



# Parade Disputes in Northern Ireland: Roadblocks on the Path to a Lasting Peace



Sean Herman

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Department of Security Studies and International Affairs

## Abstract

Since the 1998 Belfast Agreement, the peace process in Northern Ireland has seen mixed success. One area that has seen less success is the disputes over Unionist parades. The majority of the routes used for Orange Order parades remain undisputed, but tensions arise in interface areas, where Republican neighborhoods connect with those of the Loyalists. Even though these parades have been conducted since the 1800s, they have not been contested until recently. The reasons for the creation of disputes could be political leverage or financial gain for certain community groups and political parties. By examining the case study of the historic dispute surrounding the Drumcree parade in Portadown that began in 1986, interviewing academics who are subject matter experts, and utilizing archival data, this project will analyze the recent and ongoing parade dispute in the Ardoyne area of Belfast to understand how this and future disputes disrupt the peace process.

## The Troubles

- The start of the Northern Ireland conflict dates to the Partition of Ireland in 1921
- The latest round of conflict known as the Troubles started in 1969
- The Troubles ended in 1998 with the signing of the Belfast Agreement

## Parades History

- Parading in North Ireland date back to the 1700s
- Both Loyalists and Republicans hold parades
- Most parades are peaceful and undisputed
- There are an estimated 4,500 parades every year in North Ireland
- While most protests are peaceful, some do incite violence

## The Parades Commission

- Set up in 1998 under the Public Procession (NI) Act
- Non-partisan commission that determines legality and rules for parades
- Mediates disputes between Loyalists and Republicans on parading matters

## Why Dispute Parade Routes?

- Political and monetary gain
- Mistrust on the part of both sides
- A way to carry on the fight in a non-violent way after the Troubles

## How do the parade disputes affect the Peace Process in Northern Ireland?

- Continued animosity toward the other community
- Loyalist and Republican communities remain segregated
- Parade disputes become politicized to the point that they may hinder the normal workings of the government

## Topics for Continued Research

- How do parade disputes fit in with the new models of the former paramilitary factions as they transition from violence to white collar crime?
- To what extent are parade disputes politicized and monetized?
- What steps could the government take to de-politicize and de-monetize parade disputes?

An Orange Order Parade July 12, 2016



Roundabout near the Ardoyne Shops



## Case Study: Garvaghy Road Dispute

- Parade began in 1807
- Route violently disputed in 1984 and 1985
- Parades Commission changed the route from Obins St to Garvaghy Rd in 1986
- Dispute over new route began in 1995

## Case Study: Ardoyne Shops Dispute

- Parade began in the 1800s
- Dispute started in 2009
- Centered around the intersection of Woodvale Rd, Twaddle Ave, and Crumlin Rd
- Parades Commission determined a curfew for the parade to disperse by 8:00 pm
- Most of the protesting is done by supporters of each side

Map of Northern Ireland



Map of Belfast Interface Areas

