



The collapse of the ceasefire



The British government appointed George Mitchell to deal with decommissioning

The absence of talks between the British Government and republicans began to impact on the peace process and so the PIRA began to plan for a return to violence.

Unaware of this, London established a commission, chaired by former US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, to consider decommissioning.

Its solution - christened the twin track approach/parallel decommissioning - suggested the handover of weapons alongside talks.

It also put forward principles of non-violence, which all parties would have to sign up to.

Obstacles to peace

Before long there were more problems.

The first was the decision to hold elections to a Peace Forum as a way of providing a mandate for the negotiators.

The second was the end of the PIRA cessation in February 1996 when it exploded a bomb at Canary Wharf.

The PIRA blamed its decision to return to violence on what they claimed was the British Government's continued reluctance to move the peace process forward.

The Framework Documents

In February 1995, both governments published the Framework Documents which aimed to provide a framework for progressing the peace process.

A Framework for Accountable Government in Northern Ireland, outlined Britain's proposals for new political institutions.

These included a 90-strong assembly that would exercise powers similar to its 1974 power-sharing predecessor.

A New Framework for Agreement, was produced jointly by London and Dublin.

It was based around the principles of **self-determination**, **consent**, non-violence and **parity of esteem**.



Reactions from the local parties were mixed:

1. Unionists saw too many similarities with the Sunningdale Agreement and opposed the development of North-South links. Not long afterwards, the UUP leader, James Molyneaux, resigned to be replaced by David Trimble. Sinn Féin argued that the Framework Documents allowed unionists to **veto** progress. Only the SDLP and Alliance reacted positively to what had been proposed.



Reaction to the Peace Forum

Unionists supported the Forum, but nationalists were furious.

In their view, the plan was yet another stalling exercise, an example of the influence that the unionist parties in general and the UUP in particular had over the British Government.

In spite of their hostility, the SDLP and Sinn Féin contested the Forum elections.

However, Sinn Féin announced that it would boycott the resulting assembly.

The SDLP announced that it would make up its mind to attend the Forum on a day-by-day basis, depending on what the agenda was.

Election result

The results of the elections to the Forum revealed that support for the DUP and Sinn Féin had increased.

The UDP and PUP also won seats, thus enabling negotiations that had the potential to bring all the key players in the process along.

Peace talks finally began in June 1996 - without Sinn Féin.

However, the entire process was in some form of limbo throughout 1996 and during the first half of 1997.

It appeared that no real progress would be possible until a stronger government had been installed in London.



In the late 1980s, Social Democratic and Labour party (SDLP) leader John Hume held secret talks with Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams.

These talks lasted eight months and remained secret until April 1993.

When revealed, they were severely criticised by other parties - and from within the SDLP.

Changing Sinn Féin policy

Then, in 1992, Sinn Féin published *Towards a Lasting Peace*.

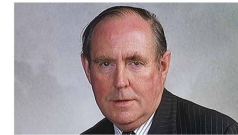
This focused on **self-determination** rather than "armed struggle" and argued Britain should persuade unionists to join a united Ireland.

This wasn't just wishful thinking.

In November 1990, Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Brooke had stated Britain had no 'selfish strategic or economic interest' in remaining in Northern Ireland.

Brooke approved the establishment of a private line of communication with the republican leadership.

He also attempted to restart discussions between the main **constitutional** parties.



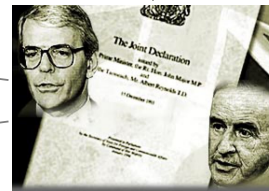
In December 1993, the British and Irish governments produced the Downing Street Declaration which outlined their approach to restoring peace in Northern Ireland.

BACKGROUND

1) HUME ADAMS TALKS



HUME ADAMS



1993: DOWNING STREET DECLARATION

4) CEASEFIRE

The significance of the Declaration: ceasefire

Careful explanation of the thinking behind the Declaration - provided by the Irish Government - enabled the PIRA to announce a 'complete cessation of military operations' as of 31 August 1994.

The PIRA warned that Sinn Féin would have to be included in any talks.

However, the British Government stated that it wanted to hear the PIRA use the word 'permanent' regarding its cessation.

It added that it needed time to test republicans' actions rather than their words.

Dublin and Washington reacted positively to the cessation - a week after the announcement, Taoiseach Albert Reynolds publicly shook hands with Gerry Adams.

Soon after, Dublin announced the establishment of a Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, to be attended by all Irish parties.

Then, in early December, nine PIRA inmates were **released on licence**.

2) DOWNING STREET DECLARATION KEY TERMS

The Downing Street Declaration (1993): key terms



The Hume-Adams Talks restarted in the early 1990s and eventually led to Sinn Féin accepting the need for unionist **consent** about Northern Ireland's future.

However, the two governments - led by John Major and Albert Reynolds - could not accept this change in republican thinking as a basis for peace.

Instead, in December 1993, they produced the Downing Street Declaration.

In the Declaration:

- London agreed to 'uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they wish to support the Union or establish a sovereign united Ireland.'
- Dublin accepted that a united Ireland had to have majority consent within Northern Ireland. It also accepted that parts of the 1937 Constitution were unacceptable to unionists and agreed - in the context of an overall settlement - to change that document.

3) RESPONSES TO DECLARATION

Responses to the Declaration

Sinn Féin stated that while it was glad to see Britain accepting **self-determination**, the Declaration still allowed unionists a **veto** over its exercise.

The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) was comforted by parts of the Declaration - however, it was unhappy with what it thought was its bias toward Irish nationalism or as they termed it, its 'green tinge'.

There was a similar reaction from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) which saw the Declaration as yet another step towards a united Ireland.

Progress?

Some progress was made.

It was agreed that any settlement of the Northern Ireland question would have to involve three 'strands':

- Intercommunity relations** - meaning between the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland.
- North-South co-operation** - between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- Intergovernmental negotiations** - between the British government in London and the Irish government in Dublin.

However, by mid-1991 these talks had collapsed.

Following the 1992 British General Election (which saw a reduction in Sinn Féin's support and the loss of Adams' Westminster seat to the SDLP), Sir Patrick Mayhew replaced Brooke.

Although Mayhew started a talks process, those talks also failed.

