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An Elusive Peace: The Nature of Ceasefires within the Irish and Basque Independence Nationalist-Separatist Movements

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and the Honors Program

by

Katrina Beedy

Dr. Susanne Martin, Thesis Advisor

May 2014
We recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by

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An Elusive Peace: The Nature of Ceasefires Within the Irish and Basque Nationalist-Separatist Movements

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BACHELOR OF ARTS, POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract

For decades, the main factions of the once-notorious nationalist-separatist groups Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) waged a war of attrition against the Spanish and British states, respectively. Following years of unsuccessful negotiations in years past, the groups have recently declared a final cessation of armed activity. This thesis examines why the groups’ past ceasefire attempts were unsuccessful, and ultimately which conditions present during the latter ceasefires might have facilitated a more durable peace. To answer these questions, I begin by conducting an in-depth analysis of the IRA’s past ceasefires, truces, and negotiation periods. From this analysis, I derive three hypotheses describing the conditions that appear to either enable or hinder lasting peace within Northern Ireland. I then test these hypotheses on the case of ETA in order to assess whether the conditions that yielded peaceful outcomes within Northern Ireland might also have facilitated peace in the Basque Country. While two of the three hypotheses I derive from the IRA’s peace process do not apply to ETA’s case, analyses of both groups suggest that ceasefires are most likely to be durable when nationalist-separatist groups are led by “politicos” and when the members adopt an absolute and uniform preference for nonviolent solutions. These findings imply that, contrary to popular belief, the peace process in Northern Ireland should not necessarily be upheld as a definitive model for similar peace processes around the globe, or even across Europe.
Acknowledgements

As I complete this thesis, there are several groups and individuals whom I would like to sincerely thank. First, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Susanne Martin, for the many hours she dedicated to brainstorming with me, editing my drafts, and generally guiding me through the research process. In spite of her busy schedule, she always found time to address my concerns. I greatly appreciate all she has done for me. Secondly, I would like to thank the Office of Undergraduate and Interdisciplinary Research for their generous sponsorship of my thesis; the funding and support I received through their office provided me access to the materials I needed to make my research a success. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Tamara Valentine for her endless dedication to the Honors Program and its students. Her hard work, diligence, and kind encouragement have inspired me to push myself farther than I ever thought possible on this project. Thank you!
List of Terms and Acronyms

Terms:

**Abertzale:**
Basque patriot or Nationalist

**Ceasefire:**
A formal renouncement of armed struggle. In the case of the IRA, ceasefires sometimes officially remained in tact even following sporadic attacks. Thus, to the IRA, ceasefires were more of a gesture for peace rather than a condition of peace.

**Eterra:**
A member of ETA

**Euskadi:**
The Basque Country, also known as Euskal Herria

**Euskera:**
The Basque language

**Ideologue**
A term coined by Cynthia Irvin to describe a paramilitary activist who rejects political participation and exclusively pursues armed struggle as a means of obtaining his objectives

**Loyalist:**
One who seeks to maintain British occupancy in Northern Ireland generally through violent means

**Nationalist:**
One who seeks reunification of Ireland and an end to British occupancy of Northern Ireland through peaceful means

**Paramilitary:**
A militarized force whose structure, training, and function are similar to those of a professional military, but which is not considered part of a state’s formal armed forces
Politico:  
A term coined by Cynthia Irvin to describe a paramilitary activist who is fully committed to the political process and outright rejects violence as a viable strategy.

Radical  
A term coined by Cynthia Irvin to describe a paramilitary activist who adopts a joint strategy of armed struggle and political participation.

Republican:  
One who seeks reunification of Ireland and an end to British occupancy of Northern Ireland, sometimes through violent means.

Sinn Fein:  
A Nationalist political party that served as the political voice of the IRA and the Republican movement for several decades. Its leader, Gerry Adams, was a prominent player in the 1990s Northern Ireland Peace Process.

The Troubles:  
An ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Great Britain that killed over 3,600 people in a thirty-year period.

Truce:  
An agreement between enemies or opponents to suspend hostilities for a period of time.

Ulster:  
A province of the United Kingdom, better known as Northern Ireland.

Unionist:  
One who seeks to maintain British occupancy in Northern Ireland through peaceful means.

Acronyms:

CAIN  
Conflict Archive Northern Ireland at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/

CIRA  
Continuity Irish Republican Army: An IRA splinter faction founded in 1986. It has pursued an armed campaign from 1994 to the present.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DUP</strong></td>
<td>Democratic Unionist Party: The larger of two main unionist parties in Northern Ireland. Until May 2008, the party was led by Dr. Ian Paisley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAL</strong></td>
<td>Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberacion (Antiterrorist Liberation Groups): A network of death squads sponsored by the Spanish government to fight ETA.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EA</strong></td>
<td>Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity): A left-wing Basque nationalist party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EE</strong></td>
<td>Euskadiko Ezkerra (The Left of the Basque Country): Coalition of left-wing groups formed in 1977, with close involvement of members of ETApm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EIA</strong></td>
<td>Euskal Iraultzarako Alderdia (Party for the Basque Revolution): Basque political party active between 1977 and 1982. It made up the coalition with Euskadiko Ezkerra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EH</strong></td>
<td>Euskal Herritarrok: A Basque nationalist paramilitary organization that replaced Herri Batasuna in 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETA</strong></td>
<td>Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom): Nationalist paramilitary organization founded in 1959. It sporadically pursued an armed campaign from the late 1960s to 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETAm</strong></td>
<td>ETA Militar: ETA faction produced by split in 1974. The group prioritized armed struggle over any political involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ETApm</strong></td>
<td>ETA Politico Militar: ETA faction produced by split with ETAm in 1974. It advocated for a political party to represent violent Basque nationalism at the same time of the armed campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HB</strong></td>
<td>Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity): An electoral coalition, formed in 1979 by parties and individuals inspired by ETAm. The organization was replaced in 1998 by Euskal Herritarrok, and was then simply known as Batasuna in 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRA</strong></td>
<td>Irish Republican Army: An Irish nationalist paramilitary organization first founded during the Irish War of Independence from 1919-1921. The</td>
</tr>
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organization split into the Official and the Provisional IRA in 1970. From 1970 onward, the Provisional IRA is simply referred to as the IRA.

**KAS**
Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista (Socialist Patriotic Coordinator): Underground network that aimed to unite the various strands of radical Basque nationalism, including ETA pm.

**LVF**
Loyalist Volunteer Force: A small Ulster loyalist paramilitary group founded in 1996 following a split with the Ulster Volunteer Force.

**MP**
Member of Parliament, usually referring to the British Parliament at Westminster.

**OIRA**
Official IRA: An Irish republican paramilitary organization, created during the IRA split of 1970. The Officials abandoned the armed struggle in the early 1970s.

**PIRA**

**PP**
Partido Popular (People’s Party): The main conservative political party in Spain. The party has taken a hard-line stance against ETA since its rise to prominence in the mid 1990s. The party controlled the Spanish Parliament from 1996-2004, and again from 2011 till the present.

**PNV**
Basque Nationalist Party: Founded in 1895 by Sabino Arana, the founder of Basque nationalism. The party has historically been more moderate than ETA, and does not advocate armed struggle.

**PSOE**

**PSNI**
Police Service of Northern Ireland: the police force that replaced the Royal Ulster Constabulary in 2001.

**PUP**
Progressive Unionist Party: A unionist political party with links to the Loyalist paramilitary group Ulster Volunteer Force.
<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RIRA</td>
<td>The Real IRA: An IRA splinter faction that has pursued an armed campaign from 1997 to the present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUC</td>
<td>Royal Ulster Constabulary: Northern Ireland’s police force from 1921 to 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDLP</td>
<td>Social Democratic and Labour Party: A moderate Nationalist party in Northern Ireland. While the SDLP was Sinn Fein’s electoral rival for several decades, its leader John Hume played a vital role in the 1990s Northern Ireland peace process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDA</td>
<td>Ulster Defence Association: A loyalist paramilitary group formed in 1971. It declared a ceasefire in 1994, but continued its armed campaign intermittently until 2007. It often used the name Ulster Freedom Fighter (UFF) to claim responsibility for attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>Ulster Democratic Party: A comparatively small loyalist political party in Northern Ireland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFF</td>
<td>Ulster Freedom Fighters: A loyalist paramilitary organization. After officially ending its armed campaign in 2007, the Real Ulster Freedom Fighters has continued carrying out sporadic attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKUP</td>
<td>United Kingdom Unionist Party: A small Unionist political party operating from 1998 to 2005. The Party staunchly opposed the Good Friday Agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUP</td>
<td>Ulster Unionist Party: One of the largest Unionist parties in the British Parliament. The Party’s leader, David Trimble, served as one of the key negotiators during the 1990s Northern Ireland peace process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................... i  
Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................................. ii  
List of Terms and Acronyms ............................................................................................................... iii  
Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1  
The Case of Northern Ireland ............................................................................................................. 7  

**Historical Formations: 14th – 19th Centuries** ................................................................................. 7  
Nationalistic Revivals: Early 20th century......................................................................................... 8  
Easter Rising: 1916............................................................................................................................... 10  
The Anglo-Irish War ............................................................................................................................ 11  
The Anglo-Irish Treaty .......................................................................................................................... 11  
Developments in Northern Ireland: 1920s -1960s....................................................................... 12  
IRA Split............................................................................................................................................... 13  

**1972 Truce** ....................................................................................................................................... 15  
Negotiations....................................................................................................................................... 15  
Analysis: Overview ............................................................................................................................... 17  
British State Response ......................................................................................................................... 18  
Internal Dynamics............................................................................................................................... 21  
Public Opinion....................................................................................................................................... 21  

**1974 Negotiations** ........................................................................................................................... 23  
Analysis: Overview ............................................................................................................................... 25  
British State Response......................................................................................................................... 27  
Internal Dynamics............................................................................................................................... 30  
Public Opinion................................................................................................................................... 30  

**Developments in the Troubles: 1976-1985** .................................................................................... 32  

Analysis: Overview............................................................................................................................... 41  
British State Response......................................................................................................................... 43  
Irish Government................................................................................................................................. 45  
Internal Dynamics............................................................................................................................... 45  
Public Opinion................................................................................................................................... 46  
International Influence....................................................................................................................... 47  
External Environment.......................................................................................................................... 47  

**Developments in Negotiations: 1994-1998** .................................................................................... 49  

viii
1990s Negotiations ................................................................. 111
Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politico Leadership Within ETA .................................................... 114
Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response .................................................. 114
Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions ......................................................................................... 115

Political Developments: 2000-2011 .................................................................................... 117
Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politico Leadership ............................................................................. 120
Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response ............................................. 121
Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions ......................................................................................... 122

A Fragile Peace: 2011-2014 .................................................................................................. 125

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 127

References ............................................................................................................................. 132
Introduction

For much of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, violent factions of the nationalist-separatist groups the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) and carried out sporadic and indiscriminate attacks in Spain and Northern Ireland, respectively. In pursuing an armed campaign, the IRA sought to purge British influence from Northern Ireland and unify Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland into a single independent Irish state. ETA meanwhile sought to eradicate Spanish influence from the Basque Country and establish an independent Euskadi between France and Spain.

Over the course of their respective armed campaigns, the two groups declared a series of ceasefires, often through negotiations with the British and Spanish states. These negotiation attempts and concomitant ceasefire declarations repeatedly failed. Nevertheless, the Provisional IRA and ETA’s most recent ceasefire declarations, announced in 1997 and 2011, respectively, have thus far been maintained. Indeed, in the aftermath of the IRA’s 2005 decommissioning of weapons and ETA’s 2011 ceasefire, a fragile peace has taken hold in both regions.

For the purposes of this study, a “ceasefire” can be understood as a formal renouncement of violence by a paramilitary organization. A paramilitary organization is here defined as a militarized force whose structure, training, and function are similar to those of a professional military, but which is not considered part of a state’s formal armed forces. Over the course of their campaigns, both the IRA and ETA have carried out
armed attacks without officially breaching their ceasefire. As such, ceasefires here are generally seen as signals of an intent for peace. Moreover, ceasefires may mark significant shifts in paramilitary strategy, and may be the first steps toward a lasting peace.

In the aftermath of ETA and IRA violence, several questions remain. This thesis examines why ETA’s and the IRA’s past ceasefire attempts were unsuccessful, and ultimately which of the conditions present during the latter ceasefires might have facilitated a more durable peace.

I begin this study with a historical overview of the Irish Republican Army’s activities from its beginnings in 1919 (Bell, 1970) to the start of the so-called “Troubles,” an ethno-nationalist conflict centered in Northern Ireland, but also affecting Ireland and Great Britain between 1968 and 1998, in which more than 3,600 people were killed (BBC News, 2012, The Troubles: 1968-1998). I begin with an examination of the historical roots of the conflict, in the process providing essential context for understanding the nature of the conflict and the factors associated with the potential for peace.

Next, I provide an in-depth analysis of each IRA peace negotiation, truce, and ceasefire between 1968 and 2007. For the purposes of this paper, a truce is as an agreement between enemies or opponents to suspend hostilities for a period of time (Irvin, 1999). Specifically, this I specifically analyze negotiations and ceasefires in 1972, 1974, 1994, 1997, 1998, and the implementation period for the Good Friday Agreement from 1998 to 2007. For each period in this analysis, I give attention to five factors
typically associated with negotiated peace in the literature on peace and conflict resolution. The factors are as follows:

1. The actions of the British and Irish governments with regards to both their conduct during periods of negotiation as well as their official policies towards the IRA and other paramilitary groups (Irvin, 1999; Neumann, 2003; Neumann, 2005, MacGinty & Darby, 2002)

2. The internal dynamics of the IRA with regards to the outlook of the leaders and their volunteers (Adams, 2003; Irvin, 1999)

3. Public opinion in Northern Ireland towards the IRA, Sinn Fein, and the use of and/or utility of violence (Neumann, 2005; MacGinty & Darby, 2002)


5. The roles of international leaders and organizations within the peace process and the nature of their interactions with the IRA (Adams, 2003; CAIN, 2013)

In analyzing these five factors, I assess how each may have played a role in the success or failure of each of the negotiation and ceasefire periods described above. I explain how the above factors were significant and how they helped or hurt the peace process.

From this analysis, I derive three hypotheses specifying the conditions that either prescribe or proscribe a successful IRA ceasefire. These hypotheses are as follows:
1. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to be durable when the leadership of the organization has become fully committed to pursuing nonviolent solutions, and there is absolute adherence to the leadership throughout all levels of the organization.

2. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to fail when the regime in power is perceived by the paramilitaries to be repressive and/or discriminatory in its practices or conduct towards the paramilitary organization.

3. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to be durable when negotiations accompanying the ceasefire are transparent, lack preconditions, are inclusive of all major stakeholders without risk of suspension, and allow all issues and actors to be brought to the negotiating table at the same time.

I then test the three hypotheses on the case of ETA in order to assess whether or not the conditions that facilitated peace in Northern Ireland also helped to bring about peace in the Basque Country. Specifically, I apply each hypothesis to negotiations, truces, and ceasefires involving ETA and the Spanish state during the late 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s.

This analysis produces interesting findings. First of all, I find that only a revised version of the first hypothesis derived from the analysis of the IRA also applied to ETA. The original hypothesis suggested that ceasefires are more likely to be durable when all members of the paramilitary organization demonstrate absolute adherence to leadership
that is fully committed to the principles of non-violence. I find that this did not hold true for the case of ETA. Instead, both the IRA and ETA’s peace processes demonstrate that ceasefires are more likely to be durable when all members of the paramilitary organization demonstrate absolute adherence to non-violent principles, not necessarily to non-violent leadership. As noted, the second and third hypotheses did not fit the case of ETA.

I draw two conclusions from these results. First, the hypothesized outcomes may indicate that I neglect to take into account a factor or factors relevant to explaining the successes or failures of IRA negotiations, ETA negotiations, or both. Moreover, it is possible that even two rather similar nationalist-separatist conflicts produced unique peace processes. Indeed, the fact that many of the key features of the IRA’s peace process did not apply to ETA’s peace process gives weight to the argument that the peace process in Northern Ireland should not necessarily be upheld as a definitive model for conflict resolution, as it has been considered since the passage of the Good Friday Agreement (Bew et al. 2009).

There are some limitations to the scope of this study. Only ceasefires declared by the Official and Provisional IRA are included in the analysis. Following the Provisional IRA’s declaration of ceasefire in 1997, the splinter factions Real IRA, Continuity IRA, and Oglaigh na hEireann vowed to continue the armed struggle without the backing of the Provisionals (Frenett, 2012, p. 3). Because each of these factions constitutes a small part of the Irish Republican movement and espouses what is now a minority point of view, their activities are not included in the analysis.
This thesis proceeds as follows. In the second chapter, entitled, “The Case of Northern Ireland,” I provide a historical overview and analysis of the case of the IRA. In the third chapter, I lay out the hypotheses derived from this analysis. In the fourth chapter, entitled, “The Case of Euskadi,” I systematically test these hypotheses on the case of ETA. In the fifth and final chapter, I discuss the implications of this study with regards to the understanding of conflict and conflict resolution and attempts to resolve conflicts across the globe.
The Case of Northern Ireland

**Historical Formations: 14th – 19th Centuries**

During the 14th century, the English Crown began to refocus its expansion on Scotland, Wales, and Ireland (Ruane & Todd, 1996). While the British had maintained at least some degree of control over Ireland since the 11th century, its reassertion of power during the 14th century was aimed at undermining the authority of the independent Irish lords, spreading the English language, and instilling a greater degree of “civility” in Ireland (Ruane & Todd, 1996).

While the Crown initially intended for a conciliatory process of expansion, by the 16th century the colonizing efforts in Ireland had become decidedly coercive in nature (Ruane & Todd, 1996). During the Ulster Plantation of the 17th century, Protestant immigrants from England and Scotland, who often profited from highly coveted land grants and privileged access to Crown titles, soon established themselves as the dominant landowning class in the predominately Catholic Northeastern Ireland. The Ulster Plantation proved to disproportionately affect this Northeastern region. While the rest of Ireland would indeed suffer at the hands of the British over the next few centuries, it would not be characterized by the same Protestant/Catholic divide as Northern Ireland. Although Catholicism was not native to Ireland or part of the traditional Gaelic culture, most of the Irish had adopted Catholicism by this time. While the majority of Ireland managed to retain its largely Catholic base for the next few centuries, the Ulster Plantation divided Northern Ireland along religious lines.
By the end of the 17th century, a series of definitive changes had taken place within Northern Ireland. The Anglican Church was the dominant religion of the land-owning class; the Catholic Church was on the defensive, and the political and economic base of the once dominant Gaelic culture had been severely undermined (Ruane & Todd, 1996). Over the next few centuries, tensions continued to run high between the Old English and Irish Catholics and the Protestant nobles and settlers.

By the 19th century, nationalistic ideals gave way to a volatile split among the residents in Northern Ireland, composed of the Catholic community committed to Irish separatis on one side and the British-identifying predominantly Protestant community loyal to the Crown and the union with Great Britain on the other (Ruane & Todd, 1996). To the Irish-Gaelic Catholics, “Ireland [was] economically laid waste by centuries of British rule; [its] rightful owners had been dispossessed, [its] religion persecuted; [its] culture all but destroyed” (Ruane & Todd, 1996, p. 29). To many of these Catholics, nationalism most clearly expressed this discontent.

**Nationalistic Revivals: Early 20th century**

Throughout the 19th century, sporadic attacks by small, secretive Irish nationalist organizations against the British state revived the fight for an independent Irish Republic (BBC News, 2012, Redmond’s Campaign). While many Irish nationalists pursued a militaristic approach to reform, some constitutionally-minded nationalists sought legal change within the British Parliament (BBC News, 2012, Redmond’s Campaign). By 1910, after several decades of active electoral participation, Irish Members of Parliament (MPs) held a majority within the British Parliament at Westminster. In 1912, the Irish
MPs introduced a Home Rule Bill that would restore self-government in Ireland through the implementation of a two-house assembly in Dublin with jurisdiction over all 32 counties of Ireland (BBC News, 2012, Redmond’s Campaign). Although the bill passed in 1914, both unionist and nationalist leaders agreed to postpone implementation until the hostilities of World War I had ceased (BBC News, 2012, Redmond’s Campaign).

By the mid-1910s, an Irish cultural revival that had begun during the 1880s prompted the emergence and rejuvenation of a number of Irish nationalist organizations that were less willing than ordinary Catholics to accept the status quo (BBC News, 2012, Cultural Nationalism). The Sinn Fein nationalist party, founded in 1905, advocated a complete withdrawal from Westminster and the simultaneous implementation of a new Irish Assembly in Dublin (BBC News, 2012, Militant Nationalism). The newly revived Irish Republican Brotherhood, disillusioned with slow electoral progress in Parliament, advocated armed struggle as a means of reinforcing its demands for self-government (BBC News, 2012, Militant Nationalism). By November 1913, widespread support for militant nationalism among both moderate and radical nationalists prompted the formation of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. The rise of these two groups paralleled the rise of the Ulster Volunteers, a Northern Irish loyalist militant organization formed in 1912 in opposition to the prospect of Irish self-government (BBC News, 2012, Militant Nationalism).

By 1915, members of the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army also opposed Home Rule. They feared that if Ireland were granted only limited self-government, the Irish people would become accustomed to submission within the British
Empire. They concluded that their fate could be avoided through a militant uprising, even one that could be repressed (BBC News, 2012, Blood Sacrifice). If repressed and executed, the Volunteers believed that Irish militant nationalism could be revived through their own martyrdom (BBC News, 2012, Blood Sacrifice). This, they believed, would enable their successors to ultimately wage a successful war of independence against the British (BBC News, 2012, Blood Sacrifice).

**Easter Rising: 1916**

The highly-anticipated Easter Rising organized by the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army took place on April 24, 1916, in Dublin (BBC News, 2012, The Easter Rising). The uprising lasted six days, with approximately 1,600 rebels facing 18,000–20,000 British troops by the week’s end (BBC News, 2012, The Easter Rising). The rebels fought hard but surrendered, garnering sympathy from the public when over 90 of the Volunteers were executed post-surrender (BBC News, 2012, The Easter Rising).

The executions, along with Britain’s imposition of martial law in Ireland following the Rising, “fuelled popular hostility in Ireland towards Britain” and increased public support for the openly nationalist Sinn Fein party (BBC News, 2012, Rise of Sinn Fein). In 1918, Sinn Fein won 73 seats in the British Parliament at Westminster. Galvanized by its electoral success, the party promptly established an Irish Assembly in Dublin (the Dail Eireann) and approved an Irish Constitution declaring Ireland a republic. When Westminster indicated its unwillingness to accept these changes, war appeared inevitable (BBC News, 2012, The Anglo-Irish War).
The Anglo-Irish War

The Anglo-Irish War began in January 1919, when a group of young Irish Volunteers who called themselves the Irish Republican Army (IRA) adopted a guerrilla campaign against the British police force (BBC News, 2012, The Anglo-Irish War). In an attempt to appease the IRA, the British Government passed the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which created two governments, one in Belfast and one in Dublin, with very limited devolved powers for each. The Act was accepted by Ulster Unionists, but not Irish nationalists, many of whom were unwilling to settle for anything less than independence (BBC News, 2012, The Anglo-Irish War). Nevertheless, by mid-1921, both war-weary parties had become more amenable to a political settlement (BBC News, 2012, The Anglo-Irish War).

The Anglo-Irish Treaty

As negotiations for a settlement began, a heated debate ensued as to whether Ireland ought to remain within the British Empire, or whether it was entitled to independent status as a republic. To appease the contentious partition issue, a Boundary Commission redrew the borders of Northern Ireland to align the preferences of the Irish people more closely with their jurisdictional boundaries, thus transferring a large percentage of the nationalist population in Northern Ireland to the southern state (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty). The Irish delegation broadly accepted this proposal, and on December 6, 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed without the consultation of those in Dublin (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty).
Under the Treaty, Southern Ireland, henceforth the Free Irish State, became a self-governing dominion with complete independence in its domestic affairs (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty). It did not, however, become a Republic; the British Crown remained the Head of State. The largely Protestant Northern Ireland, meanwhile, was granted the option of withdrawing from the Irish Free State, which it exercised on December 6, 1922 (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty).

The Treaty caused deep divisions within the Irish nationalist community (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty). Its supporters asserted that it was a “first step toward Irish unity and full independence”; its opponents argued that it failed in its “fundamental” goal of establishing an Irish Republic in the southern state, something that was not achieved until Easter 1949. While the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty was widely accepted as a necessary step in ending the war with Britain, it would inevitably bring civil war in the years to come (BBC News, 2012, The Treaty).

*Developments in Northern Ireland: 1920s -1960s*

Over the next few decades, social and political developments within Northern Ireland seemingly undermined the Catholic minority. Since the formation of Northern Ireland in 1921, the Protestant Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) held the balance of power within the Northern Ireland Assembly (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles).

While the UUP’s presence encouraged greater communal solidarity among Northern Ireland’s Protestant majority, its policies tended to marginalize the minority Catholic community (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles). Among other things, the Catholics in Northern Ireland often faced discrimination in political representation,
employment opportunities, housing, and schooling (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles). Indignant of their treatment and galvanized by the civil rights movements in the United States and elsewhere, disaffected Catholics within the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) planned a civil rights march of their own on October 5, 1968, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles). In response, the government of Northern Ireland issued a ban on all marches within the boundaries of the planned route. When a few hundred civil rights protestors failed to comply, the marchers faced a bloody confrontation with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Northern Ireland’s police force. This march marked the birth of the Troubles, a gruesome conflict that would beset Northern Ireland for decades to come.

In the months that followed the October 1968 Londonderry march, violent clashes continued between the newly revived Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Protestant loyalist paramilitaries (Irvin, 1999). As violence escalated in 1969, the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont requested that the British army be sent in to restore order (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles). The British presence, or Operation Banner as it was formally named, was initially designed as a temporary mechanism to stabilize the situation, though it ultimately stayed in place until July 2007 (BBC News, 2014, The Troubles). Operation Banner proved to be a major source of contention within Northern Ireland, and fueled the conflict for the next several decades.

**IRA Split**

Apart from the clashes taking place between the nationalists and the loyalists, internal tensions were simmering within the IRA. Many of the more militant-minded IRA
activists were exasperated by the more moderate leadership in Dublin, who had seemingly not done enough to defend the Northern Irish Catholics against the ruthless attacks by Protestant paramilitaries (Irvin, 1999). The final straw came when the IRA leadership decided to remove abstention from the IRA and Sinn Fein constitutions. To the militant IRA traditionalists, this was heresy. To abandon the abstention policy and participate in the governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland would be “the first step in recognizing partition and British involvement” (Irvin, 1999, p.55). A split finally occurred in 1970. The Official IRA and Official Sinn Fein would advocate a gradual, political approach to the reform of the state. The Provisional IRA (PIRA), henceforth referred to as the IRA, was militaristic, increasingly intent on defending Irish Catholics and waging a new war for Irish independence (Irvin, 1999). After the Official IRA declared a ceasefire in May 1972, the Provisional IRA would occupy the British government’s attention over the next four decades.
1972 Truce

As the Troubles wore on, the violence within Northern Ireland escalated. In March 1972, the British Parliament prorogued the Northern Ireland Parliament, and shortly thereafter imposed direct rule upon Northern Ireland (MacGinty & Darby, 2002).

Once the British obtained complete oversight of Northern Ireland, they promptly implemented measures aimed at restoring order to the fragmented region. Among other acts, the British introduced a policy of internment, and later the use of juryless courts, for all suspected republican activists and sympathizers (Irvin, 1999). Previously, during the Rape of the Falls of July 1970, the British army had imposed a 34-hour curfew on the Falls Road area of nationalist West Belfast, and had fired over 1,600 canisters of CS gas (Irvin, 1999). These events, underscored by the death of 13 nationalist protesters by British paratroopers on Bloody Sunday, garnered a generous amount of support for the IRA and its cause (Irvin, 1999).

Negotiations

On June 14, 1972, as violence hit an all time high within Northern Ireland, both parties began to seek out a political settlement. John Hume and Paddy Devlin, both members of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), a more moderate Northern Irish nationalist party, held a meeting with IRA representatives in Derry (CAIN, 2013, British government responses). At that meeting the IRA representatives outlined their conditions for talks with the British Government. The conditions dealt with protocol for talks and treatment of IRA prisoners (CAIN, 2013, British government responses). The
next day, John Hume and Paddy Devlin met with William Whitelaw, the newly appointed
British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to relay the IRA’s conditions (Irvin,
1999).

Although reluctant to ease sanctions on those they deemed terrorists, the British
government agreed to meet with the IRA representatives. On June 20, 1972, two leading
republicans, Gerry Adams and David O’Connell, were invited to London for talks with
P.J. Woodfield and Frank Steele, two representatives for Secretary of State William
Whitelaw (Woodfield, 1972). At the outset of the talks, the IRA laid out conditions for a
ceasefire: Whitelaw would accept the demands of certain convicted prisoners for political
status, he would immediately order the cessation of all harassment of the IRA, and he
would be prepared to meet with the IRA after the ceasefire was implemented (Woodfield,
1972).

At the meeting, each party seemingly harbored a great deal of suspicion towards
the other (Woodfield, 1972). As the two sides discussed matters of disarmament,
policing, and prisoners, both parties demanded guarantees for future talks in case the
other defected. Despite the caution, the IRA agreed to indefinitely suspend militant
operations on June 26, 1972 (Irvin, 1999).

In response to the IRA ceasefire, Secretary of State William Whitelaw agreed to
meet with the Provisionals on July 7, 1972, for follow-up negotiations. However, the two
groups were in opposition from the beginning: the IRA sought “withdrawal,
independence, and reunification; while the British sought an end to IRA operations and a
reformed, but still British, Northern Ireland” (Irvin, 1999, p. 60).
Prior to negotiations with Whitelaw, the IRA delegation had drawn up two proposals that it regarded as crucial to future negotiations (Irvin, 1999). The first proposal requested that the British government publicly acknowledge that the future of Ireland ought to be decided by the Irish people, acting and voting as a single unit. The second proposal demanded that the British government announce its intent to withdraw all troops from Northern Ireland prior to January 1, 1975 (Irvin, 1999, footnote 36, Ch 3).

Two days later, IRA activist Seamus Twomey called Whitelaw in an attempt to negotiate a resolution to a housing dispute between Catholics and loyalist gangs. The IRA interpreted Whitelaw’s failure to return calls as a dismissal of its proposals, and broke off the ceasefire less than two weeks later with the so-called Bloody Friday attack, in which 22 bombs were detonated in Belfast (Irvin, 1999).

**Analysis: Overview**

It appears that the failure of the 1972 negotiations was primarily a result of miscommunication and misunderstanding. At this early stage in the conflict, neither side was familiar with the other’s boundaries at the negotiation table. These boundaries were in fact still developing, as was seen with the gradual shift in outlook that became apparent from both sides in the years to come.

The leaders of the newly fragmented IRA, although sincerely hopeful for a lasting ceasefire and an end to violence (Woodfield, 1972), were apparently unwilling to concede much in negotiations. It appears the British at this time of the conflict, although arguably welcoming to a resolution with Sinn Fein, were similarly obstinate in their immediate unwillingness to make concessions on Irish self-determination and
withdrawal. As the negotiations revealed, neither side was entirely aware of the other’s boundaries at the onset of the talks. Nevertheless, these talks helped elucidate these boundaries, and allowed each side to test the waters for future negotiations.

At a deeper level, the 1972 talks failed due to a misinterpretation of signals. The British may have misclassified the IRA as incapable of compromise due to its seemingly unreasonable demands. Similarly, the IRA may have misinterpreted Britain’s intentions when Whitelaw failed to return calls regarding the Catholic-loyalist housing dispute. If anything can be taken away from the failed 1972 negotiations, it is that boundaries must be made clear to both parties at the onset of negotiations, and signals must be correctly interpreted by both parties. The following sections provide an analysis of three factors that appeared relevant during the 1972 negotiations: conduct of British troops and the British government, the internal dynamics of the IRA, and the role of public opinion.

**British State Response**

**Conduct of British Troops**

The root conflict of the Troubles was “in essence political”, and yet the British troops in the early phases of the conflict were left to find a solution that was essentially “militaristic” (Coogan, 1993). Instead of being reigned in by politicians, the troops were left to “blunder forward,” exacerbating an already tense situation (Coogan, 1993). Although a disconnect may have existed between the orders of the British government and the British troops’ execution of those orders, the IRA and much of the nationalist community likely did not perceive this disconnect. To the republicans in the early years
of the conflict, the British army and the British politicians were one and the same (Irvin, 1999).

Conduct of British Government

Scholars of the Troubles are often at odds when it comes to interpreting British attitudes towards Sinn Fein, especially during the early years of the conflict. Peter Neumann maintains that the British government “never had any objections to the inclusion of republicans into a political settlement” (Neumann, 2003, pg. 159). He claims that in 1972, the British government had been encouraged by an IRA defector’s assertions of serious splits within the IRA, “interpreted by the British as a divide between ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’” (Neumann, 2003, p. 159). Prior to negotiations, Whitelaw had begun to speak in “hopefully glowing terms” about David O’Connell, the presumed leader of the doves, and the notion of “politicizing the Provos…as an essential part of the solution to the Northern Irish problem” (Neumann, 2003, p. 159). Neumann also notes that Whitelaw and others involved in the July 1972 negotiations have retrospectively portrayed the talks as something of a “political tactic intended to publicly display the “republican’s intransigence” (Neumann, 2003, p. 159). Nevertheless, Neumann maintains that the British were “genuinely disappointed” by the negotiations, and had sincerely hoped that the talks could have been the first in a series of discussions leading to the end of violence and the “inclusion of the Republicans into an agreed settlement” (Neumann, 2003, p. 159). Neumann further implies that the failure of the negotiations was a result of the British perception of the IRA’s stubbornness. That is, the British were disappointed by the IRA’s list of demands, which included an acknowledgement of Ireland’s right to
self-determination, as well as the withdrawal of British troops by 1975 (Irvin, 1999). At this particular stage in the conflict, the British government as a whole was publicly unwilling to compromise on these demands, and thus perceived the IRA was obstinate for pressing them further (Neumann, 2003).

Nevertheless, there were those within the Westminster government who doubted the British strategy, even in the early stages of the conflict. A March 13, 1972, letter from Sir Alec Douglas-Home, then the British Foreign Secretary, to then-British Prime Minister Edward Heath expressed concern with regards to the British strategy of Home Rule before the policy was implemented. He stated, “I really dislike Direct Rule for Northern Ireland because I do not believe they are like the Scots or the Welsh and doubt if they ever will be. The real British interest would I think be served best by pushing them towards a United Ireland rather than closer to the United Kingdom” (Douglas-Home, 1972).

Regardless of British intentions with regards to the negotiations, the IRA’s perception of British attitudes towards the nationalist community was certainly shaped by the official policies of the British towards the entire Catholic population in Northern Ireland. The British policies of internment, indiscriminate arrests and attacks of civil rights protestors, imposition of curfews, and torture inadvertently left the IRA harboring feelings of resentment towards the British (Irvin, 1999).
**Internal Dynamics**

In 1972, Maria McGuire, a young IRA defector, publicly described “serious splits” taking place within the IRA (Neumann, 2003, p. 159). She was not referring to the major IRA split between the Officials and Provisionals that had taken place only a few years previously; rather, she was describing what the British later interpreted as a conflict between “hawks” and “doves” (Neumann, 2003, p. 159).

Indeed, even in the early stages of the conflict, prominent IRA activists appeared to be more dove-like. In his notes on his initial June 1972 meeting with IRA representatives, P.J. Woodfield noted IRA activists Gerry Adams and David O’Connell’s genuine desire for peace: “There is no doubt whatever that these two at least genuinely want a ceasefire and a permanent end to violence…They made no bombastic defence of their past and made no attacks on the British government” (Woodfield, 1972).

**Public Opinion**

As the Troubles escalated following the imposition of Home Rule in 1972, the British government’s implementation of harsh sanctions on the IRA saw repercussions within the Catholic community that extended far beyond the intended circle of IRA paramilitaries. During its period of internment, the British often incarcerated Catholics that had nothing to do with the IRA (Coogan, 1993, pg 261). Indeed, what was then viewed as the indiscriminately militaristic nature of the British response during Home Rule alienated traditionally anti-IRA members of the Catholic community to become decidedly pro-IRA (Coogan, 1993).
Within the Irish Republic, many Catholics publicly condemned the IRA for their use of violence, but many also tacitly appreciated their efforts (Moxon-Browne, 1981). Indeed, in 1972, it appeared that the IRA was making much more of an effort than the Irish government to improve the lives of those in the Northern Ireland Catholic ghettos (Moxon-Browne, 1981). More generally throughout the Troubles, support for the PIRA in Catholic areas tended to be stronger when it “confined itself to defensive” as opposed to offensive operations (Moxon-Browne, 1981, p. 49).
1974 Negotiations

Following the collapse of the 1972 negotiations, the Provisional IRA fully resumed its operations (Irvin, 1999). The British government responded with “Operation Motorman,” which sent British troops into existing “no-go” areas deep within the nationalist communities. In December 1972, the British government passed the Diplock Report, which “recommended the abolition” of jury courts for suspected terrorists beginning in 1974. The Act would severely undermine IRA operations, and republican volunteers soon saw their conviction rates soar (Irvin, 1999, p. 62).

In March 1973, the British government, in consultation with the SDLP, proposed the implementation of a new power sharing Northern Ireland Assembly (Irvin, 1999). It also proposed the creation of a Council of Ireland that would link the Irish government in the South with the new assembly in the North (Irvin, 1999). The plan ultimately failed due to Unionist resistance, and Direct Rule was imposed once more.

In the face of escalating violence, the IRA leadership once again began to seek out a proposal for peace (Irvin, 1999). In the autumn of 1974, several leading Provisionals met with a delegation of Protestant clergymen to discuss potential peace resolutions (Irvin, 1999, p. 63). On December 20, the IRA announced that it would suspend operations during the Christmas holidays (Irvin, 1999). As the New Year dawned, the IRA announced a two-week extension of their ceasefire. On January 19th, Merlyn Rees, the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, met with leading republicans to discuss another extension of the ceasefire.
Prior to the meeting with Rees, the IRA had outlined a list of twelve demands they had for the British government as a precondition for a truce between the IRA and security forces (CAIN, 2013, New Years Releases 2006). The demands included a request for a cessation of all raids on lands, homes, and other buildings, a cessation of harassment of civilians, an end to arrests of members of the republican movement, the right of republicans to move freely and carry concealed weapons for self-defense, no provocative displays of force by the other side, no reintroduction of the RUC and the UDR into designated areas, a progressive withdrawal of British troops to the barracks, and a confirmation that discussion between representatives of the republican movement and the British would continue towards a permanent ceasefire. In the event that any of the terms were violated, the IRA reserved the “right of freedom of action” (CAIN, 2013, New Years Releases 2006).

The full extent of the January 19 negotiations has never been fully revealed (Irvin, 1999), but the general outcome can be surmised. A February 20, 1975 letter from the British Foreign Secretary to the British Ambassador in Dublin made it clear that the British refused to grant amnesty or immunity of arrest to so-called political prisoners, or to grant the PIRA any status or role in the policing of minority areas. It also refused to allow the possessions of firearms outside of current legal provisions (Callaghan, 1975). However, it has been cited that the British had reassured the IRA that if it ceased all offensive operations, the army would slowly be withdrawn to barracks and then withdrawn from the North (Irvin, 1999).
Low in morale and numbers (Irvin, 1999), the IRA conceded, and agreed that “hostilities against the Crown forces” would be suspended from February 10, 1975 (Irvin, 1999). The next day, Rees announced that “incident centers” were to be established in various areas throughout Northern Ireland in order to both monitor the ceasefire and to provide a place of contact between representatives of Sinn Fein and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) (Irvin, 1999).

“Then, on November 4, 1974, the British government announced that it would be withdrawing special category status for IRA prisoners as of March 1, 1976” (Irvin, 1999, p. 66). Since 1972, paramilitary prisoners held some of the rights of prisoners of war. Beginning in 1976, however, they would be treated as ordinary criminals, confined in the new “H-Block” Maze Prison near Belfast (BBC News, 2007, Hunger Strikes). The act galvanized the republican movement, and IRA killings became frequent occurrences once more (CAIN, 2013, IRA Truce); however, it wasn’t until January 23, 1976, that the IRA truce was officially called off (CAIN, 2013, IRA Truce).

Analysis: Overview

In 1974, there appeared to be a disconnect between Britain’s overtures to Sinn Fein and its treatment of the IRA, particularly with regard to its slew of anti-prisoner legislation passed in the early to mid-1970s. At the time, Britain’s strategy appeared to be to elevate the more moderate, elected political factions while stamping out the radicals. Indeed, Prime Minister Harold Wilson noted in his May 1974 broadcast that Britain would “not negotiate on constitutional or political matters in Northern Ireland with anyone who chooses to operate outside the established constitutional framework, with
non-elected, self-appointed people who are systematically breaking the law and intimidating the people of Northern Ireland -their fellow citizens and our fellow citizens within the United Kingdom” (Wilson, 1974).

However, Sinn Fein was at this time still something of a watchdog group for abuses against the IRA and the Catholic community (Irvin, 1999). Although Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams has asserted that Sinn Fein is not the IRA, nor its political wing, Sinn Fein at this time nonetheless saw itself as the voice of both the IRA and the republican prisoners (Irvin, 1999). As such, Sinn Fein’s negotiations with Britain appeared to be inextricably linked with the conditions of IRA volunteers and prisoners. When Britain took a hard-line stance against those interned, as it did in November 1974 with the removal of special category status for IRA prisoners, Sinn Fein appeared unwilling to make concessions. Moreover, the fact that Sinn Fein still maintained its policy of abstention at this stage of the conflict meant that even unfavorable public opinion towards the IRA’s campaign of violence would not necessarily sway Sinn Fein’s strategy towards more peaceful tactics (Irvin, 1999).

The failure of the 1974-1975 negotiations therefore can be attributed to both the British and the IRA. The British were seemingly mistaken in their belief that they could separate Sinn Fein’s goals from those of the IRA Prisoners, making overtures to one while undermining the other. Ironically, the IRA leadership and Sinn Fein, taking pride in their ties to IRA volunteers and prisoners, apparently failed to rectify a disconnect between their negotiations and the IRA campaign. Indeed, throughout a good portion of
the February 1975- January 1976 “truce,” the IRA volunteers continued their campaign of violence (CAIN, 2013, IRA Truce).

From the 1974 negotiations and subsequent 1975-1976 truce, one can see the failures that come about when a regime in power (Britain) misinterprets the relationships present within similar political organizations. Moreover, the 1975-1976 truce suggests that no good can come of negotiations if there is a disconnect between a paramilitary groups’ leadership and its lower command structure. The following sections provide an analysis of three main areas relevant to the IRA’s 1974 ceasefire: response of the British state, the internal dynamics of the IRA, and public opinion,

**British State Response**

Throughout the 1974 negotiation period, it is debatable whether the British government had devised a strategy aimed explicitly at undermining the IRA and its objectives for prisoners’ rights and a united Ireland, or whether the British leaders were instead strategizing how they might best eradicate violence altogether, while inadvertently undermining the IRA.

Cynthia Irvin cites the 1972 implementation of Operation Motorman as a good indicator of British counterinsurgency strategy. She maintains that the “IRA leadership recognized that the meetings with the British government were designed not so much to resolve issues as to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the republican support base, as well as to bring republicans into the institutions of the state without handing them any real power” (Irvin, 1999, p. 61).
These sentiments are affirmed by Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, who maintained in his autobiography that all three IRA ceasefires of the 1970s (the Official’s ceasefire in 1970 and the IRA’s 1972 and 1974 ceasefires) had collapsed “because of British duplicity and bad faith” (Adams, 2003, p. 30). He went on to acknowledge that the “ceasefires also collapsed because the Irish government, the political parties, and all of the churches failed to build on the opportunity for peace that these ceasefires created” (Adams, 2003, p. 30). In particular, Adams criticized the Irish government for imposing media censorship on republicans (Adams, 2003, p. 30).

At the same time, it is difficult to interpret the British and Irish attempts at sanctioning the IRA as an entirely political move aimed to suppress an opposing ideology. Indeed, the fact that the British arrested and imprisoned loyalist paramilitaries, albeit not to the same degree as with republican paramilitaries (Coogan, 1993), may imply that the British were more generally focused on eradicating violence overall.

Irvin further claims that through the creation of a Northern Ireland Assembly, the British hoped to devise a strategy that would “isolate” Provisionals (Irvin, 1999, pg. 62). According to Irvin, through the Assembly elections, the British had implemented a counterinsurgency strategy of “containing and wearing down” the IRA while “bolstering” the SDLP (Irvin, 1999).

Meanwhile, Brendan O’Duffy’s interpretation of the 1974 Constitutional Convention implies that the British government was seeking out any non-violent solution possible, while also perhaps attempting to hand off the issue to the communities of Ireland and Northern Ireland (O’Duffy, 1996). Indeed, the Constitutional Convention
called by Merlyn Rees in July 1974 offered the opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland to construct a proposal for their own devolved government (O’Duffy, 1996). It attempted to elevate the principles of power-sharing, and to ideally enable the more moderate parties in Northern Ireland to take responsibility for governing (O’Duffy, 1996).

On the same note, Peter Neumann implies that Merlyn Rees’ legalization of Sinn Fein during the 1974 Constitutional Convention was an attempt by the British government to moderate republicans and to draw them over to more peaceful and political means (Neumann, 2003).

This theory is consistent with a December 31, 1974 note composed by James Allen, a British Foreign Office diplomat writing at the time on the PIRA ceasefire. The note states, “There was considerable conflict within the PIRA and it was important to help those who wished the organization to move from a military to a political posture” (Allen, 1974).

Moreover, a broadcast by Prime Minister Harold Wilson on May 25, 1974 made clear the British’s interpretation of their role in the conflict: “Where the political wildcats of Northern Ireland seek to divide and embitter, all the major parties in Britain have sought to heal and to unite” (Wilson, 1974). In his broadcast, Wilson further cited the 1969 Downing Street Declaration in which officials from Westminster and Northern Ireland had granted the people of Northern Ireland the right to determine their own futures (Wilson, 1974). Overall, the evidence seems to indicate that the British saw
themselves first and foremost as peacekeepers, eager to draw out the political sides of the paramilitaries while attempting to stifle their more radical tactics.

**Internal Dynamics**

In October 1974, internal feuding within the IRA had left eleven people dead in a two-week period (Irvin, 1999). Sinn Fein, meanwhile, was experiencing its own set of changes throughout the 1970s. As stated by one IRA activist, from 1974-1976, Sinn Fein was more or less a party of protest, which was present to psychologically support the nature of the struggle. They were also spectators to the Troubles; they believed that many of the social, economic, and cultural issues could be dealt with after the British had withdrawn (Irvin, 1999). This began to change with the implementation of incident centers, which increased Sinn Fein’s involvement with the community at the grassroots level. It was then that Sinn Fein began to pitch itself as an alternative to the SDLP (Irvin, 1999).

**Public Opinion**

Support for the IRA and Sinn Fein had seemingly hit a low point during the mid-1970s. The implementation of Operation Motorman in 1972 involved the infiltration of British troops into largely nationalist areas. Irvin states that it not only severely restricted the IRA’s ability to carry out its operations, it also deprived the organization of promoting its propaganda to a large pool of potential volunteers in normally isolated areas (Irvin, 1999).
In the aftermath of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s collapse and the SDLP victory in 1974, IRA violence had escalated and internal relations within the IRA became strained (Irvin, 1999). By December 1974, the relationship between the IRA and the nationalist community was severely damaged (Irvin, 1999). As one Provisional activist commented, “The people were turning against us as they had never done before…The feud coincided perfectly with British efforts to depict fighting in the North as a gangland murder spree” (Irvin, 1999, p. 65).

The IRA’s low morale combined with a lack of support from their constituency was likely a major driving force in the IRA leaderships’ pursuit of a ceasefire.
Developments in the Troubles: 1976-1985

Following Britain’s removal of special category status for IRA prisoners in 1976, the situation in Northern Ireland escalated dramatically. September 1976 saw the beginnings of the “H-Block protests” (Irvin, 1999), which combined with the subsequent prison hunger strikes would prove to mobilize the Catholic community in favor of Sinn Fein and the republican cause (Irvin, 1999).

The H-Block Protests began when republican and loyalist paramilitaries refused to wear prison garb and do prison work as a result of their new political status. When prison guards refused these protestors access to the toilets, the prisoners smeared excrement on the walls and ceilings of their cells (Irvin, 1999).

When the H-Block protests failed to prompt significant change, the prisoners began hunger striking on the grounds that they were prisoners of war, not criminals as the British government insisted (Adams, 2003). Nevertheless, by October 1980, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said that the British government would not make any concessions to those on hunger strikes, and denied the prisoners special category status through the next year (CAIN, 2013, Chronology of the Conflict, 1980).

Bobby Sands, a prominent IRA activist interned at the Maze Prison, went on hunger strike along with nine others beginning in March 1981 (Sinn Fein Foreign Affairs Bureau, 1981). Sands simultaneously ran as a Member of Parliament in Westminster, winning 52 percent of the overall vote in Northern Ireland during the April 1981 elections (Sinn Fein Foreign Affairs Bureau, 1981). When Sands finally died of starvation in May
1981, he and the nine others who later passed away hunger striking were upheld as martyrs for the republican cause (Sinn Fein Foreign Affairs Bureau, 1981).

Sands’ death galvanized the Catholic population, attracted international outcries over Britain’s treatment of political prisoners, and launched Sinn Fein to a series of electoral victories. In late 1981, Sinn Fein began contesting some elections while also supporting the continued use of violence to achieve its ends (BBC News, 2013, Hunger Strikes). Sinn Fein enjoyed astounding electoral successes in the early parts of the 1980s, threatening to beat competitors like the more moderate SDLP (Adams, 2003). In 1983, Republican activist Gerry Adams won a seat for West Belfast in the elections for the Westminster Parliament, and later that year was elected president of Sinn Fein (Adams, 2003; Irvin, 1999).

Despite the fact that the British government finally made concessions to political prisoners in October 1981, Thatcher’s administration implemented severe sanctions against the paramilitaries during the early 1980s (Irvin, 1999). To prevent a renewed offensive by the newly rejuvenated IRA, the British government adopted a policy of relying on evidence from “supergrasses,” or converted terrorists, as a means of both identifying people and convicting other suspected terrorists (Irvin, 1999). It was later revealed that those testifying at supergrass trials were offered substantial sums of money (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1983). The British state had also implemented a so-called “shoot to kill” strategy following Sinn Fein’s 1982 electoral successes in the newly formed Northern Ireland Assembly (Irvin, 1999). The strategy allowed for an RUC undercover squad to kill IRA paramilitaries. Between 1982 and 1985, the implementation
of shoot-to-kill resulted in the deaths of 23 people in disputed circumstances (Irvin, 1999). Although they were harsh, the combination of the “supergrass” and shoot-to-kill strategies contributed to a reduction of the overall level of violence to its lowest level since 1970 (Irvin, 1999). By the late 1970s, the British government began to adopt a more political approach with regards to paramilitaries. Indeed, a leaked 1979 report from the intelligence corps of the British army concluded that IRA violence could be contained by military and police work, but could not be defeated except by some political strategy (Shannon, 1986).

Animosity ran high between the IRA and the British government in the mid-1980s, as seen when the IRA attempted to assassinate British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984 in a bombing in Brighton, England (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1984).

While tensions simmered between the British and the IRA, the Irish government was gradually being included in the conversation (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1984). In November 1984, the British government held an Anglo-Irish meeting with Irish government officials. In the meeting, Thatcher shot down the three proposals present in the New Ireland Forum: “the possibility for a united Ireland, a confederation between the two states, and “joint authority” were all dismissed (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1984).

Despite Thatcher’s opposition to Irish input, paramilitary violence and the threat of Sinn Fein’s electoral success prompted a need for a lasting power-sharing agreement between Ireland and Britain (BBC History, The Anglo-Irish Agreement, 2007).
In November 1985, history was made when the “Anglo-Irish Agreement” was signed by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1985). The Agreement acknowledged that any “change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about from the consent of the majority of people of Northern Ireland,” and stated that “the two governments would support any future wish by the people of Northern Ireland to enter into a united Ireland.” The Agreement further established the Inter-Governmental Conference, an initiative that “gave the Irish government a consultative role in matters related to security, legal affairs, politics, and cross-border co-operation” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1985).

Reactions to the Agreement were mixed. While Northern Ireland’s unionist parties remained vehemently opposed to the Agreement, moderate nationalist parties regarded it as an important development, while Sinn Fein condemned the Agreement for acknowledging that Britain had a legitimate role in Northern Ireland (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1985; BBC History, The Anglo Irish Agreement, 2007). Nevertheless, the Anglo-Irish Agreement marked the beginning of a series of negotiations aimed to bring lasting peace to Northern Ireland.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the IRA and Sinn Fein adopted an increasingly non-violent political strategy. In November 1986, Sinn Fein officially dropped its policy of abstention, meaning it would now accept the seats it won in the Irish Parliament (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1986). The decision resulted in the birth of the IRA splinter faction Republican Sinn Fein with paramilitary branch Continuity IRA breaking off from the Provisional IRA (Frenett, 2012). Beginning in 1986 and continuing through 1988, Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams and the SDLP’s John Hume held talks with each other (Adams, 2003), paving the way for Sinn Fein’s more intensive negotiations in the near future. In March 1989, Adams publicly stated that he sought a “‘non-armed political movement to work for self-determination’ in Ireland” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1989).

At this time, the British government also made overtures to Sinn Fein. In 1989, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Brooke acknowledged that the British army could not defeat the IRA militarily (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1989). While the British armed forces were certainly stronger than the IRA, the British perceived that the nature of the IRA’s war of attrition strategy inevitably meant that IRA violence could not be entirely quelled by military tactics alone. The next year, Brooke called for a fresh round of inter-party talks that would include unionist parties, many of whom had previously boycotted the British Parliament in protest to the Anglo-Irish Agreement (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1990).

In December 1990, the IRA declared a Christmas ceasefire (Adams, 2003). Although the brief declaration of peace was surrounded by hype and speculation by the
media, Adams notes that the Christmas ceasefire did not mean that the IRA had officially abandoned the armed struggle; it simply reaffirmed that the IRA leadership was able to “think outside the box when it wanted to” (Adams, 2003, p. 102). Indeed, the Christmas ceasefire was to become something of an annual tradition in the next few years: until 1993, the yearly Christmas ceasefires were expected and short in duration (Times Wire Services, 1993).

In March 1991, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Brooke initiated political talks between the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI). The talks, later known as the Brooke/Mayhew talks “would involve a three-strand” approach. The talks involved nurturing “relationships within Northern Ireland and achieving a devolved government (‘strand one’ of the talks),” constructing relationships “between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (‘strand two’),” and cultivating a relationship “between the British and Irish Governments (‘strand three’).” In anticipation of the peace talks, prominent loyalist paramilitaries including the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Freedom Fighters declared a ceasefire (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1991).

In July 1991, Brooke ended the talks without agreement, due to Unionist concerns over where “strand one” of the talks should take place, and who should chair such talks in both strands one and two (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1991). The Unionist parties had furthermore decided to withdraw from the talks in anticipation of the upcoming Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference between the British and Irish
governments (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1991). The loyalist ceasefires also ended when the talks failed (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). In April 1992, the talks resumed once again to exclusively discuss strands two and three of negotiations, as strand one of negotiations relating to the government of Northern Ireland had been halted (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992). In July 1992, the peace negotiations appeared to be on a good trajectory when the unionist parties agreed to pursue talks with the Republic of Ireland under “strand two” of the negotiations (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992). For the unionists, the main inhibitors to compromise were Articles II and III of the Irish Constitution, which made reference to the “national territory” of Ireland – something unionists perceived as a “potentially hostile claim over the Northern Irish territory” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992). Despite promising attempts by some unionist parties to construct a viable power-sharing option for Northern Ireland, the talks collapsed in November 1992 due to unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992).

In December 1992, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew affirmed “that the British government had no ‘pre-selected constitutional outcome in talks’, and said that Sinn Fein, which had previously been excluded from talks, could join in future negotiations “if the IRA ended its armed campaign” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992).

By April 1993, peace talks once again looked promising. Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams and the SDLP’s John Hume had publicly resumed talks, issuing a joint statement citing the need “to arrive at a peaceful and democratic resolution that would grant the
Irish people self-determination while accommodating the diverse opinions of other groups.” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). Later that year, the talks would develop into the Hume-Adams Initiative, which has never been published in its entirety, but nonetheless quickly sparked controversy and speculation among unionists (CAIN, First joint statement, 2013).

Moreover, the Irish government was becoming amenable to changes in the Irish Constitution, and Northern Ireland Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew had begun preparation for a new series of talks with the main political parties (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). However, several unionist parties refused to enter talks while the SDLP was in talks with Sinn Fein, and continued to criticize the SDLP leader Hume of being “the voice of pan-nationalism” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

In September 1993, the IRA suspended hostilities for one week in anticipation for Sinn Fein’s meeting with US representatives. During the meeting, the US representatives affirmed their belief that Sinn Fein’s “inclusion in the peace process was an essential aspect of negotiations” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). Previously, in May 1993, the IRA had declared a very brief ceasefire in anticipation of a visit by the former mayor of Boston, but operations continued after his expected meeting with Sinn Fein failed to take place.

Later that September, Mayhew issued a statement asserting the right of self-determination for the people living in Northern Ireland, but noted that “Sinn Fein would be excluded from political talks until IRA violence had ended ‘for real’” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). Less than a month later, Adams stated that Britain’s
affirmation of Irish self-determination would prompt the IRA to cease their campaign, but noted that peace in Northern Ireland would only come about as a result of “total demilitarization,” something Adams believed should not be a prerequisite of the peace process (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

By October 1993, Mayhew had initiated bilateral talks among the political parties. However, an IRA bomb a few days later sparked retaliatory attacks from loyalist paramilitaries, threatening to undermine the peace process (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). Moreover, several unionist groups still maintained that they would not pursue talks with the SDLP until the Hume-Adams Initiative was ended (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

Nevertheless, by December 1993, the British and Irish governments had jointly agreed on the Downing Street Declaration as a basis for talks. Within the Declaration, the two governments claimed neutrality, acknowledged that the populations of Ireland and Northern Ireland had a right to self-determination, reasserted that a peaceful resolution would require a ceasefire from all paramilitaries, and welcomed into the peace process all parties that had renounced the use of violence in favor of peaceful democratic participation (MacGinty & Darby, 2002).

In May, the British government indicated that Sinn Fein’s full acceptance of the Downing Street Declaration (DSD) was not a necessary precondition for their inclusion into talks (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). Nevertheless, at a Sinn Fein conference that July, Adams indicated that he welcomed the DSD; although, the Declaration did not “address adequately some of the group’s core issues” (A chronology
of the conflict, 1994). Despite a spike in IRA attacks, peace seemed more likely as the year progressed. Sinn Fein launched a peace commission to hear opinions on the peace process, and the IRA declared a three-day Easter ceasefire that April.

In August 1994, Adams met with the IRA Army Council, informing them that he believed that conditions were in place for the peace process to move forward (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). Shortly thereafter, the IRA declared a ceasefire. The declaration was welcomed by the Irish government, but the British government and unionists parties remained skeptical on the basis that the ceasefire was not declared “permanent.” In particular, many unionists and loyalists suspected the British government of having engaged in a “secret deal” with the IRA, something the British government denied at the time (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). Loyalist paramilitaries finally declared a conditional ceasefire in October 1994, on the basis that the IRA would maintain its ceasefire. For the first time in nearly twenty-five years, lasting peace appeared to be within grasp.

**Analysis: Overview**

The 1994 negotiations were slow and unstable due to a lack of trust and transparency. The IRA and Sinn Fein were reluctant to trust the British and Irish governments due to what was viewed by the republicans as the governments’ regular and seemingly discriminatory imposition of sanctions over the past decade. Moreover, rumors of links between the British security forces and the loyalist paramilitaries only fueled the republican cause.
Unionists and loyalists were skeptical of the British out of concern that the British had unfairly engaged in secret talks with the republican paramilitaries. Unionists were, moreover, reluctant to negotiate with more moderate nationalists like the SDLP due to their communication with Sinn Fein. Furthermore, unionists were vehemently opposed to negotiations with the Irish government on the grounds that Northern Ireland’s problem was an issue to be exclusively handled by the United Kingdom.

The British and Irish governments, meanwhile, were reluctant to trust both republican and loyalist paramilitaries in case of a resumption of violence. Indeed, in declaring a ceasefire, the republican leadership had failed to provide unambiguous clarification of their commitment to a cessation of violence, other than their word (Bew et al., 2009). All of these misgivings were seemingly compounded by the complex web of secrecy and denial that seemed to characterize the peace talks in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

There is little doubt that secrecy was paramount to negotiations in the early stages of the conflict (Adams, 2003). Indeed, secret talks may very well have been a necessary prerequisite to the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Nevertheless, secret talks are fruitless unless they hold the potential for full disclosure in the near future. If key components of negotiations remain hidden to third parties for long, distrust and paranoia will seemingly cloud any promise for successful all-party talks. Peace would remain elusive in Northern Ireland until all peace talks were transparent and all parties were able and willing to face each other at the negotiating table. The remainder of this analysis examines the early 1990s negotiations period with regards to five areas of interest: the response of the British
and Irish states, internal dynamics of the IRA, public opinion, the external environment, and international influence,

**British State Response**

The primary dilemma facing the Conservative-led government in Britain at the beginning of the 1990s peace process was not so much how to combat republican paramilitary violence as it was reviving the “deadlocked peace process” between all the main parties (Neumann, 2003). Moreover, paramilitary violence was rampant on both sides of the conflict, and the British seemingly walked a fine line in condemning both republican and loyalist violence without exhibiting favoritism.

Indeed, while the British government aimed to evoke an air of neutrality, they initially seemed to have a more difficult time incorporating Sinn Fein and the IRA into talks than as they did for unionists, at least publicly. For instance, British Home Secretary Michael Howard signed an October 1993 ‘exclusion order’ banning Sinn Fein’s president, Gerry Adams, from entering Britain. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister John Major reportedly stated that to “sit down and talk with Mr. Adams and the Provisional IRA ... would turn my stomach” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). Also in November 1993, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew publicly asserted that “the British government would not talk with Sinn Fein until it had ended its campaign of violence” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

At about the same time, a series of controversial reports were leaked that detailed collusion between British security forces and loyalist paramilitary groups in the killings of Catholics over the past few years. One report noted, however, that “any collusion was
‘restricted to a small number of members of the security forces and is neither widespread nor institutionalized’” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1990). In their attempts to quell the violence, the British government vehemently denied such claims, and later banned the loyalist paramilitary group Ulster Defence Association (UDA) (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1992). This move may also have helped to distance the British government from any complicity in loyalist violence.

In reality, the British government had been secretly engaging in talks with the republican movement for three years and had been in frequent contact with the group since February. According to Sinn Fein, however, the British government initially denied that the talks had taken place (Sinn Fein, 1994). The British government later acknowledged the talks, although there were a number of discrepancies between the British government’s and the republican’s records of the secret talks (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

Indeed, British attitudes towards republicanism softened considerably as the 1994 peace process progressed. After the IRA ceasefire in 1994, British leaders lifted exclusionary orders on Sinn Fein members, and opened the door for exploratory talks between the British government and Sinn Fein (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994).

Nevertheless, throughout much of the early 1990s, it appears there was a discrepancy between what the British publicly asserted and what they actually did (Sinn Fein, 1994). Until the 1994 ceasefire, the British publicly maintained a hard line stance against negotiations with republican terrorists (perhaps in an attempt to appease unionists
reluctant to join political talks), while privately pursuing contact with those same Republicans (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994)). This inherent contradiction and lack of transparency was no doubt a turnoff to parties on both sides of the negotiating table. Until this disconnect was resolved, peace talks were not likely to resume smoothly.

*Irish Government*

The Irish government, like the British government, moved apprehensively toward a political settlement throughout the early 1990s (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). Moreover, like the British government, the Irish government gradually made concessions to the republican movement, and warmed up to the idea of making overtures to republicans earlier than the British. In January 1994, the Irish government lifted the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein that had previously prohibited the group from gaining access to the Irish media (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). The British ban on Sinn Fein broadcasting was not lifted until the following September. The Irish government was also more welcoming of the IRA ceasefire than the British, who remained skeptical of its permanency.

*Internal Dynamics*

Throughout the years, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams has maintained that Sinn Fein is not the political wing of the IRA. While Sinn Fein had always backed the IRA cause, Adams claims that it has always been a political party that has pursued its objectives through peaceful means (Adams, 2003, p. 7). Moreover, Adams has personally denied association with the IRA throughout his political career (Adams, 2003).
Despite this, throughout Sinn Fein’s period of electoral success during the 1980s, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams had maintained that armed struggle was necessary (Adams, 2003). At the same time, like the British government a few years later, he had determined that there “could be no military solution to the inherently political problem that characterized the Troubles” (Adams, 2003, p. 30). Indeed, by the early 1990s, Adams had indicated that he was fully amenable to a political settlement, and might even be willing to “accept joint authority as ‘part of the process towards an end to partition’” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993).

As the prospect of peace negotiations was discussed in the late 1980s, Adams also noted that in order for a new ceasefire to become a reality, “all components of the IRA organization had to be involved” – a daunting task (Adams, 2003, p. 97). Certainly by the early 1990s, neither all IRA volunteers, nor the IRA’s head decision-making body, the IRA Army Council, were on board to abandon violence (Adams, 2003).

While Adams’ pursuit of a lasting peace could potentially influence or inspire the IRA, any truly lasting ceasefire would have to come about from a decision made by the IRA itself. However, violence would inevitably continue as long as there was a disconnect between Sinn Fein’s and the IRA’s outlooks on the utility of armed struggle.

**Public Opinion**

It seemed that by the early 1990s, the citizens of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were generally open to political settlements. Moreover, it appears that the citizenry were not as ideologically divided as their political leaders. For example, a December 1993 poll on a political settlement in Northern Ireland indicated that among
Catholic respondents, 33 percent favored the option of joint authority, while 32 per cent wanted to see a United Ireland. Among Protestants, 35 per cent favored closer integration with the United Kingdom (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1993). While public opinion obviously played a role in the political makeup of the various parliaments, it appears that the peace process itself was largely elite-controlled and ideologically driven by a select few (MacGinty & Darby, 2002).

**International Influence**

The United States government proved to be a major influence on the Northern Ireland Peace Process from the mid-1980s onward. While Irish Republicans hoped to garner sympathy from America’s substantial Irish Catholic population (Adams, 2003), the United States generally adopted a strategy of appearing neutral, advocating peaceful resolutions, and condemning violence on both sides of the conflict ((CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994).

Indeed, in 1994, Bill Clinton defied State Department recommendations and British preferences in allowing Gerry Adams to enter the United States on a temporary visa. For his part, Adams stated that “he would not disappoint those who had “stuck their neck out” to secure his visa.” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994). Over the next few years, the US would prove to be an indispensible third-party negotiator throughout the peace talks.

**External Environment**
During the period leading up to the 1994 ceasefire, Northern Ireland was rife with violence on both sides of the conflict. The loyalist paramilitary group Ulster Defence Association, acting under the pseudonym Ulster Freedom Fighters, carried out a massive armed campaign during the early 1990s (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1991). This spike in loyalist violence made any ceasefire by the IRA highly improbable, and arguably unwise. The republican paramilitaries maintained that if they laid down arms, they would be defenseless against the onslaught of violence from the opposing side.

Moreover, broadcasting bans against the IRA and Sinn Fein implemented from 1988-1994 (CAIN, a chronology of the conflict, 1994) limited the republicans’ means of voicing their concerns. As Adams noted, groups denied more democratic channels of communication will inevitably resort to armed struggle (Adams, 2003). Until sanctions were lifted and violence was ceased on both sides, it seemed that peace could not be expected from the IRA.
**Developments in Negotiations: 1994-1998**

After republican and loyalist paramilitaries declared indefinite ceasefires in the second half of 1994, the British government proceeded apprehensively with the peace process (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). The British Prime Minister John Major lifted sanctions on Sinn Fein leaders and the unionist groups Democratic Ulster Party (DUP) and Progressive Ulster Party (PUP), and vowed to begin “exploratory talks” with Sinn Fein before Christmas (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994).

As talks between Sinn Fein and the British government began in December 1994, Major asserted that “huge progress” would have to be made in the IRA’s decommissioning of weapons before Sinn Fein could enter formal talks. Meanwhile, the Irish government maintained that it was “not a sensible precondition” to require the IRA to hand over weapons before the commencement of multilateral talks. In the early part of the talks, Sinn Fein adopted a willingness to discuss “demilitarization” rather than decommissioning of paramilitary weapons (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995). Gerry Adams noted later in 1995 that the British government had “never mentioned decommissioning as a precondition to talks before the IRA ceasefire, and if they had done so, an IRA ceasefire would likely not have occurred” (Adams, 2003, p. 237). The issue of decommissioning would plague the peace process over the next decade.

In February 1995, the British and Irish government launched the “Framework for the Future” document, which proposed the creation of a 90 member unilateral Northern Ireland Assembly. Unionist leaders quickly panned the Agreement as catering towards the Nationalists (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1994).
Despite the May 1995 IRA killing of a Catholic civilian, Gerry Adams maintained that there was “no split within the IRA” and that the ceasefire remained “secure” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995). However, since the 1994 ceasefire, both republican and loyalist paramilitaries carried out dozens of “punishment attacks” against their opponent. The attacks would often be carried out in a manner that was untraceable, so no single paramilitary group would have to shoulder the blame (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995).

Nevertheless, in May 1995, Gerry Adams and Northern Ireland Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew met for the first time. Despite the talks, Mayhew maintained a firm stance on decommissioning, and stated that, “if republican and loyalist paramilitaries did not decommission their weapons then political talks would proceed without their political representatives” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995). Like the republicans, the loyalist paramilitaries rejected decommissioning as a precondition for talks.

In August 1995, after talks with Northern Ireland Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew, Adams claimed that “the Republican movement was he was ready to make ‘critical compromises’ to achieve peace” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995).

On the first anniversary of the IRA ceasefire on August 31, 1995 “the Unionist Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) leader Gary McMichael claimed that, “Loyalist paramilitaries would decommission their arms if the IRA would do the same.” The next day, an IRA spokesperson “ruled out” the possibility of decommissioning (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995).
In early November 1995, the “Building Blocks” paper was published by the British-controlled Northern Ireland Office. The paper suggested that, “all-party preparatory talks and an independent international body to consider the decommissioning issue will be convened in parallel by the two governments” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995). David Trimble of the unionist UUP “refused to endorse the proposed ‘twin-track approach’ with the British and Irish government, claiming, ‘we are not prepared to negotiate the internal affairs of Northern Ireland with a foreign government’” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995). Nevertheless, in December 1995, the International Body on Arms Decommissioning began holding meetings with various political parties in Ireland and Britain. After the Body’s meeting with Sinn Fein, Adams described the talks as “very constructive and positive” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995).

In January 1996, the International Body on Arms Decommissioning issued the “Mitchell Reports,” named after US peace envoy and former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. The reports “laid out six principles by which parties could enter into all-party talks” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). Those principles required “a commitment to democratic and exclusively peaceful means in resolving political issues, the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations verifiable by an independent commission, the renouncement of violence as a tactic to alter the course of negotiations, the agreement to abide by the terms of any resolution reached in all-party negotiations, the resolution to use democratic and exclusively peaceful means to alter any aspect of
that outcome with which they might disagree, and the commitment to urge that punishment beatings and killings stop” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996).

Among the Commission’s findings were that an elected body would be beneficial to those in Northern Ireland, and that police services ought to be resumed in Northern Ireland. The main conclusion of the report, however, was that decommissioning of weapons should take place during all-party talks as opposed to before or after, as some parties wanted. The report was condoned by the Irish government, the SDLP, the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI), Sinn Fein, the UDP and the PUP. However, the DUP rejected the report and the UUP “expressed reservations” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). Prime Minister John Major and his conservative government, meanwhile, “chose to ignore the central recommendation regarding simultaneous talks and decommissioning, instead focusing on the electoral recommendation that appealed greatly to the Unionists” (MacGinty &Darby, 2002, p. 127).

Major’s refusal to change course on prior decommissioning sparked animosity amongst the more hawkish faction of the republican movement. On February 9, 1996, the IRA officially ended its ceasefire with the detonation of a bomb in London (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). Before the attack, the IRA issued a statement, citing the British government as a reason for its resumption of violence:

“Instead of embracing the peace process, the British government acted in bad faith with Mr. Major and the Unionists leaders squandering this unprecedented opportunity to resolve the conflict. Time and again, over the last 18 months, selfish party political and sectional interests in the London parliament have been
placed before the rights of the people of Ireland” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995.)

**Analysis: Overview**

From the IRA’s failed 1994 ceasefire attempt, it can be argued that ceasefire declarations made by radicals or ideologues are unlikely to remain durable.

In her book *Militant Nationalism*, Cynthia Irvin distinguishes between three distinct types of actors operating within paramilitary organizations: politicos, ideologues, and radicals. Ideologues are committed to the belief that “organizational goals can only be obtained as a result of the armed struggle of their military wings”; radicals “adopt a combined strategy of both armed struggle and political base-building”; politicos “reject the notion that violence can be used successfully to mobilize the masses” (Irvin, 1999, p. 25-28). As noted, while Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams was capable of exerting great influence over IRA strategy in the 1990s, decisions regarding the IRA’s operations ultimately resided with the IRA command structure (Adams, 2003, p. 118). The IRA leadership had cited a genuine willingness to engage in the 1994 peace process, and indeed were willing to engage with the peace process after the 1994 ceasefire collapse if a viable solution were produced (Adams, 2003, p. 234). Nevertheless, when negotiations stalled, the IRA fallback was violence. Sinn Fein never had such a fallback, having always been committed exclusively to the non-violent political process (Adams, 2003).

As such, it can be argued that Sinn Fein’s Gerry Adams was a politico, while the IRA leadership was composed of radicals. While Adams sympathized with the IRA cause and understood its tactical reasoning, he never personally advocated armed struggle as a
viable alternative to political engagement (Adams, 2003). The IRA leadership, on the other hand, was willing to engage in a variety of both violent and non-violent activities to achieve their goals, and could thus be classified as radicals.

Since ideologues and radicals, by definition, do not oppose armed struggle, there is no moral buffer preventing them from ending a ceasefire and reverting back to violent tactics. This was the fate of the 1994 IRA ceasefire, when the radical IRA leadership concluded that the political talks were fruitless. The following analysis discusses three main factors of interest with regards to the 1994-1996 negotiations: the British state response, internal dynamics of the republican movement, and the external environment.

*British State Response*

Although the IRA attributed the collapse of their ceasefire to the British government’s intransigence, it is unclear how much of the British stance on decommissioning and all-party talks was influenced by a general reluctance to engage politically with Sinn Fein, and how much was influenced by a genuine attempt to secure peace. Nationalists attest to the former. Following John Major’s refusal to adopt George Mitchell’s recommendations on parallel decommissioning and party talks, SDLP leader John Hume accused Major of “playing politics with people’s lives, of buying the votes of the House of Commons in order to keep his government in power” (Adams, 2003, p. 230). Adams reasoned that Major’s decision was an attempt to appease the unionists, particularly the UUP, and other conservatives who had the ability to bring Major’s government down if they were dissatisfied with Major’s handling of the situation (Adams, 2003, p. 230). Adams further cites Britain’s decision to exclude Sinn Fein from
bilateral meetings early in the peace talks as being kept in “a process of decontamination” (Adams, 2003, p. 201).

Nevertheless, following the 1994 IRA ceasefire, the British government seemingly made a concerted effort to honor its commitment to peace. Within six months of the August 1994 ceasefire, “British security forces were removed, roads previously blocked off were reopened, army bases were closed, and armed forces were reduced” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 91). Moreover, when loyalist paramilitaries sparked a protest during the Orange Marches in July 1995, British forces showed no mercy or favoritism in cracking down on the demonstrations (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1995).

The British government apparently had a genuine desire to maintain order and secure a lasting peace, and they undoubtedly believed that prior decommissioning of weapons was the most effective means of establishing that peace. Nevertheless, in their attempt to appear heavy-handed and resolute in their demands for peace, British leaders may have been blindsided by the reality of the situation: paramilitaries would not decommission weaponry until the situation was more secure, and the situation could only become more secure with all-party talks.

Internal Dynamics

In the early phases of secret negotiations with the British government, politically-minded members of the IRA recognized their duty to be “positive and constructive if there were genuine goodwill efforts to get a dialogue going” (Adams, 2003, p. 118). Moreover, the IRA leadership was often willing to heed Sinn Fein and abide by its
recommendations. Nevertheless, during the 1994 negotiations, the decision to call a ceasefire was ultimately made by the IRA Army Council, while IRA volunteers had also consented (Adams, 2003, p. 162). While there was quite a bit of overlap between Sinn Fein and IRA leadership during the 1990s, the ceasefire declaration was made independently of Sinn Fein. Moreover, the Provisional IRA’s subsequent breach of ceasefire in 1996 was also a decision made without substantial input or knowledge from Sinn Fein (Adams, 2003). Indeed, when the IRA ceasefire finally broke in February 1996, Gerry Adams described feeling “shocked” and “overwhelmed” (Adams, 2003, p. 231). While Sinn Fein undoubtedly held great sway over IRA strategy, the collapse of the 1994 IRA ceasefire reveals Sinn Fein was certainly not responsible for all its decisions. Nevertheless, Sinn Fein would suffer major repercussions for the IRA’s actions in the months to come.

*External Environment*

The IRA had initially agreed to a complete cessation of military operations because it believed that the Irish national political opinion would dominate in the republican’s favor (Adams, 2003, p. 233). According to Adams, this was “fractured” after John Bruton was elected Irish prime minister in 1994. To Gerry Adams, Bruton’s position on arms decommissioning was more in line with the British position. He moreover “refused to meet” with the nationalist leadership at this stage of the peace process (Adams, 2003, p. 233).

Bruton had stood in stark contrast to his predecessor, Albert Reynolds. Reynolds’ consistency and moderate outlook towards the republican leadership had been a “crucial”
element in “persuading the IRA that the peace process was a viable alternative to the armed struggle” (Adams, 2003, p. 191). Indeed, Adams cites the resignation of Albert Reynolds as Irish Prime Minister in November 1994 as the first major blow to the 1994 IRA ceasefire.

Decommissioning proved to be the Achilles’ heel of the 1994 ceasefire. While the republicans acknowledged that violence had no place in a peaceful, democratic society, they countered that Northern Ireland was not yet a peaceful and democratic society (Adams, 2003, p. 207). Indeed, at this stage of the conflict, Republicans could hardly consider Northern Ireland democratic, as they were continuously excluded from talks and subjected to the policies of the British government. Moreover, Adams maintained that in a time when British forces patrolled and loyalist paramilitaries could again take up the armed struggle at any moment, the notion that the IRA should surrender its weapons as a precondition for talks was “unrealistic” (Adams, 2003, p. 208). Decommissioning would be an easy enough undertaking when the conditions were right, but peace negotiations were a necessary prerequisite for establishing those conditions (Adams, 2003, p. 208).

A day after the collapse of the IRA ceasefire in February 1996, the Irish Prime Minister John Bruton “announced that the Irish government was breaking off ministerial contact with Sinn Fein” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). Shortly thereafter, the British government announced June 10, 1996 as the date for the commencement of all-party talks. Sinn Fein, however, was excluded from preliminary talks until a new ceasefire was called (Adams, 2003, p. 232).

In April 1996, the British Parliament passed the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations) Act, which published “the names of the 30 of parties and individuals who will appear on the ballot paper for the Northern Ireland election” to take place in June, with Sinn Fein listed among the candidates (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). The governments had already established a “three-strand approach” to talks: the first strand would involve the British government and the political parties, while the second and third strands would involve both the British and Irish governments and the political parties (CAIN, 1996, Consultation paper).

During the Forum election in May 1996, “Sinn Fein attracted a record vote of 15.5%,” giving the party 17 seats (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). Nevertheless, when the all-party “Stormont” talks began in June, Sinn Fein was excluded due to the absence of an IRA ceasefire (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996).
There were several hiccups throughout the Stormont negotiation process (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 35). Among these was a disagreement over the nature of George Mitchell’s role in the talks (several unionist parties opposed his chairmanship), a series of contentious loyalist parades that temporarily stalled talks, and continued criticism by nationalists over the conservative British government’s apparent lack of effort towards the talks (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 35).

Nevertheless, the Stormont talks survived the next few months, with the parties agreeing on procedural rules by late July (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 35). Yet even while talks were in progress, both republican and loyalist paramilitaries continued to carry out sporadic “punishment beatings” and occasional bombings. There was a difference however; while the IRA had openly declared a resumption of its armed campaign during the 1996 negotiation period, loyalists officially maintained their ceasefire through mid-1997 (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997). This fact would inevitably shape the course of negotiations, as loyalist and republican paramilitaries would later receive differential treatment during talks as a result of their ceasefire status.

In late 1996, Gerry Adams warned that Northern Ireland was “on the edge of an abyss” and reiterated the need for Sinn Fein to be involved in talks (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). In a November 1996 proposal, however, British Prime Minister John Major said there could be no question of negotiating with Sinn Fein as a precondition for an IRA ceasefire; rather, the IRA ceasefire must be a precondition for talks (CAIN, 2013, British government responses). Major further claimed that the British government remained skeptical on the permanency of any new IRA ceasefire, and that
they would be the judge of any such claims to permanency (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996). However, as the months passed, there were new indications that the British and Irish governments were now open to the prospect of simultaneous decommissioning and all-party talks, effectively dropping their previous stance that decommissioning would remain a precondition to talks (CAIN, 2013, British government responses).

By early 1997 the SDLP’s John Hume, who throughout the 1990s negotiation period had seemingly been most open to talks with Sinn Fein and the Republicans, now said that “if the IRA were not prepared to declare a ceasefire, then he would look elsewhere for political progress” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997). In April 1997, the SDLP also rejected an invitation for an electoral pact with Sinn Fein (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997).

Nevertheless, Sinn Fein saw astounding electoral success in the May 1997 election, winning 16.1 percent of the vote in Northern Ireland and two seats in the Westminster Parliament (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997). During that same election, Tony Blair of the Labour Party was elected prime minister of the British Parliament. He in turn appointed Marjorie Mowlam as the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who proposed a number of “confidence building measures,” including the “implementation of employment equality, reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC),” as well as allowing Sinn Fein to “enter the talks process when there was a renewed IRA ceasefire.” Sinn Fein, perhaps energized by an end to Conservative
leadership, stated that they were, “ready to do business with the British government” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997).

In June 1997, the British and Irish governments jointly agreed to appoint a subcommittee on the issue of decommissioning. They simultaneously issued a “Document on Decommissioning,” a proposal that seemingly affirmed the principles laid out by the International Body on Arms Decommissioning on the need to conduct talks and decommissioning simultaneously, as opposed to a precondition for talks (CAIN, 2013, Peace process).

On July 18, 1997, Gerry Adams publicly called for an IRA ceasefire and issued a joint statement with John Hume lauding the efforts of the new British and Irish governments in “removing the obstacles” to peace that the previous administrations had implemented. The statement also urged the two governments to respond “positively and imaginatively” to the issues of demilitarization and prisoners (CAIN, 2013, Joint statement). The next day, on July 20, 1997, the IRA issued a statement declaring a reinstatement of its 1994 ceasefire.

After the announcement, unionists regarded the ceasefire with skepticism, and many, notably the DUP party members, refused to engage in political talks with Sinn Fein (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 37). At the same time, the UUP, although reluctant to participate in negotiations with Sinn Fein, wanted to be careful not to be blamed for the “collapse of the talks” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 37). David Trimble, the leader of the UUP, called on input from other unionists, who ultimately affirmed the decision to take part in talks (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 37).
The talks resumed in September along the three-stranded approach (discussing relations between Northern Ireland and the UK, relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic Ireland, and relations between the Republic of Ireland and the UK), with most of the negotiations carried out in subcommittees and bilateral meetings. At the onset of negotiations, Adams declared that Sinn Fein’s aim was “an end to British rule on the island” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 38). As such, the UUP refused to engage directly with Sinn Fein. The UUP and more moderate nationalist SDLP, however, were able to reach consensus on a number of issues. Similarly, the UUP and Irish government developed a “working relationship”, with the Irish government affirming its willingness to amend its constitution and “remove its territorial claim in Northern Ireland in the event of an overall settlement” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 38). By late autumn 1997, however, republican and loyalist paramilitaries were having doubts about the talks process (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 38). A cycle of violence and counter-violence ensued in late 1997, resulting in the withdrawal of several loyalist groups from talks and the “temporary suspension” of Sinn Fein (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). Sinn Fein’s outrage at the suspension indicated its desire to remain in the talks process (Adams, 2003).

Despite paramilitary violence, the negotiations officially remained in tact as long as there were no breaches of the Mitchell Principles previously outlined by the International Body on Arms Decommissioning. Those principles, which all parties had agreed to at the onset of talks, were only considered to be violated when the violence was characterized as cross-community killings. Any intra-community violence that took place
was persistently overlooked, and was not considered a breach of the Mitchell Principles (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 39).

On April 6, 1998, talks chairman George Mitchell presented the parties with a draft agreement drawn up by the British and Irish governments. The result was the Good Friday Agreement (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 40).

*The Good Friday Agreement*

The Agreement included five main constitutional provisions. First, “Northern Ireland’s future constitutional status was to be in the hands of its citizens. Second, if the people of Ireland, North and South, wanted a united Ireland, they could have one by voting on it. Third, Northern Ireland’s current constitutional status would remain with the United Kingdom. Fourth, Northern Ireland’s citizens would have the right to identify as British, or Irish, or both. Fifth, the Irish state would drop its territorial claim on Northern Ireland and instead define the Irish nation in terms of people rather than land. The consent principle would also be built into the Irish constitution” (BBC News, 2012, The Good Friday Agreement).

In terms of functional structure, a “power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly would be established in which all of the main parties would be part of a permanent coalition government. A North-South Ministerial Council would allow cooperation between the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Irish Parliament on certain functional issues. As a safeguard, the Northern Ireland Assembly could only operate if the North-South Ministerial Council was also functioning. Finally, a British-Irish Council was to be
established that would draw members from the British and Irish governments as well as the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. A copy of the Good Friday Agreement was delivered to every home in Northern Ireland in April 1998, to be voted on in a referendum” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 42).

The Agreement also addressed a number of issues relating to civil and religious liberties. A Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was to be established… the “British government pledged to limit (security) consistent with the level of threat,” and there was to be an “accelerated release program for paramilitary prisoners” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 42).

Notably, the Agreement was reached without a requirement for the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. Indeed, the issue was sidelined for much of the talks. However, participants in the Agreement confirmed their intention “to work constructively and in good faith with the Independent Commission on Decommissioning, and to use any influence they may have to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons within two years.” The Agreement was held up to a referendum vote in Northern Ireland and Ireland and passed, with a 71 percent yes vote in Northern Ireland and a 94 percent backing in the Republic of Ireland (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 42). Its passage marked the beginning of a difficult transition phase as the new provisions were implemented.

Response to Good Friday Agreement
Initially, the Good Friday Agreement proved to be a divisive document, with strong feelings on both sides of the aisle. While the British and Irish governments, the SDLP, the center parties, the loyalists, and the international observers all favored the document (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 43), the Agreement posed major problems for the DUP, UUP, and Sinn Fein. While many in the UUP found the Agreement’s new institutional power-sharing provisions acceptable, they had qualms about “the deferral of decommissioning, the early release programs for paramilitary prisoners, and the prospect of police reform” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 43). Despite internal disagreement, the UUP officially endorsed the Agreement.

The DUP were similarly skeptical of the Agreement, convinced that the Republicans had not changed except in “the most superficial way” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 43). Nevertheless, in the absence of a viable alternative, the DUP reluctantly accepted the Agreement.

Sinn Fein, meanwhile, took issue with the Northern Ireland Assembly and the removal of Ireland’s territorial claim from its constitution (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 43). Republicans feared that any Assembly would necessarily be comprised of a unionist majority that would “merely perpetuate the status quo of discrimination and ill-treatment of Catholics” (CAIN, 2013, Gerry Adams reply). For Republicans, the Agreement was not a basis for a settlement, but rather a staging post; a stepping stone on the journey towards a united Ireland. Nevertheless, after much debate, Sinn Fein endorsed the Agreement. Sinn Fein’s approval of the document meant that republicans “tacitly accepted” the consent principle that Northern Ireland’s future was based on the will of the
people. This would implicitly mean the end of the Provisional IRA’s campaign of armed struggle (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p.45).

**Analysis: Overview**

The Good Friday Agreement’s ability to draw support from loyalists, nationalists, and the international community alike was truly an anomaly. Nevertheless, it did not prove to be the definitive remedy for solving the conflict (BBC, Good Friday Agreement).

Notably, the Good Friday Agreement was not inclusive of all stakeholder parties. Indeed, after the United Kingdom Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party boycotted negotiations in response to Sinn Fein’s entry into talks in September 1997, “43 percent of the Unionist electorate were absent from the talks process when crucial elements of the Agreement were being negotiated” (BBC, Good Friday Agreement). According to Chairman George Mitchell, if the DUP and the UKUP had stayed within the talks process and fought from within, “there would have been no agreement. Their absence freed the UUP from daily attacks at the negotiating table, and gave the party room to negotiate” (BBC, Good Friday Agreement). Moreover, the Good Friday Agreement neglected to settle the issue of decommissioning, an issue that would continue to plague the process for the next few years. While the Good Friday Agreement was a good launching point for a lasting settlement, the absence of key parties in the decision – making process, and the failure to address the issue of decommissioning proved to inhibit the smooth implementation of the Agreement. The remainder of this analysis examines
the response of the British and Irish states, the IRA’s internal dynamics, public opinion, and international influence.

**British State Response**

During the lead up to the Good Friday Agreement, the British expressed skepticism in allowing Sinn Fein an active voice in the newly proposed power-sharing institutions.

Peter Neumann maintains that Britain’s initial reluctance to admit Sinn Fein into power-sharing institutions during the Belfast Agreement stemmed not from anti-republican tendencies, but rather from a desire to “maintain the viability of the political process in view of the fact that the Republican’s commitment to the peace process had remained ambiguous” (Neumann, 2003, p. 3).

At the onset of the Stormont talks in June 1996, the John Major’s conservative British government had seemingly “run out of steam” during the peace process, showing “no particular urgency in anything they were doing” (MacGinty and Darby, 2002, p. 35).

Nevertheless, the British government appeared intent on quelling violence throughout the peace process. Whether or not the tactics employed to quell violence were effective or well executed is another matter. Indeed, during the contentious marches at Drumcree, the RUC ultimately had given in to loyalist demands to march through nationalist areas, and had indiscriminately fired plastic bullets in the ensuing chaos (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996).

While the British government likely had good intentions in dealing with the Sinn Fein, the IRA, and paramilitary violence, these overtures were likely lost on Republicans,
whose perceptions of British military response were often shaped by mishaps like the loyalist Drumcree parades.

**Irish State Response**

The Irish government seemed to be divided on whether or not to incorporate Sinn Fein into talks. In May 1997, Irish Prime Minister John Bruton had called a halt to further contacts with Sinn Fein and the Irish government, calling a vote for Sinn Fein “a vote for murder”. Meanwhile, the deputy Irish Prime Minister Dick Spring stated that a vote for Sinn Fein “was a vote for peace” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997).

**Internal Dynamics**

When the ceasefire collapsed in February 1996, the IRA’s renewed campaign was highly tactical in nature, aimed towards securing a place at the negotiating table (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 88). Indeed, in 1996, the IRA campaign was primarily waged in England, and the casualty rate was exceptionally low (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 93).

However, after the ceasefire was renewed again in July 1997, internal tensions increased (Adams, 2003). The IRA splinter faction Continuity IRA carried out a number of independent attacks throughout the 1996-1997 negotiations process (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1997), while the Real IRA emerged in 1997 in opposition to peace talks (Adams, 2003). Tensions were exacerbated by growing fears throughout negotiations that the peace talks would ultimately fail to deliver a united Ireland. Indeed,
when they did fail to deliver a united Ireland, the IRA splinter groups vowed to continue the armed struggle without the support of the PIRA.

**Public Opinion**

It was clear that by the mid 1990s, the citizens of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland were ready for peace. Indeed, an *Irish News* opinion poll from October 1996 showed that “94 percent of all respondents, and 70 per cent of Sinn Fein (SF) supporters, wanted an immediate Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1996).

Moreover, as the 1990s peace negotiations progressed, Sinn Fein seemingly garnered greater electoral support. In the vote for the Forum for Political Dialogue to begin all-party talks and the subsequent Northern Irish elections, Sinn Fein won 15.5 percent and 16.1 percent of the vote, respectively (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 36).

It remains unclear, however, whether Sinn Fein’s rise in electoral support was a sign of public affirmation for its gradual shift in strategy towards political participation and negotiation, or rather a nod towards its firm stance on Irish nationalism. After all, IRA paramilitaries continued to engage in violence more or less throughout the peace process, which contradicts the notion that Sinn Fein was a party for peace.

Regardless, MacGinty and Darby maintain that “much of the peace process was elite led and insulated from direct political pressure” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 138). Indeed, they have concluded that “public opinion had the greatest influence on the peace process when it was expressed through organizations in civil society once the peace process had actually begun” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 138).
International Influences

While the British and Irish governments drove the negotiations process (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 172), paramilitary parties involved in talks necessarily harbored resentment toward one of the two governments. Meanwhile, the United States’ role as a third-party intermediary enabled it to project an image of neutrality. This does not mean that the parties present in negotiations did not perceive biases on the part of the US; rather, the nature of the conflict enabled the US to make a better case than either the British or Irish government that it held no prejudices against either side of the conflict.
The summer after the April 1998 implementation of the Good Friday Agreement was characterized by violence (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 44). In July 1998, the annual standoff between the British police and the loyalist Orange Order at Drumcree spread tension and violence throughout Northern Ireland. A month later, a bomb planted by the republican splinter group Real IRA (RIRA) “killed 29 people in the market town of Omagh” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45). In response, Sinn Fein harshly condemned the perpetrators. The criticism was Sinn Fein’s first time publicly criticizing fellow Republicans (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45). The Omagh bombing prompted UUP leader David Trimble and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams to demonstrate more open support for the Good Friday Agreement (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45).

Nevertheless, the decommissioning issue continued to stall successful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. At this stage, Trimble and Adams feared that they might risk “splitting their parties” if they were seen to back down on decommissioning (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 46). The UUP firmly objected to Sinn Fein’s entry into the new Northern Ireland administration until IRA decommissioning had begun. Sinn Fein insisted that “their electoral mandate justified their automatic entry into politics, whether or not decommissioning took place” (MacGinty and Darby, 2002, p. 47). Despite arm-twisting from the British and Irish governments as well as the powerful unionist parties, Gerry Adams maintained that the decommissioning issue would “dog the peace process forever” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45).
While disagreement on decommissioning stalled implementation of the new governmental bodies, much progress was made in other areas throughout the year (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45). Paramilitary prisoners were released, British troop levels were reduced across Northern Ireland, and “an independent commission on police reform began an extensive public consultation to access local opinions on policing” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45).

In December 1998, the Loyalist Volunteer Force handed over nine weapons, but “their small gesture of decommissioning failed to influence similar actions by other mainstream loyalist and Republican groups” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 47).

In autumn 1999, George Mitchell once again spearheaded negotiations, issuing a report that recommended that, “devolution should take effect, then the Executive should meet, and then the paramilitary groups should appoint their authorized representatives, all on the same day, in that order” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 50). He noted that, “decommissioning should be voluntary, but was an essential element of the agreement.” The proposal also recommended that an IRA intermediary be appointed to the Independent Commission on Arms Decommissioning. The unionists, persuaded by UUP leader David Trimble, voted for the agreement (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 50).

The deal paved the way for the implementation of a new Northern Ireland Assembly for the first time in 27 years. Despite opposition from the DUP, the Assembly functioned anyway, and Northern Ireland had a working and locally accountable government for the first time in a generation.
However, by early 2000, grassroots IRA members threatened to topple the delicately balanced peace process with their continued refusal to come to terms with decommissioning. Nevertheless, on May 7, 2000, after a series of secret talks with British officials, the IRA acknowledged that it would “completely and verifiably” put its arms beyond use in return for greater movement on police reform and demilitarization. (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 52). A few days later power was re-devolved to Northern Ireland. In June 2000, “three IRA arms dumps were inspected by the agreed third parties,” who verified that weapons were properly disposed of to their satisfaction (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

Nevertheless, it became apparent that unionists regarded the decommissioning issue as unfinished, and the next couple of years saw a vicious cycle of contentious divisions within the unionist parties, more Assembly suspensions, attacks by IRA splinter factions, and painstakingly slow progress on IRA decommissioning (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

In October 2001, Sinn Fein announced its first act of decommissioning, triggering a return to power-sharing, with its second round taking place in April 2002 (BBC History, 2006, Timeline). Peace talks again lost momentum in October 2002, when police raided Sinn Fein’s Stormont offices during an investigation on republican intelligence gathering. The IRA had been accused of running a spying operation in the Northern Ireland Office – something Sinn Fein dismissed as “a political tactic aimed at deflecting attention from others who had failed to fulfill their side of the bargain” (BBC History,
Nevertheless, the scandal led to a complete breakdown in trust between Republicans and other parties, and devolution was again suspended.

In October 2003, the IRA undertook its third round of weapons decommissioning. However, the act was apparently not transparent enough for unionists; David Trimble and others demanded greater visual proof of the decommissioning process. In December 2004, the British and Irish Prime Ministers had finally arrived at a political settlement in which the IRA again acknowledged a complete decommissioning of arms. However, the deal crumbled when Sinn Fein said photographing IRA arms was unacceptable because unionists might use them to “humiliate Republicans” (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

In January 2005, the death of a Catholic man named Robert McCartney at the hands of a handful of rogue Provisional IRA members severely damaged the IRA and Sinn Fein’s image. Although the murder had no political motivations, and although Adams declared that, “no one involved acted as a republican or on behalf of Republicans,” Sinn Fein saw its political, electoral, and international support take substantial blows as a result of the incident (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

In February 2005, Sinn Fein scrapped its offer to complete arms decommissioning after being blamed for the latest breakdown in the peace process and being accused of involving itself in a £26.5m bank raid in Belfast the previous December.

Despite scandals and discontent, by September 2005, the Independent Body on Arms Decommissioning announced that it was satisfied that all IRA arms were now put beyond use. The declaration marked a huge step in the peace process, yet unionists remained skeptical in the absence of photographic evidence (BBC History, 2007,
Timeline). In January 2007, Sinn Fein members voted to support policing in Northern Ireland, seemingly overcoming one of the final hurdles in the restoration of the again suspended Northern Ireland Assembly.

In March 2007, devolved government finally returned to Northern Ireland following the passage of the St. Andrews Agreement. The Agreement involved a breakthrough meeting in which Gerry Adams and longtime opponent DUP leader Ian Paisley sat side by side. Mr. Paisley stated that the DUP was committed to full participation in government with Sinn Fein, and Gerry Adams declared it a new era (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

**Analysis: Overview**

The post-Good Friday Agreement implementation period is a testament to the fact that a peace process is just what it suggests: a gradual process that takes time and patience.

Indeed, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, internal sectarian violence between republican and loyalist paramilitaries continued to fuel the conflict. British and Irish state policy seemingly could do little to shape or ameliorate this dynamic, at least in the short term (Bew et al. 2009, p. 243).

That being said, the 1998 peace process was lacking in several respects. Had these failures been addressed prior to the passage of the Good Friday Agreement, the implementation period may have been much smoother and more efficient.
First, animosity and distrust between key actors ran high even as the 1998 negotiations were concluded. Indeed, UUP leader David Trimble and Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams did not hold their first face to face meeting until September 1998 (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45) – nearly six months after the passage of the Agreement. The meeting itself was tense: the men did not shake hands, and David Trimble later reported, “the origin of the handshake is to show there is no weapon in the person’s hand. He (Adams) didn’t have an open hand to show people” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 45).

Even more rancorous was the relationship between Gerry Adams and DUP leader Ian Paisley. It wasn’t until 2007 that the two men were willing to sit side by side in support of a joint power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly (BBC History, 2007, Timeline).

While it may be possible for peace negotiations to be successful without all parties getting along, animosity and distrust is certainly a hindrance in successful negotiations if key actors are unable or unwilling to face each other.

The Good Friday implementation process was structured on the basis of conditional progress. That is, devolution and implementation could only occur once decommissioning took place, and seemingly only when unionists were satisfied with the nature of the decommissioning. Moreover, if the Provisional IRA was suspected of stealing, spying, or engaging in violence, as they were on several occasions, then the talks were suspended. In other words, if the PIRA appeared to be engaging in activities that
were contrary to a transparent, democratic process, then the Provos were discouraged from continuing to participate in the talks process.

The concept of setting preconditions for talks is hardly new. In the case of the Good Friday Agreement, Sinn Fein and the IRA had previously taken substantial steps in demonstrating their commitment to the democratic process. At this point, what the groups needed was encouragement, not dissuasion. While the British government and George Mitchell made enormous steps in adapting to the wishes of the Republicans, the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement by its very nature remained a highly conditional process, in which false steps by members of republican and loyalist paramilitary groups held the potential for suspension from the talks process. When this happened, the peace process was inevitably stalled.

In sum, the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement may have proceeded much more smoothly if key opposing actors been more willing to negotiate face to face, and if the durability of the talks had not been so conditional; that is, if they had not been so vulnerable to potential suspension of essential negotiating actors.

The following analysis examines the response of the British state, the internal dynamics of both the republican and unionist parties, and public opinion.

**British State Response**

The new Labour government under Prime Minister Tony Blair seemingly had much better success appeasing the nationalists than the Conservative governments of the last 25 years. Indeed, Marjorie Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary of State from the late 1990s, had remained highly cognizant of the republican perspective throughout
negotiations. To the unionists, she was too sympathetic of nationalism, and was thus replaced in mid-1999 by Peter Mandelson. Nevertheless, the Labour government, with the support of George Mitchell, appeared much more willing to make small concessions on issues of decommissioning that proved instrumental in engaging the republicans with the peace process.

**Internal Dynamics: Unionist Influences**

By the late 1990s, many unionists, including Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, often appeared much more willing to compromise than their republican counterparts. Indeed, when the unionists voted to accept Mitchell’s November 1999 recommendations on devolved power sharing and an IRA interlocutor on the decommissioning issue, Trimble reportedly stated, “We have done our bit, Mr. Adams, it is over to you” (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 51).

**Internal Dynamics: IRA**

In order for any paramilitary ceasefire to be durable, all members of the organization must make a commitment to that peace. As the case of the IRA has revealed, when members are not willing to act uniformly and in accordance with the majority wishes for peace, then the ceasefire is either breached or splinter factions arise. In order to enable this majority consensus for peace, the paramilitary organization ought to possess either politically-minded leadership or a high percentage of politically-minded activists making up the organization (Irvin, 1999).
The case of the IRA demonstrates this logic clearly. After the passage of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, several splinter factions composed of disaffected Irish Republicans broke off from the Provisional IRA and continued the armed struggle (Frenett, 2012). The Provisionals that remained outright rejected the use of politically-motivated violence, and upheld this rejection for the remainder of the peace process and beyond (Frenett, 2012).

Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness managed to gain near total control over the republican movement around the same time of the passage of the Good Friday Agreement (Bew et al. 2009, p. 156). By 2001, their control was almost absolute (Bew et al. 2009, p. 156). It can therefore be said that the Provisional IRA’s rejection of violence was highly connected with the dominance of politically-minded leadership, and the timing of the IRA splinter factions’ defection was related to the absence of completely dominant politically-minded leadership. Of course, it can be argued that the splinter factions’ defection likely would have occurred regardless of the presence of politically-minded leadership. Nevertheless, the first relationship with regards to the PIRA’s commitment to peace and the presence of dominant politically-minded leadership is at least notable.

Public Opinion

A March 1999 BBC poll indicated that while 72 percent of Catholics believed that the Good Friday Agreement benefited both communities equally, only 41 percent of Protestants felt the same way (MacGinty & Darby, 2002, p. 47).
Indeed, unionist dissatisfaction remained high throughout the implementation period. Many of the concessions by unionists were visible and ongoing, and included compromises on prison releases, the prospect of major police reform, and the entry of republicans into government (MacGinty & Darby, p. 47). Meanwhile, concessions made by republicans, such as acceptance of the consent principle, were more vague and conceptual.

Nevertheless, a majority in both populations indicated a desire for decommissioning. A February 1999 poll by the *Belfast Telegraph* showed “that, of those questioned, 84 per cent wanted Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groups to immediately begin decommissioning their weapons (the breakdown of the figures were 93 per cent Protestants and 68 per cent of Catholics)” (CAIN, A chronology of the conflict, 1999).
A Fragile Peace: 2007-2014

Since 2007, it is commonly believed that the most important aspects of the Good Friday Agreement have been implemented (Archick, 2014). Policing and justice reform have taken place, decommissioning of IRA weaponry is complete, and in March 2011, Northern Ireland’s Assembly and Executive completed its first full term in office. Although the unionist-nationalist conflict remains a major source of contention within Northern Ireland politics today, “the 2011 election saw some voters cross traditional lines in casting their second and third preference” (Archick, 2014, p. 14), while the election itself saw greater focus on everyday political and economic issues rather than traditional issues pertaining to the Troubles” (Archick, 2014). Seemingly for the first time in forty years, Northern Ireland’s political agenda was characterized by a degree of normalization.

Still, some unresolved issues remain. These include a need to address issues of human rights and equality, potentially in the form of a Northern Irish Bill of Rights and an Irish language act. Although substantial gains have been made in this area since the 1960’s, there is still much to be done. Moreover, there are also ongoing problems in “addressing violent parades, taming sectarian strife, fostering economic development, and curbing remaining dissident activity” (Archick, 2014, p. 14).

Nevertheless, at this point in time, the main hurdles to peace - decommissioning, a power-sharing Executive, and the universal acknowledgement of the consent principle – are in the past. While the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein indeed failed in their goal of uniting Ireland and purging the British from the island, a resurgence of violence from
these particular factions appears highly unlikely. While sporadic activity by small IRA splinter factions still threatens the fragile peace that seemingly exists today, it appears that the main obstacles that defined the conflict for forty years have been overcome.

The following section outlines three hypotheses I derived describing conditions that seemed to either enable or hinder peace in Northern Ireland. These hypotheses are primarily drawn from the literature on the Northern Ireland peace process, although portions of the hypotheses are drawn from my own unique analysis of the process.
Hypotheses

Over the course of the IRA’s nearly forty-year campaign, the British and Irish governments repeatedly failed in their attempts to negotiate a lasting settlement with republicans. From my analysis of these setbacks, several hypotheses can be derived. These hypotheses describe conditions that tended to yield more or less durable negotiations with the IRA, which in turn have been observed to be correlated with more or less durable ceasefires. The hypotheses can be broken down into three main categories, and are listed as follows:

1. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to be durable when the leadership of the organization has become fully committed to pursuing nonviolent solutions, and there is absolute adherence to the leadership throughout all levels of the organization.

1. In her book Militant Nationalism, Cynthia Irvin has theorized that a greater influx of “politicos” (activists that are solely committed to a non-violent political process) within a paramilitary organization prompt the organization to elevate electoral participation over armed struggle (Irvin, 1999). My hypotheses is derived from Irvin’s work, my own observations, and Neumann, 2005’s assertion that it was the influence of the leadership of the IRA, not the ideological makeup of its activists, that proved most influential in the IRA’s shift away from violence. Throughout the
1. 1980s and 1990s, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams was a staunch advocate of the political process, and readily condemned IRA violence. During the 1990s peace process, he steadily gained influence among the Provisional IRA leadership, and seemingly guided the PIRA Army Council towards more politically-minded decisions. Where there is not absolute adherence to so-called politico leadership, ceasefires often fail. Indeed, during the IRA’s breach of ceasefire in 1996, Gerry Adams and other politico leadership of Sinn Fein presumably had not maintained control over the IRA Army Council’s tactical decision-making.

2. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to fail when a regime in power is perceived by the paramilitaries to be repressive and/or discriminatory in its practices or conduct towards the paramilitary organization.

1. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, negotiations and ceasefires repeatedly failed due to the IRA’s real or imagined perceptions of mistreatment or favoritism by the British government. Indeed, Irvin hypothesizes that regime repression, unless extremely severe, tends to draw in more militant minded activists into the paramilitary organization, which in turn may illicit more violent backlashes from the group (Irvin, 1999). While Bew et al. 2009 maintains that the “hard power” strategy
pursued by the British governments was indeed effective in crippling the IRA’s military capabilities (p. 246), these measures nevertheless were seen to provoke greater animosity towards the state, which in itself is hardly conducive to a successful negotiating environment and a lasting ceasefire.

3. Ceasefires declared by nationalist-separatist paramilitaries in democracies are more likely to be durable when negotiations accompanying the ceasefire are transparent, lack preconditions, are inclusive and accommodating of all major stakeholder parties without risk of suspension, and allow all major issues and actors to be brought to the negotiating table at the same time.

1. In the case of the IRA, ceasefires have been seen to fail when the negotiation process lacks transparency. Secrecy is often a key element in initiating the peace process, but once all-party talks begin, transparency is paramount to avoiding paranoia and distrust among parties. This was apparent throughout the 1990s peace process, when unionists became highly suspicious of secret talks taking place between the IRA and the British government.

2. In the case of the IRA, demands for preconditions during negotiations have repeatedly undermined the peace process. Indeed, parties engaged in the peace process are likely to be intransigent in the first place. Thus expectations for
concessions before talks have begun are often highly unrealistic, and tend to stall negotiations before they have begun.

3. Throughout the 1990s negotiation period, all-party talks were repeatedly stalled due to the exclusion or suspension of the IRA, often due to reasons related to decommissioning of weapons. The case of the IRA thus indicates that every effort ought to be made to accommodate the reasonable wishes of the paramilitary group during talks, and suspension or exclusion of paramilitaries ought to be avoided at all costs. Indeed, by imposing a threat of suspension upon a paramilitary group, spoilers within the group are provided with an opportunity to sabotage the process.

4. The Northern Ireland Peace Process has revealed that issues often arise when key parties have been excluded from a final settlement. Indeed, the dissatisfaction that many unionists expressed after the passage of the Good Friday Agreement is a testament to the fact that all stakeholder parties must have input in the final agreement.

5. The case of the IRA has illustrated that when it comes to negotiations, “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”
Contentious issues that are set aside within a binding agreement will inevitably come back to plague the peace process, as seen when the Good Friday Agreement glossed over the issue of decommissioning. Of course, bringing all issues to the table simultaneously often requires time and patience, as well as trial and error. Nevertheless, negotiating issues concurrently allows for reciprocation and synchronization among key stakeholder actors. Indeed, the concept of “give and take” within negotiations can only occur when all actors are willing and able to participate in talks. Moreover, as the post-Good Friday period illustrates, these negotiations are much more meaningful and successful when key actors are willing to negotiate face to face.

In the next section, the following hypotheses will be systematically applied to the case of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) to determine whether the same conditions that facilitated or inhibited peace in Ireland also enabled or hindered peace in the Basque Country.
The Case of Euskadi

Origins of ETA and Basque Nationalism

The Basque region of Southern France and Northern Spain has been inhabited for tens of thousands of years. The origins of Basque nationalism, however, are generally traced back to the 1890’s in the Basque region of Vizcaya. At that time, the industrial revolution had brought mass immigration to the Basque region from other parts of Spain, prompting a backlash from those native Basques who opposed the Spanish influence (Sullivan, 1998). To many Basques, merely the introduction of the Spanish language into Basque culture was perceived as a threat to traditional Basque society (Sullivan, 1998).

At that time, several prominent Basque nationalists emerged that helped solidify the notion of Basque superiority, and ultimately the Basque nationalist ideology (Sullivan, 1998). In 1895, Sabino Arana, the credited founder of Basque nationalism, invented a name, Euskadi, for the Basque country, designed a flag to symbolize its significance, and founded the Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV), or Basque Nationalist Party, to propel the Basque nationalist movement (Sullivan, 1998). Arana pointed to the uniqueness of the Basque language, Euskera, as a means of justifying that the Basques were a superior race; biologically distinct from their neighbors in France and Spain (Sullivan, 1998).

Moreover, the ancient Basque laws known as the fueros were believed to be representative of the purest democracy the world had ever seen. After the Carlist Wars of the 19th century, however, the Basque fueros were abolished and a more centralized
Spanish regime was imposed on the Basque people (Sullivan, 1998). While the Basques had in fact been highly integrated with Spain for centuries, the disillusionment that many Basques felt due to harsh working conditions and savage exploitation in the late 1890s prompted many to romanticize traditional Basque life (Sullivan, 1998). The PNV soon appealed to a large number of people who felt threatened by capitalism and the breakdown of morality, allegedly brought about by the Spanish invasion. By the 1920s, the party developed deep roots within the Basque community, and became a major voice for Basque concerns (Sullivan, 1998).

By 1924, the Spanish monarchy was overpowered by the military, and for the next six years authoritarian regimes were imposed under General Primo de Rivera (Anderson, 2003). The year 1931 saw the second Spanish republic and democratic elections, and by the year 1936, Spain’s first democratic government declared the Basque region autonomous (Anderson, 2003). However, later that year, a military coup led by General Francisco Franco gave way to the Spanish Civil War. From 1936-1939, Franco’s troops ravaged the Basque lands and stripped the region of its autonomous status (Anderson, 2003). After the war, Franco ruled a brutal dictatorial regime for the next forty years until his death in 1975. Seemingly intent on stamping out Basque culture and shattering the dream of Basque independence, Franco’s oppression provoked even greater anti-Spanish sentiment among the Basques and united them under the nationalist banner (Anderson, 2003). By the 1950s, the timing was ripe for a Basque militant uprising.
Birth of ETA

In 1952, a group of disillusioned Basque university students began meeting to discuss Basque politics, increase awareness of the Basque nationalist movement, and promote the use of Euskera, the Basque language (Anderson, 2003). The group began to publish a journal called Ekin, a name they soon adopted for their group. Ekin soon formed an alliance with the PNV’s youth movement. By this time, the PNV had begun to take a more passive stance to General Franco’s oppression, having taken the word of the ousted Spanish government that “the autonomous statute of the Basque region would be restored if and when a democratic regime was reinstated. In return, the PNV had promised not to seek further separation from Spain” (Anderson, 2003, p. 17). The PNV’s seemingly moderate approach to Basque nationalism frustrated Ekin, who maintained that Basques would have to fight for their rights, and not simply wait for them to be handed over by the Spanish. Moreover, Ekin regarded anything less than complete independence as “a betrayal of Basque interests” (Anderson, 2003, p. 18). Over the next few years, Ekin saw its membership grow rapidly as disaffected Basque youth committed themselves to a more radical nationalist stance. On July 31, 1959, Ekin officially adopted a new name: Euskadi ta Askatasuna, meaning Basque Homeland and Freedom, or simply ETA for short (Anderson, 2003).

ETA’s First Attacks

ETA quickly began to make its mark on the Basque region, spray painting its initials on walls in Basque cities and burning Spanish flags. It soon began to carry out militant attacks. ETA’s first challenge to Franco’s leadership was a highly symbolic
attack on a train carrying Franco supporters to San Sebastian, Spain. “In its attempts to avoid casualties, ETA failed to derail a single car” (Anderson, 2003, p. 19). Nevertheless, the Franco regime cracked down hard on the dissidents, imprisoning more than 100 eterras (ETA members) and exiling another hundred (Anderson, 2003, p.18).

While the Spanish state’s crackdown undermined ETA operations, (Anderson, 2003, p. 18) by 1962 ETA’s Executive Committee issued a public statement reasserting its “commitment to attain Basque independence as soon as possible and by whatever means necessary” (Anderson, 2003, p. 18-19). The organization evolved over the next few years, but by 1967, ETA began to pursue a socialist agenda aimed at elevating the working class along with its fight for an independent Euskadi (Anderson, 2003). In developing tactics for its armed struggle, ETA decided upon a theory known as “action-repression-action” (Anderson, 2003). According to the theory, ETA would commit carefully targeted terrorist attacks, which would in turn provoke the Spanish government into committing repressive acts on the Basque people. For every crackdown by the government, “ETA would commit an even more provocative act, encouraging the government to react with even greater force. The level of violence and repression would then escalate to the point that the Basque population would rise in rebellion against the government, and in the chaos of the ensuing civil war the Basques would seize the opportunity to secede from Spain and form its own independent Basque state” (Anderson, 2003, p. 19).

In 1968, ETA put its theory into practice. That year, the death of a popular ettera at the hands of Spanish police had sparked sufficient public outcry to warrant application

The crackdown by the Franco regime was almost immediate. A few days later, Franco suspended the constitutional rights of the Basque people (Anderson, 2003). As a result, thousands of Basques, some that had nothing to do with ETA, were incarcerated and sentenced to years in prison for “crimes against the state.” The military court trying the cases garnered international condemnation for its undemocratic and unjust practices (Anderson, 2003).

Despite brutal repression at the hands of Franco, many ordinary Basques demonstrated in support of ETA, while a series of student riots took hold across Spain (Anderson, 2003). In January 1969, Franco responded by suspending the constitutional rights of the entire Spanish population.

The Manzanas assassination and ensuing crackdown and riots appeared to be an ideal test for the action-repression-action theory. However, the population response failed to live up to ETA’s hopes for a nationwide rebellion and full-blown civil war (Anderson, 2003, p. 22). To ETA, the action-repression-action theory proved to be too dangerous and costly, and as such, the paramilitary group was forced to abandon the tactic (Anderson, 2003).

Despite its failed strategy, ETA enjoyed a sudden spike in its popularity over the next few years. Franco’s severe repression had prompted many, including members of the
more moderate nationalist PNV, to tacitly support a limited armed struggle against the Spanish state (Anderson, 2003).


**ETA Split**

The death of Blanco prompted a contentious division within ETA. The previous years had indeed been characterized by a series of minor splits within ETA over strategy and direction. Indeed, in 1971, ETA divided into ETA V, which upheld the cultural nationalist struggle, and ETA VI, which was more committed to the class struggle approach (Lecours, 2007, p. 78). However, the 1973 assassination led to a “permanent split within the organization” (Anderson, 2003, p. 27). In 1974, two groups emerged from the divided ETA: ETA politico-militar (ETApm), which favored a combined strategy of socialist politics and armed struggle, and ETA militar (ETAm), which was solely committed to an “armed struggle for independence” (Anderson, 2003, p. 27).

Despite the split, both groups continued the armed campaign over the next few years. Unlike the IRA, however, ETA’s attacks in the early years of its campaign appeared highly tactical. The group continued to “kill members of Spanish security forces, bomb important buildings, and kidnap rich industrialists for ransom” (Anderson, 2003, p. 27). ETA’s campaign stirred greater unrest within the Basque region, and despite increased crackdown by security forces, Franco’s administration was unable to restore
order. Franco finally died on November 22, 1975, with riots still commonplace and the Basque problem left unresolved (Anderson, 2003).

A Return to Democracy: 1975-1978

After Franco’s death, a new democratic Spanish Republic was quickly implemented (Anderson, 2003). Within days, the Spanish King Juan Carlos I returned to power as a figurehead and declared amnesty for “nearly all of Spain’s political prisoners” (Anderson, 2003, p. 28). Plans were soon set in place for the implementation a new Spanish parliament to be governed by a prime minister.

In 1976, the new Spanish prime minister Adolfo Suarez negotiated a deal that led “first to the legalization of the political parties; next, to the election of a Spanish parliament in June 1977; and finally, to the ratification of a new constitution by popular vote in December 1978” (Anderson, 2003).

In anticipation of the new democratic process, ETApm established the political party Euskadiko Ezkerra, or Basque Left in 1977. The party won a seat in both the Spanish and newly created Basque Parliaments (Anderson, 2003). That same year, both ETApm and ETAm joined the socialist organization Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista, a group that coordinated the activities of the various Basque leftist political parties and labor unions (Anderson, 2003, p. 32)

As a reaction to Euskadiko Ezkerra’s participation in elections, the Herri Batasuna party (HB, or People’s Unity) was formed in early 1978 as a coalition of parties that defend the Basques’ right of independence and self-determination. The party generally upheld the ideals supported by ETAm – that is, it “combined the radical ideals of Basque
ethnic superiority with socialism” (Irvin, 1999, p. 113). Up until the early 1990s, HB candidates chose not to occupy their seats in the Basque or Spanish Parliament (Clark, 1990, p. 21), much like Sinn Fein’s abstention policy in the British, Irish, and Northern Irish Parliaments.

The new Spanish constitution contained a provision for the creation of autonomous communities. Despite being shut out of talks for the drafting of the Constitution, Basque political leaders successfully negotiated the creation of the Autonomous Basque Community of Euskadi in 1979, which incorporated the Spanish Basque provinces of Alava, Gipuzkoa, and Viscaya (Anderson, 2003, p. 29). To the disappointment of many Basque nationalists, however, the region did not incorporate the lower and much larger Basque region of Navarre.

Although the Basques were not granted full independence, autonomous status guaranteed the Basques their own “local governments and parliaments, school systems, highways, police forces, and tax system” (Anderson, 2003). Additionally, the once illegal Basque flag became the official flag of the Basque region of Euskadi, and Euskera, the Basque language, was deemed the new region’s co-official language (Anderson, 2003).

Despite Euskadi’s new autonomous status, many hardcore Basque nationalists, in particular those in ETA, were not pleased with the constitutional changes (Anderson, 2003, p. 30). To these Basques, the autonomous region “stood as a mockery of Basque nationalism and the quest for complete independence from Spain” (Anderson, 2003, p. 30). Moreover, Basques were impatient with the glacial pace at which the Spanish government appeared to be transferring power and lifting sanctions on the new
autonomous state (Anderson, 2003). Basques perceived that the level of Spanish police brutality had hardly diminished since Franco’s death, and were furious that it would take several years before the approximately 750 Basque political prisoners were released (Anderson, 2003, p. 30). As a result, both factions of ETA continued to carry out kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations of police officers, informers, and various public officials, bringing the ETA death toll to 26 by the end of 1977, and 240 by the end of 1980 (Lecours, 2007).

In response, the Spanish government imposed tough new antiterrorist legislation and police measures on the Basque region, some of which included “suspension of constitutional rights and suppression of some forms of political expression” (Anderson, 2003, p. 31). The repressive sanctions sparked a vicious cycle in which government crackdowns led to the imprisonment of more political criminals, which would in turn drive ETA to further violence.
Political Developments: 1977-1978

In the 1977 Spanish parliamentary elections, both the Basque leftist parties EE and the EIA had “failed to either win a substantial share of votes or to pressure the Spanish government into complete amnesty” (Irvin, 1999, p. 114). To more radical Basque nationalists, this was proof that the abertzale socialist movements had to “move further to the left and become more intransigent in their demands” (Irvin, 1999, p. 114).

By 1978, internal disagreement within ETA had reached a head. In an attempt to negotiate a strategy that all its member organizations could accept, the Basque Leftist coordinating council KAS called a meeting to establish a “set of minimal conditions that Madrid would have to meet in order for the Basque leftist parties to participate in elections” (Irvin, 1999, p. 111). In February 1978, after much debate with six Basque socialist and separatist groups that included both ETAm and ETApm, KAS formulated a political program, known as the KAS Alternative, which “specified the terms for the Basque Left’s participation in elections and the preconditions for a ceasefire by ETA pm” (Irvin, 1999, p. 112).

The five points of the KAS alternative were:

1. Amnesty for all political prisoners
2. Legalization for all political parties
3. Withdrawal from the Basque provinces of all Spanish law enforcement authorities, especially the Guardia Civil
4. The adoption of measures to improve the working and living conditions of the working classes.


Despite multiple attempts at secret negotiations, talks between the Spanish government and ETA ultimately failed, and the KAS Alternative was rejected. In response to the Spanish government’s rejection of the KAS Alternative, ETAm began to launch “increasingly violent attacks” against the Spanish state in the hopes of forcing the Spanish government to comply with its demands (Anderson, 2003, p. 33).

Over the next few months, both ETAm and ETApm attacks began to escalate dramatically. In response, the Spanish government fortified its anti-terrorist legislation, which greatly increased the number of imprisoned eterras and prompted a drastic spike in ETA killings (Anderson, 2003, p. 34).

**Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politicos Within ETA**

By 1977, ETAm and ETApm were highly divided on the issue of electoral participation. Similar to the Official IRA, ETApm adopted a more moderate stance; it believed that the Spanish regime was indeed reformable and that “the parliamentary process held real potential for political progress for Basques” (Irvin, 1999, p. 111). Moreover, they believed that the Basque socialist coordinating body KAS should “unite all national and social forces active in the Basque Country that had participated in the anti-Francoist movement” (Irvin, 1999, p. 110). ETAm took after the Provisional IRA (Irvin, 1999) in adopting the attitude that the parliamentary process was little more than
window dressing on a regime that was inherently the same as the Franco dictatorship, and that the KAS ought to “incorporate all those groups and parties that adopted independence or autonomy as their primary objective” (Irvin, 1999, p. 110).

In 1976, there were three major players within the ETA umbrella organization (Clark, 1990, p. 75). Jose Ordeñana, known as Argala, was the leader of ETAm; Miguel Angel Apalategui “Apala” was the leader of the militant branch of ETApm; and Eduardo Moreno Bergareche “Pertur” headed the political branch of ETApm. During the early stages of negotiations with the Spanish government, the three branches intensely debated the utility of a negotiated settlement. Even before Franco’s death, ETApm leader Pertur had predicted that armed struggle was not the true path to independence, and had firmly advocated for political participation. By the mid 1970’s, Pertur proved to be an indispensable intermediary within talks. However, in July 1976, Pertur was murdered by a right-wing paramilitary group, and ETApm was seemingly “robbed of its essential leader” (Clark, 1990, p. 76).

In Pertur’s absence, ETA nevertheless continued to pursue negotiations with the Spanish government over the next few years (Clark, 1990). Indeed, by 1978, ETAm leader Argala considered offering up a ceasefire declaration in exchange for demands from the Spanish government. Still, in the absence of Pertur and other key figures, negotiations continued to falter until the early 1980s (Clark, 1990).
Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response

When the KAS Alternative was published in February 1978, Spanish antiterrorist policy was on a liberalizing trend that had begun following Franco’s death (Clark, 1990, p. 37). Indeed, in early 1978, Spain had no permanent antiterrorist legislation besides a provision declaring ETA illegal. However, as ETA unrest intensified following the rejection of the KAS Alternative, the Spanish government found itself under “increasing pressure to counter escalating paramilitary violence with harsh countermeasures” (Clark, 1990, p. 37). Moreover, the assassination of Bilbao journalist Jose Maria Portell in the summer of 1978 collapsed the Spanish government’s first serious attempts at negotiating with ETA and further provoked the government into reinstating harsher antiterrorist policies (Clark, 1990, p. 40).

Notably, the new antiterrorist legislation allowed suspects to be held for up to 72 hours if police first notified the courts. In December 1978, the legislation was revised to allow suspects to be detained for up to ten days without the notification of a family member or an attorney (Clark, 1990, p. 41). The next month, a new law introduced criminal penalties for printing or saying anything that might be construed as defending terrorist acts or groups. Data on ETA activity reveals that the timing of harsh antiterrorist legislation was highly correlative with high rates of ETA killings (Irvin, 1999).

It indeed cannot be proven that there is a direct causal link between regime repression and greater violence by ETA. However, the chaos that ensued during the late 1970s, coupled with the demands and complaints ETA laid out in the KAS Alternative
and other documents, nevertheless implies that ETA attacks were at least somewhat connected to regime repression on the part of the Spanish government.

**Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions**

The Spanish government’s history of negotiation with ETA began very early on (Clark, 1990). A few days after Franco’s death in 1975, the Spanish king Juan Carlos I sent an emissary to the French Basque country to initiate a dialogue with ETA. However, at that initial meeting, ETA members were highly skeptical of the emissary, and failed to follow through with the first round of negotiations.

After the death of ETA pm politico Pertur in July 1976, a second round of negotiations began in late 1976 and early 1977 and involved a mix of members from ETA-m and ETA-pm. However, these negotiations also failed when ET pm leaders realized they could not rely on the more militant Apala ETA-pm faction to sustain a ceasefire. ETA-m “refused to commit themselves, but left open the possibility of negotiations in which the Basque socialist parties would be invited to participate” (Clark, 1990, p. 78). In spring 1977, ETA declared that if it managed to secure the KAS Alternative, it would not practice armed activity, but would enter into action “at the slightest aggression against [its] people” (Clark, 1990, p. 81).

During the first six months of 1978, significant progress was made bringing warring factions together to negotiate a compromise with the Spanish government. However, just when peace was looking like a possibility, Jose Maria Portell, a Bilbao journalist and vital intermediary within ETA talks, was assassinated (Clark, 1990, p. 79). While the assassination stalled talks and prompted harsher anti-terrorist legislation for
several years, Portell’s tactics set a precedent for talks that were used in the following months.

After the publication of the KAS Alternative, the response from the Spanish government at Madrid was “contradictory” (Clark, 1990, p. 83). The Interior Minister Rodolfo Martin Villa discarded the five points as completely unacceptable, and asserted that, “the government has never had any contacts with ETA and never will have any” (Clark, 1990, p. 83). However, soon thereafter Bilbao’s police chief Jose Sainz Gonzalez publicly stated that he was ready to enter into a dialogue with ETA.

Although Prime Minister Suarez also indicated that he was open to negotiations with ETA, attempts at talks in Geneva in 1978 faltered. ETA had wanted the meetings to be made public and had insisted on being treated as equals with the Spanish government, which Madrid had refused on both accounts (Clark, 1990, p. 85). Moreover, the ETAm leader Argala, who was involved in negotiations with the talks, felt pressured into taking a hard line position by the hardline ETA pm faction led by Apala. In May 1978, Txiki Benegas, the leader of the Basque wing of the Spanish socialist party, was seemingly successful in engaging KAS in talks with the Basque provisional government.

However, in the wake of the assassinations of Portell, former ETAm leader Jon Etxabe, and seemingly more moderate ETAm leader Argala, prospects for bringing together ETA and the Spanish government were considerably dimmed by the early 1980s. In the aftermath of the assassinations, Suarez and Spanish government official Villa seemingly had little interest in renewing negotiations with ETA. Indeed, Suarez began to publicly deny that he had ever attempted to negotiate with ETA.
In sum, negotiations of the late 1970s were seemingly riddled with mishaps and tragic occurrences. Moreover, the talks themselves were not transparent, inclusive, and did not bring all parties and issues to the table.
By the early 1980s, the political environment in Spain and the Basque region had escalated into chaos (Anderson, 2003). A failed military coup attempted by right-wing opponents of ETA had “sent shock waves” throughout Spain (Anderson, 2003, p. 34). In response to the unrest, the Spanish government imposed even harsher anti-terrorist laws (Irvin, 1999, p. 196). The new laws redefined terrorism to encompass anyone who “undermined the territorial integrity of Spain, even if his or her actions were nonviolent”. The sanctions also greatly increased government censorship of both print and electronic media (Irvin, 1999, p. 196).

The coup attempt prompted ETApm to reconsider its tactics (Anderson, 2003). The group’s leaders realized that they would fare much worse if the Spanish military overthrew the democratically elected government, and that another right-wing dictatorship was highly unlikely to be sympathetic to the Basque cause (Anderson, 2003). Moreover, ETApm “concluded that continuing the armed struggle against the Spanish state would be too dangerous”…”as it would likely only spark more repression and diminish its public support” (Anderson, 2003, p.37). The group decided to engage in more intensive negotiations with the Spanish government, declared a unilateral ceasefire (Clark, 1990) and, in 1982, “disbanded in exchange for amnesty” (Anderson, 2003, p. 37).

Meanwhile, ETAm mocked ETApm and publicly declared that “they were against negotiations with the Spanish government” (Anderson, 2003, p. 37). Although ETAm was concerned about the potential consequences of a successful military coup, ETAm
leaders remained committed to the armed struggle. Nevertheless, beginning in the early 1980s, ETA and the Spanish government “began engaging in a series of secret talks that would go on for years” (Anderson, 2003, p. 38).

By 1984, the French government began to lend a hand the Spanish government in its struggle against ETA terrorism (Anderson, 2003, p. 39). For many years during the Franco regime, the French government had permitted ETA members and Spanish Basque refugees to remain in France as long as they maintained a low profile in the French Basque Provinces. However, France’s policies began to change after the death of Franco. In 1979, France stopped granting political refugee status for Basques. In 1984, “the state began carrying out active raids in search of ETA members and deporting them to countries in Africa and Latin America” (Anderson, 2003, p. 39).

Between 1984 and 1987, Spanish antiterrorist policy was at its most severe. The new laws allowed the government to tap telephones and enter and search homes without a warrant (Clark, 1990, p. 64). The law also allowed judges to “ban political parties, shut down newspapers and magazines that supported terrorist aims, and to order the detention of suspected terrorists without trial for up to two and a half years” (Clark, 1990, p. 64). Under the new laws, it also became a crime to “support terrorist acts or otherwise criticize the Spanish nation, its symbol, or its flag” (Clark, 1990, p. 65). Moreover, there is generally undisputed evidence that the Spanish government had conspired with the Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberacion (GAL), an antiterrorist paramilitary group, to assassinate dozens of Basques, many of whom had nothing to do with ETA (Clark, 1990, p. 67; Anderson, 2003).
The remainder of the 1980s was characterized by continued attacks by ETA (BBC, 2011, Timeline, ETA Campaign). Although ETA often carried out premeditative assassinations on disliked politicians or leaders, the group also executed a number of highly indiscriminate attacks on everyday Basque citizens (BBC, 2011, Timeline, ETA Campaign). As noted, government policy towards ETA fluctuated throughout the 1980s, but negotiations continued intermittently throughout the entire decade (Clark, 1990).

Despite several promising attempts at inclusive and a brief ceasefire at the end of 1989, the 1980s failed to deliver a lasting compromise for ETA and the Spanish government (Clark, 1990).

**Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politicos Within ETA**

During the early 1980s, the more politico-minded ETApm leadership followed in the footsteps of deceased leader Pertur in their attempts to negotiate a political settlement and call a truce (Clark, 1990).

In partial response to a radical right-wing coup attempt in February 1981, ETApm announced they would “suspend violent attacks, though not necessarily kidnappings, in exchange for amnesty for political prisoners, the integration of the Navarre province into Euskadi, and the repeal of anti-terrorist law,” among other minor demands (Clark, 1990). ETA pm encouraged ETAm to join them, but ETAm leaders refused to abandon the armed struggle (Clark, 1990).

Although the ceasefire lasted until February 1982, ETApm failed in achieving their objectives: amnesty had not been granted, Navarre had achieved its own autonomous status separate from Euskadi in August 1982, and the “transfer of additional
powers to the Basque government was halted” (Clark, 1990, p. 98). In 1982, ETApm engaged in disheartening meetings with the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), who seemingly reminded ETA pm of the minimal achievements the Basques had attained with home rule over the years (Clark, 1990, p. 101).

Internal debates within ETApm continued over the utility of a truce (Clark, 1990). ETA pm’s more militant faction asserted that ceasefires were useless because they failed to strengthen the organization. Meanwhile, ETA’s politico faction maintained that “a ceasefire was essential in strengthening democratic opposition, and that a resumption of violence would only hurt the Basque nationalist party Euskadiko Ezkerra (EE) and alienate public support” (Clark, 1990, p. 102).

A vote was finally held within ETA pm; the majority sided with the anti-truce faction. ETA pm was dissolved, while its politico members returned to politics and civil society. The pro-militant, anti-truce faction, henceforth known as “ETA,” had regained control of the organization (Clark, 1990).

Nevertheless, hopes for successful talks were revived between in the mid to late 1980s, when ETA pursued negotiations with the Spanish government in Algeria (Clark, 1990). Between 1986 and 1987, ETAam leader Txomin Iturbe proved to be an adept negotiator with the Spanish government. Indeed, Iturbe was seemingly willing to make compromises where his fellow eterras were not: while most ETA members insisted on making the KAS Alternative a precondition for talks, Iturbe did not press the matter (Clark, 1990, p. 195).
However, like other promising negotiators before him, Iturbe died in 1987 before true progress could be made (Clark, 1990). Herri Batasuna member Santi Brouard, who had been a key intermediary between the Spanish government and ETA for years, had met a similar fate in 1984 (Clark, 1990). In applying the politico influence hypothesis, it becomes apparent that, like the IRA, ETA lacked a resilient, dominant politico figure within its leadership during the 1980s negotiations period.

**Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response**

Spanish anti-terrorist legislation remained harsh for much of the 1980s; indeed, Amnesty International frequently cited human rights abuses throughout the decade (Clark, 1990). Nevertheless, many Spanish government politicians, in particular Interior Minister Juan Jose Roson, were often open to negotiations and settlements with ETA. For instance, in response to ETA’s dissolution, the Spanish government implemented a policy of “social reintegration” in 1982 and again from 1984-1986, in which all ETA prisoners who had renounced the use of violence would be cleared of charges (Clark, 1990). Although the process was often slow, the policy demonstrated the government’s willingness to make concessions (Clark, 1990).

At the beginning of all-party talks in 1984, the Spanish government reiterated its two basic tenets: “pursuit of active terrorists, and flexibility within the law for those who abandon violence” (Clark, 1990, p. 103). In 1987, however, the Spanish government released the Madrid Antiterrorist Pact. The document discussed, among other things, a need to improve Spanish and Basque law enforcement and called upon all citizens to work for “the elimination of fanaticism and intolerance in Spanish society.” It concluded
by stating that, “there is no room for negotiations with terrorists over institutional and political questions” (Clark, 1990, p. 204).

Although the Pact may have seemed reasonable to some, ETA responded with an onslaught of accusations against the Spanish government. Among other things, ETA accused the government of “issuing a series of distorted press leaks, being insincere in its expressed desires to negotiate, and maintaining a repressive strategy and a policy of genocide” (Clark, 1990, p. 193).

As with all political events and interactions, perception is key. If ETA perceived the Spanish government as corrupt and repressive, then those perceptions would inevitably shape the course of negotiations. Indeed, as the case of the IRA revealed, negotiations and ceasefires rarely go anywhere if the regime in power is perceived as discriminatory or repressive.

**Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions**

Throughout the 1980s, negotiations between ETA and the Spanish government often remained secretive but highly common affairs (Clark, 1990). Nevertheless, the government stood by a series of basic tenets throughout the 1980s talks process. First and foremost, the Madrid government was seemingly only willing to negotiate on tactical matters, or issues related to law enforcement and security (Clark, 1990). It was not, however, willing to negotiate on political matters, or issues that dealt with the integration of Navarre or the rights of the Basque to self-determination. These latter political issues would inherently violate the newly codified Spanish constitution - something the Spanish government was not yet willing to make concessions on (Clark, 1990).
Secondly, both the Spanish government and ETA were committed to several opposing preconditions for negotiations. Throughout talks, ETA members continuously insisted that the demands from the KAS Alternative be considered at the onset of talks. However, the KAS Alternative dealt with issues related to Navarre and Basque self-determination – political topics upon which the Spanish government were unwilling to negotiate (Clark, 1990). On the Spanish side, the Madrid government repeatedly requested a ceasefire as a precondition for talks (Clark, 1990). ETA’s position on this issue evolved over the decade, but until the late 1980s, the group insisted that any truce must come after negotiations had been initiated (Clark, 1990, p. 232). By 1989, ETA’s position could be characterized as “truce when talks are promised” – a position that was unacceptable to the Spanish government, and ultimately led to the collapse of the more promising 1989 talks. Nevertheless, over the years, ETA’s position on ceasefires and talks moved closer to the demands of the Spanish government (Clark, 1990, p. 232).

Like the series of failed IRA peace talks, the Basque negotiations likely failed for a number of reasons. The ETA talks were not entirely inclusive, transparent, and did not bring all issues to the table. Moreover, there was seemingly a high degree of intransigence on the part of both ETA and the Spanish government, due in large part to the presence of contentious preconditions. Most of all, the 1980s negotiations appeared to be plagued with bad fortune: throughout the decade, a number of politico ETA negotiators who may have been capable of constructing a lasting settlement were killed.
Beginning in the 1990s, the Basque political environment saw a prominent shift. While 1980s negotiations tended to primarily be based on relations between ETA, the Basque Left parties, and the Spanish government, 1990s talks involved a complex interplay between Basque nationalists, a variety of political parties, the Spanish and Basque governments, and other autonomous communities (Elkarri, 2001).

In April 1995, ETA’s publication of the Democratic Alternative revealed a promising shift in the political climate. The document outlined proposals for two different sets of negotiations: the first track would involve talks between ETA and the Spanish government, and the other would involve other stakeholder parties (Elkarri, 2001). The document further implied that when the Spanish state recognized Basque self-determination, the territorial unity of Euskadi, and granted unconditional amnesty for all political prisoners, ETA would declare a ceasefire. The cessation of violence would ultimately give way to a democratic process in which the Basque people would have the final word in all aspects related to the organization and future of Euskadi (Elkarri, 2001).

In reality, the new “Democratic Alternative” was little more than a reiteration of ETA’s goals for the past four decades, and the strategy outlined to achieve these aims ran counter to that which had been agreed by all parties to the conflict (Bew et al. 2009). As such, the Spanish government rejected the proposal, and the peace process had once again stalled (Elkarri, 2001).

However, at the time the Democratic Alternative was issued, tensions had reached a head between ETA and the right-wing Spanish government party Partido Popular (PP),
a group that had committed itself to a decidedly anti-ETA campaign (Lecours, 2007). By the mid-1990s, the PP was steadily rising to prominence within the Spanish government (BBC News, 2011, ETA campaign). From 1995-1997, ETA carried out several assassination attempts against PP leaders. Eterras ultimately succeeded in killing PP president Gregorio Ordonez and PP councilor Miguel Angel Blanco, but failed in their attempts to assassinate PP party leader and Spanish president Jose Maria Aznar (Elkarri, 2001; BBC News, 2011, ETA campaign).

By 1998, ETA began to seek out the help of fellow Basque nationalist parties in its quest for peace and self-determination; it reasoned that ending violence depended on establishing a pan-nationalist agreement. On September 12, 1998, the “National Liberation Movement,” composed of Herri Batasuna, EA, and a handful of radical nationalist civil society organizations, joined together to draw up the Declaration of Lizarra (Lecours, 2007). The document drew heavily from the Northern Ireland Peace Process in its recommendations for a democratic, peaceful settlement to the Basque conflict. Neither the PSOE nor the PP signed the document, which they criticized as being a sell-out to ETA (Lecours, 2007).

Indeed, the document seemingly catered greatly to the Basque nationalist audience. For instance, the “Declaration framed the Basque conflict as political in nature” (a Basque nationalist stance), “specified that a resolution process ought to be open to all parties” (thus including ETA in the process), and “stated that all issues pertaining to the conflict should be dealt with” (therefore including the radical Basque nationalist agenda) (Lecours, 2007, p. 114). Parties in opposition to the agreement, led by the PP, insisted
that peace could only come about from a ceasefire by ETA, and that political dialogue did not need to take place concomitantly (Elkarri, 2001). The PP faction further insisted that any political negotiations that took place would need to be bound by the precedents set forth in the Spanish, Basque, and Navarre Constitutions. Ultimately, the Declaration of Lazarra provided limited appeal to the Spanish parties and Spanish government, and failed to have the groundbreaking impact that the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement had enjoyed (Lecours, 2007).

Nevertheless, a few days after the Declaration’s publication, ETA declared a ceasefire (Lecours, 2007). ETA seemingly had several motivations for ending its armed campaign. First, ETA recognized a decline in public support for violence, which it inevitably had to honor in order to garner any true political gains (Lecours, 2007, p. 103). Secondly, ETA was inspired by the relative success of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland (Lecours, 2007, p. 103). Finally, ETA’s military capacity had been suffering major setbacks since the early 1990s, and thus its members had concluded that the organization would have” better luck driving a process of change through political rather than military means” (Lecours, 2007, p. 104). However, while Basque nationalists lauded ETA for its commitment to peace, the Spanish government dismissed the ceasefire as “a stalling tactic that would allow ETA to reorganize” (Anderson, 2003, p. 39).

ETA’s truce lasted 15 months, but ultimately collapsed in December 1999. ETA attributed the ceasefire’s failure to the PNV and EA’s reluctance to commit more fully to the fight for independence (Lecours, 2007). The collapse was also a reflection of ETA’s frustration with the Spanish government’s unwillingness to negotiate the issue of Basque

**Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politico Leadership Within ETA**

Unlike the IRA, ETA never enjoyed consistent leadership over the course of its campaign. Indeed, many of ETA’s promising politico leaders have been either assassinated or jailed over the past few decades (Clark, 1990; Bew et al. 2009). Nevertheless, as a whole, ETA leadership seemingly became more open to negotiations and the importance of democratic protocol during the 1990s, granted that it could oversee the agenda and the Spanish government would abide by its terms (Bew et al. 2009, p. 206).

Generally, it appears that ETA’s increasing exposure to the political environment, coupled with intense blows to its military capacity by the Spanish government, had major influence in guiding ETA towards a more politically minded ideology, if not enabling the rise of politico leadership.

**Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response**

After the conservative Partido Popular (PP) won the Spanish general election in 1996, tensions between the Spanish government and the Basque nationalists increased dramatically. Indeed, from the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s, the PP maintained a rigid attitude towards any decentralist and nationalist claims that ran contrary to the Spanish constitution. PP leader and Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Anzar repeatedly rejected
ETA’s attempts at establishing a peaceful settlement, as seen with his dismissal of both the Lizarra Declaration and ETA’s 1998 ceasefire. Moreover, the PP had a tendency to lump all Basque nationalists with ETA, and repeatedly refused to speak with the Basque prime minister (Lecours, 2007).

However, the PP did make minor tactical concessions to ETA. For instance, prior to ETA’s 1996 ceasefire, the Spanish government moved 135 convicted ETA members to prisons closer to the Basque region (Lecours, 2007). Nevertheless, during the 1998 ceasefire, the PP had only agreed to meet once with ETA members, and jailed an ETA negotiator shortly after the talks (Lecours, 2007). In the years to follow ETA’s collapsed ceasefire, Anzar’s government continued to oppose making political concessions with ETA (Lecours, 2007).

Despite very minor concessions with regards to the movement of prisoners, the PP’s intransigence and overt bias towards ETA and Basque nationalists seemingly sparked a backlash from eterras. Indeed, when the Spanish government appeared unwilling to even attempt to encourage ETA’s peaceful overtures, ETA’s ceasefire collapsed relatively quickly.

Therefore, it can be stated that the first IRA hypothesis held true for the case of ETA: that is, the Spanish regime adopted a somewhat biased conduct towards ETA, and ETA’s ceasefire failed.

_Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions_

Brief negotiations between ETA and the Spanish government throughout the late 1990s failed to produce anything of significance. Indeed, when the PP government had
first taken office in 1996, they had jailed Eugenio Etxebeste, who had served as a key mediator between ETA and the Spanish government over the previous decade (Bew et al. 2009). Moreover, after the 1998 ceasefire collapse, the relationship between the PNV and EH also deteriorated.

In applying the third IRA hypothesis, it can be said that any traces of negotiation throughout the 1990s were not transparent, inclusive, and certainly did not bring all actors to the table. Indeed, in order for negotiations and concomitant ceasefires to be successful, all parties must actually indicate a true desire to engage in a dialogue with opposing actors. Neither ETA’s 1998 ceasefire nor any of its negotiations throughout the 1990s contained those elements.
**Political Developments: 2000-2011**

In the wake of ETA’s ceasefire collapse in December 1999, the political climate was beginning to deteriorate quickly. By 2000, the PNV-EH relationship ruptured due to new ETA killings, as well as “demands by ETA that the PNV sacrifice itself and surrender the leadership of Basque nationalism to ETA” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 237). Moreover, EH left the Spanish Parliament, and both the PP and the PSOE put “immense pressure upon the PNV to formally announce the death of the Pact of Lizarra” (Lecours, 2011, p. 105).

The PP continued to press a hard-line policy against ETA, censoring Basque newspapers and even outlawing Batasuna, the Basque political party that had evolved from Herri Batasuna and Euskal Herritarrok in 2003 (Lecours, 2007).

In March 2004, bombings at the Atocha train stations in Madrid killed 191 people and injured 1800 (Lecours, 2007). The PP immediately blamed ETA for the attacks, when in fact the bombings were carried out by Islamic fundamentalists (Lecours, 2007). As a consequence of the bombings, and as a consequence of the Spanish government seemingly withholding information, the PP fell out of favor with the Spanish public and the PSOE won the Spanish general elections shortly thereafter (Lecours, 2007). By late 2005, the Spanish populace expressed a pronounced decline in support for violence, with only a small minority of Basques not condemning ETA and its tactics “outright” (Lecours, 2007, p. 109).

In March 2006, the Spanish government promised formal dialogue with ETA if it maintained a permanent ceasefire for six months (Bew et al. 2009). ETA declared a
permanent ceasefire. It did so perhaps as an acknowledgement of the diminished utility of violence, as well as because the new PSOE government seemed much more amenable to sincere negotiations than did its predecessor the PP (Lecours, 2007).

However, the Spanish government responded skeptically to the ceasefire, with the new Spanish prime minister Jose Zapatero comparing it to the failed IRA ceasefire of 1994 (Bew et al. 2009). Nevertheless, the Spanish government appeared willing to engage in talks. The PP condemned the possibility of negotiations, and even drew up a crowd of 200,000 demonstrators to protest the talks (Bew et al. 2009, p. 15).

ETA remained intransigent during the course of negotiations, seemingly refusing to “discuss technical matters” such as weapons decommissioning or prisoner releases until negotiations between political parties had begun (Bew et al. 2009, p. 236). In December 2006, it bombed a Madrid airport, killing two people. The violence was a reflection of ETA’s frustration with talks with the Spanish government and other Spanish Socialist and Basque nationalist parties, whom ETA had “attempted to submit to its will on negotiations” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 237). However, ETA did not declare an end to its ceasefire until June 2007, after failed talks in which the organization claimed that it would pursue a commitment to peace when the Spanish government “ended its attacks” against ETA. The ceasefire collapse came hours after Zapatero’s recent endorsement of a regional minority government in Navarre headed by a party linked to ETA’s nemesis the PP (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign). In September 2007, ETA issued a statement declaring that it would continue its campaign of violence until it achieved self-
determination for the Basque Country, vowing to “strike at Spanish state structures on all fronts” (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign).

ETA continued a sporadic armed campaign for the next three years. In September 2010, after prompting from Batasuna (Cala, 2010) ETA announced a decision “not to carry out offensive armed actions” in a video obtained by the BBC. It further stated that the organization was, “prepared to agree to the minimum democratic conditions to put in motion a democratic process, if the Spanish government is willing,” and called for international mediation to help bring a definitive end to their campaign (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign; Cala, 2010). The Spanish government, however, dismissed the claims as a tactical move. Moreover, Spanish and Basque political party leaders “rejected ETA’s call for international arbitration in the absence of a verifiable and unconditional ceasefire” (Cala, 2010).

In January 2011, ETA again declared a permanent and internationally verifiable ceasefire. The Spanish government again dismissed ETA’s claim as “arrogant”, and called on ETA to disarm and disband. On October 20, 2011, ETA announced a “definite cessation of armed activity” (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign). In November 2012, ETA reported that it was ready to negotiate a “definitive end to negotiations and disband completely (BBC News, 2012, Basque separatists). After forty-five years of armed struggle and 829 deaths, ETA’s campaign was finally over (BBC News, 2012, Basque separatists).
Hypothesis 1: Presence of Politico Leadership

By the mid-2000s, at least some ETA members demonstrated a desire for compromise and peace. Indeed, in November 2004, newspapers published a letter sent to the head of ETA’s political office, Mikel Albizu, by six prominent ETA prisoners (Bew et al. 2009, p. 232). In the letter, the prisoners rejected suggestions by party leadership that they start a campaign of protest in jail and instead asked ETA’s leadership to “invest in its political capital within the institutional and mass struggle” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 232).

While ETA leadership initially rejected the request, a few days later ETA’s newly illegal political wing Batasuna held a rally in Anoeta, San Sebastian in which the party’s leader Arnoldo Otegi put forth the party’s new political program (Bew et al. 2009, p. 232). Within his speech, Otegi called for “political agents” to negotiate the political and legal framework for Euskadi’s future, as well as the engagement of the Spanish and French government on “technical matters” related to demilitarization, ETA prisoners and refugees, and victims” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 232).

The so-called Anoeta Declaration marked a departure from 30 years of ETA policy which had previously excluded outside parties from attempting to “negotiate the path to Basque independence” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 232). More importantly, the incident illustrates a shift in some attitudes towards the utility of violence among all levels of ETA membership, not just its leadership. However, following ETA’s ceasefire collapse in 2007, Otegi was imprisoned, along with the party’s entire executive (Bew et al. 2009, p. 238).
In terms of the first IRA hypothesis, it appears that ETA did not enjoy a consistently politico leadership, or for that matter, any truly consistent leadership, throughout the mid-2000s (Bew et al. 2009, p. 256). However, after ETA’s breach of ceasefire in December 2006, Batasuna became more assertive in standing up to ETA’s insurgent leadership. Over the next few years, an internal power struggle ensued between ETA and Batasuna leaders, with the latter increasingly pressuring ETA to abandon violence (Cala, 2010). Indeed, it was Batasuna that first urged ETA to declare a ceasefire in September 2010 (Cala, 2010).

The thus-far durable ETA ceasefire was perhaps a testament to the Batasuna leadership’s ability to convince ETA leadership of the need to abandon violence. Moreover, ETA’s campaign had seemingly become so severely crippled by the late 2000s that its own leadership apparently also came to fully realize the necessity of abandoning armed struggle.

**Hypothesis 2: Regime Repression: Spanish Government Response**

From 2000-2004, when the PP headed the Spanish government, government censorship and crackdown on ETA was a common occurrence. Indeed, in 2003, the PP shut down the Basque newspaper Gara, which had often been utilized by ETA to relay its information to the public (Lecours, 2007). That same year, the PP outlawed the political party Batasuna, which had evolved from Herri Batasuna and Euskal Herritarrok (Lecours, 2007). A few years previously, the PP had sentenced 23 members of HB’s Executive to seven years in prison for collaborating with ETA (Bew et al. 2009, p. 222).
The shift in parliamentary leadership from the PP to the PSOE meant that post-2004, the Spanish government was much more willing to negotiate with ETA. Indeed, after ETA declared its 2006 ceasefire, Spanish prime minister Zapatero tacitly communicated that even if ETA killed again, “dialogue would not be broken off” (Bew et al. 2009, p. 235).

Nevertheless, the PSOE did not hold back from censuring ETA following its ceasefire break in July 2007. In September 2007, the Spanish police “arrested almost the entire alleged leadership of Batasuna on charges of glorifying terrorism” (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign). The next September, the Spanish Supreme Court banned two more Basque political parties, the Communist Party of the Basque Lands (PCTV) and Basque Nationalist Action (ANV), which were “accused of acting as a front for militant” (BBC History, 2011, Timeline: ETA campaign).

Interestingly enough, the Spanish regime’s repressive stance and harsh security tactics seemingly succeeded in destabilizing ETA’s military capacity (Bew et al. 2009, p. 256). It has thus been argued that this destabilization and lack of popular support was among the primary factors present in influencing ETA to abandon its armed campaign (Bew et al. 2009, Cala, 2010).

**Hypothesis 3: Negotiation Conditions**

Amidst the political deterioration of the early 2000s, Basque president and PNV member Juan Jose Ibarretxe proposed the so-called Ibarretxe plan in 2003 as a means of reviving negotiations. The plan called for a form of co-sovereignty between Euskadi and
Spain, somewhere between a multinational composite state and confederation between Spain and the Basque Country (Lecours, 2003).

The Ibarretxe proposal quickly came under heavy criticism by both Spanish and Basque nationalists. For the nationalists, the plan was rejected because it fell short of independence and excluded Navarre as well as the French Basque Country. For the PP, the plan went against the Constitution and was therefore unacceptable.

Although the plan failed, it represented an early attempt by the PNV to find middle ground on the Basque question. At the time, ETA and other radical Basque nationalists were staunchly opposed to anything that resembled the Spanish Constitution or the Basque Statute of Autonomy, while the PP were seemingly unwilling to accept any proposal that undermined the values upheld in the Spanish Constitution (Lecours, 2007). Through the Ibarretxe proposal, the PNV leadership had sought to guide a process of compromise.

The change of leadership in the Spanish Parliament in 2004 proved to make a significant difference in the course of negotiations with ETA. Indeed, while the PP had flatly refused to make changes to the Spanish Constitution or reform the Statutes of Autonomy, the PSOE passed a resolution in the Spanish Parliament in 2005 (with all parties signing except the PP) “stipulating that the Spanish government was now ready to negotiate with ETA if the organization formally renounced the use of violence” (Lecours, 2007, p. 110). However, the resolution itself only proposed negotiations related to ETA’s disbandment and the status of their prisoners rather than the political status of the Basque country.
While these initiatives fell short of ETA’s ultimate objectives, ETA may have still been more inspired to engage in a dialogue with the Spanish government due to promising advances the PSOE government had recently made in transferring powers to the Spanish region of Catalonia (Lecours, 2007, p. 110). Interestingly, even as both the Spanish government and ETA apparently became more amenable to talks as the 2000s progressed, ETA’s ceasefire declarations in 2010 and 2011 were not preceded by in-depth all-party talks, as had been the case with the IRA.
A Fragile Peace: 2011-2014

Today, ETA has followed in the footsteps of the IRA in pursuing a gradual process of decommissioning. Beginning in late February 2014, ETA took its first steps towards total disarmament as its first few rounds of guns and explosives were verifiably destroyed (The Guardian, 2014).

However, the current political climate is seemingly not as harmonious as it could be. The current Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy of the PP, like his predecessor Jose Anzar, continues to refuse to negotiate with ETA until ETA has handed over all its weapons and disband. Moreover, unlike the case of the IRA, the decommissioning body overseeing destruction of ETA weapons is not recognized by the Spanish government. In addition, nearly fifty years after it began its armed struggle, ETA has still failed to attain its dream of an independent Euskadi. Perhaps most worrisome, ETA still has over 530 members in jail (The Guardian, 2014). It is quite possible that these members may defect from the ETA ceasefire when released.

Nevertheless, ETA’s ceasefire is now approaching its fourth year. Never in ETA’s history has its commitment to peace been so durable. Astoundingly, the organization has retained its ceasefire despite the fact that it seemingly met none of the three hypothesized conditions for peace derived from the IRA case. That is, at least not in the same form as the IRA.

While ETA has seen politico leadership over the course of its campaign, the organization’s political and military branches have not been as consistently unified as IRA and Sinn Fein, nor has any ETA or Herri Batasuna leadership maintained the same
prolonged dominance enjoyed by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness over the course of the IRA’s campaign (Bew et al. 2009, p. 256). This may be due to the fact that ETA endured severe internal disagreement and multiple splits over the course of its campaign. After ETAm’s split from ETApm in the 1970s, the more militant-minded ETA leadership continued to dominate the strategy of the organization for decades (Bew et al. 2009, p. 256). During the lead up to the 2010-2011 ceasefire declarations, it appears that ETA and Batasuna leaders had engaged in an internal debate over the future utility of violence (Cala, 2014). For the time being, it appears that the now more politico-minded Batasuna ideology has dominated the debate, but not necessarily its leadership.

ETA has further maintained its ceasefire despite not meeting the conditions described in the second and third IRA hypotheses. The Spanish PP still maintains sanctions and a highly negative stance towards ETA and Batasuna, and negotiations appear to be nonexistent.

The future durability of ETA’s ceasefire therefore seemingly relies on the continued dominance of politico ideology, if not leadership, and a corresponding uniform adherence to that leadership or ideology within the organization. If uniform adherence does not occur, then ETA’s post-ceasefire period will likely see a handful of splinter factions and spoilers pursue an armed campaign once more.
Conclusion

Nearly 50 years after ETA and the IRA’s bloody nationalist-separatist campaigns first terrorized two nations, a tenuous peace has taken hold over Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. On the surface, the two paramilitary groups appear to have followed parallel tracks for much of their history. Both campaigns were launched during the late 1960s, when members of the two groups were driven by nationalistic ideals and fueled by feelings of mistreatment and repression. Both saw the active involvement of political wings by the 1970s, harsh regime repression and prison strikes during the 1980s, an acknowledgement of the benefits of peace and the democratic process in the 1990s, and verifiable abandonments of violence during the 2000s.

Despite their similarities, I show in this analysis that the conditions that yielded a lasting peace in Northern Ireland were seemingly not all necessary in the Basque Country. Of the three categories of hypotheses derived from the literature and my analysis of the IRA, at least two -- those related to regime repression and inclusive negotiations without preconditions – apparently did not hold true for the case of ETA. Indeed, today the Spanish Partido Popular party has not significantly changed its harsh outlook towards ETA, nor have inclusive, groundbreaking all-party talks taken place within the Basque Country.

This is significant, given that much of the Northern Ireland Peace Process is often upheld as a model for other conflicts (Bew et al. 2009; Irvin, 1999). Indeed, since the passage of the Good Friday Agreement, key facilitators of the Northern Ireland Peace Process have attempted to apply the lessons of the Northern Ireland case to conflict
resolution attempts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, and Sri Lanka (Bew et al. 2009). These attempts have often been met with some skepticism and even exasperation by outside intermediaries (Bew et al. 2009). In particular, during the mid-2000s, expert negotiators in Iraq rejected attempts by British officials to draw on the Northern Irish case, maintaining that Northern Ireland was a unique case whose lessons cannot necessarily be arbitrarily applied to a Middle Eastern conflict with a fundamentally different culture and government structure (Bew et al. 2009, p. 7). Nevertheless, since the passage of the Good Friday Agreement, the lessons learned in Northern Ireland of “talking to terrorists” and appeasing extreme parties have become a widely accepted tenet of conflict resolution strategy for the past decade and a half (Bew et al. 2009). However, the fact that ETA abandoned violence without all-party talks or significant guidance from the Spanish government indicates that these aspects of peace processes are perhaps not necessary to enable a lasting peace.

Moreover, in terms of my first hypothesis, it cannot be asserted that politico leadership fully dominated ETA’s command structure at the time of its 2010-2011 ceasefire. Rather, it appears that by the end of its campaign, ETA members joined together in uniform acknowledgement that armed struggle could no longer be the answer. This recognition may have been influenced by politico-minded leadership from Batasuna. More likely, however, it was due to the fact that repressive anti-terrorist policies imposed by the Spanish government were severe enough to force ETA to surrender (Bew et al. 2009).
Ironically, these harsh sanctions that seemingly enabled a lasting ceasefire hold the potential to collapse the ceasefire in the future. Today, over 500 ETA members are still imprisoned across the Basque Country in France and Spain (The Guardian, 2014). Despite the fact that ETA’s military capabilities have been severely undermined, and more importantly that its weapons have already undergone the first round of decommissioning, it is possible that these prisoners would still be capable of sabotaging the ceasefire when released. It thus appears that the future durability of ETA’s ceasefire depends on ETA members’ continued commitment to non-violence, as well as a unified resolve by the group to abide by these principles. Thus, if any parallels are to be drawn from the end of ETA’s and the IRA’s armed campaigns, it is that a paramilitary group’s uniform adherence to politico principles tends to yield more durable ceasefires.

Indeed, the presence of IRA splinter factions is a testament to the fact that uniform adherence is key. Even if politico ideology is prevalent across the group, these peaceful ideals will not yield a durable ceasefire unless all actors in the group demonstrate a commitment to non-violence. Indeed, although the IRA splinter factions are small and no longer command the attention of the British government in the same manner as the Provisional IRA, their presence nevertheless undermines the viability of the republican ceasefire.

In light of the fact that only a slightly revised version of my first IRA hypothesis applied to the case of ETA, several conclusions can be drawn. First, it is quite possible that I failed to test other highly relevant independent variables that enabled peace in both Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. Future studies might be able to address these
variables that I have potentially overlooked. Secondly, it is possible that there were
simply no other independent variables that played a significant role in the ceasefires and
negotiations of the two groups, and that the two cases naturally took different paths in
attaining a peaceful resolution.

This second possibility lends credence to General Petraeus’ assertion that,
“…Every situation is unique. Every situation has its own context, its own circumstances
and the key, of course, is an accurate and nuanced understanding of the conditions of the
situation and then the crafting of an approach that is appropriate for that context” (Bew et
al. 2009, p. 8).

Indeed, the outcomes of the “twin peace processes” examined in this paper are a
testament to the fact that there is no “one size fits all” remedy within conflict resolution
theory. Moreover, peace processes by their very nature are just what they imply: a
process that requires much time, trial and error (MacGinty & Darby, 2002). As such, the
hypotheses I derived earlier in this paper are not intended to be taken as a quick fix
solution to be arbitrarily applied to other conflicts. Indeed, many of the conditions I
prescribe in my hypotheses require years and sometimes decades of trial and error in
order to become a reality.

Thus, this thesis should be taken as a sort of guide map for conflict resolution.
The hypotheses I derived provide key insights into what enabled or hindered peace in
specific nationalist-separatist conflicts. While history has shown us that no conflict
resolution theory can be successfully applied across all countries, cultures, or
governments, the insights derived from this thesis may nevertheless prove useful in serving as a guidepost for other nationalist-separatist conflicts across the globe.
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