

Cross-border Cooperation coming out of conflict : the Northern Ireland Experience

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The Northern Ireland conflict

- **1968-1998 conflict, over 3,500 people killed**
- **Three protagonists: British security forces, IRA (seeking British withdrawal and Irish unity), loyalist (pro-British) paramilitaries**
- **Border with (Republic of) Ireland a central issue**
- **Mediation in 1990s by Irish, British and US governments**



1998 Belfast Agreement



BROUGHT CONFLICT TO AN END: 3 STRANDS

1. **Internal power-sharing government between IRA's political wing (Sinn Fein) and (pro-British) Unionists**
2. **East-West: institutionalising British-Irish relations**
3. **North-South: institutionalising relations and establishing cooperation bodies between Northern Ireland and Ireland**

Rev. Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness

N. Ireland First Minister and Deputy First Minister



North/South institutions



- **Overseeing North South Ministerial Council
(Ministers and officials from both Irish jurisdictions)**
- **Practical areas of cooperation: trade and business development, EU funding, tourism, marine management, inland waterways, health services etc.**
- **Relations between Ireland and Northern Ireland now better than at any time for over 90 years**

North South Ministerial Council



EU funding and NGOs



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- **EU funding crucial to N.Ireland peace process**
- **Over €2 billion granted since 1990s**
- **Hundreds of cross-community (Protestant-Catholic) and cross-border non-governmental organisations**
- **Centre for Cross Border Studies: joint research/development in health, education, the economy, ICT, public administration, planning, citizens information, impact assessment**



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund
Investing in your future

Cooperative transnational space

EU seeks to ‘de-territorialise the Northern Ireland conflict, to build cross-border networks of cooperation around issues of common interest. In this sense, it seeks to move beyond bounded territory to the creation of a cooperative transnational space.’

(O’Dowd and McCall)

Peace Bridge Derry – June 2012



The future



The Centre for
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- **Peacebuilding a slow, expensive process**
- **Cross-border cooperation works slowly as part of this process – needs inter-governmental structures and funding**
- **International financial crisis means Northern Ireland and cross-border cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland no longer high on policy agenda**
- **Continuing problem of communal/religious sectarianism in Northern Ireland**