



CRAFTING STRATEGIES FOR A SHARED FUTURE

December 18, 2001
Belfast, Northern Ireland

On December 18 nearly 150 political and community leaders from throughout Northern Ireland came together to consider a number of thorny issues in relation to ending conflict, effecting change, and modifying attitudes and behavior in the context of implementing a peace agreement. The session was held following a period when the people of Northern Ireland had seen threats to the fragile balance of power necessary for the continued operation of the Legislative Assembly, demonstrations of sectarianism, movement on the subject of decommissioning, and significant changes to the structure of the police. While some of these developments gave people in Northern Ireland reason to be hopeful, others were viewed as setbacks or only small steps on a very long road toward creating a society free of violence and division. And the difficulty of these issues was compounded by differences among the leaders of Northern Ireland about the appropriate course. Divisions continued to exist not only within and between communities, but between the political and community sectors. The **Crafting Strategies for a Shared Future** program afforded an opportunity to discuss the challenges facing Northern Ireland as its leaders try to find ways to achieve true peace that goes beyond the ratification of a written accord, and to consider approaches and strategies for addressing these challenges.

The program was co-sponsored by Harvard University's Project on Justice in Times of Transition, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust and Queen's University's Institute of Governance, Public Policy and Social Research. It was held at Queen's University's Peter Froggart Centre. The session was designed to enable participants to focus on issues of relevance to the consolidation of peace

and democracy in Northern Ireland, in this case with a special emphasis on the design and implementation of the European Union Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation ("Peace II" is a joint Northern Ireland/Ireland program that will be implemented under the authority of the Northern Ireland Community Support Framework and is meant "to reinforce progress towards a more peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation"). It also afforded an opportunity for Northern Ireland leaders to develop and strengthen connections in order to increase trust and facilitate future collaborative and complementary work on subjects of concern at both the political and community levels. And since the conference included presentations by practitioners from Chile and Ecuador, participants were able to consider their own challenges in light of strategies used by other societies in the world.

An impressively diverse group of political and community leaders from throughout Northern Ireland took part in the day-long program. Participants included representatives of a cross-section of community groups including those representing victims, ex-prisoners, young people and individuals concerned with a variety of social and cultural issues. As well, there were a number of individuals affiliated with the spectrum of political parties in Northern Ireland. Some of these political representatives were party activists and others were members of District Councils or the Legislative Assembly.

The session began with an introduction by **Nik Gowing**, Programme Anchor for the BBC World. He then gave the floor to representatives of the three co-sponsoring groups: **Avila Kilmurray**, Director of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust,

Elizabeth Meehan, Director of the Institute of Governance, Public Policy and Social Research, Queen's University, and **James Cooney**, Executive Director of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. All three offered thoughts about the challenges facing the political and community leaders gathered for the conference and what might be accomplished during the day.

Jamil Mahuad, former President of Ecuador and a Fellow of Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership, initiated the day's discussions with a presentation entitled "After the Negotiations: Embedding a Peace Process". President Mahuad's remarks touched on issues ranging from the difficulty of reaching a peace agreement between Peru and Ecuador, to the divisions within Ecuadorian society that surfaced once the accord was signed, to the psychological shift required for Ecuadorians to accept the accord and begin to create a post-conflict society. He described the multiple divisions within Ecuadorian society which includes 17 ethnicities, languages and political parties, and a relatively even split between the country's two main cities and sources of primary exports. Despite these differences, according to President Mahuad, the Ecuadorian people are united by a national identity that is based on geography. (He likened the importance of the map in Ecuador to that of the constitution in the United States.) Given this national mentality, the border dispute with Peru provided the diverse population of Ecuador with a common enemy and allowed them to ignore the divisions that existed within their own society.

Nevertheless, after 77 days in office, President Mahuad signed a peace treaty with President Fujimori of Peru, a feat that was accomplished by separating the concepts of sovereignty and property. President Mahuad reflected that citizens of both Ecuador and Peru agreed that the treaty was neither fair nor just, but the Congress of each country ratified the treaty because they could identify no better solution. There was agreement that signing the treaty was a wise thing to do, if not an appealing one. As a result of the accord, Ecuador's commerce increased 600% over two years, and Peru became its second-largest commercial partner. However, there were

some negative and unanticipated results of the peace treaty. Since Ecuadorians no longer faced the task of differentiating themselves from the common enemy of Peru, they began to focus on the internal divisions of their own country and Ecuadorian society became more fragmented. In assessing efforts to address these divisions, President Mahuad concluded by saying that "If you are driving a car, you should see through the windshield not the rear mirror. That's the only way to ride in a car, you have to look to the future. There's a big temptation to look into the past, through the rear mirror. But that is not the best way to do it."

The second speaker was **Duncan Morrow**, Lecturer in Politics at the University of Ulster, who addressed the subject of "Challenges and Opportunities of Peace-Building in Northern Ireland". Like President Mahuad, Professor Morrow used a transportation analogy, likening the situation in Northern Ireland to that of "mending the plane while flying it". Although this capacity to continue despite injury has been a unique accomplishment of Northern Ireland, according to Professor Morrow, the need to keep the plane aloft has often been

"Very informative. ...I feel I have learnt a great deal. The international perspectives were fascinating. We need more of this."

- Conference participant.

addressed at the expense of mending. He maintained, however, that change in Northern Ireland is not a matter of engineering but of engaging people in situations that enable learning differently and lead to organic change. In this sense, process and product should not be considered separately but the goal for the people of Northern Ireland must be to create new, more inclusive processes of dealing with one another.

Professor Morrow also noted that traditionally the policy response to areas of violence in Northern Ireland has ignored the fact that the problems these outbursts manifest are not

necessarily rooted in those areas alone. Rather, policy must be formulated with the recognition that explosions of violence stem from deeply rooted problems and patterns and structures of all levels of society in Northern Ireland. Thus, in order to be sufficiently deep and far-reaching, the process of peace-building must be difficult --- a superficial effort can not possibly address core problems. It is this grappling with challenging issues in order to keep up with a changing context, rather than simply harmonious interactions, that will be the measure of how people in Northern Ireland are successfully building peace. Professor Morrow stated that the goal for Northern Ireland should be not just respite from trauma but preventing repetition of the trauma by creating a culture of mutual respect.

The final presentation of the day was made by **John Biehl**, Director for Colombia and the Andean Region of the International Crisis Group, and former Secretary General of the Presidency of Chile. Like President Mahuad's analysis of Ecuador's reaction to the peace accord with Peru, Mr. Biehl noted that Chileans were not happy with the agreement that was signed in their country 15 years ago. In fact, Chileans are still not content with this agreement but there is consensus that returning to pre-agreement conditions would be worse. Mr. Biehl detailed the stipulations of the agreement that left those who were in power in Chile with continued control. Despite this, he noted, the new system has created opportunities for interaction and negotiation, particularly with regard to issues of social reform. Another challenge in Chile was to create an "official truth" about what

"I'm extremely happy that you here in Northern Ireland have reached the point where you've stopped the war and you have an agreement you don't like. The beginning of peace is an agreement you don't like."

-John Biehl

had happened. Gradually, efforts to reconstruct events and determine responsibility resulted in

people speaking out. Yet this was not enough for many in Chile; they felt truth without justice was inadequate. The provisions of the agreement stipulated amnesty, but the British detention of General Pinochet reopened the whole issue. Surprisingly, the majority of Chileans thought that it would be preferable to leave the judgment of Pinochet to the British and the Spanish.

Mr. Biehl also commented on a second peace agreement, the Central American peace plan. He observed that during the assessment of this peace plan, evaluators suddenly discovered that many of the elements they included in the peace plan were unnecessary. For example, they realized that instead of negotiating kilometers of land or number of schools, the emphasis should have been on political security and equality. For Mr. Biehl this demonstrated that peace agreements themselves are not enough, they are simply a starting point for actually grappling with the questions of how to transform a conflict. He concluded his remarks by saying "I'm extremely happy that you here in Northern Ireland have reached the point where you've stopped the war and you have an agreement you don't like. The beginning of peace is an agreement you don't like."

The presentations by Jamil Mahuad, Duncan Morrow and John Biehl spurred and augmented other discussions held throughout the day, especially those of the two small group sessions. The spectrum of experiences and perspectives represented by the conference participants ensured that the two small group discussions were lively. While the formal title of these working groups was "Strategies Needed to Maximize Aspirations and a Context for a Shared Future," as expected the subjects explored ranged from participants' personal histories and views, to debate about elements of the Northern Ireland peace agreement, to review of recent legislation and policy, to speculation and recommendations about the steps that various groups should take.

Like the comments made by the conference speakers, participants noted that the existence of a peace accord in Northern Ireland was not enough. During the working group sessions they explored the ways in which community and political leaders of Northern Ireland must take responsibility for

implementing the accord in such a way that people feel change is positive and the society is moving forward. Among the points that were made in more than one small group were the fact that not all experiences in Northern Ireland are the same and the future can not be built on perceptions. It was noted that many in Northern Ireland are still working in the context of fear, yet the progress that has been made since the cease-fires and the agreement must be acknowledged (though some felt that the agreement institutionalizes sectarianism and the range of societal diversity is lost when the vocabulary becomes one of Unionists vs. Nationalists). Others mentioned that extremism can not only be equated with paramilitaries, but must be recognized and dealt with when it is exhibited by other groups, and that to some extent everyone in Northern Ireland is part of the problem. Conference participants felt that to have an impact the “Peace II” program must target areas most affected by division and sectarianism, should focus on building community confidence and dealing with issues of loss and pain, and needs to address issues of longer-term stability by connecting “Peace II” projects with mainstream structures in Northern Ireland. Achieving this will require relationships and structures between politicians and social activists, however, which is no easy task. Echoing Duncan Morrow’s comments, participants agreed that the challenge for Northern Ireland’s political and community leaders is to figure out how to promote projects that create space for dialogue within and between communities. Finally, it was noted that these leaders must learn to manage change rather than just manage crises.

For the *Crafting Strategies for a Shared Future* program, the organizers attempted to supplement the more standard conference format of presentations and small group discussions. In advance of the conference the Project on Justice in Times of Transition solicited brief written papers that enabled people to convey their ideas about what is needed for entrenching peace in Northern Ireland and other societies. Calls for papers were sent to a large number of political and community activists throughout Northern Ireland, as well as a select group of practitioners from other countries. Four papers from Northern Ireland, two from El Salvador and two from South Africa were distributed in advance and used to stimulate

discussion at the conference. The papers from Northern Ireland dealt with sectarianism and segregation and the reforms necessary to address these divisions, including building relationships between communities; the importance of “Local Strategy Partnerships”; and managing expectations while implementing a peace agreement. Practitioners from South Africa wrote about the importance of the parties to problems taking responsibility for finding their own solutions, and the need for leaders to truly espouse the concept of change. The importance of leadership and the willingness to compromise were also themes of one of the papers prepared by a Salvadoran practitioner; the second focused on economic reforms as a means to stabilization. Many conference attendees commented that the papers stimulated their own thinking, and following the conference, the working papers were posted on the Project’s website and are now available to practitioners and academics around the world.

The December 2001 conference, which was the Project’s 10th programmatic initiative focused on Northern Ireland, was part of a multi-faceted three-year plan launched in February 2001. Four parts of the program take the form of conferences or workshops for political and community leaders in Northern Ireland, and the fifth element involves the development and use of materials documenting the experience of Northern Ireland. The overarching goals of the Project’s programming in Northern Ireland are to:

- afford an opportunity for a broad representation of leaders in Northern Ireland to spend a concentrated amount of time together focused on issues of relevance to the consolidation of peace and democracy
- encourage the development of connections among the participants in order to increase trust and facilitate collaborative and complementary work on a range of subjects of concern at both the political and community levels
- provide political and community leaders in Northern Ireland with an impetus to develop solutions to some of the challenges facing their society by exposing them to examples from other societies in the world

Acknowledgements

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition would like to thank Avila Kilmurray, Peter McKittrick, Elizabeth Meehan, Aric Schwan, Barbara Stephenson and Alex Warleigh for their assistance with this initiative. Funding for this conference was provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies.

This summary report was written by Sara Zucker.

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition

The Project on Justice in Times of Transition is an inter-faculty initiative of Harvard University under the auspices of the Kennedy School of Government, the Harvard Law School, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Originally founded in 1992 as part of the New York-based Foundation for a Civil Society, the Project assists states emerging from repression or conflict to engage in dialogue across national, ethnic, religious and ideological boundaries with the intention of preventing legacies of the past from jeopardizing their progress toward democracy and peace. The December 2001 program for political and community leaders from Northern Ireland was the 28th of the Project's distinct initiatives which have provided an extraordinary stimulus to pragmatic problem-solving by offering a broad spectrum of individuals exposure to international experiences in ending conflict, establishing peace, and building civil society. Among the countries and regions in which the Project has worked are South Africa, Northern Ireland, Central and Eastern Europe, and Central America.

ADVISORY BOARD

JOSÉ MARIA ARGUETA

Guatemala

OSCAR ARIAS

Costa Rica

PAUL ARTHUR

Northern Ireland

HANAN ASHRAWI

Palestinian National Authority

GEORGE BIDDLE

United States

KURT BIEDENKOPF

Germany

THOMAS S. BLANTON

United States

ALEX BORAINÉ

South Africa

MARTIN BUTORA

Slovak Republic

NAOMI CHAZAN

Israel

ROGER ERRERA

France

JOACHIM GAUCK

Germany

RICHARD GOLDSTONE

South Africa

LEONEL GOMEZ

El Salvador

ÁRPÁD GÖNCZ

Hungary

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Russia

VÁCLAV HAVEL

Czech Republic

MAURICE HAYES

Northern Ireland

BRANKA KASELJ

Croatia

JAMES LEMOYNE

United States

NELSON MANDELA

South Africa

ADAM MICHNIK

Poland

LUIS MORENO OCAMPO

Argentina

SHIMON PERES

Israel

TANJA PETOVAR

Sweden

DIMITRINA PETROVÁ

Bulgaria

JON SNOW

Great Britain

DICK SPRING

Republic of Ireland

ROSE STYRON

United States

JOZSEF SZAJER

Hungary

LAWRENCE WESCHLER

United States

JOSÉ ZALAQUETT

Chile

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Philip Heymann,

Faculty Chair

Harvard Law School

James A. Cooney

Weatherhead Center for International
Affairs, Harvard University

Wendy W. Luers

The Foundation for a Civil Society

Timothy Phillips

The Foundation for a Civil Society

Peter Zimmerman

John F. Kennedy School of Government,
Harvard University

STAFF:

Sara Zucker Director

Ina Breuer Associate Director

Jenny Ellis Program Officer

