, "Blair and Clinton in Ulster appeal", 18 May 1998, *Financial Time*, "Blair and Clinton woo Ulster: Leaders say strong Yes vote would encourage surge of inward investment", 18 May 1998

¹⁶⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton will join Blair's push for Ulster 'Yes' vote", 16 May 1998

¹⁷⁰ *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, Statement by the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair, 15 May 1998.

¹⁷¹ *White House Press Release*, Statement by the President, 21 May 1998

Blair, Mr Clinton said there would be increased US investment in Northern Ireland if the process continued.¹⁷² Nonetheless, despite the improved US-UUP relationship, Clinton did not come to Northern Ireland. The UUP may have developed a more pragmatic response at times but they were still very reluctant to fully embrace US involvement. The UUP still saw US efforts as potentially threatening or at least believed their potential voters saw it that way.

The success of the “yes” side in the referendum with 71.12% of the Northern Ireland population in favour of the Belfast Agreement¹⁷³, and the results of the election on 25 June 1998 comforted the UUP as the leading Unionist party with 28 seats out of 108 in the new assembly. However, the DUP won 20 seats and the UKUP 5, which made a total on 25. With anti-agreement Ulster Unionists added to those 25 representatives, there was a majority of anti-agreement Unionists in the new assembly and therefore it did not provide a good omen for its future work.¹⁷⁴ This point is significant as from the beginning of the agreement’s implementation, a majority of Unionists sitting in the newly formed assembly were against it.

This situation created the necessity to maintain close scrutiny to sustain its validity as the anti-agreement parties refused to acknowledge the validity of the referendum results. Paisley declared “They spent three million to buy the people’s votes” and McCartney argued: “We have taken a clear majority of the pro-Unionist community in the face of a massive propaganda campaign.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² *Financial Time*, “Blair and Clinton woo Ulster: Leaders say strong Yes vote would encourage surge of inward investment”, 18 May 1998

¹⁷³ *Irish Times*, “The Belfast Agreement”, 25 May 1998

¹⁷⁴ see: www.nio.org for election results

¹⁷⁵ *The Independent*, “Ireland: Leaders greet referendum verdict”, 24 May 1998

The Omagh Bombing in August 1998 worsened the fragile political situation of the province reviving the huge controversy about decommissioning and playing to the advantage of Unionist hard-liners. Unionists demanded the IRA decommissioning before allowing Sinn Féin representatives to take part in the executive committee.¹⁷⁶ The bombing took place two weeks before the Clintons' arrival and his coming was seen in the media as an opportunity for Blair and Ahern to insist on the necessity to work for the implementation of the agreement.¹⁷⁷

B- Clinton's Trip to the Province, September 1998

Reflecting the general belief in the aftermath of the agreement, *The Independent* declared that the GFA was 'not an American deal, based on American proposals. But without America's backstage prodding, without the Clinton Administration's efforts as a "facilitator" it might never have happened at all.'¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Clinton's visit relied not only on his position as US President but also on the major role he played in the signing of the agreement.

Clinton's imminent arrival was described as London and Dublin's strongest weapons of pressure over Sinn Féin and the Ulster Unionists.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ *The Observer*, "Focus Ireland: a Frantic Race from Horror to Hope", 6 Sep. 1998

¹⁷⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, "Clinton tells Ulster it must not lose 'magic of peace'", 4 Sep. 1998

¹⁷⁸ *The Independent*, "Irish Peace Talks: Deal not possible without Clinton", 11 Apr. 1998

¹⁷⁹ *The Observer*, "Focus Ireland: a Frantic Race from Horror to Hope", 6 Sep. 1998

Gerry Adams coincidentally condemned the Omagh bombing on 1 September 1998 and Trimble was reported to be about 'to make a dramatic concession on decommissioning by saying the IRA can hold on to handguns and other "defensive" weapons for the time being if it starts to surrender its stockpiles of Semtex.'¹⁸⁰ However, Clinton's trip in the province was not as spectacular as the first one, as some of his detractors strongly insisted his coming to Northern Ireland was linked to the Monica Lewinsky scandal.¹⁸¹

On the Ulster Unionist side, Trimble who, as First Minister of the province since July 1998, made the welcome speech to introduce the President at the Odyssey renewed his commitment and sent a clear message to the President about the Ulster Unionist position on decommissioning:

Mr President, the path ahead is for true democrats only. As First Minister and Leader of Northern Ireland, I can not reconcile seeking positions in Government with the failure to discharge responsibilities under the Agreement to dismantle their terrorist organisations (Trimble, 2001, p. 78).

Clinton's journey played a catalytic role after the horror of the Omagh bombing as a member of the UUP expressed it, 'if we use the image of driving the peace process forward, the Americans were more like a foot on the accelerator than a hand on the steering wheel. They were hurrying us on in a direction we had already agreed to go.'¹⁸²

Clinton made a call for decommissioning during his speech at the Waterfront Hall: 'Now, as you go forward, courage and reconciliation must drive

¹⁸⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, "Unionists tell IRA: you can keep the guns", 30 Aug. 1998

¹⁸¹ *Sunday Times*, "The peace broker searches for allies", 6 Sep. 1998

¹⁸² *Sunday Times*, "The peace broker searches for allies", 6 Sep. 1998

this Assembly in very specific ways: to decommission the weapons of war that are obsolete in Northern Ireland at peace.’¹⁸³ As the *Sunday Times* stated the President’s statement ‘will have been warmly welcomed by Ulster democrats of all stripes.’¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Clinton’s impact proved to be limited not only on the UUP side, as Trimble remained firm on his agenda but also, from a Unionist viewpoint, on the republican one. Steven King argued that ‘the US involvement was useful in terms of brokering the agreement but not much pressure on Sinn Féin and the IRA on the decommissioning issue.’¹⁸⁵ The stall on decommissioning blocked the effective implementation of the agreement and leading to its review by the end of 1999 with Senator Mitchell’s presence as facilitator.

C-Mitchell’s return as facilitator

The political situation in Northern Ireland remained deadlocked following Clinton’s trip but the US President remained strongly involved in the attempts at breaking the stalemate as London and Dublin continued to believe that the US could play a major role. In that sense, the UUP along with the rest of Northern Irish parties, had to remain under US scrutiny. Nevertheless, the momentum of the St Patrick’s Day celebration at the White House in March 1999 with Clinton

¹⁸³ *US newswire*, “Remarks by President Clinton to the Northern Ireland Assembly”, 3 Sep. 1998

¹⁸⁴ *The Times*, “How President has forced the pace of change”, 4 Sep. 1998

¹⁸⁵ Dr. Steven King, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 23 Oct. 2003

reportedly meeting Trimble and Adams to urge them into finding a solution remained without effect.¹⁸⁶

Originally, the peace process had come to a standstill over the UUP demand that the IRA had to start handing in its weapons before Sinn Féin could take part in the power-sharing executive. Sinn Féin argued that IRA decommissioning was not a prerequisite to the party joining the executive under the peace agreement. Senator Mitchell had been called to chair the review of the agreement in July 1999.¹⁸⁷ His role was to facilitate the reaching of a compromise between Sinn Féin and the UUP on decommissioning that would lead to the election of the first executive committee and the re-start of the implementation of the Agreement.

The British and Irish governments jointly appointed Mitchell as chair of the review but anti-GFA Unionists did not appreciate it. Molyneaux argued that 'Mitchell's return visit was a mistake because it highlighted the betrayal and expectations of the Belfast Agreement.'¹⁸⁸ Anti-agreement Unionists as expected fumed at this appointment as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, Mitchell 'was told he should leave Ulster for good by Cedric Wilson of the anti-agreement Northern Ireland Unionist Party and clashed with Robert McCartney, of the UK Unionist

¹⁸⁶ *The Independent*, "We may need the Americans, but peace will still come; London, Dublin and Washington could force Trimble and Adams into an accommodation", 9 Feb. 1999, *The Guardian*, "Blair, Ahern seek Clinton's aid in bid to break deadlock", 9 Feb. 1999, *Financial Times*, "Ireland peace hopes focus on Clinton, Good Friday Agreement, UK government looks to President to help break deadlock when leaders visit Washington", 4 Mar. 1999, *The Independent*, "Mowlam pins peace hopes on Clinton", 12 Mar. 1999, *The Guardian*, "Clinton fixes Trimble and Adams talks", 18 Mar. 1999, *Sunday Times*, "Hard-hitting Clinton tells Adams 'IRA must end war'", 21 Mar. 1999

¹⁸⁷ *The Independent*, "Profile: George Mitchell- The man to bring peace to Ulster?; The ex-Senator's patience and judgement are in demand like never before", 18 Jul. 1999

¹⁸⁸ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 10 Feb. 2004

Party.’¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, according to *The Independent* on 19 July 1999, Trimble was ‘talking cordially about “George” and making it clear he had no objection to his re-appearance on the scene.’¹⁹⁰

Trimble’s comments are very positive on the role that Mitchell played:

Having a review process, having Mitchell as chairman of the review process was helpful. My own take on this, I might be completely wrong but this is my interpretation. The fact that the initial meetings between Sinn Féin and ourselves chaired by G. Mitchell, which took place in Belfast, were appallingly bad, there were the worst meetings we ever had. Sinn Féin were simply shouting at us the whole time, they were just abusive in the autumn 1999. It was suggested that we would take sometime out before having meetings in London. Then he suggested that we had these meetings in hotel. We said no, we didn’t like that idea. There would be too much press intrusion. Lancaster house was available. I remembered the Winfield house had completed its renovation. The meeting then took place there by the end of the month. Once in Winfield house, the atmosphere changed like that. Sinn Féin who in Belfast had been very abusive, in Winfield house started to converse in moderate tones and the whole atmosphere was totally different. I said to colleagues that I thought the reason why Sinn Féin had changed their approach when we got into Winfield house, is that Winfield house was probably the only building in London that MI 5 did not bug the US almost certainly had it bugged and that a synopsis of the conversation if not the exact text were probably arriving on the Clinton’s desk within a day after the meeting. I thought that’s why the atmosphere changed, because the Republicans did not want Clinton to hear their normal behaviour. Now, this might completely be off

¹⁸⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, “Mitchell steps back from Ulster rift”, 5 Sep. 1999

¹⁹⁰ *The Independent*, “Profile: George Mitchell- The man to bring peace to Ulster?; The ex-Senator’s patience and judgement are in demand like never before”, 18 Jul. 1999

the wall, it might have nothing to do with the change of atmosphere but that's my theory.¹⁹¹

Whatever the veracity of Trimble's account, it is interesting that he sees a potential reading by Clinton of transcripts of meetings as positive from a UUP perspective. Trimble portrays Clinton as a source of pressure on Sinn Féin not a threat to Unionists or the Union.

Mitchell, as during the previous negotiations, had to work closely with Trimble and concentrate on producing an arrangement that the UUP leader could sell to his party for two reasons. First, the extremely hostile attitude of the anti-agreement actors confirmed the impossibility of convincing them. Second, the fact that Trimble's name was so closely related to the agreement meant that the political leader's downfall would certainly engender its collapse as much as the rejection of the change within the GFA would certainly entail the end of his leadership. Trimble admitted as much in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 18 November 1999 in other words a week before the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) vote to amend the UUP support for an executive.¹⁹²

The assimilation of Trimble's image as the leader of the UUP to the success of the GFA made two distinct issues completely interdependent.

¹⁹¹ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, 8 Apr. 2004

¹⁹² *Belfast Telegraph*, "Jump with Trimble, Mitchell tells IRA", 18 Nov. 1999

This interdependence could also play in Trimble's disfavour as, as much as Mitchell paid attention to Trimble's position, the former senator could use this leverage to make him accept a compromise that he may originally not have supported.

After two and a half months of negotiations, the arrangement relied on three main points. First, there should be the creation of an Executive exercising devolved powers. Second, decommissioning should be completed by May 2000 and finally it should 'be carried out in a manner determined by the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning',¹⁹³

After the changes, Mitchell reportedly 'attempted to shore up Mr Trimble's position by saying decommissioning will happen.'¹⁹⁴ Clinton made several interventions exhorting the IRA to decommission showing some support to the Unionist leader and discrediting the anti-agreement argument that the US had a pro-nationalist agenda.¹⁹⁵ Such statements certainly rely on the idea that Trimble had advocated the American card due to the US potential influence over the Republican movement.

¹⁹³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Mitchell tells of his hopes for future of province", 18 Nov. 1999

¹⁹⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Jump with Trimble, Mitchell tells IRA", 18 Nov. 1999

¹⁹⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, "IRA decommissioning is next step says Clinton", 19 Nov. 1999

Clinton also made positive statements about Trimble:

[He] has provided very strong and clear leadership. I don't think that he would be doing this if he didn't believe that ultimately all the provisions of the Good Friday accord would be honoured. And I hope his party will stay with him because he has been absolutely pivotal to this. And it's taken a lot of courage for him to take some of the decisions that he's taken, but because of that, we're on the verge of success.¹⁹⁶

It is difficult to gauge the level of contribution from the US "campaign" to the "yes" success by a narrow 58% of the votes in the UUC.¹⁹⁷ However, it can easily be argued that the effect was not essential as the UUC did not simply vote on the basis of Mitchell's plan but also on the provision that Trimble would resign as First Minister by 12 February if decommissioning had not started by then. This point along with the strong support of major political figures such as the influential John Taylor who was able to carry a significant proportion of the party with him,¹⁹⁸ certainly put more weight in the "yes" balance.

On the decommissioning matter, Ulster Unionists have been quite sceptical about the contribution that the US made or the level of motivation of the US administration into trying to persuade the paramilitaries to hand over the weapons. This scepticism is reflected in Trimble's words:

There was not any serious attempt to bring it about. Diplomacy is sometimes the exercise of pressure as well as persuasion. What he was saying was helpful but it

¹⁹⁶ *The Associated Press*, Clinton: Northern Ireland talks making progress, 19 Nov. 1999

¹⁹⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "It's YES, Trimble outlines his vision of new era", 27 Nov. 1999

wasn't always following through. In the summer of 1999, he said to us in form of an interview, that Unionists should set up the institutions, if Republicans don't follow through and deliver on their obligation then they can walk away and that was very much in our minds when at the end of 1999 we went into devolution with a clear understanding that there would be decommissioning before the end of January and that did not happen. We proposed to walk away and that stage, we expected Clinton to be saying yeah they did their bit, you republicans haven't done your bit, Trimble is quite right to walk away, he didn't actually. He attacked us for doing that. I felt a bit soured about that although I think I have a fair idea about why, that goes back to Irish American political pressure.¹⁹⁹

Trimble described what a lot of Unionists felt with Clinton not using greater leverage on the Republicans to obtain decommissioning. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that even six years after the signing of the GFA, Trimble is very nuanced in his reflections and blames Irish-Americans rather than openly declaring that Clinton was not willing to or could not persuade the IRA to decommission. While Trimble's own views are ambiguous, it at least suggests that he considered that the US could play a positive role from a UUP perspective.

The mere fact that a UUP leader even considered that a US President might take their side in an argument with Sinn Féin was a significant departure from the UUP viewpoint at the start of the peace process and during the first instances of US engagement. Yet, within the pro-Agreement camp, there were critical voices. Trimble's diplomacy is in sharp contrast to Lord Maginnis' statement. Maginnis' position is much more judgmental vis a vis what he

¹⁹⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Queuing up for a slice of history at the Front", 27 Nov. 1999

¹⁹⁹ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

perceived the US ambiguous attitude on decommissioning and the Unionists' position on the US agenda:

Members will recall that when President Clinton came to Northern Ireland amidst the euphoria of the first IRA cease-fire — a cease-fire which we cautioned was a fraud — he stated here in Belfast to the people of Northern Ireland “You must stand fast against terror. You must say to those who would still use violence for political objectives: ‘you are the past. Your day is over. Violence has no place at the table of democracy and no role in the future of this land’.” Yet, within two or three years, his Administration is making a decision that six illegal immigrants should not be deported back to Ireland. One might say that that is very much a domestic matter, one for the United States Administration and no concern whatsoever of ours.²⁰⁰

If the UUP members generally remained quiet on their perception of the US involvement, some actions were of great significance or interpreted as such. For instance, Trimble's departed for Sicily during Clinton's third trip to Northern Ireland in December 2000.²⁰¹ Indeed, the end of Clinton's second mandate along with Bush's victory was some kind of relief for Unionists as they would not be under constant scrutiny. Trimble declared:

Bush does not have the same emotional involvement with the issue that Clinton had. That's absolutely true. That's not a bad thing. (...) I think actually a lower engagement and a lower profile is also a good thing. There are too many Northern Ireland politicians who are becoming a bit too blasé but, because there were getting access to the White House, they thought that they were the centre of the world and that consequently things should be adjusted to fit their requirements. I

²⁰⁰ Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002.

²⁰¹ Private Interview, Northern Irish official, according to the interviewee, Trimble left in the middle of the gathering because Clinton arrived very late and Trimble had to catch a flight for an official ceremony in Sicily.

think that the more distant approach of the Bush administration is better for that reason.²⁰²

This feeling of relief is also underlined in Taylor's attitude reported in the *Daily Telegraph*. 'Even if Trimble called President Clinton a friend of Northern Ireland, John Taylor, deputy leader of UUP refused point-blank the idea that Clinton might become the new American peace envoy.

The declaration of Mister John Taylor is very loquacious, "Bill Clinton by the end of the day is a democrat and the democrats are controlled by the American Irish."²⁰³ Such a declaration is the ultimate proof that despite an active collaboration with the US, Unionists in general retained their initial position regarding the US President being somehow manipulated by the Irish-American lobby. Such declarations had not taken place before due to the potential diplomatic fallout but once the President was not in a position to pressurise the different political groups, the UUP made more virulent declarations. Besides, Bush's election was obviously the end of an active US involvement in the peace process. Donaldson stated: 'George Bush, in fairness, does not take a particularly detailed interest in the Northern Ireland peace Process. I think because of the friendship he has developed with Tony Blair, he is very much prepared to rely on the Prime Minister's advice. There will continue to be an American interest but I think it will be a more positive interest from the Unionist perspective.'²⁰⁴

²⁰² David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 8 Apr. 2004

²⁰³ *Daily Telegraph*, "The Unionist don't want President Clinton as a Ulster "peace envoy"", 26 Dec. 2000

²⁰⁴ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

American officials who actually did not necessarily see the decrease of the US engagement as being negative for America share this viewpoint. Indeed, Soderberg argued: 'they are much less engaged, but that is ok. There's no point. You don't need to have an engagement that we had at the time, it's good for Americans to step back.'²⁰⁵

Congressman Peter King declared: 'There is no doubt that Northern Ireland or issues not directly affecting the US are going to be more secondary. (...) The US administration found very offensive that Gerry Adams went to Cuba. It was like a slap for the US. He never realised the impact. That's up to the Unionists whether to take advantage of that.'²⁰⁶

Unionists actually never did take proper advantage of Sinn Féin strategic mistakes. It demonstrates how much the UUP was eager to go back to a situation that could be similar to the one prior to Clinton's presidency. Maginnis does not see any advantage in engaging with the Bush administration arguing: 'it's all very egocentric, it's all to do with "Mr USA" rather than what's going on in Northern Ireland or in London or whatever.'²⁰⁷

Donaldson, despite being one of the early advocates of an American agenda, reflected a more traditional unionist position by 2003 saying: the USA should act 'as facilitators nothing more than that (...) and I think it is the best that the detail of any new agreement is left to the political parties in Northern Ireland and the British government and of course with a role in terms of the Irish

²⁰⁵ Nancy Soderberg, New York, 14 May 2002

²⁰⁶ Peter King, Washington D.C., 20 Apr. 2002

²⁰⁷ Lord Maginnis, UUP Head quarter, 6 Dec. 2002

government on those aspects of the agreement that relate to their decision.²⁰⁸

The Unionist MP's statement strongly insinuates that in spite of the UUP quasi constant silence about Clinton's administration involvement, they actually thought that it was too much of an interference demonstrating that they actually never changed their mind on the nature of this involvement and what it could bring.

²⁰⁸ Jeffrey Donaldson, UUP Lisburn Office, 15 Apr. 2003

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis raised a number of questions about the nature and evolution of the Ulster Unionist Party's relationship with the US administration as an external mediator in the Northern Ireland peace process. The discussion in chapter one also highlighted key international debates of relevance to this thesis, focusing on identifying when an external mediator can make a difference and on the debates as to whether neutrality or leverage is more important in mediation. On the first point, the controversy continues between those in favour of preventive mediation, or immediate intervention and those, like Zartman, who argue that intervention is more efficient when the actors of the conflict have reached a "hurting stalemate".

While the geo-political context of the Cold War prevented any earlier external intervention and thus any analysis of "preventive intervention", the issue of whether a "mutual hurting stalemate" had arrived in the late 1980s, or was necessary is interesting in the Northern Ireland context. Did the key actors perceive a "mutual hurting stalemate" by the early 1990s and if yes, has it been a relevant factor? The discussion in chapter one suggested that the British

government and Sinn Féin might well have seen the situation in those terms. Of more direct interest to this thesis is whether the UUP did so.

On the question of who can mediate, Unionists always viewed the US as being more sympathetic to the Irish nationalist cause, in spite of the State Department's longstanding support for the British government's position. Despite this reputation of partiality among Unionists, the US administration became involved in the issue and contributed significantly to the peace process. This aspect of the research fits in the international debate about the level of neutrality that a mediator must have. As discussed in chapter one, if one considers that the will to be involved in mediation is based on a "cost-benefit calculation", the mediator's neutrality can always be questioned (Zartman and Touval, 1996, p.451).

In the Northern Ireland case, any potential third party would have been seen as supporting the Nationalist side as Unionists sought to defend the status quo. Therefore, this dissertation is not seeking to judge the partiality or impartiality of the mediator but whether a mediator seen as partial by one side can still succeed.

The eighteen events that were used as case studies in this dissertation ultimately sought to answer three main questions. Firstly, why did the UUP engage with the US mediation effort if they perceived the US administration or indeed any external mediator to be opposed to their interests? Secondly, what was the nature of this engagement, was it just one of resistance and did it evolve along with the peace process to include a more positive attitude to US

intervention? Finally, what does the relationship between the UUP and the US during the Northern Ireland peace process bring to the wider debate on neutrality and leverage and more importantly, to what extent is mediation leverage efficient in bringing about a successful conflict resolution? This final chapter will be structured around these three main questions.

I- THE UUP DECISION TO ENGAGE WITH US MEDIATION

Unionists paid very little attention to the 1992 US presidential election thinking that the repercussions on Northern Ireland would be as limited as Carter's statement in August 1977. The very limited range of UUP statements about the US role suggests that they did not really think that Clinton's administration could seriously contemplate significant involvement in Northern Ireland conflict resolution. If such a misunderstanding was partly based on Unionists' miscalculations, especially regarding the British government's capacity to prevent this involvement, the first one and a half years of Clinton's first term did not provide any significant sign of a serious involvement. Such an attitude also explains the relatively slow UUP reaction to the undesired US involvement as it developed.

As discussed in chapter two, the USA has always been viewed as hostile to Ulster Unionism due to the strong Irish-American political activism in favour of a united Ireland and the absence of a pro-unionist political constituency there. On the inter-governmental level, Unionists traditionally felt that the Anglo-

American “Special Relationship” would prevent any US intervention in the Northern Ireland situation. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapters one and three, the cataclysmic changes within the International System at the beginning of the 1990s along with the initial mutual resentment between the new Democratic administration and the British Conservative government made US intervention possible. Indeed, the disequilibrium of strength between the US, being the only remaining super power, and the United Kingdom was in favour of a potential intervention. The changing international order necessarily had an impact on the unionist traditional position. Once the British government gave in to US pressure and allowed a US intervention, the Unionists’ traditional defensive position was, at least, seriously diminished.

The UUP became actively involved in the peace process and built a relationship with US representatives despite great reluctance within their own community. Unionists’ initial suspicion was based on three main factors. Firstly, any external involvement in Northern Ireland would imply a questioning of the constitutional and political status quo. Secondly, regarding the US in particular, they feared a strong Irish-American influence over the new President due to the significant role that the Irish-American lobby played in Bill Clinton’s election in 1992. Thirdly, after the US administration granted the first visa to Adams, Unionists could not stand the idea of being treated on the same level as people they perceived as “terrorists”.

One striking example is the answer by Jim Wilson about the UUP refusal to take part to any media event involving Sinn Féin, to explain the UUP boycott of the 1995 St Patrick's Day celebration as described in chapter three.¹

Unionists have always seen the conflict situation as a zero-sum game. They had everything to lose and Nationalists nothing through mediation. Their political position is often based on the perception that everyone outside the Northern Ireland Protestant community as being a potential enemy of Ulster. Therefore, their traditional strategy was to practice abstention, and seek to oppose any external intervention or indeed any reform pressure from London.

As described in chapters three and four, the UUP consent to cooperate with an American mediation was based on the simple fact that the US offer could not be rejected. Indeed, the US had forcibly demonstrated that the British government could not stop them in their desire to become involved or prevent them making decisions opposed by the UUP or the British Government. Among the eighteen case studies used for this research the failure of British Government attempts to limit US intervention can be seen in: the Adams' visa case; the positive welcome by the US administration of the first IRA cease-fire in August 1994; Gore's phone call to Adams in September 1994; the establishment of an official diplomatic relationship between Sinn Féin and the US administration, underlined by the first meeting between Adams and Clinton in December 1994; Adams' invitation to the White House for the 1995 St Patrick's Day celebration; and the US pressure on the British government during the 1995 Washington Economic Conference during which the first meeting between Mayhew and

¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton given cold shoulder by Unionists", 17 Mar. 1995

Adams was organised. These are events that demonstrate strong US leverage. The UUP and the British government opposed all these US decisions, and yet, they went ahead. It was increasingly clear to the UUP that they could not rely on the British government to prevent US decisions which they opposed. These decisions would also proceed whether they engaged or not. This led to a progressive engagement by the UUP seeing it as the only possible strategy to prevent the development of a worse case scenario. Furthermore, the recent experience of the failed campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) from 1985 to 1988 had weakened the tendency within the UUP to simply refuse to engage. As mentioned in chapter one, Ken Maginnis argued that one of the consequences of the AIA and the failure of the campaign that followed was 'one thing that Unionists were determined about was that nobody would ever again make an agreement behind their backs.'²

There is no evidence of any positive strategy to enlist the US in their support during this early period of intervention. The UUP strategy was to engage with the USA to limit the involvement of the Clinton administration. It was an entirely defensive strategy. The UUP still assumed that any US involvement would be negative but that they needed a relationship with the US to avoid giving nationalists a clear-run and because the British government had not been able or willing to defend their interests. Thus it is very difficult to see any evidence for "mutually hurting stalemate" thinking in the UUP at the beginning of the process. In fact, they totally opposed any mediation seeing it only as a threat. They did not seek mediation as a way to escape a "hurting" status quo. They sought rather to protect that status quo. Neither is there any evidence at this time

² Lord Maginnis, UUP Headquarters, Belfast, 6 Dec. 2002

that the UUP appreciated the significance of the changes in the international system. They largely ignored the 1992 election and the first eighteen months of Clinton's term, assuming that nothing would really happen. There was certainly no evidence of a preparatory UUP American strategy.

The peace process may not have been successful without Unionists being involved but the US had enough leverage to assimilate the Unionist position to the British one in the early phase and present their direct dealings with London as providing the necessary balance to links with Sinn Féin. As covered in chapter three, the US administration virtually ignored Unionists until after the first visa to Adams. Moreover, the UUP's initial attempts at denouncing US engagement and their boycotting strategy at the beginning of Clinton's first term turned out to be totally ineffective in preventing US involvement.

There are certainly other factors apart from US mediation that can explain the UUP engagement with the peace process more generally. However, from Clinton's election until David Trimble's election, the UUP saw the US involvement as a threat being constantly confirmed by US decisions.

The granting of the first visa to Gerry Adams was the turning point within the UUP which saw some of the then younger activists, such as Jeffrey Donaldson, start advocating the necessity to implement a US agenda to counterbalance the Nationalist viewpoint in the US.

This advocacy was applied with the organisation of UUP lobbying trips to the US starting with one just after Adams' trip in February 1994.³

The decision to implement a US strategy also coincides with the UUP realisation that the British government was unable to protect their interests, as Mayhew's speech in Cookstown during Adams' first trip in the US expressed: "We did our best".⁴ The position of some UUP members demonstrates the perception that for some, the launch of an American agenda had become a necessity rather than a possibility. Nevertheless, not all leading UUP members felt that way and some of them, like Willie Thompson and Willie Ross, denounced it as useless, accentuating already existing internal ideological divisions within the party.⁵ The continuing division on the issue and hesitation about the creation of an American agenda clearly impacted on the time that it took for the UUP to effectively go Stateside.

Given this situation why did the UUP start engaging with the US? The analysis of this dissertation is that, like their internal engagement in the aftermath of the failed anti-AIA campaign, they felt they had no other choice. In this regard, Touval's comment, mentioned in chapter one, that there are offers you cannot decline, is accurate (1992, p.232).

Beyond political factors, the US offered some possible economic investments that Unionists could hardly turn down, given the economic crisis that then existed in the province. The importance of the economic aspect was

³ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Unionists set up tour to counter Sinn Féin", 3 Feb. 1994

⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, "We did our best: Mayhew", 2 Feb. 1994

⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, "UUP Rebels in Talks Threat", 22 Dec. 1997

revealed in the UUP and DUP decision to send a delegation to the conference in May 1995 in Washington, in spite of Mayhew officially meeting Adams there behind closed doors and just two months after they boycotted the St Patrick's Day events.

Consequently, it seems clear that external factors were far more important than internal motivation in their change of policy. The UUP's primary engagement was more defensive than active as they were responding rather than initiating. In their early decisions to affect a US strategy there is no evidence that the UUP hoped to use US leverage against Irish nationalists to Unionist advantage. They only hoped to limit the possible damage and felt obliged to engage with the USA to limit nationalist influence there. This is clear in Trimble's comment in the aftermath of the creation of the UUP office in Washington, mentioned in chapter four: "Our operation is just a "me too" sort of thing, pointing out to people when you think of this issue think of us as well" (Birney & O'Neill, 1997, p.247).

While responses to mediation efforts are by no means the only way of identifying a "mutually hurting stalemate", the early unionist engagement at least suggests that unionist politicians did not perceive themselves to have reached a hurting stalemate and certainly preferred a defence of the status quo to seeking a way forward based on external mediation.

II-EVOLUTION OF THE UUP STRATEGY TOWARD US INVOLVEMENT

While active involvement with people seen as enemies of unionism could be electorally risky for the UUP, a potential engagement with the US also presented some possible advantages. Their main motivation was that of slowing down the process, as they did within Northern Ireland using the decommissioning issue to block the negotiations. There is some evidence however that, as the process developed, some UUP members ultimately believed that they could benefit from the US administration's influence on Irish Republicans and might also benefit from a privileged position in media events such as the one offered to Trimble during the first presidential trip to Northern Ireland. Indeed, as discussed in chapter four, the ride given to Trimble in the Presidential limousine gave him the opportunity of having a private meeting with the US President, providing a local demonstration that the UUP's position was taken into account by the US administration.

Despite the launch of the US agenda under Molyneaux's UUP leadership with the organisation of several trips to the US and the creation of the UUP Northern American office, the UUP engagement clearly became more active after Trimble's election as the party's new leader. Indeed, as highlighted in chapter four, Trimble demonstrated a greater awareness of the importance of strategically engaging with the US. This attitude is based on his political pragmatism, a more active leadership style than Molyneaux and a lesser willingness to trust Westminster politics. Therefore, instead of passively accepting the US involvement as being unavoidable, Trimble launched a more

active strategy. This dynamic strategy was visible right after his election in September 1995 as Trimble went on an official visit to the US as soon as November 1995.

Trimble's election appeared to be decisive in the UUP's active engagement with the US. Trimble used negative but very forceful arguments to convince his people of the necessity to engage as he presented it as a duty to neutralise or slow down the nationalist influence. Trimble appeared to have adopted this ambiguous strategy almost immediately after his election. For instance, as discussed in chapter four, Trimble stated that the US involvement "complicate[d] life" but the US had a part to play because of the way "some Irish-Americans have behaved in terms of (...) supporting terrorism".⁶ Trimble also applied the same strategy with Mitchell's designation to chair the peace talks. The UUP did not make any official declaration of support or opposition, but remained in the talks and tried to diminish as much as possible the role of the new Chairman in the negotiations. Trimble argued: "What I did achieve was to open up the procedures and instead of continuing on the agenda designed by the two governments we are now adjourned for a week, during which a committee will draw up fresh procedures and re-examine the agenda" (Mitchell, 1999, p. 56-57). This tactic is also clearly visible in the way Trimble handled the campaign for the "yes" vote in the GFA referendum in May 1998 using the conditional argument of a possible Unionist withdrawal if Irish Republicans did not decommission.

The UUP played a much more active role with the US under Trimble's leadership. Persistent DUP hostility could still be seen; for example, Paisley

refused to meet Soderberg and Crowe in September 1995 arguing a trip to Wales as taking precedence and Robinson called the President's trip to Northern Ireland of being a vast NORaid media campaign. However, the UUP did not make any overtly negative statement after Trimble's election and actually applied the opposite strategy. Trimble used the US delegation trip to ask the US administration to clarify its position about decommissioning.⁷ Thus, some elites in the UUP clearly showed signs of a much greater acceptance of the reality of the US role.

It took two years for the UUP to shift from resistance to pro-active engagement with the US. This point is crucial as, when they started engaging effectively, they were taken into account. This new status was visible with the US responding very positively to the new UUP policy, as Soderberg, quoted in chapter four, declared that the administration was always making sure that Unionists would get a slightly better deal than Sinn Féin to keep them engaged. The UUP consequently gained greater control over the peace process. Indeed, if the UUP had not engaged with the USA in the negotiations, they would have been unable to exert pressure and water down Mitchell's role as chairman of the negotiations within Northern Ireland. Moreover, such an engagement allowed Trimble to take advantage of the USA's wish to be seen as a honest broker. Trimble showed some very positive attitudes towards the US. For instance, as described in chapter five regarding Clinton's re-election, Trimble flew to Washington less than a month after Clinton's victory and took advantage of this

⁶ *Sunday Tribune*, "Trimble Defiant after US Clash", 5 Nov. 1995

⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Clinton's Team bids to break Deadlock", 3 Oct. 1995

trip to praise the role of Senator Mitchell.⁸ Nevertheless, these advantages must not be overstated.

Trimble's attempts to use the US desire for 'neutrality' to persuade the US administration to pressure Sinn Féin on the decommissioning issue was largely unsuccessful.⁹ In spite of Trimble's plea, the US administration maintained diplomatic relationships with Sinn Féin allowing Adams to enter the US after the Canary Wharf bombing in February 1996.

Moreover, as discussed in chapter five, the UUP engagement with the US did not prevent the US administration announcement that the IRA was no longer on the list of terrorist organisations at the beginning of October 1997, a day after Trimble's visit to Washington.

The review of the eighteen case studies analysed in this dissertation demonstrates that the UUP engagement went through three stages. The first phase corresponds to the Unionist denunciation of the US involvement, showing resistance, denial and ignorance of the US will to engage until Gerry Adams' first visa. Clinton's first election (Nov. 1992) generated very little reaction by Unionists and no senior UUP member made any official statement, since Clinton's promises had not been taken seriously. Unionists of all shades, apart from some members of the UUP, mostly due to Molyneaux' being consulted, opposed the Downing Street Declaration (Dec. 1993). Nevertheless, the "détente" that the declaration showed between the British and Irish government, and the strong nationalist input that Major consented to was a sign that the US

⁸ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Where do we stand?", 5 Nov. 1996

⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, "Pressurise Sinn Féin", 6 Oct. 1995

administration took into account in its decision to grant the visa to Adams. The Unionists' lack of support for it did not slow down the US decision.

The UUP viewed the granting of the visa to Gerry Adams (Feb. 1994) as a scandalous decision taken by a foreign country resolute to interfere in Northern Ireland. As described in chapter three, they boycotted the conference on peace that had been especially organised and remained cut off from the discussion. This was, in hindsight, viewed as a mistake and, thereafter, the UUP started changing its strategy, adopting a much more reactive approach and became more involved, as the organisation of several trips to the US following the visa case show.

The second phase corresponds to a period of reactive and negative engagement to try and counteract Irish nationalist influence in the USA with the organisation of several trips and the creation, though initially with great reluctance, of the UUP Northern American office.¹⁰ Their refusal to attend the St Patrick's Day celebration at the White House (Mar. 1995) was expected as Adams had also been invited. Nevertheless, their absence was a mistake, which was viewed within the US as a sign of their reluctance to engage in a peace process. Despite their refusal to attend the St Patrick's Day events, Unionists of all shades sent a delegation to the Economic Conference organised in Washington D.C. (May 1995). It was certainly easier to justify this to their constituencies. Their official attendance was also the first official demonstration that they could no longer ignore the US. The opening of the UUP North American Bureau (Oct. 1995) demonstrates the continuing difficulty for the UUP in engaging with the US. First, the office was only opened after being strongly

¹⁰ See Chap. 3

solicited by the US, and secondly its role seen as purely reactive, limited to countering Sinn Féin.

Finally, in a third phase the UUP engaged a little more positively in order to gain advantages for themselves, to seek greater control of the process and the negotiations under Trimble's leadership, with increased regular contact with the US administration. This regularity was also eased by the progressive involvement of George Mitchell in Northern Ireland affairs.¹¹ David Trimble's election as Leader of the UUP (Sep. 1995) led to increased engagement with the US, in spite of the shock that was expressed in the British political class as everyone, or almost everyone, saw him as a hard-liner and a sign of party radicalisation. Trimble turned out to be more energetic in his attempts to obtain benefits for the UUP from US involvement. This is seen in his account of the phone call on the day of the signing of the agreement as reported in chapter five.

Clinton's first Trip to Northern Ireland (Dec. 1995) was important for Trimble's new strategy as the President had to show his willingness to act as an honest broker which could provide greater room to manoeuvre for those inclined towards a proactive, rather than simply a defensive attitude to US involvement. The UUP did not reject Mitchell's report on Decommissioning (Jan. 1996) as a sign of their greater commitment, but only because it supported (if tentatively) the organisation of elections that Trimble had called for. This demonstrated that a more active and less defensive policy could bring some payback. The UUP's muted reaction to Mitchell becoming Chairman of the negotiations (Jun. 1996) actually saved Mitchell and the talks process.

¹¹ See Chap. 4 and 5

The UUP clearly did not look favourably on his appointment but demonstrated its readiness to cope with it at a certain price, gaining some positive responses and playing the game of cost-benefit calculation. The UUP responded more actively to Clinton's re-election (Nov. 1996), Trimble personally congratulating Clinton and the UUP showing greater involvement by visiting Washington as soon as early December 1996 to discuss the Northern Ireland agenda with the US administration and complementing Mitchell's efforts.

The UUP planned for the foreseeable Labour victory in the British general elections (May 1997) and ensured that their situation would not be as sensitive as it could have been. The disastrous relationship between Clinton and Major at the beginning of the first term of the US president actually worked against Unionists' interest. Therefore, the renewal of the special relationship between Blair and Clinton turned out to be quite positive for the UUP. Blair and Labour in general had adopted more pro-Union position, and had a greater capacity to influence Clinton and launch a greater collaboration, insisting on the fundamental role of "majority consent". The IRA cease-fire (Jul. 1997) is important within the peace process as it indicates the imminent return of Sinn Féin to the negotiations table. The UUP decided to remain in the talks to confront Sinn Féin (though not directly), but being the only major Unionist party to remain in the talks and believing they would obtain a better deal than if they walked out. The signing of the GFA (Apr. 1998) raised several points and a host of accusations. Nevertheless, Trimble's version insists on the beneficial aspect of talking to the President to obtain a letter guaranteeing a number of substantial points for Unionists and therefore insinuating that Trimble had to some extent some influence over the US President.

In the “yes” Campaign to the Referendum (May 1998) Trimble openly disagreed with Clinton’s arrival during the campaign. The rejection was typical of the isolationist unionist attitude which remained an important part of unionist’s overall position despite the greater levels of engagement. However, Trimble agreed with Mitchell’s return as facilitator in the review of the agreement (Jul.-Dec. 1999), and worked with the former Senator to obtain guarantees regarding US pressure on the IRA to decommission. The failure by the US to blame the IRA for not decommissioning by 12 February shows the limits of the UUP’s greater collaboration with the US.

However, at the end of the day, despite some noticeable changes in their relationship with the US administration, it seems that the UUP was simply patiently waiting for the end of Clinton’s term to show their underlying position. For instance, in the *Daily Telegraph*, ‘Even if Trimble called President Clinton a “friend of Northern Ireland”, John Taylor, deputy leader of UUP, rejected point-blank the idea that Clinton might become the new American peace envoy. Taylor declared in the same article: “Bill Clinton at the end of the day is a democrat and the democrats are controlled by the American Irish.”¹² This statement was made when Bush had already been elected as the future President of the United States, so, it can reveal the UUP desire to build good bridges of communication with the future Republican administration but clearly demonstrates their ultimate hostility towards Clinton and his administration. Unionists were clearly happy not to be under scrutiny anymore, as Steven King mentioned in an interview.¹³

¹² *Daily Telegraph*, “The Unionists don’t want President Clinton as a Ulster “peace envoy””, 26 Dec. 2000

¹³ Steven King, UUP Headquarters, 23 Oct. 2003

Such a declaration demonstrates UUP satisfaction about the return of the traditional US position vis a vis Northern Ireland. Stronger evidence in this regard is their lack of active strategy toward the Bush administration, especially after September 11th and the FARC scandal in 2001. To the question of whether the Unionists had tried to take advantage of the post 9/11 atmosphere in Capitol Hill, a Northern Irish official answered:

I am surprised they haven't. Next week, the National committee hearings start. A lot of people will hear no distinction between terrorists. The psychological impact is profound. Unionists might not be strategic thinkers. There is a lot of the stuff that Unionists could react to, for instance, 09.11, the detainees in Columbia and the Ashcroft anti-terrorist measures. Unionists could accuse the US of gross hypocrisy. Perhaps, it shows Unionists' inability to think in strategy. That may say something about the way Unionists regard the USA.¹⁴

As this Northern Irish Official states, the UUP attitude vis a vis the new President demonstrates that a more moderate US involvement in the Northern Ireland political situation was welcome. Moreover, it also demonstrates that the UUP never fully perceived the US involvement as being positive from their standpoint.

III- THE UUP-US RELATIONSHIP AND THE WIDER DEBATE ABOUT LEVERAGE IN MEDIATION

As discussed in chapter one, Bercovitch argues that four main factors are decisive in judging the likelihood of success in mediation. First, it must be a

protracted conflict. Secondly, the actors to the conflict must reach an impasse inducing them to search for an alternative. The third factor is to evaluate each actor's level of readiness to carry on the struggle at any cost. Fourth, success in mediation also depends on each actor's will to accept the assistance of a third party (Bercovitch & Houston, 1996, p.13, Bercovitch, 1997, p.133, 2000, p.8). There is no evidence in their early response to the USA, or even their first engagements, that the UUP saw any advantage to US involvement. In this regard, there is no evidence that the UUP perceived a hurting stalemate.

Both Bercovitch and Zartman agree with the importance of reaching this hurting stalemate, as defined in chapter one, as the realisation by both sides that they are 'never going to win or solve the problem' (Zartman & Touval, 1997, p.452-453). Unionists never felt this hurting stalemate, as they perceived that a containment policy was enough to preserve the status quo if not solve the issue.

One of the four main factors underlined in Bercovitch's work as essential for successful mediation, is that all participants must agree with engaging in a process of mediation and with the choice of the mediator. Unionists were opposed to any external involvement for two main reasons: firstly, the absence of an awareness of any hurting stalemate, and secondly, the fear of external involvement as being necessarily against their interest. But more particularly, as discussed above, Unionists clearly opposed the US acting as mediators in a potential peace process in Northern Ireland. Thus, the Northern Ireland situation does not fit all of Bercovitch and Zartman's criteria. Moreover, the US mediation only relied on its huge capacity for leverage, as it was clearly not perceived as

¹⁴ Private Interview, Northern Irish Official

being neutral on either side. Thus, beyond neutrality, the US access to the role of mediator was actually based on leverage.

A-The “mutually hurting stalemate” and the willingness to accept mediation

The evidence of this thesis suggests that the UUP decision to develop a strategy towards the US was not based on a pre-existing hurting stalemate. In this regard and limited to the UUP relationship with the USA, this thesis cannot be used to advance Zartman’s thesis. The UUP support for the GFA was not a result of a well-timed mediation at a period when they saw the conflict as a “hurting stalemate”. While the thesis is not a refutation of Zartman, it does raise questions about his insistence on mutuality. It may well be that the mutually hurting stalemate was important for the relationship between Sinn Féin, the IRA and the British government. However, the UUP’s engagement with the process developed despite the absence of any evidence that they saw their situation in those terms. Their involvement was effectively forced upon them and their initial engagement was purely defensive. Yet, as we have seen it, their attitude could develop and become more positive under Trimble’s leadership and the UUP ultimately voted in favour of the Good Friday Agreement.

As the different events used as case studies demonstrate, the UUP was forced to accept US involvement. Therefore, their first engagement with the US administration was not motivated by internal strategic desire to enlist the support of a mediator. The UUP, as much as any other Unionist parties, were radically

against US involvement. The first five cases examined in this dissertation, from Clinton's first election, his administration's early involvement, the UUP attitude vis a vis the Adams' visa in refusing to attend the conference, their attitude at the Washington Economic Conference in May 1995, all clearly show that the UUP did not see the situation in Zartman's terms. Even in the later case studies, such as their reaction to Mitchell's designation as chairman of the talks, where there is some more positive UUP responses are not based on an implied "mutually hurting stalemate" analysis. None of the 18 cases could be said to support the idea that the UUP saw a mutually hurting stalemate either at the beginning of the peace process when they decided to engage or even after Trimble's election.

This indicates that there was no internal motivation within the UUP to engage with an external mediator. Thus, the UUP does not fit Bercovitch's fourth main criteria for a successful mediation. Likewise the relative success of the peace process, in bringing the UUP to accept an agreement and in keeping cease-fires in place for ten years (a long time by international standards) suggests that an external intervention can have a successful outcome even when one of the central actors does not see the conflict in terms of a hurting stalemate.

B- Neutrality and Leverage

Only the progressive realisation of US leverage influenced the UUP's change of strategy. The first striking event was the granting of the visa to Gerry Adams despite British opposition. The visa was perceived as evidence of the US President's sympathy toward the Irish Nationalist agenda. Despite the controversy caused by the visa decision, the US became involved. The US was

the only state powerful enough to accomplish such a gesture without endangering their relationship with London in the long term. Therefore, as described in the first chapter, the US was the only potentially successful mediator in the Northern Ireland case. First, the US was the only remaining superpower, neither the UUP nor the British government could easily turn down its offer and it possessed considerable weapons of persuasion such as potential economic and political rewards. Thus, the US leverage was a key factor in their effective involvement and surely contributed to Mitchell's effective chairmanship of the negotiations. As chapter one highlights, if leverage does not automatically bring success, it can certainly contribute to the potential mediator's acceptability in the talks. However, despite this strong leverage, the US ability to push the peace process was considerably constrained as the suspension of the negotiations between March and May 1997 shows. Mitchell, as much as the US administration, could not persuade the actors to resume the peace talks. As discussed in chapter one, the use of leverage entirely depends on the third party and the way it judges to use it (Kleiboer, 2002, p.127). Therefore, the US lack of persuasion at that particular time was certainly based on the idea that the time was not right to do so. However, it indicates that potential leverage is only applied according to the situation and that the US could not use it with efficiency in any circumstances.

If the US leverage played a strong role in their becoming mediator, the US administration also attempted to show its neutrality especially after granting the visa to Gerry Adams. First, every actor involved in the conflict has always been invited to major events that the administration organised such as the Economic conference. Second, the US administration clearly tried to demonstrate to Unionists, and the UUP in particular, their will to engage with them by

showing signs of particular attention, such as the ride in the limousine already mentioned; Mitchell's understanding that the UUP would never buy the first draft of the agreement; and President Clinton praising Trimble's role in the peace process after the signing of the GFA. Nevertheless, despite the US efforts, the UUP never really saw the US administration as such, as Trimble's vision of the US not pressurising the IRA enough to decommission shows.¹⁵ Therefore, the US mediation can be seen to have been more focused on leverage, while being conducted in as even-handed a way as possible in its actual operation.

Still, overall, it was a successful operation of mediation while being seen as 'not neutral' by one key actor. Indeed, roughly five and a half years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and despite the difficulties that the actors involved had to face during this time, the US involvement is still perceived as a successful mediation in the sense that it assisted all parties involved to reach agreement on a viable model for durable peace in Northern Ireland. The mission of the US government along with the independent American delegation led by Senator Mitchell was fulfilled when an unprecedented inclusive agreement was signed on 10 April 1998.

Therefore, US mediation has been a success as it contributed to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. However, this success must not be overstated. The relationship between the UUP and the US tends to show that if leverage certainly prevails over neutrality in terms of acceptance and collaboration with a third party, it does not necessarily imply a long-term success. Indeed, 'when [external actors] decide to act- engage in peace-making-meeting the challenge of implementation is central to success' (Crocker &

¹⁵ David Trimble, UUP Headquarters, 8 Apr. 2004

Hampson, 1996, p.57). Although the US remained actively involved in the monitoring of the implementation and review of the agreement, some UUP members, such as Molyneaux, denounced it as the ultimate proof of the GFA inefficacy.¹⁶

Thus, if the US leverage undeniably had a positive impact since it helped persuade the UUP to remain in the negotiations and strongly contributed to the signing of the agreement, the continuous ambiguity of the UUP mainstream towards its support for the GFA and its apparent lack of determination in selling the agreement to their community did not help convince a very suspicious Unionist population. It is worth remembering that, as discussed in chapter five, although a majority of Unionists voted “yes” during the referendum in May 1998, the majority of Unionist representatives elected at the first assembly were anti-agreement. The lack of apparent internal motivation, division within the UUP and constant attacks from the DUP led to a stalemate and no institution resulting from the agreement is effectively working.

If leverage is a precious argument to convince actors to become involved in a peace process, it does not ensure a long-term success. However in the wider international debates the Northern Ireland example certainly lends weight to those who emphasise the importance of a mediator having leverage. A potentially more neutral but less powerful mediator would not have had enough influence to lead the conflicting parties to an agreement as the offer of acting as a mediator would have been easily turned down. In the unlikely case that this potential mediator would have been accepted, their suggestions would have been

¹⁶ Lord Molyneaux, Westminster, 9 Feb. 2004

effortlessly rejected and then the negotiations would have failed. The reasons for the UUP's acceptance of the United States as a mediator corroborate this idea.

The party had two options. They could agree to try and implement an agreement with the Nationalist minority or they could reject US involvement. This last option would have created serious difficulties for the UUP, as they would have rejected the help of the most powerful country in the world. More crucially, rejection of US efforts by the UUP may have pressurised the British government into implementing a new political structure over their heads. The UUP would never have gained anything out of such a strategy. The awareness within the UUP of this sensitive situation led the party to progressively engage with the US.

Thus, to the question regarding the reasons why the UUP evolved toward a much more pragmatic approach of the issue when they perceived the US administration to be opposed to their interests, the main answer is that they had no choice but accept it on the basis of the cost-benefit calculation as the consequences of rejection might have been heavier to endure than those of welcoming it.

Secondly, regarding the nature of the UUP engagement, it seems that the party's leadership never actually trusted the US but were able to show flexibility in their approach to this unwelcome third party. If the initial engagement was clearly one of resistance, the UUP managed to become more actively involved and above all more proactive, therefore obtaining some advantages such as their word being taken into account in the last moment prior to the signing of the

agreement, gaining a letter from the Prime Minister on issues which were not part of the content of the agreement.

Finally, it appears that Northern Ireland offered a very instructive case regarding the analysis of the evolution of a relationship between a third party and a reluctant actor to mediation. Indeed, the fact that the UUP never perceived the US administration as being completely neutral on the Northern Ireland issue did not prevent them from gradually engaging and attempting to obtain certain advantages. Nevertheless, as discussed above, the USA would never have been able to act as a mediator in Northern Ireland without the huge leverage they possess, therefore, neutrality automatically becomes a minor parameter if not a negligible one. But leverage does not ensure a total success as the continuing tension in the UUP-US relationship and the ongoing difficulty of the Northern Ireland peace process more generally shows.

Appendix I

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

US officials

Congressman Peter King, Rhodes Island, 20 Apr.2002

Mr. Neumann, Congressman Gilman's Foreign Policy advisor, 20 Apr. 2002

Mr. Carlton, Congressman Meehan's Foreign Policy Advisor, 20 Apr. 2002

Nancy Soberberg, former deputy director of the National Security Council, 14 May
2002

Thomas Crohan, Senator Kennedy's Foreign Policy Advisor, 17 May 2002

Mary Koenig, US State Department, 17 Jun. 2002

Anonymous Interviews

British Officials

Terry Evans, British Information Service (BIS), British Consulate, Boston, 31 Jan.
2002

Paul Johnston, Director of the BIS, British Consulate General in New York, 8 Feb.
2002

Jonathan Caine, Formerly Sir Patrick Mayhew's Personal Advisor, 25 Jun. 2003 & 20

Oct. 2003

Lord Dubbs, Former NIO Minister, 28 Mar. 2004

Irish Official

A member of the Irish Embassy who wished to remain anonymous

Northern Irish Officials

Dr. Peter Smyth, Northern Ireland American Office, 13 Mar. 2002

Anonymous interview

Unionist Representatives

Anne Smith, UUP Northern American Office Representative, Washington, 14 Mar.

2002 & 18 Apr. 2002

Unionist Political Activists in the US

Rev. Charles Reynolds, 3 Sep. 2002

William McGimpsey, 21 Mar. 2002

Kevin McGimpsey, 23 Jun. 2002

UUP

Dermott Nesbitt, MLA, 16 Mar. 2000

Steven King, David Trimble's advisor, 23 Oct. 2003

David Trimble, Former Northern Ireland First Minister and UUP Leader, 14 Mar. 2002 & 8 Apr. 2004

Lord Laird of Artigarvan, Former President of the Ulster-Scots Agency, 14 Mar. 2003

Lord Maginnis, Former MP, 6 Dec. 2002

Jeffrey Donaldson, then UUP Representative, 15 Apr. 2003

Barry White, Former UUP coordinator in Westminster, 14 Feb. 2003

Roy Beggs, MP, 30 Jan. 2004

Lord Molineaux, Former UUP Leader, 10 Feb. 2004

William Ross, Former UUP MP, 2 Feb. 2004

DUP

St Clair McAllister, Director of Communication, 6 Apr. 2000

UKUP

David Vance, Former UKUP Deputy Leader, 15 May 2000

Sinn Féin

Mearaid Keane, Former SF Representative in the US, 4 Sep. 2003

Rita O'Hare, SF Representative in the US, 4 Sep. 2003

Alliance Party

Sean Neeson, Former AP leader, 9 Jul. 2003

Allan Leonard, Research Officer, 9 Jul. 2003

SDLP

Mark Durkan, Former Deputy Prime Minister and SDLP Leader, 8 Mar. 2000

Alasdair McDonnell, MLA, 7 Mar. 2000

PUP

David Ervine, 15 May 2000

NIUP

Elizabeth Roche, NIUP Representative, 15 May 2000

Journalists

Niall O'Dowd, co-founder of the Irish-Americans for Clinton/Gore, 13 May 2002

Conor O'Clery, Irish Times Correspondent, 10 May 2002

Ray O'Hanlon, Irish Echo Senior Editor, 10 May 2002

Bob Connelly, Former Journalist at the Boston Globe, 12 Jun. 2002

Irish American Businessman

Tony Culley-Foster, 14 Mar. 2004, and by telephone on 24 Apr. and 3 May 2002

Academics

Prof. Michael Dukakis, Former US Presidential Candidate, 16 Apr. 2002

Prof. Kerbi Millar, Expert on Irish Emigration to North America, 10 May 2002

Prof. Paul Bew, Expert on Northern Ireland Politics, 18 Dec. 2003

Walsh Visa Program

Patrick Riordan, Director of Housing of the Walsh Visa Program, 25 Feb. 2002

Thomas Keown, Employment Selection Manager of the Walsh Visa Program, 19 Mar.
2002

Ulster Scots Agency

John McIntyre, Former member of the board of the agency, 19 Mar. 2003

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