

After 3 decades of troubles and over 3,000 dead, in 1998 a ground breaking and controversial agreement was signed in Belfast. This became known as the **BELFAST AGREEMENT** or **GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT**. It was arranged between the Northern Ireland political parties and the UK and Irish Governments.

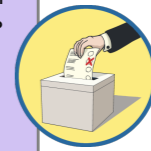
It was **OPPOSED** by the DUP

The GFA contained **THREE STRANDS** and a number of other issues.

- It brought **SINN FEIN** into the political process
- It created a **new devolved Assembly** based on power sharing
- it added an **all Ireland dimension** to NI affairs

The GFA was endorsed by the NI public at a **referendum** with **71%** support.

This had significant Protestant opposition however. **Only 54% agreed compared to 97% of nationalists**



1) BACKGROUND



GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT 1998



**STRAND 1
An ACCEPTABLE FORM OF POLITICAL POWER SHARING IN N. IRELAND**

THIS WAS TO BE ACHIEVED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS

1) **108 MLAs** were to be chosen by **STV**, a form of PR based on constituencies. This would give much broader representation than traditional unionism and nationalism.

2) A **POWER SHARING EXECUTIVE** (government) would be chosen. This would be based on electoral strength. It would be **made up of nationalist and Unionists**. It was aimed at encouraging cooperation and debate. This would be led by a **FIRST AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**. This was also a joint position representing both major communities.



NI ASSEMBLY

OTHER ISSUES

THERE WERE ALSO A RANGE OF OTHER CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES:

1) **PRISONER RELEASES.** As part of the agreement prisoners were to be released on licence. This created a great deal of anger, particularly the unionist community

2) **REFORM OF THE RUC** (police force)
The **PATTON REFORMS** were introduced:
Name of RUC changed to PSNI (Police service of Northern Ireland)
Badge changed;
police recruitment changed to 50-50 to make it more representative

3) **DECOMMISSIONING**
Decommissioning was a controversial issue that would undermine the GFA.
Unionists felt that it was agreed that the IRA would decommission as a result of the GFA.
Republicans argued that this was not the case and decommissioning would be tantamount to surrender.



**STRAND 3
EAST WEST LINKS
BIC- British Irish Council**

BRITISH IRISH COUNCIL set up to coordinate policies across the main components of the British Isles. These include Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Jersey, Isle of Man, Guernsey

This has regular meetings on areas of mutual concern, such as e commerce, tourism and transport links



**STRAND 2:
ACCEPTABLE ROLE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND (NSMC North-South ministerial Council)**

1) The Republic of Ireland **dropped their historical claim to Northern Ireland in their constitution. (Articles 2&3)**
This eased unionist fears of a United Ireland



2) **THE NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL** was formed
This was set up to **coordinate policy** across shared areas within the island of Ireland. Issues such as ; food standards ; trade; waterways; tourism; health etc



UNIONISTS



- 1) **Deeply divided** by the agreement. Only **54%** of Protestants voted for the agreement showing how sceptical or opposed many were.
- 2) **UUP** were the largest Unionist party led by David Trimble. They were **deeply divided**. **6 out of 10 of their MPs opposed the agreement** they had signed up to. Key members like **Jeffrey Donaldson or Arlene Foster** openly opposed the agree.net and eventually switched to the DUP.
- 3) Large numbers of Unionists would begin to vote for the more hard line DUP.
- 4) Unionists in particular were angry at the concessions made- the prisoner releases and RUC reform in return for what seemed to be very little. On top of that the IRA had failed to decommission its weapons.
- 5) A Unionist campaign was set up to oppose the agreement
- 6) The DUP opposed the GFA from the very beginning.

NATIONALISTS

- 1) **PIRA** felt that the Good Friday Agreement **fell short of what they were wanting**. They therefore **refused to decommission their weapons**. This decision which infuriated unionists and weakened the moderate UUP.
- 2) **SINN FEIN** did take part in the new Northern Ireland Assembly. This is important as they had previously refused to 'recognise' the ' Northern state' seeing it instead as a partitionist parliament. They had to change their constitution to allow their members to become members.
- 3) However, **SINN FEIN did remain very wary of the PSNI and justice** infrastructure. They regarded them as the RUC with only the name changed. It would take several years until they fully supported policing and justice

