Did British policies and involvement in Northern Ireland aid or hinder the peace process?

Grace Buzzoni
### Key Terms

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Did British policies and involvement in Northern Ireland aid or hinder the peace process?

Northern Ireland was created in 1921 after the ending of the Irish Civil War. The six counties in the north east of the country remained under British control when the remaining counties formed a republican state called Ireland. In the island of Ireland, Catholics were in the majority except in these six counties, which became Northern Ireland. Protestants emigrated from the North of England and particularly Scotland in the 17th Century and mainly settled in the region that became Northern Ireland. Catholics were therefore in the minority in this area for many years and treated poorly. The Catholic community in Northern Ireland had faced significant discrimination over a very long period. Catholics, due to gerrymandering had no real say in parliament. The Protestant community held power in Stormont which was the regional parliament. Protestants ensured that the population in each electoral constituency was such that most the population was Protestant. This consolidated their power base as the constituents would vote for the Protestant candidate, ensuring they maintained absolute power. Discrimination was present in all aspects of life; housing, education and employment, all of which were heavily segregated. Catholics were considered to be second class citizens. The ‘Troubles’ began in the late 1960’s as a civil rights movement, following others that had occurred worldwide, including America. The civil rights movement of the Catholic community was exploited by Republicans turning the peaceful protests violent. The violence was the crisis point of a long history of issues and conflict.

Internment and the ‘Shoot to Kill’ policy were British polices that had a large impact on the ‘Troubles’. These two policies are important as Internment caused a great deal of resentment, anger and emphasised the Catholic community’s second class status, making little differentiation between the Catholic community and Republican activists. “Shoot to Kill” is also highly important. It did not have such a large impact at the time as investigations and enquiries into the claims of victims’ families are only just being conducted. However, these policies angered and alienated many people. They also demonstrated the British Government’s views on members of the public. I investigated whether internment and “Shoot to Kill” hindered the peace process or not. Britain’s involvement was substantial and necessary, however it ultimately delayed peace, and the movement to peace.
Internment

Internment was a policy introduced by the British Government into Northern Ireland on the 9th August 1971 ending in December 1975, stated to be "solely for protection of life". The purpose of this policy was to reduce the amount of violence in Northern Ireland. This was done by arresting and imprisoning someone without trial, "who is suspected of acting, of having acted or being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the preservation of the peace and the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland". The intention was to stop the possibility of a full scale civil war in Northern Ireland.

It was suggested and developed by the Northern Irish Prime Minister Brian Faulkner, and his Stormont government, in 1971. This was possible as The Civil Authorities Act, 1922, allowed the reintroduction of the law of internment. It was previously used in the 1950’s to deal with rising levels of unrest, it was successful then, and so was believed would be successful again during the 1970’s. Arguably, though the British government did not investigate the issues in Northern Ireland enough. The unrest and anger was higher than ever before. Perhaps with this knowledge the British government would not have given authorisation to this policy. The British became more involved in Northern Ireland after the introduction of Internment. Faulkner brought the policy to the attention of the British Prime Minister Edward Heath. Heath’s consent was necessary as the British Army was required to enforce the policy. Internment was meant to be a short – term solution to regain control of the streets before imposing order in the country. However, internment was relied upon by the security forces especially in Belfast for the next five years to regain control over the streets and the people. People, particularly the Catholic community felt targeted due to the closeness of the Catholic and Republican communities.

Heath wished for there to be a condition that both Loyalists and Republicans could be arrested and all actions from both the Loyalists and Republicans would therefore, be severely limited. This would ensure that the British government would be seen as a neutral force. However, Faulkner refused this. Heath did not force the issue as Faulkner in his own right had significant power and influence and could make Heath’s time in office, and his dealings with Northern Ireland far more difficult. Faulkner and Stormont were now seen as crucial in ending the violence. Also, Heath would not want to alienate any of the electorate in England by forcing the issue and appearing to support the Catholic community who many particularly in England considered to be if not actively, passively supporting Republicans and groups such as the IRA. Faulkner only agreed to a six month ban on marches by both groups and only Republican’s to be arrested. This was considered an act of "common sense" by the media at the time. Loyalists had originally believed that the British Army

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4 Ibid.
5 The Belfast Telegraph, Monday 9th August, page 1
was there to protect and support them, originally welcoming them with open arms. The Protestant community considered themselves Britain’s main supporters and fundamentally British. This meant that they were particularly angry at Heath’s intentions to be treated equal to the Catholics and Republicans who they felt were unjust and attacking democracy. Protestants felt they were being attacked so retaliated in self – defence, increasing the issues and violence.

Faulkner, along with the majority who worked in Stormont, and many other official government organisations, such as the Police, were Protestant and traditionally loyal to Britain. This meant laws were biased. There was little or no equality for Catholics. However, Faulkner placed a Catholic loyalist as his State minister and a Catholic in his Cabinet when he first came to power in May 1971. These appointments were a token of inclusion to the Catholic community and the British Government. Catholics continued to be powerless. The appointments were simply a public relations exercise to stop any backlash therefore enabling the claim that there was diversity in Stormont. Representation was therefore, particularly poor for Catholics. However, these appointees did not hold Republican values and therefore, they did not represent the views of a large percentage of the Catholic population. The appointments were an offer to the British government, but held very little meaning and the posts held very little power. Their purpose was purely to appear more acceptable to the wider world. However, these were all the reforms that Faulkner was willing to make. There was already widespread distrust by Catholics of the British before the introduction of the policy, due to the behaviour of British forces in Northern Ireland and the hard line they took with civilians before the start of internment. Civilians felt, especially Catholics, that they were being controlled by the British. Ultimately, the introduction of Internment brought an end to the Stormont government for a year due to the violence that occurred in reaction to the policy. By the beginning of August 1971, there had been nearly 100 deaths due to the political unrest. The resulting violence affected everyone in the country. The death rate was four times higher than the previous year. Faulkner was under huge pressure to control the violence and deaths. Therefore, internment was considered to be a last resort by a desperate government. Internment was an attempt to control the immediate unrest, and then look at a long-term plan. Stormont had to be perceived to be making changes and trying to tackle the issues that had originated from the civil rights movement, which then quickly escalated into the Troubles. Negotiating and creating a deal with Republicans was not considered to be an option by the highly bigoted and discriminatory members of Stormont. Faulkner and Heath believed they could stop or at least limit the violence without negotiating with terrorists.

Faulkner, openly stated when he announced the beginning of internment that it was solely for the arrest of IRA members and not of any loyalist paramilitaries. This was due to Faulkner’s belief and insistence that it was purely Republicans who were participating in the violence. Despite the vast amounts of evidence, showing the levels of violence and destruction, committed by loyalist groups such as UVF. Faulkner saw internment as a process to help halt the violence and ultimately end the Republican uprising by crushing the opposition he faced. This task was difficult, but he believed that he held power, not the paramilitary groups, who controlled the public through fear. Paramilitaries gained increasing support, therefore, political control and internment did nothing to stop or limit this. Heath removed Faulkner from office, closed Stormont temporarily and returned government to Westminster. Faulkner was therefore, unsuccessful in his attempt to limit Catholic representation in parliament, strengthen Protestant hold on government, and control the violence. Faulkner, never had any intention to work with Catholics, even power sharing in government, despite the possibility that it could have meant the end violence. The Catholic community started the civil rights movement to gain equal rights and to remove all sectarian discrimination in Northern Ireland.

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Faulkner’s refusal essentially confirmed to the Catholic community that if they agreed to a peace agreement, they would have gained nothing and they would not be treated as equals. Faulkner publicly supported segregation and the superiority of Protestants. If Heath had been willing to stand against these views, peace may have been achieved much faster. Internment strengthened the entrenched views within society of bigotry and the unjustness of the country. The Protestant community was unwilling to cooperate with the general Catholic public due to the large increase in violence after the introduction of internment.

The first night of Internment is referred to as Operation Demetrius. This was an operation, conducted by the British Army, on the night of the 9th - 10th of August 1971. There were mass arrests of suspected Republicans. On this night alone 342 people were arrested on suspicion of working with the IRA. These raids sparked a further four days of violence due to the deprivation of liberties granted to those arrested. In these four days 24 people were killed including civilians, mostly Catholic, British Soldiers and IRA members. The policy initially had a far more negative response than expected. Outdated lists were used in the initial arrests. These lists had 420 names which were provided by the RUC Special Branch. Many of the 342 men who were arrested had no connection to the IRA or had any role in the violence, as information used to form the lists was faulty and outdated. In one cases, the information was so outdated that in Armagh the British Army were attempting to arrest a man who had been dead for four years. The RUC had been slowly distancing themselves from the large Republican communities in the North over the previous years and therefore the gap in intelligence increased. The ultimate result was that within 48 hours of the initial arrests 116 of those that had been arrested had been cleared as having no connection to the violence. The government did, though after some time, set up an advisory council which allowed internees to appeal their detainment and have a chance to be released, this was an attempt to promote government policy within Northern Ireland. Paddy Kennedy, a prominent Republican MP, fighting against internment held a press conference in Belfast on the 13th August 1971 stating, "They have failed to get near the leading members of the IRA." No members of the PIRA were interned, the authorities had little information on them and had difficulty in diminishing their power base.

Prior to 2nd February 1973, all who were arrested and detained were Republicans, despite the UVF having been highly active since 1966. During the entire four and a half years of internment 1,981 people were arrested and interned. 1,874 of them were Republicans and 107 were loyalist. However, in the first six months alone over 2,400 people were arrested, but not necessary interned, some being released in their first few hours in custody. The obvious and large inequality caused a lot of damage to the efforts to bring about peace by the British Army and British Government. Many Republicans were unwilling to discuss peace even if the government was willing. Faulkner received criticism for not detaining any Loyalists. This led to accusations of partiality and discrimination against Catholics. This only confirmed to the population that internment was as much a political device used against the Catholic community as it was a security measure. Internment was highly unsuccessful as the violence and deaths dramatically increased. The distance between Protestants and Catholics had increased making any government movement almost unimportant. There were no

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 The Belfast Telegraph, Thursday 12th August page 8.
13 Ibid
successful gains to any community due to the introduction of internment. The security forces had
lost more control of an already angry public. Their difficulties were demonstrated by the number of
attacks, which increased, in response to the start of internment. The Catholic community as a whole,
were unjustly persecuted for Republican action, as Faulkner and the British government let their
personal views cloud his judgment.

In the month after internment commenced thirty-five people were killed and in the rest of
1971 a further 150 people were murdered. This led to the most violent year of the Troubles, in
their most violent period. An open and constructive negotiation could never occur in this situation as
the increase in violence, anger and distrust between the opposing sides and the British was so large,
no effective peace treaty could ever be reached. This greatly increased animosity and lack of trust so
that discussions were no longer possible, and any thought of conciliation no longer existed. Time was
required to ensure that the pain caused by the introduction of internment and its unexpected violent
aftermath, could be overcome and allow productive discussions to take place. In order to create an
agreement that was acceptable to all.

The increase in violence meant that there was no wish to enter talks as there was a
reciprocal increase in resentment and anger from all in Northern Ireland as well as mainland UK. The
electorate in Britain did not support the government negotiating with terrorists and murderers. This
severely limited the possibility of and movement towards peace as the British Government and
Heath’s main concerns were to become re-elected. As well as beginning a disturbing precedent of
negotiating with terrorists. Therefore, the government was unwilling to make any bold statements
or to negotiate to a peace treaty that would give acknowledgement to the issues that Republicans
raised. This would be accepting guilt, therefore committing political suicide. The issues and violence
though great were never expected to last thirty years. The British people in England, saw a threat to
their lives and their way of life and therefore, did not wish to be associated with these men who
were committing hideous crimes. They were labelled by British politicians and newspapers as
terrorists, which they were. Therefore, the government felt unable to negotiate with them. The
terrorists did not have electoral support for any decision or agreement which might be made. Heath
and many members of the Cabinet were particularly worried that opening discussions with terrorists
could ultimately cause the Conservatives to lose power in Britain for an extended period. They were
ultimately however, unsuccessful at maintaining power in Britain as they were removed from office,
with Northern Ireland and the failures there playing a role in it.

Internment prompted many people to become terrorists and join the paramilitaries, in which
they otherwise would have been uninterested. There was a significant increase in the levels of
membership, which was completely opposite to the aims of Faulkner and the desired effects of
internment. This, in turn, caused increased levels of violence as angry individuals turned to
extremist, violent acts to express their feelings about the injustice and the discrimination against
innocent men. Few of the leaders and key members of the paramilitaries were arrested, which was
the aim of the policy. This meant that the key players who were calling the shots were not interned
and therefore their power was not diminished even partially. The policy therefore being a failure and
leaving the government unsure of how to progress. Internment, therefore, cannot be considered
completely successful in creating order as it was not able to truly enhance the safety of the streets in
Northern Ireland. Peace was also pushed further away, as there was only a very small diminution of
power from the paramilitaries. Despite the British government’s best attempts they were unable to
take back control. This meant that Stormont did not feel the need to settle and accept an agreement
that did not fully accede to all their wishes. This helped in increasing the levels of violence. If the
paramilitary leaders were arrested, they still had a large amount of influence over what went on in the
outside world. Their influence and power over the members of paramilitaries was not affected by

14 Ibid.
them being in prison. Even if members were interned the security and systems in place to isolate them were so poor meant they still had large amounts of control. An example of this is Gusty Spence, a prominent UVF leader and a leading loyalist politician, was one of the few loyalists interned. This was the first time since the policy was reintroduced in 1971 that any Loyalist had been interned\(^\text{15}\). Spence was imprisoned in the Maze, a prison established to house the large numbers arrested during internment. He had a huge influence over the other loyalist prisoners as well as continuing his role in the UVF while in prison. Therefore, internment made no significant difference as paramilitaries retained their power and control whether they were interned or not. The policy of internment was to take those that were deemed most dangerous off the streets, in particular the leaders of paramilitary groups. Spence was a powerful leader, but being interned did not affect the power he held, making the policy a failure as its main aim was not achieved. Soon after the British involvement in August 1969, Republicans began to not only fight against Loyalists but also the British Army when they became more visible on the ground and their involvement in policing increased. After February 1973, Loyalists felt the need to fight against the British Army, who they originally saw as an ally. From this point any peace agreement would be even harder to arrange. This left the British Army and Police with little or no support in Northern Ireland, creating an even larger force opposed to the authorities and with little the British could do to lower it.

Perhaps the most public display of disagreement with the policy of internment was the withdrawal of 30 prominent Derry Catholics from public bodies. Less than five days after the introduction of internment, the IRA held a Press Conference in Belfast. The statement made by Joe Cahill on behalf of the IRA, informed the public no changes will be made due to the introduction of internment, the campaign would continue as if nothing had changed\(^\text{16}\). The plan for internment had been ultimately unsuccessful. Internment was meant to limit and reduce the power of the paramilitary groups, promoting the safety of all civilians. This failed and they were in fact becoming increasingly powerful as their support increased in two ways; general support from their communities or active support by those joining the paramilitary to fight against the injustices of the British involvement. Both happened and increased the standing of all paramilitaries, particularly the IRA. The official statistics agree with that. In the remainder of August, 1972 thirty-five people were killed and by the end of the year, 150 people had been killed since the introduction of internment\(^\text{17}\). In addition, about 7,000 Catholic refugee families fled across the border to the relative safety of the South\(^\text{18}\). A commission chaired by Lord Diplock, 1972 considering the use of internment stated that “the scale of the operation led to the arrest and detention of a number of persons against whom suspicion was founded on inadequate information.”, the numbers arrested were too large and meant many key members of terrorist organisations were not arrested.\(^\text{19}\)

Internment was finally stopped in December 1975. Over a period beginning in 1973 if violence continued to decrease a few men each month would be released. This agreement was made between the British government and paramilitaries. This could be considered successful as the violence did lower and the never escalated to the levels in 1972 again. This was one of the first times all the sides had come together and made an agreement. If all groups had been willing to

\(^{15}\) http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/intern/chron.htm (Accessed 13/01/2016).


\(^{18}\) Ibid.

compromise on their aims, a peace agreement may have been made. These were the conditions that were made clear to the paramilitary groups and therefore mostly respected. However, this ‘threat’, to limit those being released had a limited effect. There were still retaliation attacks on other groups as well as additional movements to stop policies and agreements before they were introduced. The world outside of the prisons, where the majority of the population had to live, was considered by all to be more important than the liberty of the men. Some men, who were considered as high risk internees, were convicted in courts and remained in custody. The British government decided to remove the Special Category Status on 1st March 1976, on the recommendation of the Gardiner Committee, which investigated the police and governments dealing with terrorism in Northern Ireland. This meant anyone convicted after March 1976 was treated as an ordinary criminal. Prisoners had been granted Special Category Status in July 1972, stating all prisoners convicted of a crime related to the Troubles would gain political status. This political status was a condition, set by the PIRA, in a truce meeting, with the British Government. It meant that they were able to gain Prisoner of War status. This allowed them to gain the extra privileges guaranteed by the Geneva Convention. William Whitelaw, only installed this in 1972, to defuse the situation and stop any hunger strikes during this time. Whitelaw and the British government were keen to explore links and communication with the IRA. Any additional men who were arrested after December 1975, were tried in a non-jury court as ordinary criminals and not as political prisoners. This movement stopped any progression to peace that the end of internment had made. Though necessary as justifying the crimes committed severely weakened the opportunity for peace.

The Gardiner Committee was set up by the British Government to investigate how they should deal with "terrorism and subversion in Northern Ireland". This heavily suggested that the introduction of the political status was a mistake as it gave paramilitaries the ability to question the removal of Special Category Status, causing larger issues for the British. This status had shown that the government considered their fight was justified. This meant any subsequent peace agreement would have to be far more equal, and substantial progress would have to be made in official bodies especially in Stormont. The government wished to emphasise to the people how serious the acts of terrorism were and, therefore, wished to mandate harsher punishments following the advice of the Committee. Also, the Committee highlighted that "the earliest practical opportunity should be taken to bring special category statuses to an end." Once the first few Republican men were arrested and imprisoned as ordinary criminals and forced to wear the prison uniform they rebelled and refused to wear it stating that they were political prisoners. Previously under the Special Category Status they were able to wear their own clothes. Instead they wore the blankets from the beds in their cells. By 1978 there were nearly 300 Republican "blanket prisoners". They were fighting against the government and authorities who, they felt, had suddenly changed their mind on whether the fight was valid. The protest was against the removal of the status and their fight for their rights, both in prisons and more generally. This limited the governments movements. There was little they could do, the move to end Special Category Status was required as it was giving terrorists justification for their actions, though it angered many limiting any movement towards peace.

Internment, and the subsequent issues that occurred with Special Category Status, did not hasten the movement to peace. In fact, many historians believe that due to the introduction of

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22 Ibid.
Internment, violence dramatically increased, particularly in areas of traditional Republican support. The growth in anger and resentment towards the British was dramatic. There was a large amount of persecution with little or no investigation linked to the arrests of many of these men. The anger and the resentment that was created then, meant that the general Republican community, were less likely to agree to a Peace treaty as Britain and the British Government would have to play a large role in the agreement. Following internment, beliefs became more polarised with less desire to compromise. Internment had provided direct examples of discrimination by the security forces in the enforcement of the British governments’ policies in Northern Ireland. The Republican community feared that such discrimination would become normalised, if they agreed a peace deal then. The mass arrests and the brutality particularly by the police could become an accepted norm that they were unwilling to risk. The protests, which often became violent, continued. Many historians argue that the protesters saw this as their only choice.

Internment is generally considered by historians as well as residents of Northern Ireland and members of the armed forces to be one of the worst policies used during the Troubles. Four days after the introduction of Internment it was considered a 'catastrophic error in judgement' by many papers including the Belfast Telegraph. Though originally thought by the British government to bring immediate stability that was desperately required. Initially, it was also considered by many in Northern Ireland especially Catholics to be the end of the reform programme that had been beginning. This is due to the massive after-effects and the vast amount of violence that occurred. As a consequence, Northern Republicans could not win alone and so needed support from the South as well as elsewhere. Therefore, Internment did not give either side a victory but only created more discontent and brutality. Historian Paul Dixon, highlighted that the treatment of the internees was bordering on torture and even Second World War Soldiers said the treatment of those arrested would not have been permitted in a Prisoner- of- War- Camps in World War Two due to the Geneva Convention. The policy was so one-sided that it caused Republicans to see the British Army and the British government as nothing but a tool for Loyalist discrimination against them. The United States was particularly appalled by this and many Irish living in America donated money and goods to Republicans which often found its way to the IRA. That 1972, was the bloodiest year of the Troubles is unsurprising. The violence was a response to the unjust and brutal British policy of Internment in Northern Ireland.

The policy of internment had a very large impact, angering many people. The violence dramatically grew and became more blood thirsty, spreading from Northern Ireland to Britain, for example the bomb attacks in Birmingham in 1974 and the attacks on Kings Cross and Euston Station in 1973. The British policy did not lower the violence or remove many great threats from the streets. If a key leader was interned, they still held power outside the prison. Internment, therefore cannot be considered a successful policy as it pushed peace further away and made attempts such as the Sunningdale Agreement, 1973, even less likely to be successful.

“Shoot to Kill”

“Shoot to Kill”, is suspected by many in Northern Ireland as an unofficial policy held by the RUC and Army, with the knowledge of the British Government. The security forces did not shoot to


maintain control of a situation but to cause physical injury and kill civilians, who often held no connection to paramilitary groups. This likely occurred without government knowledge though they were part of the cover up. This was a highly controversial ‘policy.’ An examination of government documents does not reveal any official policy to deliberately kill a suspect on sight, instead of apprehending them. Most the victims were Catholics, usually Republicans. However, there were some Protestant victims, though in comparison to the numbers of Catholic’s the numbers are very small. One loyalist killed under this policy by undercover soldiers was UVF member Brian Robinson. “The Shoot to Kill” policy led to multiple investigations. The majority resulted in the conclusion that the British Army, in particular the SAS, Parachute Regiment, and the RUC, were heavily involved in the deaths of many suspected members of Irish Republican Paramilitaries, either through direct shooting or collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries. The SAS have been accused of murdering 14 PIRA and INLA members. Perhaps the most public and obvious representation of this policy occurred when the actions of the Parachute Regiment, in both Bloody Sunday 30th January 1972, and the Ballymurphy Massacre, 9th – 11th August 1971, which caused the deaths of 24 innocent Catholics.

The “Shoot to Kill” policy has never been acknowledged as an official policy by either Stormont or the British Government. While this may be true the government was forced to cover up the actions of the army, the British government hindered peace as they allowed the deaths to occur. However, there is strong evidence of collusion. When an individual, usually Republican, though not always, became an irritation to either the British Army or RUC, they asked a Loyalist paramilitary to carry out a murder, for which they would not be punished. The government would have been aware of this and given permission. If the government wasn’t aware of “Shoot to Kill” they were aware of collusion. In many circumstances the weapons used had been supplied by the British Army or the RUC. Groups such as the FRU would recruit agents from within paramilitaries such as the UDA. On recruitment, loyalist paramilitaries were offered immunity from prosecution for any crimes they may have committed. They were also paid a large amount of money to give any additional information they may have on events at the time. Collusion however, has been strongly denied by the British government. It has always been a cause of debate and over time has been proven to be correct. There are multiple cases were collusion has correctly been identified. This was not limited to loyalists. In the 1980’s the Police and Army began to have informants giving information, these informants were often high up in the IRA.

It was uncovered by Sir John Stevens in the Stevens Enquiry that acknowledged collusion had taken place: "Rogue elements within the Police and army in Northern Ireland helped loyalist paramilitaries to murder Catholics in the late 1980s.” Stevens also found that the operatives used by FRU were not properly monitored or controlled. They could do as they wished and participate in terrorist activities. They conducted specific killings to assist the Army, but continued on with their usual activities with paramilitary groups. The enquiry found that many deaths could have been prevented if collusion had not occurred between the army, RUC and loyalist paramilitaries.

Perhaps one of the most public cases of collusion was the death of Patrick Finucane who was a human rights lawyer fighting for the rights of many who had been imprisoned under the Internment policy. He was considered a "thorn in the side of those in the military and security establishment who had things to hide." He also ensured that the authorities followed the proper

27 Ballymurphy Massacre Families leaflet.
28 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/2955941.stm
29 Patrick Finucane Review, point 44,
procedures, making it far more difficult for the police to hold and imprison Finucane’s clients. Finucane was from a traditional Catholic background, and generally supported the majority of Republican internees. He had become deeply involved in many hunger strikes cases at The Maze prison, in particular, defending Bobby Sands. The authorities did not provide Finucane with protection when it was required in 1981 and 1985, when there were severe threats to his life. The Security Services and UDA took no actions to protect him, which they had an obligation to do so.

Finucane was murdered in his home, whilst he was eating dinner with his wife and three young children by the UDA on the evening of the 12th February 1989. His wife, Geraldine Finucane was also injured in the attack at their home. Finucane was shot once by an automatic rifle and a further thirteen times, all of which hit his upper body and head and his wife shot once in the foot after two UDA members broke in and attacked. A UDR soldier was jailed for the theft of the weapons from a British Army barracks. He then sold them to a UDA member who participated in the murder of Finucane. It was confirmed by Lord Stevens and Judge Cory in their report that collusion was a key reason for the death of Finucane. Without the police’s involvement, the murder would never have occurred. There had been many threats to Finucane from the RUC given via his clients when they were arrested. Warnings were given to the clients that Finucane may be dead soon. It was found that the operatives run by the British Army and FRU, and placed undercover in groups such as the UDA had large roles in the death of Finucane and the expected deaths of three key Catholic solicitors conducted by the UDA. No action was taken in the light of these warnings with the result that Finucane was murdered. These agents were also involved in many other deaths. The agents all held strong loyalist views and ideologies. There was no checking by the government of the actions being carried out by their bodies in Northern Ireland. The enemies were the paramilitary groups and the police and army had no opinions and would act within the law. This was foolish and unwise, increasing resistance and making peace more difficult to occur.

In this case, as well as in many other similar cases, poor judicial process took place. These processes gave an appearance to the public that there was a thorough and proper investigation taking place, whereas in fact there was not. Investigations into the crimes were superficial and complicit, therefore no one was punished for the deaths. Victims were classed as members of a paramilitary organisation, without any evidence to support this claim. This meant they were seen by the press, as well as by the general public as criminals, despite often having no involvement with the groups. Allowing for there to be a poor investigation. The result was that many people, especially victims’ families, who were angered by the unjust treatment of their loved ones were radicalised. The membership of republican paramilitaries increased due to the implementation of this unofficial policy. Violence and terrorism continued, meaning that a prospect of peace receded. People were becoming less willing to compromise as the Government and the government forces such as the police and the army were not changing. They were still highly discriminative and arguably becoming more and more bigoted while colluding with illegal loyalist paramilitaries.

Consistently during this period there were several cover ups and whitewashes. The government influenced the media. The presence of the army in conjunction with colluding formal enquiries ensured that no blame could be placed upon the government, its officials, or any members of the armed forces. There were many events such as the Ballymurphy Massacre in West Belfast, a predominantly Catholic area, where eleven people were killed by members of the Parachute

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31 Stevens Enquiry.

32 Patrick Finucane Report.
Regiment³³. A section of the population in West Belfast were rioting as a response to the introduction of the policy of Internment. The Parachute Regiment were deployed to restore order when the massacre occurred. Many of the people that were killed posed no threat to the soldiers. Bobby Clarke for example was moving a 9-month-old child to safety when he ran across open ground and was shot. Father Hugh Mullan had run out to help Clarke and the child. Father Mullan, obviously in his vestments, was shot twice³⁴. There was indiscriminate killing some argued in fear, though in this case, many were trying to move to safety or flee the area. Neither of these men were any threat to the soldiers, or to public order. Therefore, there was no reason to shoot them. The anger that came from this event was intense. However, they media portrayed them as criminals who had been trying to attack the British forces who were merely attempting to keep the peace. The media was often used as a desperate attempt by the British to justify their actions, and spin the events to ensure their continued support.

Bloody Sunday occurred on the 30th January 1972 during an anti – internment protest march, which was widely publicised as peaceful. Derry, the location of the march was generally a Catholic area. It was organised by NICRA. Fourteen unarmed civilians were shot dead by soldiers from the Parachute Regiment. The government launched an investigation into the deaths of the fourteen civilians³⁵ after the British Army claimed that they had been fired upon, and only fired in response. The Widgery Report goes as far as to say that they must have been attacked first, as there was no reason for the soldiers to turn and engage in gunfire. The report was widely published and believed, particularly within the Protestant communities. It is now generally considered to be a whitewash, with a total failure to properly address the facts of the event. The report shifted blame away from any soldier and instead the blame was placed on the protestors and murdered victims. The Widgery Report, removed the blame from any government group or individual soldiers, maintaining government control, it would have appeared particularly poorly if it had become evident that the government were killing their own people. It has now been acknowledged that it was the same battalion that had participated in the Ballymurphy Massacre. At the time, there were many that argued against the report and believed that it was a whitewash. They were labelled in the media as liars and any argument they made was ridiculed, making their evidence redundant. It has now been proved that none of the protestors had been armed or had attacked the soldiers in any way, they had been defenceless. The soldiers brutally murdered fourteen civilians for no obvious cause except to exert power and control over them and the others there. Though the British government most likely had no prior knowledge of this so their reaction was an attempt to control a crisis.

These events were horrific and showed the British Army and therefore the government stretching their power beyond legal limits. By colluding with, and covering up these actions, they allowed the majority of the population to believe the lies about the victims. There are now many campaigns, especially from the victims’ families to clear names. Many friends and family members of the victims were radicalised, creating greater, rather than less, support for paramilitary groups in these areas. This further delayed the peace process as membership of paramilitary groups grew. The Army and the Government were being trusted less and less, and they were no longer seen as the impartial neutral force that was meant to help peace. They did not appear to be neutral but instead were perceived as attacking and suppressing a minority. The unprovoked killings increased the anger and fear nationwide. The desire for retribution grew, creating retaliation killings of army soldiers and

³³ 1971 Ballymurphy Internment Massacre families leaflet.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 1971 Ballymurphy Internment Massacre families leaflet.
officers\textsuperscript{36} and increasing violence between the different paramilitary groups. This meant that a legal agreement between all groups was becoming less likely as anger among the general populace increased. The tit for tat killings became more common with the majority of the Protestant and Catholic communities knowing someone who had died and therefore, many supporting a peace agreement, though the paramilitary groups stopped any opportunity of it. The British government to create a peace treaty, would have to work with the Catholic community not Republicans.

The British Government view was supported by the media as they did not question or investigate any statement made by the police or the government. They accepted and reported exactly what they were told as the official line. There was no consideration that what the government was saying may not be completely truthful or the events “spun”. The media did not consider the possibility that some of the key details may be held back to maintain a position of neutrality and superiority over the paramilitaries. To inform the public that a large group of people were shot, even though they posed no serious threat to the lives of the soldiers or to anyone else, would have been disastrous and therefore weaken the position of the Army and British government in Northern Ireland. This non-questioning stance, chosen by the media also relates to collusion. It includes the position taken by the media to brand those who stated that there was some form of coordination and information sharing between the RUC, British Army and loyalist paramilitaries as liars.

Thus, “Shoot to Kill” had a negative impact on peace. “Shoot to Kill” was not however, as widespread as internment as it only impacted on a few people. Internment affected thousands of people and angered thousands more. As the existence of a “Shoot to Kill” policy was disputed there was not the same widespread anger. The average person believed what the press said and actions against authorities were minimised. However, recently it has become apparent that there were a significant number of whitewashes and cover ups. This means that there is now a great deal of anger. However, this anger is not as intense and the reactions to it are not as violent as in the past. If this had been disclosed in the 1980’s the increase in violence would have been astronomical and could have meant that Ireland would be very different today. These incidents were also isolated and were not connected. The three examples I specifically investigated were not connected. Pat Finucane died, 1989, due to his involvement in ensuring internment prisoners and criminals had proper access to their rights. The Ballymurphy Massacre, 1971, was in West Belfast and was during the first few hours of internment under Operation Demetrius. Bloody Sunday, 1972, in Derry was during a peaceful protest. As these incidents were not connected they had less of an impact. Therefore, they did not individually have a large delay on Peace. However, the policies of collusion and “Shoot to Kill”, did have an impact. There were large reactions and a large backlash in West Belfast and Derry, but not across Northern Ireland, though many were angered widespread riots did not occur. Resentment increased, though that was the height of the reaction.

“Shoot to Kill” was successful at some levels though. Collusion with different organisations was particularly successful as it removed key members of the opposition to the authorities. This meant that the government aim to bring about order was made slightly easier in their view as they were removing people who would stand in opposition to them and their policies of discrimination. This impact however, was minimal as there were always people present to try and force the government to promote different policies and change their practices. Whether it was people in parliament, for example Bernadette Devlin, MP for Derry or people on the ground in Belfast, all were trying to change the way government policies were being implemented and have a more just society. These also did not benefit peace as many felt they were fighting for it but were facing resistance from the government.

“Shoot to Kill” though not an official policy was highly controversial and had a large impact. Key members of the public were caught up in it, such as Bernadette Devlin in Bloody Sunday. Therefore, the events were widely discussed. Though “Shoot to Kill” was important it did not have the same power over the public as other events did. “Shoot to Kill” did not anger the widespread population and motivate thousands of people to organise and participate in protest marches such as those that were created for internment. However, it did increase paramilitary membership and the distrust of the British government, army and police.

Overall, British policies and involvement in Northern Ireland delayed and hindered the Peace Process. Even as the Peace Process was being ratified, discussed and negotiated, it was contentious. Internment severely limited any ability to bring peace for at least twenty years due to the increase in paramilitary membership and activity. Internment also increased resentment and violence, as well as distrust of the British government and particularly the Army as they did not appear to be neutral. This meant that as time progressed Stormont was closed and government was transferred to Westminster. The transfer of power was viewed with disfavour even though it was necessary. The “Shoot to Kill” policy destroyed the barrier between keeping the peace and becoming actively involved in the Troubles. The army became a sort of ‘official’ paramilitary organisation as they participated in the violence alongside terrorist groups. The army were never punished or reprimanded for the damage and pain they caused which created distrust and resentment. “Shoot to Kill” was not an active force in the delay of the progression of the peace process. However, it did have a significant effect in delaying the initiation of the peace process as there was so much underlying distrust and resentment between all involved. Which meant that the openness required to put in place a successful peace agreement was lacking. British involvement was ultimately necessary in Northern Ireland but the policies used were not effective. British policies did hinder the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement as they were highly discriminatory towards the Catholic Community. This prolonged the process towards peace, lengthening the period of violence and increasing hostility among different cultural groups. The scars of this are still evident in the politics and everyday life in Northern Ireland.

Ultimately however, the British government in retrospect learnt a lot from the Troubles in Northern Ireland. This has affected their policies elsewhere. For example, they implemented what they learnt in their dealings in the Afghanistan war (2001 – 2014). This meant that originally, they were considered to be much more successful than the American army due to the skills and information they learnt over the period of thirty years of Troubles in Northern Ireland. Negotiations for a peace treaty had to be made with Catholics and Protestants, not Republicans and Loyalists who the British had been dealing with until the Good Friday Agreement. The Republican and Loyalists though important were in a minority. The groups that needed to be involved were the general Protestant and Catholics communities. As their agreement was essential to the forming of a manageable peace agreement, ensuring that either side was not pushed towards paramilitary groups.

The British government hindered the policy, their policies were biased and focused too much on protecting Protestant interests rather than everyone. This alienated a significant percentage of the population and created distrust. This ultimately lengthened the peace process.
Internment and “Shoot to Kill”, are two of the British government policies that made a large impact on Northern Ireland. However, there are many more which the government also used to control the violence and bring about peace.

The sense of discrimination and alienation that the Catholic community dealt with for years is similar to the discrimination of hundreds of thousands of Muslims due to a select few extreme views. Trump, imposing a travel ban from a majority of Islamic countries is perhaps a modern-day version of the discrimination the Catholic community faced. This led to a violent and ultimately brutal civil war. With the similar prejudice and discrimination facing these Muslim groups today, it is more than likely that history will ultimately repeat itself and a similar violent eruption will occur due to the world-wide sense of discrimination and attacks that the Muslim community are facing.

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