



POLITICAL PARTY COOPERATION IN PEACE PROCESSES: INTERNATIONAL CASES

INTRODUCTION

As the peace talks progress between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), preparations for post-conflict are made at the local, regional, and national levels. Certain aspects of the peace process, such as the lack of a ceasefire and debates about judicial benefits for the guerrilla group's leaders, have caused doubts in some political sectors. However, most agree that should a final peace agreement be reached, multi-party cooperation and implementation efforts will be necessary to legitimize such an accord and support sustainable peace. In addition, given the partial agreement on political participation, which includes provisions to facilitate broader political engagement, mechanisms to strengthen inter-party cooperation and dispute resolution will be crucial for peace.

This spotlight examines international examples of peace processes that have emphasized inter-party cooperation and joint peace agreement implementation, and highlights lessons learned that Colombia could use to facilitate cooperation between all sectors of the political spectrum.

NORTHERN IRELAND

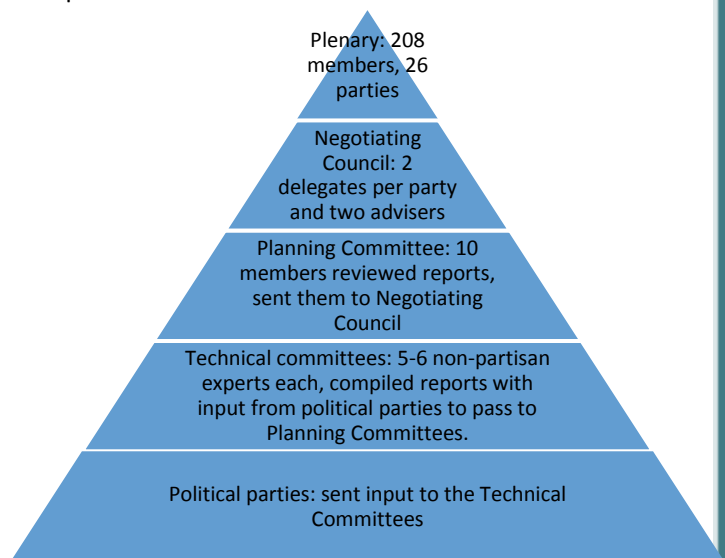
Both the violence and the political party system in Northern Ireland were characterized by religious divisions that translated into Protestant support for continuation of Northern Ireland's inclusion in the United Kingdom, and Catholic objectives of becoming part of a united Republic of Ireland. In the late 1980s, republican parties formed a coalition to gain the political clout necessary to influence peace talks, which they had not yet been able to enter. This and other factors consolidated the political will to progress with multi-party talks within a broader peace process that included disarmament of illegal armed groups. In April 1998, all parties signed the Good Friday Agreement, of which copies were sent to every home in Northern Ireland, to inform people before the referendum, which saw a 71% approval of the agreement.ⁱ Various institutions were established to ensure the continuation of multi-party collaboration:ⁱⁱ

Northern Ireland Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power-sharing entity, manages relations within Northern Ireland • Only operates if North-South Ministerial Council also functioning (safeguard)
Permanent coalition government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes all main parties • Key decisions made jointly
North-South Ministerial Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages Ireland - Nor. Ireland relations • Cooperation between Northern Ireland Assembly and Irish Parliament
British-Irish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members from British and Irish governments, plus representatives from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Despite these institutions, distrust between the parties persisted and in 2002, Britain installed direct rule after disagreements about implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.ⁱⁱⁱ The Assembly was reinstated in 2007 but interruptions to the Northern Ireland peace process, which is considered to be ongoing, continue as parties still disagree on topics such as flags, parades and how to present the past, and must overcome these differences in order to move forward with peace.^{iv}

SOUTH AFRICA

In 1990, South African President, Frederik de Klerk, began negotiations to end the apartheid regime. The country's many political parties played key roles in the negotiation process, with De Klerk's National Party (NP) and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) taking center stage. Multi-party negotiating groups allowed small numbers of representatives to voice their concerns and influence agreements, meaning that input from party constituents reached the negotiating table. The formal multi-party consultation mechanism was first called the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) and, when that mechanism collapsed due to disagreement over the type of constitution South Africa needed, the Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP), whose transparency and opportunities for public input made it socially legitimate and thereby sustainable. The mechanisms implemented in the MPNP were structured as follows:^v



The technical committees' thematic focuses on violence, human rights, constitutional issues, and discriminatory legislation provided outlets for proposals on the areas in which parties sought reform. The MPNP mechanisms drew on the broad base of influence of the political parties to incorporate public input to the negotiations process, as well as channeling disputes to make all voices heard and

allow for mediation. The MPNP was praised for facilitating cooperative inter-party relationships that sustained themselves into the post-negotiations period.^{vi}

NEPAL

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Nepal was signed on November 21st 2006 to bring autocratic rule to an end and facilitate a transition to democracy, with the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-Maoist) party gaining significant political clout after a decade-long insurgency. The 12-point agreement was signed by the UCPN-Maoist group and the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA), the latter of which brought together six political parties and one coalition of three parties, and had been established with the purpose of generating a space for consensus-based decision-making. When the King of Nepal stepped down, he made the SPA responsible for organizing democratic elections and guiding the country to peace. The SPA gained 194 of the 205 seats available in the first legislative elections. It also oversaw implementation of the peace agreement, including the formation of various commissions to investigate the causes and consequences of the armed insurgency, and the provision of aid and relief to families affected by the violence. Finally, the SPA coordinated the political and judicial processes necessary to establish a constitutional assembly and write a new governing document.^{vii}

Despite these efforts to bring political parties together in the interests of peace and democracy, Nepal has seen little agreement on socio-economic matters, and secret consultations between parties has prevented collective political will from consolidating and being exercised. This has slowed new constitutional processes. In addition, although the SPA initially brought political parties together as a power-sharing mechanism to reach a peace agreement, each party's goals of monopolizing power within the new democratic system has prevented the SPA from being fully efficient in the post-agreement context.^{viii}

COLOMBIA

Although the current peace process has highlighted and even broadened divisions between political parties in Colombia, opposing sides of the spectrum have come together before in the interests of peace. Specifically, the constitutional design and ratification process of 1991 involved an Assembly of both elected and decree-designated representatives from across the board, from the Conservative Party to the Democratic Alliance M-



19, the latter of which was newly created after the demobilization of the M-19 guerrilla group. The government created 1,580 working groups throughout the country to ensure input and proposals from as broad a range of actors as possible. The multi-party nature of the Constitutional Assembly indicated an attempt to move away from the traditionally bi-partisan character of Colombian politics. Although it was praised at the time as a jointly created governing document, the 1991 Constitution has since received criticism for both representing guerrilla interests, and for not including input from the FARC and the ELN. In addition, given the condition that members of the Constitutional Assembly could not run in new congressional elections, the implementation of the Constitution has not been a multi-party effort but rather has for the most part been limited to the bi-partisan political practice of pre-1991.^{ix}

CONCLUSION

Peace processes around the world have recognized the importance of multi-party cooperation to support and legitimize peace. In Northern Ireland, such collaboration was at the crux of the Good Friday Agreement, and although disagreements continue, the variety of institutions created to channel debate and facilitate consensus has allowed the peace process to advance. In South Africa, the complex Multi-Party Negotiating Process provided a formal mechanism for the voicing of input and political concerns across the spectrum, and the inter-party relationships formed there have continued into the post-agreement period. Nepal's case shows the importance of bringing parties together without hidden agendas, as multi-party coordination was efficient in achieving peace but not in upholding democracy (rather than monopoly) after an agreement was reached. While Colombia does have a brief history of multi-party collaboration in the 1991 Constitutional Assembly, the government should take care to learn from these and other international examples and to work towards a truly multi-party and collaborative implementation of a final peace agreement.

ⁱ Darby, J. (2003) "Northern Ireland: The background to the Peace Process" <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/darby03.htm#blocks>

ⁱⁱ Darby, J. (2003) "Northern Ireland: The background to the Peace Process" <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/darby03.htm#blocks>

ⁱⁱⁱ Aly Sergie, M. (2014) "The Northern Ireland Peace Process" www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/northern-ireland-peace-process/p31552

^{iv} Hutton, B. (2014) "Fresh talks to break deadlock in Northern Ireland peace process" <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/fresh-talks-to-break-deadlock-in-northern-ireland-peace-process-30622345.html>

^v Barnes, C. and De Klerk, E. "South Africa's multi-party constitutional negotiation process" <http://bit.ly/1ssnNVm>

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} "23-Point Agreement by the Seven-Party Alliance", (2007) <http://bit.ly/1GF1Jxi>

^{viii} Bhatta, C. (2012). "Reflections on Nepal's Peace Process" <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/08936-20120228.pdf>

^{ix} Fox, D., Gallón-Giraldo, G., and Stetson, A. *Lessons of the Colombian Constitutional Reform of 1991* in "Framing the State in Times of Transition" Aucoin, L. and Miller, L. (2010). USIP: Washington D.C. <http://bit.ly/1BF3F7P>

