



LAGAN COLLEGE POLITICS



DATE: 2014
KEY PARTIES: UK & Irish governments
Sinn Fein, DUP, Alliance, UUP, SDLP

The Stormont House Agreement was signed in the run up to Christmas 2014 after months of intensive negotiations. It was signed between the British and Irish governments and all five of the main political parties in Northern Ireland.

It aimed to tackle a number of key fundamental issues which were continuing to inhibit progress in Northern Ireland.

In the end the agreement was reached in a hurry and quickly unravelled over the coming months in a period of increasingly acrimonious events such as rejection of WELFARE REFORM (a key part of the agreement) and fall out from paramilitary activity.

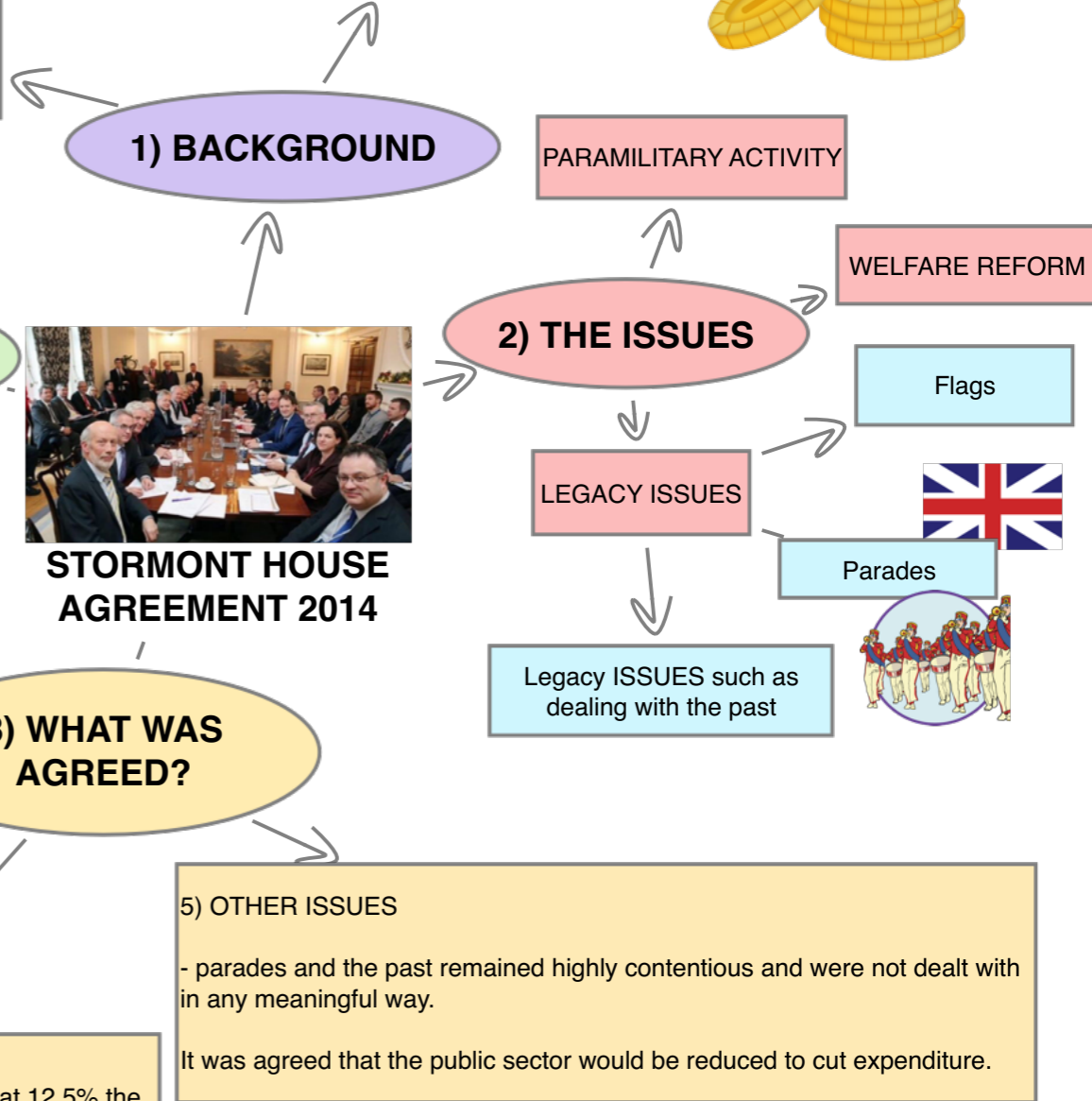
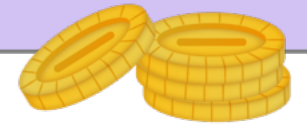
WHAT WERE THE KEY ISSUES BEING NEGOTIATED?

- WELFARE REFORM. This was a huge issue. It had been introduced in the rest of the UK and was due to be implemented in NI. However, there was much disagreement about it. Sinn Fein and the SDLP worried that WELFARE REFORM would have a devastating effect in the poorer and more WELFARE dependent areas of Northern Ireland. These parties also had an anti austerity agenda so giving in to WELFARE cuts was not on their immediate agenda.

The problem lay with the fact that Northern Ireland got hefty fines for not introducing the reforms.

- CORPORATION TAX- many MLAs and unionists in particular wanted to have the power to lower CORPORATION tax to help the economy's competitiveness.

LEGACY- ISSUES which had plagued Northern Ireland for years, such as paramilitary activity, flags, parades and historic crimes from the troubles continued to test the negotiators. Many of these remained unresolved.



STORMONT HOUSE AGREEMENT 2014

The Stormont house agreement was a flawed agreement. It was conceived and agreed in a pressure cooker environment which led to it unravelling. Sinn Fein and the SDLP both disagreed with WELFARE REFORM. They rejected it using a petition of concern. This would deeply anger the DUP and UUP who felt they had got nationalist approval as part of the deal. Cross party relations again became chilly and this became highly tense after the murder of 2 republicans supposedly by the PIRA. This revelation doomed the Stormont house agreement and led to almost a full break down in the assembly and return to direct rule. Only the fresh start agreement saved this

1) ASSEMBLY CHANGES
MLA's reduced from 108 - 90 by 2021
Executive departments reduced from 12-9
Official Opposition to be allowed (complete with finance and set days for debate)
Cross community voting system and petition of concern remain on place.

2) WELFARE REFORM TO BE INTRODUCED
In order to reduce U.K. Treasury fines it was agreed that the parties would introduce WELFARE REFORM for debate with a view to introducing it into NI.
The NI EXECUTIVE proposed to top up WELFARE recipients



3) FLAGS
A 15 strong commission is to address the controversial flag issue is set up.

4) CORPORATION TAX
This was to be introduced in 2017 to peg the tax at 12.5% the same as the Republic of Ireland)

5) OTHER ISSUES
- parades and the past remained highly contentious and were not dealt with in any meaningful way.
It was agreed that the public sector would be reduced to cut expenditure.