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The State Department's Northern Ireland Special Envoys and the redemption of the Good Friday Agreement.

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Abstract:

The George W. Bush administration's intervention in Northern Ireland from 2001 to 2007 was decisive and remains undervalued and misunderstood. Throughout this time the US State Department determined American involvement in the region with responsibility for strategy falling to two successive directors of the Policy Planning Staff: Richard Haass and Mitchell Reiss. This paper demonstrates how the sources and operations of these men's decision-making authority enabled the US to intercede as a third-party actor with the results being pivotal to the restoration of devolution in May 2007. State Department control of US involvement in Northern Ireland points to a manner of US intervention that I posit as assertive unilateralism.

On Monday 16 June 2008 President George W. Bush visited Northern Ireland (NI). This was the final leg of his farewell European tour as US President. He was greeted at Stormont Castle by First Minister Peter Robinson and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. US government interest in NI had come a long way in seven short years. Although George W. Bush was content to associate himself with the peace process, his was an administration whose foreign policy priorities were focused on other parts of the world. After meeting with Condoleezza Rice in early 2001 NI Secretary of State Mo Mowlam concluded indifference to the region was the most likely scenario from the new regime in Washington (Sanders 2019: 263, Clancy 2013: 179 and Dumbrell 2006: 359). But, it has often been a feature of American post-Cold War policy that a desire to pursue a detached overseas strategy cannot be maintained indefinitely (Dumbrell: 361). True to form, pressure for US re-engagement in NI emerged by the spring of 2001 and gained momentum by the summer.

Subsequent US intercession was pivotal to the restoration of the Stormont Assembly and Executive on 8 May 2007. To substantiate this case I will present original testimony from a number of key figures whose accounts help improve our understanding of events leading-up to the return of NI's devolved government. There are of course risks associated with this methodology, namely how much weight to afford it given the fallibility of human memory and the tendency for some actors to self-aggrandise. Conducting interviews, however, allows the researcher to personally engage with individuals germane to their study, and are vital to understanding their respective experiences and the meaning they attached to these occurrences (Castillo-Montoya 2016: 811 and Jacob & Furgerson 2012: 9). As I am investigating a period that has limited scholarly scrutiny these interviews have helped deconstruct the vague nature of intricate events and establish how prominent persons perceived events (Rubin & Rubin 2012: 3 and Marsh & Stoker 2002: 11). I will also make use of important archival material, including newspapers and government documents to test the reliability of my interview data.

This paper will attribute more weight to the international dimension's impact on the peace process. Some scholars against according too much significance to the role played by external forces in NI. Dixon claims more emphasis should be placed on the internal and national dimensions rather than the international. He argues that British strategy in NI was 'marked by tactical adjustments, with the international dimension having little impact on its trajectory' (2006: 410, also see 2002: 106-108). English has pointed to a series of important political and military calculations made by the IRA before their 1994 ceasefire that were made separate to the shifting geopolitical situation post-1989 (2012: 303-315). Clancy has also remarked that 'the US experience [in NI] suggests that it cannot be unambiguously asserted that aligning international influence is an important "lesson" to be extracted from NI' (2010(C): 23). I will contend, however, that without the international dimension the restoration of devolution in May 2007 would have been more problematic. Its characteristics changed with

George W. Bush's election victory and particularly the terror attacks in September 2001. If the end of the Cold War made it possible for a third party like the US to play a more decisive role in NI (Cox 2006: 430, also see Cox 1997: 683-686), then the election of George W. Bush in 2000 and subsequent events of 9/11 opened the door for that intervention to converge safely in the autonomous hands of State's Special Envoys (SEs). In framing this argument I will build on a key part of Clancy's work that addresses the significance of NI's internationalisation. She argues that:

US intervention has been neither uniformly destructive nor constructive, nor has it always been in alignment with UK and Irish preferences. It can be further argued that US interventions both exacerbated and alleviated the credible commitment problem within the negotiating process. (2013: 187).

While concurring that US interest in NI from the 1990s to the early 2000s has infrequently caused consternation in both London and Dublin, what follows will show that American diplomacy, when controlled and deployed by Haass and Reiss, was undoubtedly constructive. Clancy states that their exploits can only be 'partially explained via reference to the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM)' ((C): 18). She argues the reluctance of the British to demand the White House rein-in the SEs at sensitive periods in the peace process is crucial to understanding the authority and success they had in managing American foreign-policy (2010(A): 138). I will demonstrate that in spite of Clancy's caution, bureaucratic politics is fundamental to understanding the impact of US intervention in this context. I will establish that the organisational setting in which the SEs operated, which in turn affected policy choices (McCormick 2012: 21), was central to their success in altering the US role in NI.

Not only were Haass and Reiss engaging in a decades-old political dispute, but they themselves became political players in this process. As both were appointed by SoS Colin Powell, they came to exercise significant political clout. They did this without any significant presidential oversight. Presidents will prioritise where their foreign interventions will be most effective, and NI was certainly not high on George W. Bush's list. This is where he contrasted greatly with his predecessor. The W. Bush administration's outreach in Ireland was completely different, with control invested in the SEs. Stepping back from the minutia of foreign-policy formulation was a pattern of his decision-making approach (Marsh 2012: 433). Just as the George W. Bush had delegated significant responsibility to his NSA Stephen Hadley during discussions over the Iraq surge in 2006, his White House had also allowed the same bureaucratic situation to arise regarding American intervention in Ireland. The State Department took responsibility for NI policy in early 2001. Consequently the region came to be treated as an anomalous entity within the department. It was, as Barbara Stephenson (former American Consul General in

Belfast from 2001 to 2004) asserted, ‘not how we usually do things’ (Interview with Author (IWA): 17/07/18). This remark was a reference to the unusual management of NI within State’s bureaucratic structure. Haass, who had worked for four different administrations over fifteen years, explicated on nature of this and how it bestowed substantial authority on the SE:

Normally you had all sorts of competing jurisdictions, overlapping authorities. The entire interagency process is designed to be a kind of crosshatch of responsibilities, and in that process... everybody who needs to be involved gets involved and compromises are made. With Northern Ireland there were not overlapping jurisdictions essentially, there were not competing centres of authority. The Pentagon had no role, the NSC had very little interest. It was a degree of autonomy and concentration of authority. (IWA: 20/02/2020).

The absence of these “competing centres of authority” saw creation and implementation of NI policy bypassing the European Bureau’s UK or Ireland (junior or senior) desk officers. Instead, it came from the head of Policy Planning. This department (S/P) essentially acts as State’s think-tank, serving as a powerful source of independent policy analysis and advice for the Secretary of State (SoS), while also anticipating emerging foreign-policy priorities (Haass 2009: 177 and Rice 2012: 305). S/P was created in the Spring of 1947 at the request of SoS George Marshall. Its first director George Kennan was tasked with developing an American response to the Soviet threat and fears over Western Europe’s looming economic collapse (Pugliaresi & Berliner 1989: 383, Miscamble 1992: XI, Rubin 1985: 63 and Destler 1974: 224).

Richard Haass¹ was announced as Director of Policy Planning (DPP) on 6 February 2001. On 15 March 2001 he added the NI SE responsibility to his brief. Haass would have several other duties to fulfil during the first few years of the George W. Bush presidency. After 9/11 he was charged by SoS Powell to lead State’s work on post-war Afghanistan (Haass 2009: 4 & 206 and Dumbrell: 360). This type of additional responsibility was one of the key reasons why Haass accepted the DPP position (Haass 2009: 172). Although it is an important role within State, the Policy Planning chief has no interagency function and the person occupying it derives much of their influence from their relationship with the SoS. Haass knew this and asked for operational duties as a “roving ambassador” be attached to his State Department portfolio (Clancy(A): 136 & (C): 18). Having this kind of additional responsibility inside the federal government means the head of S/P can seek to influence the wider decision-

¹ Dr Richard Haass was born on 28 July 1951. A Rhodes Scholar, he holds a bachelor’s degree from Oberlin College and master’s and doctorate of philosophy degrees from Oxford University. He is the current president of the Council on Foreign Relations. In 2013 he served as the chair of multiparty negotiations in Northern Ireland. From January 2001 to June 2003, Dr Haass was a principal advisor to Secretary of State Colin Powell, and was confirmed by the US Senate to hold the rank of ambassador.

making process and thus increasing their own relevance (Halperin et al 2006: 26). Haass confirms this reasoning when I asked why he had accepted the position of NI SE:

I had no idea what I was getting into... Northern Ireland was a small percentage of my life... I had a lot of other things I was worried about. What I liked about [the SE role] was it was qualifiedly different in the sense that it was a clear set of operational responsibilities without the need to fight bureaucratically, without any oversight, for better or worse, I could pretty much decide what I would do. (IWA: 20/02/2020).

The selection of Haass to a high-profile State Department post contrasted with other administration appointments. He was a liberal New York republican and a diplomat, 'who could use charm or aggression to achieve his objectives' (Marsden 2006: 61). Haass had a good working relationship with SoS Powell, and also enjoyed a personal rapport with Condoleezza Rice. This allowed him to meet with the NSA on an informal basis and outside the bounds of the interagency process (Haass 2009: 4). This is another important example of how Haass, as head of S/P and SE, had access to key influencers within the federal government during this period. He came to the SE position without any personal interest in Irish affairs and had no ancestral linkage to Ireland, once stating 'I will be the first to admit that shamrocks were not exactly a family tradition where I grew up' (Quoted in Dumbrell: 359). That aside, however, the choice of someone of Haass's calibre, with his profile and foreign-policy acumen, confirmed the administration was taking seriously continuing US involvement in NI. Almost a year prior to the new administration coming into office Haass had penned a scathing assessment of Clinton's foreign affairs record. He stated the former president's efforts, both in NI and the Middle East, 'do not add up to a foreign policy legacy, because they did not alter the administration's international environment in basic and lasting ways.' (Haass 2000: 137). By early 2001, with control of America's strategy pertaining to the peace process transferring to State, and specifically the DPP, Haass was now in charge of policy formulation and its implementation. Shortly after his appointment as SE he released a statement on NI, declaring the US government was not:

Central to implementation of the peace agreement... But because of the many strong links between our country and the island of Ireland... we are immensely interested and strongly committed to an enduring peace...' (Quoted in Dumbrell: 360).

Although he was supported by around twenty-five Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) within S/P, only a small number of these worked on NI matters (Confirmed by Haass in interview: 20/02/2020). Haass reserved as much time as he deemed necessary for this work. He referred to the SE role as a 'compartmentalised' undertaking, and

something that was a 'largely siloed effort [which] was apart from most of the work of the policy planning staff.' (Ibid.). Clancy has noted that Haass commanded significant influence over his FSOs with some even declining to offer too much insight into his tenure at State (Clancy(A): 137). What's more, the authority and respect he derived in the department, meant Haass had become de facto NI policy for the new administration. Like his successor, he could bypass the cumbersome State Department bureaucracy and communicate directly with the SoS and White House (Clancy(A): 136 & 2010(B): 126). This would ultimately cause great unease among key actors in the British and Irish governments.

George W. Bush's appointment of a SE was welcomed by all of the main political parties in NI. This even extended to the DUP who had been condemnatory of President Clinton's role in the peace process, viewing it as unhelpful and tantamount to biased meddling. Its leader Ian Paisley talked about a 'new era' in relations with the US and declared, 'gone are the days of the pro-republican Clinton administration which did so much to attempt to elevate terrorists into statesmen' (*Belfast Newsletter*: 28/04/2001). Paisley's then deputy, Peter Robinson, stated that although he had reservations about the continuing internationalisation of NI's political situation, preferring it to be kept as an internal UK matter, he was content with this form of US intercession because it was no longer the case where 'you brought in somebody wearing shamrocks and carrying a shillelagh.' (IWA: 23/10/2020). Robinson also revealed that George W. Bush actually reached out to senior unionists to provide assurances that his consent to a SE had no hidden agenda. He would reveal an encounter with the President at the White House shortly after W. Bush had assumed office in 2001, which reveals a colourful side to his character as well as perhaps where the President's Irish political affiliations more comfortably rested:

I remember being in circle, and the four points of the compass were representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland. This was at the time when the two larger parties in government were the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP. So, he shook hands and spoke to them for a short time, and then came to Ian Paisley and myself before he came to Sinn Féin, and his first words were "what are those sons of bitches up to now?" (IWA: 23/10/2020).

While Sinn Féin publicly welcomed continued American involvement in the peace process the party was wary of how control of this foreign policy area had passed from an attentive White House to another federal bureaucratic entity. Conor Murphy, a senior Sinn Féin representative for several decades, stated:

The State Department is a long-lasting organ of the state. [Its approach towards Ireland] would have been very hand-in-glove with British policy in relation... because it was a safe

place for them to be. So in some ways we would have had a sense the State Department was a tougher nut to crack in terms of the people and the policy. (IWA: 19/02/2021).

Haass arrived in NI as the post-Good Friday Agreement (GFA) political process was in a perilous state. The fledgling Stormont administration collapsed on 1 July 2001 when unionist First Minister David Trimble resigned, blaming the IRA's refusal to begin decommissioning. As the "marching season" loomed, there were fears the summer months would be consumed by sectarian violence. Haass chose not to inflate the gravity of the situation and saw no need for formal US mediation. After reporting back directly to the President he stated there was 'no sense that we have passed a point where things cannot be retrieved politically' (Haass, quoted in *The Independent*: 29/06/2001). The message from Washington was kept simple: the solution to problems on the ground lay with NI's elected leaders and not elsewhere (Clancy(A): 114-115). As time move on, however, the work of the SE shifted from simply liaising with the principal actors in London, Dublin and Belfast to becoming involved in the singular issue of decommissioning (Sanders: 260). Trimble's resignation and the subsequent failure of the political parties to resolve their difficulties led the British government to suspend the GFA institutions again on 10 August 2001. In the midst of this crisis a curious event was to occur in the jungles of South America, which would further complicate matters in NI: the arrest of three IRA members in Colombia.

In August 2001 three suspected members of the Provisional IRA were detained by Colombian authorities as they were in transit from a demilitarised zone that had been ceded to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Niall Connolly, James Monaghan and Martin McCauley were charged with training FARC guerrillas and travelling on false passports. The Colombian military alleged the men were 'explosive experts' (*Belfast Newsletter*: 14/08/2001, also see Rafter 2005: 232). It was subsequently revealed both Monaghan and McCauley were known former IRA men with significant weaponry and engineering know-how, while Connolly was Sinn Féin's liaison with the Castro regime in Cuba (Sanders: 262). The transatlantic ramifications of this were huge. The US government had been supplying the Colombian army with defence equipment. Consequently, a response from the '16,000-strong rebel army [was] long expected' (*Associated Press*: 13/08/2001). Logistical and ordnance assistance from the IRA to a US-designated terrorist organisation placed Haass's role as SE in the spotlight. His involvement in the peace process became significantly more active. He became the administration's primary responder to this event. Addressing reporters at the State Department Haass stated, 'my understanding is that they were not there vacationing... [the arrests] could have potentially serious consequences for the role of the US in the peace process...' (BBC News Online Archive 2001 – *IRA warned about Colombia 'links'*).

The IRA assisting an internationally recognised terrorist organisation caused great alarm on Capitol Hill and within the George W. Bush administration (Marsden 2006: 62, Clancy 2013: 180 & (C): 9 and *The Guardian*: 19/08/2001). Seasoned political operatives in Sinn Féin have long calculated that widespread American interest in the peace process is nominal and sketchy at best. But, as English states, in this instance the “‘goodies and baddies” mattered, and the IRA seemed to be on the wrong side’ (Richard English interviewed by Marsden 2006: 63). Therefore, the words of Haass and other prominent politicians in Washington were listened to carefully in the UK and Ireland. Events the following month increased the pressure on the republican movement even further. Some of the literature examining the consequences of 9/11 has sought to explain how the terror attacks initiated a sense of American insecurity and vulnerability as a result of the unprecedented nature of this threat (Ralph 2013: 1, Pauly Jr. 2010: 246-247, Leffler 2005: 406, Woodward 2003 and Daalder, Lindsay and Steinberg 2002: 2). The US response therefore had to match the scale of what Condoleezza Rice regarded as an “‘existential threat””. This characterisation of what was essentially a continuation of Al Qaeda terrorism is hyperbole. English has argued that there has been an exaggeration of this form of terrorist challenge and that 9/11 ‘formed part of a very long sequence of acts of jihadist political violence’ with many of these elements being nothing relatively new (2018: 82). Haass was in Dublin on the morning of 9/11, meeting the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern. Later in the afternoon he sat down to a meeting with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness in Belfast. This was widely reported as an extremely tense and heated encounter, laced with an expletive-laden threat from Haass to Sinn Féin (Clancy 2013: 180, (A): 166 & (C): 9 and Moloney 2007: 491). *The Guardian* newspaper reported it as follows:

After a few minutes of talking about “‘inching forward”” the peace process, Haass finally snapped: “‘If any American, service personnel or civilian, is killed in Colombia by the technology the IRA supplied then you can fuck off,” he shouted, finger jabbing towards Adams' chest. (28/10/2001).

I put this to Haass and asked if the White House or State were aware of how robust his language would be. His response, minus the colourful language, was equally forceful:

It’s not accurate... That did not happen. It’s not my style. I have never in my life used that kind of language in an official meeting... But 9/11 did change the conversation, particularly with Sinn Féin. I made clear... there would be zero tolerance in the US for the sort of finessing...of them with violence. (IWA: 13/02/2018).

George W Bush, in declaring a Global War on Terror (GWOT), had drawn a line in the sand. Sinn Féin and the IRA were not going to fall on the wrong side of this. Under immense scrutiny following the attacks, and struggling to repair the reputational damage caused by the Colombia arrests, the IRA, submitting to these new realities, announced their first acts of decommissioning on 23 October 2001 (Clancy 2013: 180, Cochrane 2007: 226-228, Marsden 2006: 63 and McInnes 2006: 164-165). The IRA had clearly moved out of self-interest and there was a desire within its leadership not to be viewed by an American audience in the same guise as Al Qaeda. It is important to note, however, that as early as December 2000 the IRA had publicly stated that, 'we remain prepared to initiate a process which would completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use' (IRA Statement on the Arms Issue, 5 December 2000). This was proceeded with electoral gains for Sinn Féin in the 2001 UK general and NI local council elections. These successes may have led Adams and McGuinness to realise the potential of their political momentum, both north and south of the border, and at the same time how a fully armed private army in a post-conflict environment could be a burden (English 2012: 336). Moreover, Moloney has asserted that by 1999 the leadership of the IRA army council had the 'authority to begin decommissioning whenever it wished and didn't need to call a special Convention to win approval' (2007: 518). Therefore, decommissioning was clearly a process the republican movement was preparing itself for well before the September 11 attack. But what transpired following 9/11 demonstrated just how receptive the republican movement was to sustained US diplomatic pressure via the operations of the SE (Lynch 2009: 76). I therefore reject Dumbrell's premise that Haass 'found it difficult to apply the "with-us-or-against-us"' mantra of the administration's 9/11 response (363). Although he did not communicate America's defiance to Al-Qaeda's assault in the same folksy and hawkish manner of others in the administration, Haass, as a diplomat of immense intellect, could execute a strategy in a calm and patient fashion.

While he was an effective channel for articulating George W. Bush's foreign policy postures from 2001 into 2002, Haass also became more engaged in the deepening political crisis in NI. As a consequence he increasingly found himself at odds with, or ahead of UK government policy. This caused problems for America's principal ally. This arose when Haass sought to cultivate a relationship with the DUP leadership between 2002 and 2003. He engaged with senior party figures on a more regular basis than the British did at this time (Haass, IWA: 20/02/2020). This exasperated UK officials, who could not fathom a scenario where the post-GFA process survived without David Trimble and the UUP (Clancy 2007: 166). By March 2002, however, Haass, along with the Irish government, had realised a lasting deal would only now happen between Sinn Féin and the DUP. Mooted Assembly elections in 2003 were already causing the British government concern. Tony Blair, Jonathan Powell and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) feared they would result in the elevation of the extremes to the head of their respective electoral blocs, and lead to a political 'ice age' of 'five to ten years' (Godson 2004: 761). The projected voting outcome

proved accurate. The subsequent mood in 10 Downing Street was one of dejection. Haass, who had previously sided with Dublin, as well as Sinn Féin and the DUP, in opposing an earlier postponement of the elections (Clancy 2013: 183 and Frampton 2009: 152), argued there was a fresh opportunity to fully implement the GFA. He recalled a conversation with Tony Blair and the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern when he told both leaders, 'I know this election may seem to you like a major setback... but in the long run this was necessary... This will actually give you more to work with' (IWA: 13/02/2018). On the back of the DUP supplanting the UUP in the November election, and encouraged by their more "moderate" wing, Haass was prepared to gamble on the perceived unionist hardliners moving towards accepting a form of power-sharing in NI (Clancy(A): 129). He was assured in his reasoning and better placed than some to foresee how the political tectonic plates in NI were shifting:

[The British] were surprised and thrown for a loop... when you had the election results. They had been working so closely with the UUP and SDLP. They saw both the DUP and Sinn Féin as, at best complications and at worst threats... I said this may be an awkward transition, but ultimately this process will only work when these parties sign on to it, because they are the ones who can sink it from the outside... But if you can ever get them to the point of making it their own then you have a deal that will stick. (IWA: 20/02/2020).

Peter Robinson agrees with this analysis, stating that 'the general principle that only Nixon could go to China applies to this case' (IWA: 23/10/2020). Robinson had already determined in early 2003, with the IRA refusing to enter into a meaningful decommissioning process and the pressure this placed on David Trimble to carry the unionist electorate, as well as the gains his party made in the 2001 elections, that the DUP would supplant the UUP as the voice of unionism. While Downing Street was clearly uneasy with this, they were even more uncomfortable with the US SE making clear his acceptance of and personal support for this situation. Clancy has asked, given the importance of the alliance with the UK in the GWOT, 'why didn't the White House muzzle Haass?' (2007: 169). While she rightly acknowledges the reason this did not happen is a result of the autonomous position Haass held within State, I contend this has not been fully appraised. The position of NI envoy paired with the role of DPP gave both Haass and Reiss the ultimate power to pursue their own policy preferences. This particular context is referred to as the law of "where you stand depends upon where you sit" (Miles 1978: 399-403, also see Snow & Haney 2013: 81, Jones 2012: 118-127, Marsh 2014: 269 and Foot et al 2003: 10). The roles occupied by key governmental actors are extremely important. The SE's personal directives resulted in the creation of new policy. Not only would Haass decide what was to be accomplished on his visits to NI, he also asserted there 'was no real micromanagement' and his superiors 'were happy to just be kept in the loop, basically happy that it was

being handled.’ (IWA: 13/02/2018, also see Sanders: 261-268, Clancy 2013: 182-184, **(A)**: 114, **(C)**: 17-18 & 2007: 162-173 and Dumbrell: 360).

Haass remained actively engaged in the peace process for the next eighteen-months, and maintained the momentum of his form of third-party intervention. Paul Murphy, who by late 2002 had been appointed Secretary of State for NI, confirms this: ‘I virtually lived [with Haass] at Hillsborough Castle. He was hugely hands-on, and one of the cleverest diplomats I have ever experienced’ (IWA: 12/07/2016). In October 2002, using very purposeful language, Haass said the GFA could not be fully implemented without the IRA disbanding, stating that ‘the IRA needs to give up any acts of violence. It needs to get rid of its arms. Essentially it needs to lose its paramilitary character’. (BBC News Online Archive 2002 – *IRA must go out of business*). Unionists were impressed by a diplomat of Haass’s stature making public statements that mirrored their core position. His toughened tone towards Sinn Féin was paired with an insight into unionism that was largely missing in Washington (Clancy 2007: 161 and Dumbrell: 364). This more nuanced understanding does not, however, tell the true story of the actual settled opinion he may hold of the unionist political establishment. During one of our interviews, Haass revealed an astonishing interaction, which took place during a meeting between himself and the DUP leadership on the afternoon of 11 September 2001:

At one point someone... pointed out that proportionally, in terms of population, more Protestants had died in... the Troubles... than Americans died that day. That was not a good time to make that argument... It was not a winning argument with an American envoy within a few hours of that attack. That took me back as it showed a certain lack of empathy... (IWA: 13/02/2018).

This clearly left a bad taste in Haass’s mouth, despite his rapprochement with unionism in 2002. But this was short-lived. Due to a lack of personal chemistry and growing impatience with Trimble, the SE’s relationship with the main unionist leader began to sour (Moloney 2008: 428). Haass was particularly riled by his reference to the Republic of Ireland as a ‘pathetic sectarian state’ (Quoted in Sanders: 263). This coincided with an improving relationship between Haass and Gerry Adams (Clancy**(A)**: 11). FSOs at State had been meeting with the Sinn Féin leader for almost a decade by this point. One official, who was close to Haass during period stated:

Gerry Adams is mesmerizing... And he’ll spin a story and a narrative, and in it you just can’t see how you could do anything other than give Gerry the sweeties he’s asked for... [Haass] did get more solicitous of Adams. (Quoted in Clancy 2007: 162).

I posited to Haass that based on this he had become enamored of Adams. He rejected this completely, becoming slightly annoyed at the suggestion he had been, in a sense, played:

I just disagree with it. First of all the focus wasn't on the policing board... The priority was more decommissioning... With Gerry it was hard to know what was real and what was tactical in terms of his ability... to bring along [his] colleagues. The impression he often left you with was he was sympathetic, but he couldn't deliver. (IWA: 13/02/2018).

By late 2002 and into early 2003 NI began to feature less in the work of the DPP. During this time Haass, and his officials in S/P that worked primarily on Middle East affairs, had begun to realise from their conversations with the Pentagon, NSC and the Vice-President's office that war with Iraq was a real probability (Haass IWA: 20/02/2020 and Haass 2009: 4). As he prepared to leave State, Haass had made an indelible contribution to NI peace process. His interventions served as the first indications of assertive unilateralism. American foreign policy towards the peace process was managed by a singular authority who acted without need to liaise with other federal bureaucracies or to secure the concurrent support of either the British or Irish governments. While his responsibilities as DPP had gradually drawn his focus to other international crises, the manner of Haass's unilateral third-party engagement helped untangle a number of obstinate and protracted issues that were blighting the 1998 settlement. He had communicated the administration's tough GWOT rhetoric to the republican movement and also made clear what the consequences were if their subsequent words or deeds implied an indifference to George W. Bush's call to decide what side they were on in this global crusade. This diplomatic weight, though not the only medium of pressure, was crucial in forcing the IRA to begin decommissioning in October 2001.

Haass's replacement in December 2003 would leave with a more significant and greatly unappreciated legacy. If the stock in trade of the standard US diplomat is to urge caution when an administration intercedes overseas too audaciously (See Rockman 1981: 915), then Mitchell Reiss² did not adhere to this guidance. As DPP he came to the SE position sensing there was an opportunity to adopt a more independent approach. Reiss was persuaded that the British and Irish governments were too accepting of the arguments put forward by the republican movement (Sanders: 269). Along with his team at S/P and in Belfast, he was often frustrated by 10 Downing

² Dr Mitchell Reiss was born on 12 June 1957. He holds a D. Phil. from Oxford University and a J.D. from Columbia Law School. Dr. Reiss currently serves as a member of the 'Independent Reporting Commission' in Northern Ireland. He is the former president and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Virginia, and served as Chief Negotiator in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation. Dr Reiss was accorded the rank of ambassador in May 2004.

Street's continued indulgence of Gerry Adams. To this end, Reiss was determined that his intercession would not slavishly follow their example of handling Sinn Féin with kid gloves. Barbara Stephenson, who worked closely with Reiss, asserts he was prepared to ignore British preferences and was able to repel the persuasiveness and effectiveness of the British Foreign Office and embassy in Washington. She also draws important distinctions between the styles of Haass and Reiss, revealing how the latter listened to his FSOs on the ground and was prepared to take risks:

[Haass] would take British views into account more than Mitchell did... The autonomy under Mitchell was a level up... He listened to advisors... When we were strongly of the view [to increase pressure on Sinn Féin to endorse the PSNI]... Mitchell became very convinced of it... Richard is much more convinced of the validity of his own counsel... He was more sensitive to breaking away from the British on this. (IWA: 24/06/2020).

What differentiated Reiss even further from his predecessor was the importance he placed on building coalitions to effectuate US involvement in NI. He employed this tactic to his advantage throughout his time as SE. Between 2003 and 2007 he built coalitions with the Irish American lobby, members of Congress, and figures within the British and Irish governments. When Colin Powell asked Reiss to become the administration's SE to NI he knew he was taking a job that many within State regarded as a fool's errand (Reiss 2010: 35). His diplomatic manner was less abrasive than his predecessor's jarring style. While he adopted a measured approach when dealing with the peace process's main players, Reiss's tenure was marked by a testing relationship with certain elements from inside the Tony Blair administration. As I will reveal, many of these individuals, to their cost, underestimated his determination and strategic intellect. Sir David Manning, former UK ambassador in Washington from 2003 to 2007, remarked that he did not view Reiss with the same prominence as George Mitchell:

I think it's a different sort of job by the time you get to Mitchell Reiss... But it's not negotiating the outcomes in the way that I think it's fair to say his predecessors would have done... I can't remember exactly what Mitchell Reiss delivered at this stage. (IWA: 06/04/2020)

George Mitchell's role in the lead-up to the GFA was significant and his legacy is secure. The comparison with Reiss, however, is unfair as the context and mechanics of their respective diplomatic functions are entirely different. While neither of George W. Bush's envoys acted as arbitrators within a formal talks process, both, and particularly Reiss's contribution was decisive. He pursued a policy in Ireland that sought to maximise the authority of his position and to make the greatest impact on the floundering peace process. This was evidenced most when

he communicated a clear-cut message to the republican movement that their endorsement of the police and criminal justice system in NI and was a *sine qua non* of any powersharing deal that unionists would agree to (Reiss IWA: 12/07/2018, Clancy(A): 149 & 2007: 172, Marsden 2006: 66, Frampton: 176). Reiss knew how emotive the issue of support for and cooperation with the police was for nationalist / republican communities in NI. He was also aware that such a momentous step by their political leaders would act as the definitive metric unionists would need for judging Sinn Féin's commitment to peace. On reflection Reiss remarked that, 'I knew that Catholic neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland deserved better than the vigilante justice IRA thugs were meting out' (Reiss 2010: 36). Therefore, if Sinn Féin gave their official backing to the PSNI then the 'last great hurdle' (US official familiar with Reiss's strategy, quoted in Clancy 2007: 168) to restoration of the institutions would be removed. To this end, along with his Dublin ally, Irish justice minister Michael McDowell with whom he had a close working relationship, Reiss sought to convince Peter Robinson that if republicans could be cajoled into the principles of quid pro quo and took this historic step, it would serve as the litmus test for judging their commitment to an exclusively democratic society (Clancy 2013: 185 & (C): 14). The former SE explained the reasoning behind presenting this plan to the then DUP deputy leader:

With Paisley you got the intangible: "We'll know when it's the right time, the dogs on the street will know..." But that doesn't do you any good in real negotiations. So I asked Peter "what do you need Sinn Féin to say and do, and if they do these things are we done?" And Peter laid it out. And we started going down the check list. As we delivered each one I would remind Peter, "we're closer". (IWA: 27/04/2020).

Reiss and McDowell had an interesting relationship and formed a strong alliance on what they viewed the best way was to resolve the main difficulties in the peace process. Bertie Ahern was aware of this partnership and did not always seem enthralled by its outcomes, stating that 'Mitchell Reiss was a bit like McDowell. It was easy to get both of them going' (IWA: 12/01/2020). Reiss and McDowell had concluded Sinn Féin seemed content to hold-off making concessions for as long as the peace process remained in flux. This was intermixed with continuing IRA criminality and the British government's tendency to ignore it. Robinson, the DUP's principal strategist, bought into Reiss's logic. He asserted that his party ended up 'believing it helped our argument as to why certain things had to be done because [Sinn Féin's] bona fides were now in question' (IWA: 23/10/2020). Reiss also received post-hoc recognition from an actor who became an impediment and critic of his tactics: Tony Blair's Chief of Staff Jonathan Powell. On a final visit to 10 Downing Street as SE Reiss revealed that:

[Powell] came into the room and before I could say anything, he said: “you were right, and I was wrong”. [Repeated twice]. What he meant was, we needed to push Sinn Féin... or it could be an endless string of concessions. I’m not saying this was the only reason for the success that we achieved, but I think it contributed to it. (IWA: 12/07/2018).

Reiss’s strategy gained momentum by early 2005. He had already announced the manner of his intercession when present at the Leeds Castle negotiations in September 2004. Although these talks did not result in the restoration of devolution, notable progress was made on British demilitarisation and marginal advancement on how IRA decommissioning should be completed (Sanders: 264). Two subsequent events had scuppered any possible breakthrough: the Northern Bank robbery on 20 December 2004 and the murder of Robert McCartney in Belfast on 30 January 2005. The Northern Bank heist was the biggest in British and Irish history. A total of £26.5 million was stolen. Police intelligence pointed to the IRA as the culprits and implicated dozens of individuals including senior IRA-personnel (Cochrane 2006: 87). The February 2005 report by the Independent Monitoring Commission linked Sinn Féin to the raid, stating some of its members ‘are also senior members of the Provisional IRA’ and were involved in sanctioning the robbery. (Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) Report 2005(A), also see Clancy 2013: 184, (A): 147 & (C): 14, Frampton: 185 and Moloney 2008: 422-423). The scale of planning and the success of its execution meant the raid was too big to be dismissed by the British and Irish governments as another criminal act that had been “unsanctioned” by the leadership of the Provisional IRA (Clancy 2007: 169).

The political ramifications of the heist were still reverberating when a brutal murder took place outside a Belfast city-centre pub. Thirty-two-year-old Robert McCartney, a father of two, was repeatedly stabbed following a melee at the bar. Minutes before this a companion of McCartney’s had his throat slit as he socialised inside, but survived (Rafter: 33). Afterwards those responsible for the murder went back into the building, locked the doors, disposed of CCTV footage and oversaw a forensic clean-up operation of all evidence. Witnesses were also warned not to cooperate with the authorities. Once again, the resulting police investigation pointed to suspected IRA involvement (Cochrane 2006: 87 and Nag 2006: 701). Members of Sinn Féin were present on the evening and the party subsequently suspended twelve of these individuals (Sanders: 265). The IRA also took the unprecedented step of expelling three of its own members linked to the murder and subsequent cover-up (*Associate Press*: 25/02/2005). The Independent Monitoring Commission’s May 2005 report concluded that though the act was not authorised by the Provisional IRA’s leadership, ‘those concerned may have believed they were acting at the direction of a local senior IRA member at the scene’ (IMC Report 2005(B)). The murder and the defiant response from Mr McCartney’s family made its way onto the pages of American daily newspapers. Reiss offered his analysis on the impact the murder had on an increasingly interested US audience:

The Northern Bank robbery was appalling, but it didn't resonate the way you might think, because it was a so-called "victimless crime"... it didn't resonate with Irish America the way the McCartney murder did. (IWA: 12/07/2018).

The SE's response to these incidents centred on sending a clear message to the republican movement of how grave the US administration viewed recent IRA conduct. Reiss and his FSOs, both within S/P and at the Belfast Consulate, were convinced Sinn Féin's continuing boycott of support for the police and judicial system in NI was a fundamental contradiction of the peace process. The challenge for Reiss was how he could harness the political pressure republicans were coming under to force a change in their stance. The impending St Patrick's Day celebrations in Washington offered Reiss an opportunity to intensify his form of intervention. This revealed an emerging schism between the British and Irish approach to handling Sinn Féin, and that of the US administration (Moloney 2007: 553). Firstly, he banned Sinn Féin members from fundraising during this week (*New York Times*: 12/03/2005). Moreover, on the SE's advice, and to objections from London and Dublin, the White House excluded Gerry Adams from all official events and instead invited the four sisters and fiancée of Robert McCartney to meet with the President. This was an act of high political significance. Pictures of the family meeting with George W. Bush and their plea for his support in their campaign for justice were seen and heard around the world. While all of NI's political leaders were not invited to the centrepiece events, including the Speaker's lunch at Capitol Hill, the barring of the Sinn Féin leader caused the greatest stir.

As the week progressed the political ostracization and opprobrium of Adams continued (Sanders: 265, Nag: 701 and Cochrane 2006: 87-88). Senators John McCain, Edward Kennedy, Hillary Clinton and Congressman Peter King followed George W. Bush in refusing to meet Adams and chose instead to welcome the McCartney family to Washington. This was a highly symbolic repudiation of Irish republicanism. All these rebukes were noteworthy and some unprecedented, but it was the speech by John McCain at the annual American-Ireland Fund dinner that was most devastating for Gerry Adams. The Arizona Senator tore into the IRA, calling them a 'bunch of cowards' and no better than a 'criminal syndicate that steals and murders to serve its members personal interests' (Moloney 2008: 429). Bertie Ahern revealed that McCain had actually approached him at the beginning of the week to say he was going lambast Sinn Féin and the IRA. The former Irish premier asserted that McCain 'had really made up his mind that he was going to go for [Sinn Féin] because he felt... they were betraying all that we were doing... He was far more wound up than I was' (IWA: 12/01/2021). Reiss recalls sitting next to Sir David Manning at this event, with both men looking at each other in disbelief at what they were hearing:

It wasn't just what McCain said, it was the response from the audience. This was an overwhelmingly sympathetic audience to Adams and Sinn Féin. The good and the great of Irish America. They interrupted McCain six times with spontaneous applause... That was when Adams knew the jig was up... And he couldn't count on continuing to stonewall in the negotiations with the Brits in order to ring out further concessions. (IWA: 27/04/2020).

The Irish American political establishment was aghast at the bank raid and McCartney murder. The entire week was a complete PR disaster for the republican movement (Cochrane 2007: 226). Sanders has asserted that 'the loss of US fundraising privileges might have been a blow, but the loss of the party's place at the top table in the US hit deeper' (266). Gerry Adams even conceded Sinn Féin had been thrown 'on the back foot' (*New York Times*: 15/03/2005), which in turn seemed to accelerate the acceptance that the IRA needed to finally leave the stage. The British were also cognisant of the impact that Sinn Féin's St Patrick's Day banishment was having on the party and wider peace process. Reflecting on this period Jonathan Phillips, a former Permanent Secretary at the NIO, stated, 'it certainly seemed to us that after that St. Patrick's day set of engagements and the media coverage in Ireland... that was a moment of real change... It led on to... some very significant shifts in the summer of 2005.' (IWA: 27/02/2020). Reiss's tact of placing immense pressure on Sinn Féin during this week was beginning to take effect. Eric Green, a former State official in Belfast and S/P explains the rationale behind Reiss's stratagem:

Mitchell's sense was that the British government was not taking this problem seriously enough, so then we brainstormed about what leverage we had, and the fundraising seemed to be the best instrument we had... this was a very useful message to send them [Sinn Féin]. (IWA: 08/05/2020).

Coalition building was central to Reiss's approach. Aware of the power this gave him to affect productive American involvement in the peace process; Reiss viewed it as 'absolutely essential to our ultimate success' (IWA: 12/07/2018). It has also been a long-established practice of S/P to engage with non-governmental players during the embryonic stages of policy development (Miscamble 1992: 357). Irish America was a key constituent part of Reiss's alliance. The SE had determined that if he could persuade the DUP to move beyond abstract demands of Sinn Féin to tangible examples of what they actually needed republicans to do; these being endorsement of the PSNI and verification from the IMC that the IRA's criminal enterprises had ceased, then Irish America could be activated to lobby Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to embrace the new policing and judicial structures (Clancy 2013: 184 & **(A)**: 149). This pressure was clearly working. Reiss had secured private assurances from Congressional Democrats, who were also close supporters of Sinn Féin, as well as insurance magnate and long-

time backer of the party, Bill Flynn, that they would support the SE's approach, including fundraising restrictions (Clancy(A): 169). If Haass's post-9/11 interventions had unnerved the republican movement by overtly calling on the IRA to immediately commence decommissioning, then Reiss's strategy had ultimately forced them into a corner and achieved what the British government and unionists had failed to do for a generation: precipitate an environment where the IRA would formally end its armed campaign (Cochrane 2007: 226). Back in Belfast three-weeks after his difficult US visit, Adams made a public plea for the IRA to decommission all of its weapons and commit itself to purely democratic and peaceful means of pursuing Irish unity. On 28 August 2005 the IRA ordered its volunteers "to dump arms" and to desist from any and all armed activities (Sanders: 266, Moloney 2007: 558, Clancy 2007: 170 and Nag: 702).

In spite of this historic move by the IRA it was not yet the game-changer the peace process needed. There remained the substantial stumbling block of Sinn Féin's refusal to endorse the PSNI. Consequently, the State Department's fundraising visa restrictions continued. In spite of this, Sinn Féin were intent on pursuing a strategy of delaying for as long it could any move towards supporting the new NI police service. In a speech in Toronto in November 2005 Adams explained that only when policing and justice powers were transferred from London to Belfast would his party consider making this momentous move (Clancy(A): 161, Moloney 2008: 433 and Frampton: 175). Reiss could not accept this logic. When I questioned him on his tactics towards the republican movement at this time, he described this engagement: 'I explained to [Sinn Féin's leadership] there are consequences to certain actions and ... inactions... Those aren't threats... This is going to be US policy.' (IWA: 12/07/2018). This affirms the case the SEs were now engaged as key political players in NI, rather than third-party arbitrators. Reiss in particular had strayed into political combat with Sinn Féin. This began in late 2005 when Gerry Adams sought to have visa restrictions revoked by reaching out directly to the party's Irish American allies as well as the 10 Downing Street Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell. The latter was particularly important. Over the previous eight years Adams and Powell had formed a rapport and the republican leader was prepared to make the most of this friendship. While Powell did persuade Prime Minister Blair to petition the White House to overrule State's visa provisos, this ultimately failed. In spite of this, Reiss was left infuriated. A deliberate effort by the British to usurp his authority and undermine what was established US policy was something the SE would not forget. (Reiss IWA: 12/07/2018).

Reiss also had to deal with a diplomatic skirmish on another front as he became embroiled in several testy encounters with the republican leadership on the issue of support for the police. Gerry Adams was vocal in his dissatisfaction at Reiss's control and implementation of US foreign policy towards the peace process. In one disparaging assessment he stated, 'I don't have high regard for Mitchell Reiss's input into the process... if it is he

who is advising the President, it's very bad advice' (BBC News Online Archive 2006 – *Adams Criticises Bush's NI envoy*). By the summer of 2006, after Reiss had told a Congressional hearing that the main causal factor to the political impasse in NI lay with Sinn Féin's refusal to endorse the PSNI (Testimony to Congress 2006), relations with Adams worsened. A retaliatory row between the two men was subsequently played out mostly within the pages of the *Irish Times*. Then came Sinn Féin's paid full-page advertisement on the op-ed section of the *New York Times* outlining their reasons for opposing the new NI police service (Schmitt 2008: 67 and Marsden 2006: 66). This drew an angry reproach from Reiss, who stated the advert contained 'massive untruths' (Frampton: 175). Back in Dublin the Irish government was becoming concerned at the SE's approach towards the republican movement. Bertie Ahern explained that while he wanted to see progress in the talks and to keep the DUP engaged, he did not want to be 'over gilding the lily either' (IWA: 12/01/2021). The Taoiseach was anxious about too much pressure being exerted on Sinn Féin and the IRA, and in conversations with Reiss tried to caution the SE on his strategy by telling him, 'I understand the tough messages but at the same time look at the bigger picture' (Ibid.). Not surprisingly, unionists in NI readily approved of Reiss imposing a harder line on republicans. Ruminating on this period, Ian Paisley described him as the 'unionist batman' (IWA: 24/03/16). When responding to this accolade, Reiss dismissed any suggestion his involvement was a one-sided assault on Sinn Féin, stating, 'There was at least as many conversations with the Unionists to get them to be specific on what a deal would look like' (IWA: 12/07/2018).

While Reiss weathered political attacks from the republican movement, it was the efforts of certain British actors to circumvent the SE that deserve deeper analysis. These attempts firmly counter Clancy's contention the UK government was unwilling to implore the White House to rein-in the SEs at vital junctures in the peace process ((A): 138). Downing Street most certainly did. But, the nature of envoy's autonomous structure, the fact it was held by a prominent and influential member of the State Department, and there being minimal presidential oversight of the application of US overseas strategy in NI, meant these efforts were always in vain. That said, Reiss did come under substantial pressure from London as a result of his approach. This placed considerable strain on his relations with the principal British players. The SE's FSOs had become increasingly irritated at Downing Street and the NIO's unwillingness to challenge Sinn Féin on continuing IRA criminal activity (Clancy(A): 144). This friction consequently afflicted NI Secretary of State Peter Hain and Reiss's professional dealings. When I posited his relationship with Hain had severely deteriorated, along with a quote from a US official who stated their rift became 'nasty' and that the British government 'went after [you] harder than they went after Haass' (Clancy(A): 155 & 2007: 171, also see Sanders: 269), Reiss gave this response:

I take that as a compliment. But... there is no person called “the British government” – we are talking about a couple of people. I know that [Powell] was angry, and I know that they tried to go over my head to the White House... That was all very unfortunate. (IWA: 12/07/2018).

Almost fifteen-years after their official working relationship ended tensions remain between Reiss and Hain. The candour from both men when elucidating on their experiences with one another reveals the scale of the rancour that existed between a British cabinet minister and an American diplomat at a time when the Anglo-American Special Relationship was experiencing a resurgence under the tutelage of George W. Bush and Tony Blair. Although Hain does not recognise the “nasty” description, he nevertheless acknowledges Reiss’s operations in NI caused deep frustration within the NIO. In taking a direct swipe at the former SE, he stated, ‘if you’re not actually in the negotiating room, and you’re trying to be a player yourself rather than a supportive player then you can get your lines crossed. And that was what [Reiss] was doing.’ (IWA: 18/03/2020). This pointed attack on Reiss is surprising for two reasons. Firstly, both Haass and Reiss, to varying extents, participated in different NI negotiations between 2001 and 2006. Moreover, Reiss, as the manifestation of US foreign policy vis-à-vis NI, was a particularly important player. This is confirmed above all else by the fact his work in formulating a strategy that required Sinn Féin’s endorsement of the PSNI before devolved government to NI could be restored was eventually adopted by the British and Irish governments (Frampton: 175). As his retrospective criticism continued, Hain’s most acerbic denouncement of Reiss was his accusation that there were times when, ‘I thought [Reiss] was operating off-script, and particularly seemed to be not really in tune with what Dublin and London were trying to achieve.’ (IWA: 18/03/2020). As I have long contended Reiss was an autonomous instrument of the George W. Bush administration and not someone who would have stuck to any set British government script, I therefore asked Peter Hain to elaborate on this statement:

Well this was a very delicate process of negotiation and influence I was pursuing. I knew all along that there would be no deal between Sinn Féin and the DUP unless Sinn Féin and the whole of the republican movement signed up to support policing and the rule of law... Some of Mitchell’s interventions were sort of a bit clumsy. (Ibid.).

I shared Hain’s damning analysis with Reiss. The former SE though slightly irritated, and who had previously made clear to me that he was never impressed by Hain’s style or the substance of his approach, revealed the then NI Secretary was not always kept in the loop on his deliberate and at times discreet outreach in NI.

What Peter doesn't know... is that I did not take any decision without conferring very closely with both London and Dublin. But Peter wasn't involved in those conversations. And I can understand him being upset at being cut-out, but I simply didn't trust him as an interlocutor, I didn't trust his judgement, I didn't trust his ability to keep information confidential. (IWA: 27/04/2020).

When contemplating these verbal recriminations, it is Hain's "off-script" charge that stands-out most. In many ways this comment is perceptive and also indicative of Reiss's ability as SE to gradually elevate the position to a greater degree of autonomy. Within the confines of the federal government the head of S/P is an important, albeit junior administration appointee. Players on the fringes of government, however, can shape pivotal choices (Allison & Zelikow 1999: 255-257). Reiss did, and his ability to devise and direct US foreign policy in NI allowed him to steer a course with considerable latitude. NI was an anomaly at the State Department. It was detached from the UK desk but with policy planning residing with the DPP. This proved the bureaucratic structures of the envoy position gave decision-making authority to this individual. This handed Haass and Reiss unprecedented power to affect policy and alter America's role in the peace process.

Following three intensive days of talks at St Andrews, Scotland, in October 2006, the British and Irish governments, and NI's two main political parties agreed to a process that would see devolution restored. A key piece of this complex political puzzle fell into place on 28 January 2007 when Sinn Féin members voted by an overwhelming majority to endorse the PSNI. Shortly after the autumn 2006 negotiations, when it was becoming clear Irish republicans were edging closer to this decision, Reiss, satisfied his approach was working, assessed the time was right to revise State's visa policy. By early 2007, after almost six years this level of State Department involvement in NI affairs was coming to an end. A managed third-party process, coordinated by the head of S/P and State FSOs, had achieved its objective. Both Haass and Reiss came to manifest the mantra of former DPP Robert R. Bowie who declared the purpose of S/P 'is not merely to produce literature, but to also produce results' (Quoted in Destler: 226). Their actions in NI also validate Pugliaresi and Berliner's assessment that granting 'S/P some operational responsibilities may be the only way for [it] to achieve long-term standing with the regional and functional bureaus' (392).

The means by which both SEs interceded in NI challenges any notion the 21st Century State Department lacks agility or is without initiative (Burns 2019: 105). Haass and Reiss brought independent thinking and innovation to policy formulation towards the peace process. There was, however, a clear dichotomy in the way their interventions affected NI. Haass's impact was felt reactively. Following the Colombia arrests and the 9/11 attacks,

he delivered a robust and unambiguous message to Irish republicans that the US administration had zero tolerance for terrorism of any mould. This pressure was an important contributory factor in forcing the IRA to enter into a decommissioning process in October 2001. Reiss's approach, on the other hand, was much more proactive. His actions were part of a deliberate strategy. He wanted his third-party intercession to achieve something meaningful in NI. His term as envoy reinforces the argument, against Clancy's contention, that the 'structural autonomy [of the SE position] is only part of the story' ((A): 168) when seeking to explain how the SEs were able to pursue policies independent of British and Irish preferences. It is the whole story. Working closely with the DUP leadership, Reiss helped facilitate an environment for the unionist party to clarify tangible demands and gradually transform into agreement mode. He also pursued a course that accelerated Sinn Féin's realisation that their acceptance of policing was a non-negotiable precondition of any powersharing deal. This is what makes him such a vital player in the restoration of the GFA's institutions in May 2007 and an undervalued asset to the peace process. Assertive unilateralism was personified by Reiss. His enterprising control of American intervention in NI elucidated how State Department diplomacy had affected progress in an entrenched political stalemate. This is striking considering the State Department had been largely devalued by an administration that time and again deferred to the Pentagon to determine the direction of US foreign policy.

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