

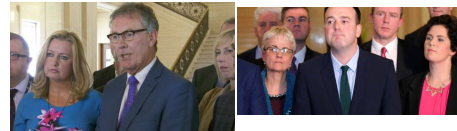
DATE: 2015
KEY PARTIES: UK & Irish governments
Sinn Fein and the DUP

NEW OPPOSITION
The agreement may have actually led to an even deeper 'CARVE UP' of power.

It was clear the deal was not multi party but rather between the DUP and SF. This widened the chasm between SF and the DUP on one side and the other parties and in particular the UUP and SDLP .

This seemed to prove the impetus for creating an official opposition with the UUP first taking the step of leaving the Executive followed by the SDLP. on the other which led to the UUP and SDLP leaving to form an opposition.

This makes use of the opposition bill designed by John McCallister to create the framework for an opposition. Both the UUP and SDLP now have official rights to ask questions and have 'opposition days' where they can choose the topics of debate.



FAILURE TO DEAL WITH MAIN ISSUES.
Although it was successful in overcoming political impasses like WELFARE REFORM, it achieved little in terms of ongoing bitter issues like flags, parades and the past



1) REPUBLICAN MURDERS LINKED TO PIRA
A political crisis was sparked by the murder of 2 prominent Belfast republicans.

This was connected openly by the PSNI to the Provisional IRA who are supposed to be

- 1) Without weapons
- 2) Disbanded- (not active) Unionists were deeply angry that The IRA were linked to this... showing clearly their continued presence and therefore danger.

The arrest of a senior Sinn Fein official in connection with the murders also raised the tension even higher. (despite him later being released without charge) the DUP demanded that Sinn Fein be suspended from executive office

The shared future Agreement kept 'the show on the road' It was a pragmatic agreement between SINN FEIN and the DUP essentially continuing to carve up power between them. Other parties are not really involved illustrating DUP SF dominance

Electorally the DUP and SF make it to the 2016 assembly election against the odds. The DUP maintained their 38 MLA's. Significantly SF slide by an MLA to 28. This was significantly due to losing seats in their heartland of west Belfast and in Derry to People before Profit- an anti austerity party. This was a blow to SF's plans but has suggested its weaknesses. To govern SF have to make tough decisions and WELFARE REFORM may have lost it support.

2) POLITICAL CRISES & REVOLVING MINISTRIES
The first minister, Peter Robinson and 3 DUP ministers resigned from the Executive... with the exception of one minister. This would suspend all executive work as it required the First Minister to convene.

The UUP increased pressure further by resigning their only Minister from the Executive.

WHY LEAVE ONE MINISTER?
The DUP knew that completely resigning would see their executive seats given to other parties. This could mean Sinn Fein which would not have went down well with the unionist electorate. It could also trigger an election which at that stage could see them lose votes.

Instead they 'revolved' their ministers over 20 times.. resigning and then reappointing every week to keep their positions.

While this kept their positions, it led to a great deal of negative press as headlines suggested problems in NI hospitals and a host of other issues not being dealt with by the Executive. Unionists soon knew they would have to compromise.

3) WELFARE REFORM IMPASSE
The other key issue was welfare reform. This was introduced all over the UK. It is an austerity measure designed to reduce government expenditure and increase fairness in the benefits and welfare system. It aimed to cap how much each household earned on benefits to £26,000 to encourage families to go out to work. It would also limit household benefits to houses matching the size of the family. This was nicknamed the bedroom tax.

Under the STORMONT HOUSE AGREEMENT, the welfare reform act had been accepted by NI parties. However, controversially it was then rejected by SF and the SDLP using a petition of concern. This deeply angered unionists who accused nationalists of going against their word... it ended up costing the NI Executive vast sums in fines that had to be paid for failure to implement the reform.

OVER 10 weeks of talks took place leading to an eventual agreement being reached between the British and Irish governments and the DUP and Sinn Fein (NI's other parties were not involved in this deal)

1) BACKGROUND

4) VERDICT?



FRESH START AGREEMENT 2015

3) WHAT WAS AGREED?

1) PARAMILITARIES
New principals were agreed to whereby NI political parties had to work towards an end to paramilitaries, and take their instructions solely from their electorate
A new international monitoring body was to monitor and report on paramilitaries

2) CROSS BORDER TASK FORCE ON CRIME
A new cross border agency is to be set up dealing with cross border crime.. up to £200 million is set aside to fund this.

3) WELFARE REFORM
The parties agreed to allow Westminster to push through welfare reforms using 'legislative consent' This essentially hands powers of welfare temporarily back to Westminster to legislate for the welfare reform (in the process nine of the NI parties get the blame for introducing welfare reform

A £564 million 'sweetener' was provided by London to mitigate (reduce the effects of welfare reform in NI over a period of 6 years)

4) CORPORATION TAX
This is to be introduced in 2018 (a year later than in Stormont house) it is to peg the tax at 12.5% the same as the Republic of Ireland)

5) OTHER ISSUES
- AGREEMENT to finance the A5 dual carriageway
- £60 million for peace walls
- £500 million for shared housing investment
-£700 million for public sector redundancies

2) THE ISSUES

