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The Role of Economic Assistance in Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland

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The Role of Economic Assistance in Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland

Abstract

External economic assistance from the International Fund for Ireland and the European Union Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation assisted in setting the context of the Northern Ireland peace agenda, and holds out the promise of a new civic culture. This article explores people's perceptions of economic assistance of conflict amelioration in Northern Ireland. Some of the findings, in respect of inter-community differences in perceptions of the utility of external economic assistance in building the peace dividend, are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: *civic culture, conflict resolution, economic assistance, inter-community differences, Northern Ireland*

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THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Sean Byrne, Cynthia Irvin, Eyob Fissuh, and Chris Cunningham

Abstract

External economic assistance from the International Fund for Ireland and the European Union Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation assisted in setting the context of the Northern Ireland peace agenda, and holds out the promise of a new civic culture. This article explores people's perceptions of economic assistance of conflict amelioration in Northern Ireland. Some of the findings, in respect of inter-community differences in perceptions of the utility of external economic assistance in building the peace dividend, are discussed in the paper.

Introduction

The closing years of the twentieth century brought renewed optimism that sectarian tension and ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland could be resolved. After years of failure and frustration, politicians negotiated a framework to devolve power and build upon the fragile peace between the Catholics and Protestant communities. The global community paid close attention as most of all major political parties in Northern Ireland except for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) now comfortably the largest Unionist party signed onto the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement (GFA). However, to the frustration (and perhaps surprise) of many, those on the ground slowly realized that the GFA cannot transform society and politics alone (Ruane and Todd, 2000, 2001). Indeed, the crisis of identity in Northern Ireland is so deep, that only an all-encompassing transformational approach to conflict resolution—one that addresses components of the conflict beyond constitutional matters, such as cross-communal relationships, political polarity, socioeconomic status, and the challenge of identity politics, to name but a few—can empower the people on both sides of the conflict well enough to embrace peace (Morrow, 2001; Ruane and Todd, 1996).

This article covers an important aspect of settlement, given that the statistical measurement of people's perceptions of economic assistance in conflict amelioration in Northern Ireland had not been undertaken before our 1997 survey. The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) had only just called its second ceasefire when the data was gathered and no political deal had been clinched. Given external funding for peace processes globally, the research here could have a wider remit beyond Northern Ireland. The objective of this article is to examine public perceptions of external economic assistance on the peacebuilding process in

Northern Ireland as manifested in the pre-GFA 1997 perceptions of respondents on the role of these funds on community economic development, and on the reduction of violence, and the role of these funds in building the peace dividend. Very considerable economic resources have been committed to resolving the conflict, yet we have little empirical evidence of their impact (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995). Economic assistance fits in with the general civil society approach to conflict resolution (Pearson, 2001; Sandole, 2002). Moreover, the article analyzes the effect of the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and European Union (EU) Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation on sustainable economic development in Northern Ireland. The article begins with a discussion of the role of economic assistance in building the peace dividend in Northern Ireland. The research findings and their implications are then highlighted.

Economic Assistance and Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland today remain largely divided over national issues of identity. Except for a growing middle class, the working class lives largely in separate enclaves, attend different churches and schools, and socially distance themselves from the other community (Byrne and Irvin, 2002). Since partition in 1921, Nationalists and Unionists in Northern Ireland have competed for scarce resources in one of the poorest peripheries of the EU, which has in part prompted bicomunal conflict (Byrne and Ayulo, 1998). Between 1920 and 1972, Unionist regimes used populist economic policies that favored its Protestant majority while discriminating against the minority Catholics (Bew, et al., 1979). Under unionist rule, there were few opportunities for Catholic Nationalists while Protestant Unionists enjoyed all of the economic privileges of a populist regime in Belfast, the capital of government in Northern Ireland before the 1972 introduction of British direct rule (Bew et al., 1979, 1995).

Unionist control institutionalized discriminatory practices against Catholics creating large disparities between the two communities. The populist policies of the Northern Ireland state manufactured discrimination in housing, employment, and job creation that worked to the advantage of the Unionists and to the disadvantage of the Nationalist community (Bew et al., 1979, 1995). Prior to the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) movement of the 1960s, Nationalists were generally poorer and less educated than Unionists, and were two-and-a-half times more likely to be unemployed (Dixon, 2001; McGarry and O'Leary, 1995; Tomlinson, 1995). Today, university entrance rates are similar for both communities.

On a larger scale, British government policy also contributed to segregation and alienation within society by its historic failure to address its economic woes. Past British government policy often dealt only with symptoms not the root causes of structural inequalities, and even then in manners which tended to exacerbate rather than ameliorate competition between the two communities (Byrne and Irvin, 2002). British economic policy largely sought to stabilize the political status quo in Northern Ireland, rather than try to resolve the underlying roots of the conflict.

“The Northern Ireland problem has not been high on Britain’s political agenda, and the government’s major priority has been to limit the cost of this involvement; thus the responses to economic inequality and unemployment can be described as superficial and palliative” (Bew and Patterson, 1985, p.75).

Economic negligence of Northern Ireland’s working classes leaves Britain partly responsible for the feelings of alienation, distrust, and sectarianism felt in both communities (Bew and Patterson, 1985). Consequently, poverty and unemployment, which reached over 70 percent for males over several generations in urban communities supportive of Republican and Loyalist Paramilitaries, have stricken nationalist communities across the region (Byrne and Irvin, 2001). Northern Ireland’s economy is arguably the most subsidized and public sector dependent in Western Europe. It is true that much British finance was ploughed into security, but the subvention went beyond this.

The IFI and the EU Fund were set up to support economic regeneration and peacebuilding within Northern Ireland and the border area (Byrne and Irvin, 2001). The IFI was established in 1985 after the British and Irish governments signed the AIA to foster greater cooperation between both governments. London and Dublin had stipulated that both governments sought to:

Promote the economic and social development of those areas of both parts of Ireland which have suffered most severely from the consequences of the instability of recent years, and shall consider the possibility of securing international support for this work (Anglo-Irish Agreement, 1985, p. 2).

The AIA specifically established economic support fund assistance for United States (US) contributions to the IFI; its language reflected the US’s belief of a strong relationship between peace and economic development. The AIA proposed “to provide for the US contributions in support of the Anglo-Irish Agreement,” so that “all may live in peace, free from discrimination, terrorism, and intolerance and with the opportunity for both communities to participate fully in the structures and processes of government” (Irvin and Byrne, 2002, p. 134). Economic development was also seen as a means to building peace because it could improve the conditions that bred violence.

The US initiated funding of the IFI with US \$50 million in 1986, and through 1996 had funded more than US \$500 million (Irvin and Byrne, 2002). Other donors to the IFI include the EU, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The EU contributed US \$18.3 million per year from 1989 until 1994, when it increased its annual contribution to approximately US \$24.4 million per year supplanting the US as the largest donor to the fund in response to the 1994 cease-fires between paramilitary groups (Irvin and Byrne, 2002).

Likewise, the EU positively responded to steps in the peace process. It created a special economic task force designed to promote community ties and dialogue, as well as strengthen and encourage existing political agreements with economic incentives and support. This resulted in the 1994-1999 EU Special

Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland, which primarily aims to address unemployment and social exclusion, while maintaining momentum for peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland (Byrne and Irvin, 2001). The European Commission, which initiated the fund, promised US \$393 million for the period 1994-1998, and has since proposed over US \$220 in additional funds (Byrne and Irvin, 2002). Combined with substantial EU structural funds for economically depressed regions, the EU invested 1.2 billion ECU (US \$1.4 billion) as of 2000 (Irvin and Byrne, 2002, p. 135). Similar to the IFI, the Peace Fund aims to reinforce peace and stability, and promote reconciliation, by increasing economic development and employment; promoting urban and rural regeneration; developing cross-border cooperation; and extending social inclusion (Irvin and Byrne, 2002).

As a result of a vibrant marketing campaign by both the EU and IFI to highlight both funds we might expect people to have a positive perception of external economic assistance. The provision of both funds is important in empowering the grassroots promoting social inclusion, boosting economic growth, advancing socioeconomic regeneration, and reinforcing progress toward a peaceful society. It is important to explore this systematically.

Methodology

The data analyzed are from a Northern Ireland public opinion survey constructed by Drs. Irvin and Byrne and conducted in August 1997 by Millward Brown Ulster. The data-set is unique as it is the first empirical study to examine public perceptions of economic assistance to Northern Ireland. Both senior authors commissioned Millward Brown Ulster to assess the public perceptions of the impact of funding from the IFI and from the EU Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation. A representative sample of 610 adults (18+) were interviewed from August 6 to 8, 1997 by fully trained and experienced interviewers, according to the definitive quality standards of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme. All interviews were carried out face-to-face at 50 sampling points selected at random throughout Northern Ireland normally in each respondent's home. Two of the interviews were excluded from the data set as they were defective. Missing values and "I don't know" responses were removed from the analyses. This reduced the effective sample to less than 608 in all the cases. The stratified random sample was controlled by gender, age, class, and religion. The dependent variables are the perceptions of the contribution of funds: toward peace, toward reducing violence, towards one's own community economic development, and the economic situation of the person that last three years.

This study employs a special class of regression techniques in general and quantitative response models in particular in testing some hypotheses. More specifically binary probit and ordered probit models are employed for the binary dependent variables and ordinal dependent variables respectively (Greene, 2003). This section develops the key characteristics of these models. Special emphasis is given to the interpretation of the coefficients as it is very crucial to our discussion.

We start with the binary dependent variable models and then we proceed to the ordered probit model.

As in Wooldrige (2002) we employ the binary dependent variable regression model of the form

$$E[y/x] = 0[1 - F(x' \beta)] + 1[F(x' \beta)] = F(x' \beta)$$

1.0

Where x is $k \times n$ data matrix and β is $k \times 1$ vector of the coefficients. It is noteworthy that in the probability regression models (in our case we employ logistic and normal distributions) we employ the parameters of the model, like those of the non-linear models, which may not reflect the true marginal effects. That is to say the coefficients are not the same as the marginal effects. Rather the generic marginal effect form is given by,

$$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x} = \left\{ \frac{dF(x' \beta)}{d(x' \beta)} \right\} \beta = f(x' \beta) \beta$$

1.1

Where $f(\cdot)$ is the density function that corresponds to the cumulative probability distribution function, $F(\cdot)$. As it is clear from equation (1.1) to get the marginal effect we need to weight the slope by probability density. Hence, for a binary probit model the marginal effect would be given by:

$$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x} = \left\{ \frac{dF(x' \beta)}{d(x' \beta)} \right\} \beta = \varphi(x' \beta) \beta$$

1.2

where $\varphi(t)$ is the standard normal density.

This is what we have reported in Table 1. Equation (1.1) also illustrates that the value of the marginal effect depends on the level of all variables (x_i). This leaves us with a decision about the values of the variables to be used to compute these effects. In our case the marginal effects are calculated at mean values of all other variables. But this approach is not without flaws. First, given the nonlinear nature of the model it is not an easy task to translate the marginal effects into changes in the predicted probability that will occur if there is discrete change in one of the variables. This is pertinent to our modeling because most of our explanatory variables are binary outcomes. To get around this problem we calculate the difference at the values of 1 and 0. Keeping this in mind the results could be interpreted as follows. Let us take the marginal effect of the variable GENDER on the perceived effect of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on violence in Model 5, Table 1. For a male individual respondent the predicted probability of perceiving the contribution of the IFI and EU economic assistance positively is

higher by 0.234(23.4 percent) than his female counterparts keeping all other variables constant. All the other coefficients can be interpreted likewise.

Ordered Probit

We have also used an ordered probit model for perceptions about the importance of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on economic development. As is common in the literature we will motivate the usage of ordered probit with a latent variable approach as we assume that there is a continuous unobservable function, which maps into the observed categories. Similar to the binary response models the coefficients in these models, the parameters, are not marginal effects. We can illustrate this point in the case of three ordinary value variables as follows:

In the mode of the importance of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on one's own economic development we have three categories, which are: important ($y = 2$), neutral ($y = 1$, neither important nor unimportant), and not important ($y = 0$). In this case because we have three categories our model has only one unknown threshold parameter. Note that our model also has a constant. The three probabilities are given by:

$$\Pr ob(y = 0 / x) = 1 - \Phi(X' \beta)$$

$$\Pr ob(y = 1 / x) = \Phi(\mu - X' \beta) - \Phi(-X' \beta)$$

1.3

$$\Pr ob(y = 2 / X) = 1 - \Phi(\mu - X' \beta)$$

and the marginal effects of changes in the three regressors are

$$\frac{\partial \Pr ob(y = 0 / X)}{\partial X} = -\phi(X' \beta)\beta$$

$$\frac{\partial \Pr ob(y = 0 / X)}{\partial X} = [\phi(-X' \beta) - \phi(\mu - X' \beta)]\beta$$

1.4

$$\frac{\partial \Pr ob(y = 2 / X)}{\partial X} = \phi(\mu - X' \beta)\beta$$

As the above equations demonstrate with the exception of the outcome $y = J$ and outcome $y = 0$, we cannot a priori state that a positive (negative) parameter also implies that probability rises (falls) with X_i because it will depend on the relative densities in equation (1.4). Similar to our binary response model it is important to note that the marginal effect of the dummy variable needs special attention. For example, in all of our models GENDER is a dummy variable and since it is a discrete variable the marginal effect reported is a discrete change. We analyze this discrete change by comparing the probabilities that result when the variable takes its two different values with those that occur with the other variables held at their sample means.

Unlike the binary probit models in the case of ordered probit models the interpretation of the marginal effects is not straightforward. Instead interpretation in terms of odds ratio is simple. For example, from Model 5 in Table 1 the odds of the perception of Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) supporters being in favor of the positive role of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation funded projects versus the combined outcome of perceiving the contribution to be from unfair to not fair at all is lower by 1.03 times than other political party supporters.

With this in mind, we now turn to the issue of goodness of a model. There is no one conventional measure of goodness of fit for these models. But in most cases the very least measure that should be reported is the maximized value of the log likelihood function. Thus, we have reported the log likelihood ratio and the limiting χ^2 values for all the models. It is also commonplace to report the actual versus predicted probabilities. Another reliable and popular measure of goodness of fit is the Hit and Miss table with the counted R^2 . However, it merits mention that the usual R^2 value has no much value in these kind of nonlinear models. Besides the Maximum Likelihood Estimator (MLE) does not try to fit using the prediction of y as it is in a classical ordinary method (which maximizes R^2). Rather it is chosen to maximize the joint density of the observed dependent variable (Wooldridge, 2002).

Data and Key Variables

Following we briefly discuss the key independent variables that are employed in our data.

Political party: It is the task of this article to investigate any association of the perception of the respondents about the importance of both of these funds to economic development, and the importance of these funds to peacebuilding and the reduction of violence. We generated nine dummy variables for each of the political parties. The ten political parties are: Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Alliance Party, Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), United Kingdom Unionist Partyewrb nh g (UKUP), Conservative Party, Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), Sinn Fein (SF), the Women's Coalition Party, and the new defunct Unionist Democratic Party (UDP). The main objective is to investigate any systematic association between political affiliation and the perceptions of these respondents. It is expected that the political affiliation of a respondent influence the perception about the likely effects of these funds on peacebuilding, the reduction of violence, and economic development.

Class: Another key variable of interest in the hypotheses testing is the category of the economic class a respondent belongs to. Three dummy variables were generated to represent the three economic income classes—the ABC1 (professional class), DE (skilled class) and C2 (semi-skilled class). It is expected that all three classes, especially the semi-skilled class will welcome economic assistance from both funding agencies as unemployment is a serious issue in working class communities.

Age: The variable age is also included as a determinant factor on the models considered. It is expected that age will have an effect on the evaluation of citizens about the respective funds. This way we will be able to control the effect of age on the models considered in this article.

Relation: The relation variable is a dummy variable that indicates the relationship a person has with the funding agency. It is in effect expected to capture the benefits a person reaps from any cross community project by its network effect. It is expected that this variable will affect the perception of respondents on the role of these funds in establishing peace and economic development. However, it is hard to a priori postulate on the expected direction of effect. It is expected that those respondents who have a personal tie to one or both of the funding agencies will be supportive of their efforts to empower local communities.

Gender: A gender variable is also included in our model to indicate whether a person is female or male. It is our expectation that gender will have a significant effect in perception about the role of economic assistance on conflict resolution. Gender assumes a value of 1 if a respondent is female and zero otherwise. It is our expectation that females will be more favorable to the funding agencies efforts to build a peaceful society than males.

Religion: It is well known that religion is a badge of identity for both communities in the Northern Ireland conflict. To capture the role of religion the respondents were classified into three religious groups, Catholic, Protestant and others. Accordingly there are three dummy variables for each religious group. The other religion group is used as a reference group. It is expected that Catholics compared to Protestants will be more favorable to the goals and objectives of both funding agencies.

Results

This section presents the regression estimates. Table 1 summarizes the results of this analysis. The first model, Model 1, presents the probit model where the dependent variable is perceived importance of the IFI and the EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on the peace process in Northern Ireland. Model 2 reports a probit model for the perceived role of these funds on the reduction of violence. Model 3 presents an ordered probit model where the dependent variable is perceived importance of the IFI funds on community economic development. Model 4 presents an ordered probit model where the dependent variable is perceived importance of the EU fund on community economic development. Finally, Model 5 presents a probit model where the dependent variable is a binary variable for the personal economic situation of a respondent during the last three years before the survey was conducted.

Model of Importance of IFI and EU Funded Projects to One's Own Economic Development

This section examines the respondents' perceptions of the importance of both the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on community economic

development. To examine this relationship two ordered probit models, Model 3 and Model 4 were fitted. The dependent variable in each case has three categories, “important”, “neutral”, and “not important,” which assume values of 2, 1, and 0 respectively. The results from both models support the fact that the perception of Catholics is less favorable than the perception of other religious groups on the role IFI and EU funded projects play in the development of their communities. This tends to support the claim by (Honaker, 2004) who argues that duration of unemployment for Catholics is relatively higher than those for Protestants, i.e., the exit rate is very low.

Also age has a positive and significant association with the perception of the importance of IFI and EU funded projects to one’s community’s development in both models. The older a person is the higher the probability that the person is going to recognize the importance of IFI and EU funded projects to her/his own community economic development.

Gender is also found to be negative and statistically significant at less than the 5 percent level in both models. More specifically the marginal effects suggest that the probability that male respondents see a positive role for these funds on their community’s economic development are higher than their female counterparts. This result may be explained by the fact that perhaps relatively few females are aware of these funds in Northern Ireland. This finding in turn may also be explained by the fact that more men are in positions of power and privilege in society than women, which may emanate from a relative differential with regards to access to, and knowledge of the funding agencies.

Models 3 and 4 also show that age and some political party identifiers are statistically significant to warrant interpretation of the results. As far as political affiliation is concerned the two models tend to produce different results. Model 3 shows that the probability of the perceptions of a respondent from the Conservative Party and Women’s Coalition party have higher chances of perceiving a positive role of these funds on their community’s development than the other respondents. Moreover, in Model 4 only the dummy variable for the Women’s Coalition party is positive and significant at less than the 1 percentage level. Age is found to be significant in both models. It is important to note that both the Conservative Party and the Women’s Coalition are very minor political parties and so the sample of respondents supporting these parties would be very small and any conclusions to be drawn from them must be treated with caution.

Model of IFI and EU Funded Projects to Personal Economic Situation

We have also tried to explore the determinants of the economic situation of a person three years before the survey was taken, which is expected to shed some light on any possible link between economic growth and political party membership. This analysis assumes that the economic situation of an individual could be used as a proxy for economic growth. Model 6 in Table 1 reports the marginal effects of the probit model for the economic situation of individuals the

last three years before the survey. The regression output indicates that the variables Age, Class (ABC1), and "Relation" included in the model are statistically significant. One's perceived economic situation seems to have a positive correlation with age. This may be explained in part by the productivity effect as suggested by human capital theory.

Table 1: Binary probit and ordered probit models

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5			
	$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x}$	z-stat	$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x}$	z-stat	$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x}$	z-stat	$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x}$	z-stat	$\frac{\partial E[y/x]}{\partial x}$	z-stat		
Relation	-0.057*	(-3.7)	-0.07	(-0.52)	-0.076	(-1.41)	-0.065	(-1.27)			-0.174*	
Gender	0.088**	(1.92)	0.14**	(1.95)	-0.437*	(-2.79)	0.270*				0.053	
Age	-0.001	(-0.55)	-0.12	(-1.23)	0.015*	(3.33)	0.014*	(2.59)	-0.0156*	(-3.53)	-0.010**	
UUP	-0.091**	(-1.83)	0.09	(0.92)	-0.207	(-0.94)	-0.048	(-0.2)	0.204	(0.96)	-0.214	
DUP	-0.313*	(-3.41)	0.13	(0.71)	0.030	(0.1)	0.001	(0.0)	-0.15	(-0.52)	-0.144	
Alliance	0.147	(1.49)	0.00	(0.02)	-0.216	(-0.74)	0.032	(0.1)	-0.355	(-1.08)	0.022	
PUP	-0.378*	(-2.64)	0.42**	(2.48)	0.286	(0.66)	0.153	(0.34)	-1.103*	(-2.65)	-0.606	
UDP	0.108	(0.87)	0.01	(0.05)	0.291	(0.49)	0.197	(0.34)	0.226	(0.47)	-0.361	
UKUP	-0.06	(-0.23)	0.38**	*	(-1.74)	-0.292	(-0.53)	-0.444	(-0.78)	-0.29	(-0.4)	-0.267
Conservative Party	0.016	(0.10)	0.17**	*	(-1.80)	0.979*	(26.27)	-0.335	(-0.52)	0.316	(0.51)	0.251
SDLP	0.07	(1.02)	-0.15	(-1.42)	0.297	(1.11)	0.331	(1.14)	-0.860*	(-3.53)	-0.099	
Sinn Fein	-0.068	(-0.74)	-0.22	(-0.72)	-0.017	(-0.05)	-0.141	(-0.42)	-0.266	(-0.86)	0.004	
Woman Coalition	-0.026	(-0.11)	0.09	-0.92	0.333*	(23.3)	0.392*	(22.7)	-0.281	(-0.36)	-0.29	
ABC1 class	0.141*	(2.141)	-0.22*	(-2.96)	0.039	(0.21)	-0.087	(-0.45)	-0.087	(-0.43)	0.629*	
C2 class	0.054	(0.054)	-0.06	(-0.67)	-0.157	(-0.7)	-0.295	(-1.28)	-0.154	(-0.72)		
Catholic	-0.056	(-0.36)	-0.03	(-0.19)	-1.092**	(-1.94)	1.248*	*	(-2.08)	0.805***	(-1.74)	
Protestant	0.055	(0.35)	-0.05	(-0.25)	0.678	(1.19)	0.788	(1.31)	0.358	(0.78)		
Cut point1					0.945*	(3.53)	2.398*	(-6.02)				
Cut point 2					1.523*	(5.49)	1.644*	(-4.02)				
Observed Probability											0.694	
Predicted Probability [#]	0.62										0.708	
Counted R^2	0.65		0.7								0.71	
Wald chi square	61.04		44.66		-173.60				46.19		37.79	
Log Likelihood	-308.72				3727.53				-766.5		-256.72	
								5				

Observations 509 268 451 451 509 451

Source: August 1997 Millward Brown Ulster Survey. Note: * significant at 1% level** Significant at 5% level;*** significant at 10% level . #calculated at mean value.

- Model 1: dependent variable contribution of funds towards peace
- Model 2: dependent variable contribution of funds towards reducing violence
- Model 3: dependent variable importance of the IFI funds on own community economic development (three categories)
- Model 4: dependent variable importance of the EU funds on own community economic development (three categories)
- Model 5: dependent variable importance of the EU and IFI funds on own community economic development (three categories)
- Model 6: dependent variable economic situation of the person the last three years

Note: In 1999, the Unionist Democratic Party (UDP) disbanded.

Table 2: Hit and Miss Tables

Model 1				Model 2			
	Actual				Actual		
Predicted	Yes	No	Total	Predicted	Yes	No	Total
Yes	261	127	388	Yes	97	40	137
No	52	69	121	No	41	90	131
Total	313	196	509	Total	138	130	268

Model 3				Model 4			
	Actual				Actual		
Predicted	Yes	No	Total	Predicted	Yes	No	Total
Yes	261	127	388	Yes	97	40	137
No	52	69	121	No	41	90	131
Total	313	196	509	Total	138	130	268

Model 5			
	Actual		
Predicted	Yes	No	Total
Yes	295	112	407
No	18	26	44
Total	313	138	451

Source: August 1997 Millward Brown Ulster Survey

According to human capital theory age earnings profile is usually a concave function. If we assume the person's economic situation is highly dependent on individual earnings the positive coefficient of age in the model is not unexpected.¹ Further, the economic situation of the last three years before the survey was taken is positively related to the ABC1 economic class. The probability that the economic situation of a person from the professional class ABC1, improving her or his situation during the last three years of the survey is higher than the respondents in the other economic strata. What is more striking is that the relationship that a person has with the funding agency has a positive and significant correlation with her or his economic situation, i.e., the coefficient of "Relation" is positive and significant. More specifically the probability that the perceived economic situation of a person who has a good relationship with the funding agency to be at a better economic position in society is about 0.174 higher than a person who has no relationship with either of the funding agencies community development officers. This finding may suggest some form of favoritism or positive spillovers from such projects either in terms of the allocation of aid or employment. The finding may also imply the significance of personal relationships and connections within the culture, which would need a separate treatment with appropriate techniques. Thus, financial assistance instead of having a curative role for the political problem may have the potential to aggravate conflicts by increasing inequality in the society. This may also imply that economic aid by itself may not be enough to transform the conflict and should be complemented with political solutions. It is worth noting that except for the three variables discussed no variable is significant in the regression model.

Our model has also reasonable strength of goodness of fit. The log likelihood ratio, which follows, χ^2 (37.79) is found to be large enough to reject the null hypothesis of the coefficient vector, which is zero. In addition, the Hit and Miss table report in Table 2 illustrates that the counted R^2 to be 0.71. Likewise, the counted R^2 can also be calculated from the Hit and Miss table for the other models.

Contribution of Cross Community Projects to Peace

In this section we examine the perceived contribution of cross community projects to peace. In other words, we explore any systematic relationship between financial assistance and peace in Northern Ireland by estimating a binary probit model. Model 1 in Table 1 reports the probit model. The findings have far reaching implications for the role of economic assistance to completely solve ethnopolitical conflicts.

Before discussing the results in Table 1 we need to explain the construction of the dependent variable, which was constructed from an answer to the question "do you think that community projects have helped to bring about peace?" The response categories are yes, no, or I don't know. The "I don't know" options were excluded from the regression analysis so that the estimated model is a non-linear

probability model with binary response. Accordingly, a probit model was estimated. Some of the implications from the regression analysis are now outlined.

Model 1 in Table 1 reports the probit model with the dependent variable being the perceived contribution of the IFI and the EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on the peace process. According to Model 1 not all the explanatory variables are statistically significant. We discuss the variables, which have statistically significant coefficients.

RELATION: The relationship of a respondent to the funding agencies has a positive effect on the perception towards the contribution of community projects to peace. The closer a respondent is to the funding agency the higher the chances are that she or he feels it is going to contribute to peace. Recall from the previous section that this variable had a positive effect in Model 4 where the dependent variable is the perceived economic situation of the respondent. This may imply two things. The first straight forward implication is that the perception of individuals who are closer to the funding agencies may be biased in their assessment. Another possibility is that because these people are closer to the funding agencies community development officers they might have an information advantage, which enabled them to evaluate the true impact of these funds on their own lives and on the society. Which one is more dominant is a question for further research. However, these results indicate the prospect for a positive role of these funds on peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.

PUP and DUP: Model 1 also shows that the supporters of PUP and DUP are less likely to perceive the importance of cross community projects to building peace than those from other political parties. In other words, our results suggest that the supporters of the PUP and DUP perceive that the cross community projects funded by the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund have done nothing to maintain or contribute to the peace process. The DUP's support for the GFA is lukewarm.

ABC1 Class: One's membership of ABC1 class relative to DE class increases the probability of perceiving the projects' contribution towards peace positively. This is not surprising. The coefficient of the ABC1 class was positive and significant in Model 6 which suggests a probability of improvement in the economic situation of a person from ABC1 class relative to the other economic income classes. Thus, the fact that the ABC1 class is witnessing an improvement in its economic situation indicates it might have a positive assessment of the role of these funds on peace. Membership in the ABC1 class increases the probability of perceiving the contribution these funds make to the peace process by about 11 percent compared to the other two classes keeping all other things constant.

We observe that those in the ABC1 professional class tend to see the contribution to be more positive than those in the semi-skilled and skilled classes. Another variable worth noting is the respondent's relation with the funding agency. The negative coefficient indicates that there is a positive association between the perceptions of a person towards the contribution of the cross community projects funded by the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund to peacebuilding. It is

worth remembering that the value of the variable “RELATION” is in descending order, a large number means an unfavorable relation.

We have also conducted a joint test for political parties, class, and religion. A joint test for the political party dummy variables demonstrates that the political party affiliation identifiers are jointly significant, even though not all individual dummy variables for the respective political parties were statistically significant. The interpretation of this result is that the party affiliation of respondents as a whole is statistically significant in affecting the perception of the IFI and the EU Peace and Reconciliation fund towards peacebuilding. With regards to the religion variables, the coefficients were significant neither individually nor jointly. Hence, the probability of perceiving the contribution of economic assistance to peacebuilding does not vary by religious affiliation. Finally, a joint test for age groups shows that the age variables were significant neither jointly nor individually.

Goodness of Fit

The log likelihood ratio which follows χ^2 is found to be large enough to reject the null hypothesis of the coefficient vector, which is zero. In addition, the log likelihood value at the globally optimal point is reported to be about -309. As it is more common and more reasonable we report the power of our model using the Hit and Miss table. Table 2 reports that the counted R^2 to be about 65 percent.

Specification Test

We have also conducted a normality test for the probit models. For these tests we use the loglikelihood test as follows

$$\lambda_{LR} = -2[L_r(\bar{\beta}) - L_{ur}(\hat{\beta})] \sim \chi^2_a$$

Note that the null hypothesis is the distribution of the error terms, which is normal. The null hypothesis of normality test for Model 1 shows that the λ_{LR} is 0.56 so that we do not reject the hypothesis. Thus, our probit model is justified. The same was also done for Model 2 and Model 6. The results show that the null hypothesis is rejected at less than the 1 percent level.

Perceived Effect of IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation Fund on Violence

Using a binary response mode, this section analyses the response to the following question: “do you believe IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund economic support has helped in the reduction of violence?” The possible responses are: “yes”, “no” and “don’t know.” More specifically, we estimate a probit model for the perceived contribution of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund’s economic assistance on the reduction of violence. Model 2 in Table 1 presents the results of this exercise. The dependent variable is a binary outcome, which assumes 0 if the response is “no,” and 1 if the response is “yes.” The probit equation in Table 1 indicates that not all of the factors included in the regression analysis have a significant effect on the perceived impact of economic assistance in reducing violence in Northern Ireland.

Gender: All things being equal, the probability of a male respondent perceiving a positive role for the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund's economic assistance to reduce violence is lower by 14 percent than a female counterpart. All things being equal the probability of a person from ABC1 class perceiving a positive role of IFI and EU financial assistance is higher than for a person from the DE class. Our probit model suggest that the probability of rating the impact of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund on the reduction of violence is negatively associated with PUP, UKUP, and Conservative Party affiliation.

The model has also a very good fit when we look at the overall predicted probability in comparison with the observed probability. Its goodness of fit is indeed remarkable while the observed and our predicted probabilities are 0.49 and 0.48 respectively. This gives the model more predicted capacity as it seems to fit the data well. The hit and miss table shows that the counted R^2 is about 70 percent. A specification test was also conducted to check if there is any fragility in our estimates. The specification test shows that the results are indeed tenable to the problem of endogeneity. We have also conducted a normality test by employing the predicted values $(x'\beta)$ and $(x'\beta)^2$ in our model to calculate the restricted and unrestricted likelihood values. The likelihood test of normality does not reject the null hypothesis of normality. As can be seen from the Hit and Miss table the percentage of correctly classified responses in our model, the counted R square, is about 70 percent. This is a remarkably high goodness of fit.

Discussion

Overall, the public opinion data suggest that economic assistance properly administered may play a key role in fostering an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict. Clearly, the respondents recognized the link between prosperity and the fact that peace is the end of the long war. The positive marginal effects of the minor political parties within Northern Ireland--Conservative party and Women's Coalition party in Model 3 and 4 are supportive of this argument. Thus, the role of economic assistance coupled with the 1998 GFA may be important in building peace over the long-term. Both Governments built confidence building mechanisms into the GFA to reform the police, decommission paramilitary arms, release prisoners, and withdraw emergency legislation (Wilford, 2000). In 1994, the EU created the Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation to support the political process and build the peace dividend. In addition, the IFI's economic assistance and President Clinton's visits to Northern Ireland resulted in the Catholic community and a slight majority of Protestants support for the 1998 GFA (Byrne, 2002). Hence, the GFA will not provide an immediate political solution to the deep-rooted causes of the Northern Ireland conflict. In addition, the impact of both of these funds on the political process may be negative as they might have had an adverse effect by further

alienating already isolated Unionists. The negative marginal effects of the respondents from the PUP and UUP, UKUP and DUP in Model 1 suggest that Unionists do not perceive that the funds will build a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. The GFA “is neither a solution to the Irish question nor a blueprint for government, it is a framework to build consensus” (Cox, 1999, p. 66). By 2002, only one-third of Protestants supported the GFA (MacGinty, 2003).

In the current climate Unionist mistrust of the peace process is indicative of mainstream Unionist uneasiness over the decommissioning of Republican and Loyalist arms, and prisoner release means less Unionist confidence in the GFA to resolve the conflict (Aughey, 2000; Dixon, 2000). The negative marginal effects of the PUP and UUP, UKUP and DUP in Model 1 are supportive of this argument. The GFA includes the Unionist community negotiating with SF that it vilifies as terrorists, and a SF who has abandoned support for political violence in pursuit of the goal of a united Ireland that it has fought to achieve for over thirty years (Cox, Guelke and Stephen, 2000, p.5).

Moreover, Honaker (2004) used available data to estimate the separate unemployment rates for Protestants and Catholics. He found that unemployment leads to images of economic discrimination and is a significant causal mechanism for the intensity of conflict in Northern Ireland. Catholics still remain twice as likely to be long-term unemployed as Protestants (Byrne and Irvin, 2002). Currently, Republicans traded the long war to be part of the political process of government in Northern Ireland, to address human rights, policing, prisoner release, equality, poverty and unemployment that marginalized Catholics in the past (Coakley, 2003; Irvin and Byrne, 2002). In this study, we found that the probability that Catholics will perceive the funded projects as very important to their community’s economic development is much lower than Protestants. Catholics, in particular, were excluded and marginalized by the Unionists, and lacked material advantage. Moreover, it is within the SF respondents in the survey that we see a belief in the positive role of the funding agencies in addressing economic disadvantage, and in reducing the levels of violence in Northern Ireland.

This finding is in contrast to that of the professional and skilled Unionist classes where there is minimal support for the idea that economic assistance can provide more economic opportunities and reduce the level of violence. The Unionists rank the PIRA as the net beneficiary of the Troubles. Further, a lower level of recognition of the existence of the EU Peace and Reconciliation fund by Protestant respondents indicates that the lower level of applications for EU funding in Protestant areas may be due to the lack of a local community infrastructure when compared to the Catholic community. Moreover, fewer unemployed Protestants compared to Catholics perceived the distribution of IFI funds between both communities to be fair. This finding is noticeable when we compare the Unionist with Nationalists. Protestants initially boycotted what they termed as IFI blood money from America (Byrne, 2002).

In general, Protestants find the distribution of the IFI and EU Peace and Reconciliation fund unfair. They perceive that Catholics are receiving all of the benefits of both funds. This finding may also be related to the complexity of the

application process suggesting that the funds are escalating sectarian conflict rather than transforming it. Similarly, a post-2003 Northern Ireland Election Survey found that Unionists shared a strong belief that the 1998 GFA benefits Nationalists at the expense of Unionists (Dowds, Hayes and McAllister, 2005). In other words, Protestants perceive economic gains for Catholics as a deficit for their community promoting sectarianism rather than cooperation. Unionists have a “historic culture of fatalism, a culture of suspicions of the intentions of those outside that Unionist family and even more suspicious of the intentions, even the best intentions of those within it” (Aughey, 2000, p.185).

In 1994, the EU consulted with community groups in its development of the peace package. Yet, far fewer respondents in this sample are aware of either EU or IFI funded projects in their communities. The professional and skilled classes are more aware of funded projects and both agencies. Perhaps the skills to access economic assistance from the funding agencies remains confined to certain classes. The amount of red tape hampering applications was certainly illustrated in other studies of community group leader’s attitudes toward the funding process (Byrne and Ayulo, 1998; Byrne and Irvin, 2001, 2002) while funding agencies target the areas of greatest needs. Thus, the funding agencies need to streamline the application process to make it more user-friendly.

Fitzduff and O’Hagan (2002) make the point that economic assistance from the EU Peace and Reconciliation fund has empowered the community sector in the grassroots to work for constructive socioeconomic and political change and has assisted in stabilizing the conflict in Northern Ireland. This point is not completely convincing given the aforementioned results. Our findings tend to indicate that the funds are only perceived to be beneficial to certain groups in the society.

Conclusion

Even though the contribution of the IFI and EU in financial terms is dwarfed by that coming from the British government they are important as part of engaging civil society in a multi-track intervention peace process. By examining the role of external economic aid in Northern Ireland’s polarized society, this article suggests that peacebuilding is, as Byrne and Irvin (2002) put it, “a process comprised of a multiplicity of interdependent roles, functions and activities as an effective strategy to help resolve ethnic conflict” (p. 58). External economic funding is one of several intervention activities that must be integrated into a transdisciplinary strategy of conflict transformation enhanced by a coordinated, multimodal, and complementarity approach at multiple levels of intervention (Byrne 2001ab). Other activities that can contribute to conflict resolution include: citizen empowerment and participatory democratic initiatives, cultural tradition initiatives, education for mutual understanding, integrated education efforts, urban planning peacekeeping strategies, mediation training, civic education, and a storytelling process to address past traumas (Bollens, 2000; Byrne, 2001ab; Senehi 2000). “A comprehensive peacebuilding approach creates, therefore, a critical space or

landscape that builds upon people in their own setting” (Lederach, 1997, p. 12). Only a transformational approach to conflict resolution can empower members of ethnic groups sufficiently to reduce conflict. A multi-modal and transdisciplinary approach to conflict resolution that encompasses and draws from every approach can produce rapid change in societies torn by conflict and empower citizens (Byrne and Keashly, 2000).

Economic assistance as part of a multi-track intervention process within the political framework of the GFA has the potential to build a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Ultimately, the power of the GFA, its potential, and its constraints can all be found within the roots of its purpose. “There may be quibbling about the (GFA’s) institutional superstructure but if it is going to succeed it will be because of the values which form its foundations” (Thompson, 1999, p. 263). Indeed, the importance of the GFA’s emphasis on consent, diversity, parity of esteem, and commitment to exclusively peaceful means cannot be overstated, because fear motivates violence (Thompson, 1999). The GFA is functional because it seeks to directly resolve fear. It aims to bring to an end an ethnic conflict by reassuring the two communities that they have a right to their identity (Thompson, 1999).

The GFA cannot transform into a sustainable peace accord without further progress by the political parties because it has failed to significantly impact hostile relationships and attitudes, and has not aided in the demise of political polarity (MacGinty 2003). However, the overarching lesson here is that at least in the case of protracted ethnopolitical conflict no treaty, document or economic assistance package on its own can transform societies plagued by ethnic violence as the work toward the resolution of these conflicts can only occur through genuine discussions and communication (Byrne, 2000). But the responsibility belongs to the political parties, and the GFA has at least built them a vehicle to get to peace.

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