CHAMELEONIC LEADERSHIP: TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
DURING THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS

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Abstract *This paper argues that the interpretations of political leadership in peace processes offered by both the political leadership literature and the peace and conflict studies literature, to date, are often inappropriate in the context of Northern Ireland. It contends that an alternative interpretation of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process is critical to the development of any future analyses of that process, and also to the development of the analyses of peace processes more generally. The paper then suggests that political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process was often necessarily contradictory in style and substance and argues that such contradictions and inconsistencies form the basis of the alternative interpretation that this article seeks ultimately to present. At this point, the paper turns to the introduction of a novel alternative concept, that of chameleonic leadership, outlining what this concept might mean in both theory and in practice, in terms of the peace process, and using the concept as a means of bringing the reader towards a new understanding of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process.*

Chameleonic Leadership: Towards A New Understanding of Political Leadership During the Northern Ireland Peace Process

Introduction

On 10 April 1998 Northern Ireland joined a long list of countries which had produced peace agreements in the 1990s. The Agreement was the culmination of a prolonged peace process, which had followed an equally prolonged and protracted conflict. This peace process has been examined through many paradigms although, curiously, little attention has been paid to the specific role of political leadership during the process. Arguably, this is because the phenomenon of political leadership in Northern Ireland during the continuing peace process presents something of a problem in terms of academic research, especially when considered through the paradigm of leadership studies. It would, however, be untrue to suggest that political leaders in Northern Ireland have been ignored, and have been reduced to mere footnotes in history. The plethora of authorised and unauthorised biographies and autobiographies serve as illustration of this point (See Adams, 2004; Godson, 2004; Hume, 1996; McDonald, 2000; Sharrock & Davenport, 1997; and Sinnerton, 2002). Conversely though, it would be equally untrue to suggest that such material either seeks or serves to define or explain the true nature of that leadership during the peace process. Indeed, taking an overtly personalised approach to understanding these political leaders has often been the norm, presenting these political leaders as idiosyncratic, rife with anecdotal tales of personal transitions as part of the peace process, and 'road to Damascus' conversions along the way (Breen, 2003; Fletcher, 1998). The phraseology to describe the political leaders is often loose and often devoid of any real meaning. Indeed, during the peace process many of the leaders were simply described as being 'charismatic', as a catch-all phrase for their various qualities and attributes and ignored the reality that charisma in one community often meant loathing in another (Braid, 1995; Bruce, 1986; McKittrick, 1996). As a result, we seem no closer to really understanding the nature of political leadership during the ongoing peace process.

Our rather limited understanding has been compounded further by the fact that that much of the more general literature on leadership has made little meaningful connection with the issues of peace, conflict and deeply divided societies in terms of helping us to classify, define and explain such leadership. For example, the case has already been made that both transformational and transactional styles of leadership are of limited value in helping to analyse the aims and actions of political leaders in the Northern Ireland peace process (Gormley-Heenan, 2005). Thus, the purpose of this article is to explain the usefulness of the concept of 'chameleonic leadership' as a way of understanding leadership processes during the Northern Ireland peace process. Chameleonic leadership is explained in this paper as an inconstant form of political leadership which shifted according to the opinion of others and the climate in which it existed, just as a chameleon can change its colour to blend with its background. To be clear, it is not a concept which is necessarily advocated, nor believed to be a good thing in the context of the peace process.

The article begins by explaining the rationale for choosing both the phenomenon of peace processes and the context of Northern Ireland for research, in respect of the potential contribution that such research might make to the field of leadership studies. It argues that the interpretations of political leadership in peace processes offered by both the political leadership literature and the peace and conflict studies literature, to date, are often inappropriate in the context of Northern Ireland. The article contends that an alternative interpretation of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process is critical to the development of any future analyses of that process, and also to the development of the analyses of peace processes more generally, further suggests that political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process was often necessarily contradictory in style and substance, and argues that such contradictions and inconsistencies form the basis of the alternative interpretation that this article seeks ultimately to present. At this point then the article turns to the introduction of a novel alternative concept, that of chameleonic leadership, and outlines in detail what this concept might mean in both theory and in practice, in terms of the peace process, as a means of bringing the reader towards a new understanding of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process.

A note on methodology

Much of the research for this article was undertaken during the period 2000 – 2004. The purpose of the research was essentially exploratory in nature. The tripartite classification which is commonly used to explain the purpose of any piece of research emphasises exploratory, descriptive and explanatory purposes (Robson, 1993). In particular, the exploratory purpose seeks to find out what is happening; seeks new insights; seeks to ask questions; seeks to assess the phenomenon in a new light; and is usually qualitative in nature (Robson, 1993). Given that the original aim of the research was to analyse more systematically the phenomenon of political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland from 1994-1998 specifically and to move towards a new framework of analysis for political leadership in peace processes more generally, it seems clear that the research purpose could only be exploratory. This is especially true given one of the core arguments of this article which is that interpretations of political leadership in peace processes offered by both the political leadership literature and the peace and conflict studies literature, to date, are often inappropriate in the context of Northern Ireland. Thus, the purpose of the research was essentially to explore other possible interpretations of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process.

In designing the research, some of the key terms needed to be teased out further and explained. Principally, these were leadership, political leadership and peace processes. The main interest of the research was *political* leadership though the author was fully cognisant of the role that other leaders play in divided societies and in societies in transition, whether they were cultural, religious, community-based or business leaders not least because such leaders can often have a moderating effect on unwise political leaders. While it could be argued that many of those other leaders mentioned above might act *politically* they are often seen to be nonconstituted leaders (Tucker, 1986). Nonconstituted leaders, by definition, lack the power that political science sees as intricately linked to politics. In the context of the Northern Ireland peace process this was evidenced in the fact that there was no formal space created at the negotiating table for leaders other than party political leaders. For this reason the nonconstituted leaders were omitted from the parameters of this research. Instead, political leadership was taken to mean political party leadership.

How far down a party organisation one can go in terms of making a distinction between the political leaders and the rank and file of a party also require further elucidation in order to more fully clarify the boundaries of the research. For the purposes of this research it was decided that the concept of political leadership should be used to classify those people engaged in a political capacity at the top level of their respective political parties in Northern Ireland. The concept was not necessarily taken to mean merely the individual political party leaders in isolation, nor did it mean only those political actors who held electoral office. Instead, the concept was more inclusive than exclusive in its classification and focused on those who had the capacity to effect influential change both within their own parties and beyond their parties during the peace process. It was felt that for the purposes of an exploratory investigation any broader conceptualisation of political leadership ran the risk of becoming bogged down in a maze of variables, dimensions and linkages that might 'obscure more than it reveals about the essence of political leadership'(Hah & Bartol, 1983: 107).

In total, twelve political elites were interviewed formally by the author for the purposes of the research. These interviewees came from the UUP, SDLP, DUP, Sinn Fein, Alliance, Women's Coalition, PUP, and UDP. The author was unable to secure interviews with representatives from the other two parties involved in the multi-party talks process – the UKUP and the NILP. The original twelve interviews were supplemented by many more informal and 'off the record' conversations which took place with some of the original twelve and also with other political elites during the course of the research.

The author acknowledges that the small sample might be considered unrepresentative and thus might also have resulted in some gaps in the information gathered but would point out that problems of access to some of the political leaders was compensated by obtaining information from multiple sources other than simply from interviews. Furthermore, as noted the purpose of the research was designed to be exploratory in nature and therefore the research presented should be seen as indicative research as opposed to definitive. Additionally, those interviews that did take place provided accounts by some of the most major players into events and issues of importance to the research and their input was absolutely critical in this respect. Whilst mindful of the degree of confidentiality offered to the interviewees, it is permissible to say that each of these players were either senior members of their various parties

negotiating teams, and/or were actual party leaders, and/or were current or subsequent Ministers within the Northern Ireland Executive. This indicates the seniority of those interviewed and adds further validity to the credibility of the research.

In organising and analysing all of the data collected, a grounded theory approach was used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Critical to such an approach is that: 'one does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge'(Parry, 1998:89).   Additionally, because of the risk that elite interviewees might, at worst, try to rewrite history in their own favour or, at best, present radically different interpretations of events and issues, a process of triangulation was used whereby the data collected from interviews was cross-referenced with other published first-hand accounts and documentary sources from the peace process and also with published secondary source materials.

The overall result is an analysis of political leadership unconstrained by either a strict chronological approach or a unionist/nationalist tradition approach because through using the grounded methodological approach, it became clear that neither approach emerged from the research as necessarily important. In other words, no attempt has been made to ascertain types and styles of leadership that could be described as inherently unionist or nationalist. Nor has any attempt been made to chart shifts in behaviour on a month to month basis by various political leaders. Rather, the focus has been on political leadership in Northern Ireland in its generic form during the entire period of the peace process. This is critically important in terms of the progression of the argument in this article which contends that an alternative interpretation of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process is critical to the development of any future analyses of the Northern Ireland peace process, and also to the development of the analyses of peace processes more generally. Focusing on a unionist/nationalist leadership dichotomy would be likely to result in a perpetuation of the academic argument that the conflict and its resolution was about two distinct ethnic groups. The research presented here seeks to offer an alternative analysis.

Why bother studying leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process?

 To be fair, the story of the Northern Ireland peace process is not considered to be particularly unique since the 'decade of peace processes' of the 1990s bore witness to a multiplicity of cease-fires and

political agreements spanning all continents. Moreover, researchers' attempts at understanding the causes of the conflict and the various guises of its peace process have led to the accusation that Northern Ireland is, in fact, one of the most over-researched countries in the world (Whyte, 1990). However, despite the proliferation of works on the conflict in Northern Ireland, it has also been argued that the research undertaken has fallen short of a comprehensive understanding of the situation (Whyte, 1990: 248). Nowhere is this analysis more true than in terms of our understanding of the role, capacity and effect of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process.

This argument applies as much in the more general analysis of peace processes as it does to the context of Northern Ireland. For example, it is argued, in normative terms, that many ethnic conflicts are triggered by 'bad leaders' (Brown, 2001: 220). They are defined as: 'self-obsessed leaders who will do anything to get and keep power' (Brown, 2001: 223). By the same rationale then, those who help to trigger peace processes might be determined or presented as 'good leaders'. Not only could this be interpreted as an oversimplification in the extreme, but it is also arguable that the use of the terminology of 'bad' and 'good' leaders lacks the academic precision that is needed to explain the role, capacity and effect of political leadership in conflicts and, more importantly, in peace processes. The basic rationale for this paper takes as one of its starting points a critique of this lack of academic precision, in respect of political leadership in peace processes.

In addition, there are numerous other reasons which validate the decision to examine political leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process. In terms of why political leadership per se, there are four main points to consider. Firstly, and most obviously, it is political leaders, not institutions nor the average citizen within a country that actually governs that country on a day-to-day basis. Their decision-making centrality, the extension of their responsibilities into the public sphere and the structural amplification of the effects of political leaders are obvious (Renshon, 2000). Secondly, there is an ever-growing public fascination with political leadership, personality politics and the personal elements of political affairs. Gaffney refers to this as an 'obsession' by everyone (2001: 120). Such an obsession lends itself to a paradox given both our need for great statesmen and women and our preponderance towards either reading or dishing the dirt on political leaders. The third reason is actually the reverse of the second, though no less important. While there may be a public fascination with

political leadership the same cannot be said within some academic quarters. Indeed, leadership has often been seen as something rather superfluous to explanations of governance, especially in the UK context (Foley, 2002). Re-introducing the concept of political leadership to academic debates on governance is a worthy rationale for its study. The final reason for studying political leadership is directly relational to its perceived problem-solving orientation. According to Tucker, political leadership means the diagnosis of a problem, the prescription of solutions and the mobilisation of support for needed action (Tucker, 1981). Nowhere is the problem-solving orientation of leadership more important than in the context of violent conflicts and the search for peaceful solutions through peace processes. It is to this context that the paper now turns.

Three reasons are elucidated here which serve to explain the rationale for choosing peace processes as an area of research. The first reason is one of necessity since political leadership in peace processes is a subject that appears to have been ignored by general peace and conflict studies research. As the most recognisable embodiment of political groupings, political leaders are key actors in the creation, control and/or culmination of violent conflicts. However, despite their obvious centrality, there exists a general dearth of writing that specifically addresses the role of political leaders in conflict situations. Such an omission is not only an academic oversight but is also one that has profound 'real world' consequences. Writing with reference to leadership during conflict Brown observes that:

> Scholars have paid comparatively little attention to the roles played by domestic elites in instigating ethnic and internal conflicts. The result is a 'no fault' history that leaves out the pernicious effect of individuals……leaving elite decisions and actions out of the equation, as many social scientists do, is analytically misguided. …Under appreciating the importance of elite decisions and actions hinders conflict management efforts and fails to place blame where blame is due (Brown, 2001: 220).

Complementing this scantiness is the large lacuna in the literature on political leadership at the (later) period when conflicts culminate and transform. At best, political leadership is referred to in scant detail as one of the many variables at play when deciphering why conflicts escalate, de-escalate and transform. Such an omission is perplexing given that political leaders are central actors in any peace

process. Indeed, regardless of the significant role of civil society, political process and peace processes are essentially elite driven, with a relatively small number of people wholly responsible for making final decisions and implementing all related policy.

The second reason why it is worth attending to leadership in peace processes is that the majority of the literature that does exist remains unconvincing. The tendency to accord diametrically opposite labels of leadership leads to unconvincing explanations for leadership behaviour. Setting up such dichotomies: 'good leaders' versus 'bad leaders' (Kellerman, 2004); 'leaders versus power-wielders' (Burns, 1978); 'warmongers versus peacemakers'(Ludwig, 2002); and 'weak versus strong leaders' (Colaresi, 2004), ignores a reality which is much more complex and nuanced and does not fit with the multi-dimensional nature of many protracted negotiations, which necessitates a much wider range of actors than a dichotomy might allude to (Blondel, 1987: 24). For example, explaining South Africa's transition from apartheid to a multi-party democracy as a story of 'Mandela versus deKlerk' competition divorces other, equally important, political actors from this narrative (see Glad, 1996). In a similar vein, explaining the peace process in Northern Ireland as 'the David [Trimble] and Gerry [Adams] Show' divorces other, equally important, actors from that particular narrative.

Thirdly, and finally, the study of political leadership in the context of a peace process challenges some of the existing general assumptions that are made in relation to political leadership. Indeed, many assumptions are made in the literature about the type of context in which political leadership operates. For example, Burns' seminal work on leadership in the 1970s argues that: 'conflict between and within parties is considered normal, predictable, and assuaged by time honored understandings about good winners and good losers, majority rule, "to the victor belongs the spoils" and so on' (Burns, 1978: 315). In functional liberal democracies this might well be considered to be the case. However, it could be argued that the 'time honored understanding' that Burns refers to, is not so well understood nor accepted in ethnically and violently divided societies. In fact, part of the problem is often that there are few common understandings at all. Furthermore, the concept of 'good winners' and 'good losers' only emanates from societies where the competition/election procedures are considered fair, and where the administrative system is not contested. Majority rule has long been a major source of contention in many divided societies, with arguments made for 'mutual consensus' and the protection of minority groupings.

Ultimately then, Burns' understanding of what is normal and acceptable about conflict and leadership within and among parties may be inapplicable to divided societies. In another example of the challenge to existing assumptions, the study of leadership in peace processes serve to contest the notion that political leadership is a wholly positive phenomenon. Kellerman highlights the implicit assumption assumed by many leadership scholars 'that to lead is to do right' (Kellerman, 2000: 66). It could be argued that the subject of peace and conflict has not been broached because the implications of the relationship between leadership and conflict are difficult for some scholars to acknowledge. Yet it is clear that many divided societies are prone to leaders sometimes dubbed 'ethnic entrepreneurs', 'warlords' or 'power-wielders'- in other words leaders whose motivations may not be so altruistic in both the conflict and in any subsequent peace processes, and thus warrants further analysis.

Collectively, the rationale presented here for the study of political leadership in the context of a peace process reinforces one of the arguments of this paper that the literature can often offer interpretations of the political leadership that are sometimes lacking in relevance. Some do not engage at all with the concept of political leadership in peace processes, preferring to remain focused on political leadership in war and conflict; others ignore the cultural specificities of divided societies and assume that the context in which political leaders operate is more universal; and those which have tentatively mentioned political leadership in the context of peace processes often ignore the very different leadership variables at play. However, it is true that the study of political leadership in peace processes, in general terms, runs the risk of becoming immediately bogged down in the multiplicity of variables that exist within each individual context. Instead, it seems more appropriate to begin the study of political leadership in peace processes by focusing on a singular peace process in a particular region. And what, then, of the decision to use Northern Ireland (again) as a case study for analysis?

A number of reasons can be used to explain this. Primarily, Northern Ireland serves as an interesting case study because many of the key actors involved in the conflict were the same key actors involved in the peace process. While numerous key political actors involved in the Northern Ireland conflict engaged in a re-assessment of their positions, policies and preferences in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this did not necessitate a change of leadership in Northern Ireland which makes for a rather unusual phenomenon. Contrary to some conflict resolution theory which argues that leadership change is

often necessary for the transformation of a conflict, political leadership in Northern Ireland remained mostly consistent during this re-assessment period (Stedman, 1990; Kriesberg et al., 1991). Of the four largest parties at the time of the negotiation process, - the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin - the leadership of the latter three had remained unchanged for almost two decades. The fact that many of the key players remained the same and yet the political situation dramatically changed is highly significant. Indeed, it raises the question, what allowed for the political changes to take place, if it had not been a significant change of leadership within the main parties? In other words, how exactly did a society with many of the same political leaders in place from the 1970s and 1980s come to make a peaceful agreement in the 1990s? How did these 'political protagonists' become the 'political pragmatists' of the 1990s? The concept of chameleonic leadership may serve as a partial explanation of this, as will be discussed further in the paper.

The other important reason in using Northern Ireland as a case study for analysis is in reaction to the often confusing analogies that have been made in the past between political leaders from Northern Ireland and political leaders involved in peace processes elsewhere in the world. Perhaps feeling bereft of new and novel ways of explaining the phenomenon, writers had taken to making comparisons, for example, between Northern Ireland's political leaders and leaders from the South African peace process (see Hume, 1996: 95-96; Guelke, 1997; O'Connor, 2002: 87). Intended as a method of explaining progress in the peace process by using the concepts of lending, borrowing and exchange between them, the analogies between the leaders in different countries are often misleading, superficial or inappropriate (McGarry, 1998). Thus, revisiting the issue of political leadership in the specific context of Northern Ireland, allows the reader to move away from the somewhat ill-conceived comparisons and the idea that Mandela-ism is, perhaps, exportable towards an analysis grounded in the process of leadership as opposed to the personality of leadership.

Out with the old and in with the new - applying various models of leadership

Given the argument that many of the interpretations of political leadership in peace processes offered by both the political leadership literature and the peace and conflict studies literature, to date, are often

inappropriate in the context of Northern Ireland, there is a need to offer an alternative interpretation of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process. This is critical to the development of any future analyses of that process, and also to the development of the analyses of peace processes more generally. Some might argue that there is no need to create a new model or way of understanding to explain leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process and that the application of existing models to the context of Northern Ireland, in most instances, should suffice.

Indeed, there are already a number of existing classifications of political leadership, some used more widely than others. In exploring the different types of political leaders, some focus on the process of leadership, others on the outcome of that process, some on the style of leadership, and others on the different sources of power which they have at their disposal. Early political leadership classifications include Plato's timocratic leadership (ruling by pride and honour); plutocratic leadership (ruling by wealth); democratic leadership (ruling by popular consent); and tyrannical leadership (ruling by coercion) (Bass, 1990: 22). Kellerman groups the political leadership types into democratic, totalitarian, revolutionary, legal, traditional and charismatic, entrepreneurial, and non-constituted (Kellerman, 1986: 193). Some of the more recent definitions of leadership are less 'political' in terminology. For example, Hermann's crusaders, salesmen, agents and fire-fighters are more metaphoric than anything else, but her classification conveys the message that crusaders have a vision and seek to make that vision a reality; salesmen use persuasion to get their constituents to 'buy' an idea; agents act only as delegates for those whom they represent; and fire-fighters consistently respond to the emergencies which might affect their constituents (Hermann, 1995).

Additionally, within the broader field of leadership studies, there are a selection of leadership theories dating from the 1970s that might be considered of use in helping to explain political leaders in Northern Ireland. Referred to as the 'new leadership theories' they include theories of transformational (and therefore by association, transactional) and charismatic leadership (House and Aditya, 1997). Previously, such theories have been used to explain the leadership of successful social reforms and leadership of transitions from colonial rule and/or political tyranny to independence (Barker et al, 2001; Glad, 1996; Kane, 2001: Sheffer, 1993; and Westlake, 2000). In other words, not only do these leadership theories attempt to present leadership behaviours that can account for and explain outstanding

leadership, but the illustrative examples which they often use are not entirely dissimilar from the scenarios of deeply divided societies, and thus not entirely dissimilar from the case study of Northern Ireland.

Arguably though, the problem with much of the leadership field, however, is its normative undertones. This is clearly evidenced in the case of transformational leadership. As a classically normative approach to leadership, the term *transforming leadership* has gained widespread recognition as linked to the work of James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Transformational leadership is one which looks beyond the existing system, and offers ideas, hopes and aspirations to followers. Burns highlights four types of transformational leaders - intellectual leaders; leaders of reform; revolutionary leaders; and heroes or ideologues (Burns, 1978). The essence of transformational leadership is for the leader to transform people into better people. Thus, there is a highly moralistic premise to such leadership in so far as this type of leadership 'transforms people from the selves that they are into the selves that they should be. As a result of the transformation, people are poised to be true to their better selves' (Price, 2003: 68).

Because of the moral basis to transformational leadership, Burns refuses to acknowledge some of the better-known figures in history as leaders with Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin regarded not as leaders but rather as 'power-wielders' (Burns 1986). Burns is not alone in his refusal to afford a label of 'legitimacy' to those he deemed unworthy. As Kellerman points out in relation to the leadership literature:

> The powers that be – theoreticians and practitioners, researchers and educators, consultants and trainers – have entered into a tacit alliance: Omit from the collective conversation the notion of evil. The name Adolf Hitler does not cross our lips and so we pretend his ghost has been exorcised. In general, our work – indeed the way we use the English language – operates on the premise that the man who, arguably, had a greater impact on 20th century history than any other was in no way whatsoever, in no conceivable sense of the term, a leader. Needless to say this deep distortion has had a ripple effect. For example, the voluminous literature on leadership and management in the private sector implies that, by definition, leaders are meritorious and good rather than deficient and bad (Kellerman, 2000: 66).

This normative redefinition of the word 'leadership' has not gone uncontested in other fields, if not in the field of leadership. Kellerman argues that it is only those who work in the field of 'leadership studies' who make the distinction between leaders who do good and those who do not. Outside of the field, for example in political science, and equally importantly, among the general public no such distinctions are made. For example, Slobodan Milosevic is still routinely referred to as the leader of the Serbs, and until recently Saddam Hussein was regarded the leader of the Iraqis. In Northern Ireland, Gerry Adams is the leader of republicanism. This raises the question - would the leadership studies scholars prefer not to consider as leaders those political figures in Northern Ireland with a democratically elected mandate yet who have links to paramilitaries, or who are former paramilitaries themselves? It seems so. Using this sort of moral argument, it would appear that there is no merit in examining political leadership in Northern Ireland, since a significant proportion of those leaders might actually be considered 'non-leaders' and can therefore be discounted from any analysis. However, an equally valid response is that those in leadership studies who refuse to acknowledge all genres of leadership have taken a departure that is 'ill-founded and ill conceived' (Kellerman, 2000: 67). To omit such leaders is to limit our understanding of who we are and of what we do.

With this point in mind, it is not the case that I feel the need to create a new model of leadership to explain the context of the Northern Ireland peace process. Rather, it is more that problems and paradoxes which arise from existing understandings and models of leadership reveal the necessity of doing so. Firstly, many of the existing classifications are used to explain individual leaders, as opposed to the more collective concept of leadership. The emphasis of this paper is to find a way of understanding the collective phenomenon of political leadership in Northern Ireland's peace process as opposed to emphasising the traits and attributes of individual party leaders. Secondly, as illustrated, the theoretical underpinnings of some of the literature are often value-driven and have a tendency to focus on how leadership ought to be, rather than on how leadership actually is. There are significant difficulties in applying such values to leadership behaviour in conflict and peace processes, when the values are often in dispute between warring factions. For example, if as Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggest leadership is about 'doing the right thing' then the obvious question is, doing the right thing by whom? Who determines what is the right thing to do in a peace process, if the options are as simple as surrendering

your weapons or protecting your community? Who decides what is 'right'? Whose values take priority? And more importantly, why? It is with these issues in mind that the paper turns to the Northern Ireland case study for further examination.

Contradictions and inconsistencies: confused roles, undermined capacity and negated effects

Making sense of the Northern Ireland peace process in the 1990s and the phenomenon of political leadership therein, is extraordinarily difficult when the multiple contradictions and inconsistencies of leadership are factored into the equation. In other words, it becomes difficult to label a leader as either a hardliner or a moderniser; transformational or transactional; reluctant or ambitious; innovative or pedantic; charismatic or robotic, because many of the leaders displayed alternate traits during the course of the peace process. To be clear, the contradictions of such leadership are within the context of a single leader rather than between different political leaders. The benefit of such a style of leadership was that it allowed the various political leaders to shift and adapt to changing political circumstances during the peace process without losing face. To its detriment, contradictory leadership or what I am calling 'chameleonic leadership' left nuanced political observers, other political leaders and the general public unsure how best to describe and define their leaders.

It is clear though that what is key to the analysis presented here is the issue of consistency, or lack thereof, in relation to the behaviour of political leaders in Northern Ireland. Upon reflection, it seems that the often-contradictory style and substance of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process should form the very basis of any interpretation proffered. Such an approach necessitates an examination of the possible contradictions and inconsistencies within the role of political leadership during the peace process; the possible contradictions and inconsistencies within the capacity of political leaders to carry out their roles; and the contradictions and inconsistencies in terms of the effect that political leaders had on each other during that process. In doing so, it becomes clear here that political leadership here suffered, at times, from confused roles, undermined capacity and negated effects during the course of the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Arguably, the role confusion came from the multiple and often incompatible roles assigned to political leaders. In other words, political leaders engaged in the Northern Ireland peace process had no

single role to play. Rather they had multiple roles which were prioritised according to the political demands of the day. Overall, the peace process required that attention be paid to all of the political leaders' various roles. Ultimately however, the leaders seemed to struggle in terms of both understanding and effectively fulfilling all of their roles. This raises an obvious question: why? One obvious reason is that the political leaders were conditioned by the rather normative expectations of others in relation to what they should have actually been doing during the peace process. For example, one normative understanding was that that the role of political leaders was to win the peace at all costs during the Northern Ireland peace process and that the leaders would say: 'I shall do the right thing, no matter what its effect on me and the parochial interests I represent, even if the effect on us is adverse' (Horowitz, 2002: 202). A second understanding of their role was that it was necessary for leaders to step down from earlier rhetoric and accept an agreement which was likely to be far below the leaders' original expectations and wishes, and in which the immediate benefits were not always obvious. In such an instance, the leader would say: 'I shall do the right thing, even though it is not, at this moment, in my interest or in the interest of those I represent; inasmuch as my vision does not permit me to see what will be in our interest in the future, I shall choose those arrangements I can live with, come what may' (Horowitz, 2002: 202). A third understanding was that the role of political leaders was to suffer short-term pain for long-term gain in a process and to encourage their constituents to do likewise. In such instances, the leader would say: 'I shall do the right thing, because although its effects will be negative on us in the short run, I can see that they will be positive in the long run' (Horowitz, 2002, 202). These messages of the need for leaders to 'do the right thing' were delivered at different times by various international actors, the British and Irish governments, the churches, the business community and the media.

Additionally though, and in contrast to the above, the political leaders were also conditioned by the realities of 'real politik' and their own selfish interests (Darby & MacGinty, 2003). Taking heed of the calls to 'do the right thing', might well have resulted in winning the peace but could equally have resulted in losing the party. Certainly making peace at any price could have cost the leaders their positions within their respective political parties. Making historic compromises with political opponents would have required a great deal of explanation with constituents and followers. Delivering constituents

towards acceptance of a deal would have required emphasis on the various gains that had been made in the process as opposed to any mention of the concessions that had been made. Assisting opponents in the deliverance of their own constituents would have required that the aforementioned emphasis of gains that had been made in the process was not highlighted too much lest the political opponent's constituency only saw the gains of their adversaries as opposed to the gains that they themselves had secured. Maintaining party cohesion and unity required a two-pronged approach. At times, it required leaders to negotiate firstly with their own people. One Sinn Féin representative likened this to putting the republican grassroots 'through the tumble dryer' by tumbling ideas around and around during the process (Author interview, 2000). At other times it necessitated being rather more economical with the truth. All of this resulted in a degree of role confusion for the political leaders insofar as the roles to be played often seemed to be contradictory in nature. Indeed, delivering peace and maintaining party unity required different role priorities with different effects and yet both were equally important in terms of the long-term sustainability of any agreements made. In other words, political leaders were left with the problem of deciding whether their role in the peace process was to do the right thing for the greater good and whether this was, in the context of the needs and demands of their own constituents, the right thing to do.

The roles of political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process were inextricably linked to the leaders' potential capacity to fulfil their roles. While an examination of the roles of political leaders focused on a variety of actions and activities expected of them, any examination of their capacity must then focus on their ability and aptitude to deliver on the same. The nature of the linkage between the two concepts can be evidenced in a number of examples. Many actors may have sought to play a role in the peace process in Northern Ireland but only a limited number had the actual capacity to do so. For example, an overview of the 1996 Forum Elections in Northern Ireland reveals that in addition to the ten political parties which were eventually elected to the Forum and the multi-party talks process, there were 14 other parties and individual actors seeking election to become involved in that process also. Thus, while 14 political parties and individuals sought out a role for themselves within the peace process, the election results negated at least some of their capacity to do so.

Moreover, even within some of those parties which were elected to the Forum, their capacity to affect the process was diminished by issues such as internal wrangling, intra-party politics and broader

political events. For example, the Labour Party, which was elected to the Forum and the multi-party talks process with 0.85% of the total votes cast, became bogged down in a row which threatened to split the newly formed party and saw one member of their negotiating team withdraw from the party entirely (Simpson, 1996). Therefore, while some political parties, such as the Labour Party, were given a role to play in the peace process through their electoral mandate, albeit an electoral mandate which had been enhanced by the particular electoral system which allowed some tiny parties to be represented, their capacity to do so was diminished by a lack of infrastructure and personnel, and some internal political divisions. In another example, the temporary exclusion of both the UDP and Sinn Féin from the talks process in the early stages of 1998, left both parties, at least for a short time, with a diminished role to play in the talks process despite the capacity existing within both parties to do so (see McKittrick, 1998).

Overall though, the influence and capacity of leadership rested in three domains – the influence of office, the influence of events and the influence of the personal (see Elcock, 2001). Each will be considered here in turn. Firstly, the differences between the various party leaderships in terms of the mechanisms used to elect party leaders, the attitudes of party leaders towards their positions of office, the plausibility of a 'leader-in-waiting', and differences within the party structures, all had an impact on the potential capacity of leadership to use their influence of office to shape and direct the peace process. Put simply, the influence of office and the parameters of influence within that position of office were not uniform between the various parties during the peace process (see Aughey, 1996). That much is clear.

In terms of emphasising the relevance of this to the progression of the overall argument, one point stands out for further elucidation. While the influence of office can be substantial, any challenges to positions of office can seriously undermine the influence of a leader in office. For example, a past leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, James Molyneaux, underwent a leadership challenge in 1995 by a largely unknown candidate from within the party. While Molyneaux successfully defended this challenge in the immediate sense, it was a challenge from which Molyneaux failed to recover in the longer term. In addition, the fact that his successor, David Trimble, was elected to office with only 58% of the vote in a two-way ballot was directly relational to his subsequent difficulties with his party officers and fellow MP's (see Mullin, 1999; Breen, 1997). The result of any undermining of influence of a leader in office was, often, an inconsistent approach by leaders, in terms of handling their parties. At times, this was

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manifested in both the desire and attempts to operate outside of the confines of office and beyond the constraints of other leaders within the party's elite. This is illustrated in the example of the secret talks between John Hume, then leader of the SDLP, and Sinn Féin's leader Gerry Adams in the early 1990s, despite the legitimacy that Hume's office afforded him on the world stage, not least with the various US administrations (see O'Connor, 2002). Taken as a whole, the parameters of influence afforded by the positions of office were not stagnant and subject to change as the process moved along, even within parties. This was usually as a consequence of the influence of events that took place during the peace process.

Many events occurred during the peace process which had the capacity to both enhance and damage the influence of leadership during the peace process. These various events often necessitated that the political leaders modified their approach in the peace process in order that the events did not limit the leaders' capacity to direct their respective parties and the wider political process. This could explain Trimble's seemingly hard-line stance in relation to events at Drumcree (over a parade dispute in the mid 1990s) in contrast to his more 'moderate' stance, at least in comparison to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the United Kingdom Unionist Party (UKUP), in terms of his decision to stay in the talks process once it became clear that Sinn Féin were about to be admitted to them for the first time in September 1997. This was despite the decision of the DUP and the UKUP to leave the talks process as a consequence of the same event. The contradiction in his behaviour between hard-liner and moderate give further resonance to the argument of this paper that the contradictions and inconsistencies of leadership behaviour should not be ignored or explained away in any analysis or understanding of political leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process but, rather, should be seen as the very basis of a new understanding.

Finally, there are many contradictions to be noted in understanding the power and influence of the personal and the capacity that such power and influence afforded the political leaders at different points in the peace process and perception and reality are two issues at the heart of the seeming contradictions. For example, while John Hume had, on the one hand, 'managed to develop the power of influence and has walked with more useful people than princes', on the other it was clear that while he was turning into an icon outside of his party, the party itself effectively lacked leadership during critical

stages of the peace process (O'Connor, 2002: 33). The perception was that Hume had the capacity to lead his own party towards a peace process as well as the capacity to influence other actors at the international level. The reality, at least for many senior political actors within the SDLP, was that Hume was better at the latter than the former. What is most critical to any understanding of the capacity of political leadership to affect the overall peace process through their personal influence is that the perception of their personal influence often mattered as much, if not more, than the actual reality. In this respect, it is clear that the most potent source of influence during the peace process was personal rather than structural. What is particularly interesting is that political leaders focused as much on their personal capacity to influence other political leaders during the peace process as they did on their personal capacity to influence followers. In interviews, many spoke of the interaction and effects of interaction between political leaders at critical junctures of the peace process (Gormley-Heenan, 2005). This appeared to have as much importance for political leaders as did the interactions and effects of their interactions with followers during the peace process. Thus, it is important to also consider specifically the nature of the relationship between the political elites during the peace process and how, if at all, political leaders were able to have an effect on other political leaders during the process.

The nature of the relationship between the political leaders

To note that relationships between the majority of political leaders in Northern Ireland, during the early part of the peace process, were not good is an understatement. It cannot be stressed enough that the nature of inter-party relations was dysfunctional in the extreme. Many of the political party leaders did not talk to one another and/or had no everyday experience of dealing with one another. Clearly, much effort was needed if the fragile relationships between the various party leaderships were to improve as a necessary pre-requisite to a holistic negotiation process. These efforts were to take place in both public and private arenas.

Following the IRA ceasefire in 1994, the ensuing period bore witness to many of the first public interactions between some of the political players. While these interactions almost always happened at the individual level, it was clear that the meetings were sanctioned at party level. For example, in October 1994 there was participation in a television debate in the US by senior representatives from Sinn

Féin and the UUP. Sinn Féin and the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) shared a platform in September 1995 during a Liberal Democrat party conference in Glasgow. Sinn Féin and the UUP took part in a radio discussion in Belfast, in January 1996. They also took part in a live local television debate for the first time in February 1996. Another television debate between Sinn Féin and the UUP in February 1996, was not broadcast because of the subsequent breakdown of the IRA ceasefire that night. Televised debates resumed between Sinn Féin and the UUP by August 1997. Finally, the individual interaction gave way to more collective interaction. This was illustrated when the UUP and Sinn Féin sat down at the same conference table for the first time during the multi-party talks process, initiated by the British and Irish governments in September 1997. In addition to these tentative first steps in public however, the various political leaders had been meeting together in more private forums (Arthur, 1999). These private forums acted as a mechanism in which the leaders could engage in some type of 'prenegotiation' activity. However, despite the argument that 'the beginning of the process of prenegotiation is generally marked by a turning point in the relationship between the parties' this was very clearly not the case in Northern Ireland (Stein, 1989: 475). Indeed, the very point of these private forums was designed to help facilitate a turning point in relationships. One key objective, from the perspective of those hosting events, was to try to improve the poor relations between the political leaderships, and thus by extension, was an attempt to improve the prospects of the peace process more generally.

In relation to such initiatives however, a number of issues clearly sit easily with the contention that political leadership during the Northern Ireland peace process was often contradictory and inconsistent in both style and substance. Firstly, a contradiction was detected in terms of the attitudes and actions of some of those involved in the relationship-building exercises. One leader summed this point rather succinctly when he noted that his party had taken part in one initiative and found that it was good, but yet would not concede that it had the potential to make a difference in terms of the overall peace process (Author interview, 2000). Secondly, the inconsistency of participation throughout the various initiatives, whilst often for fairly valid reasons such as that the smaller parties did not have enough 'senior' political players through which to rotate participants, undermined some of the potential that political leaders had in terms of their influence on other political leaders. Thirdly, the behaviour of the various political leaders was often demonstrably different beyond the confines of Northern Ireland in

comparison to their behaviour at home. Many anecdotal stories were revealed during the course of this research which indicated the more reconciliatory side of the personalities involved, though it was made explicitly clear that these stories were not for citation (Author interviews, 2000). Fourthly and finally, the contradictory nature of the (limited) developing relationships beyond the immediacy of the relationship-building initiatives was apparent in examples such as the nature of the relationship between the UUP and the loyalist parties. At some points in the process, the relationship between the two seemed to be positive and resulted in the parties' leaderships standing shoulder to shoulder when returning to the talks process after the departure of the DUP and the UKUP in 1997. At other points in the process, the relationship was alleged to have deteriorated with David Ervine, leader of the smaller Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) pointing out that during the course of the talks he discovered that many unionists disliked him more than they disliked Adams (Sinnerton, 2002). Collectively, these contradictions and inconsistency of behaviour served to negate the potential of personal influence during the peace process.

In summation then, deconstructing political leadership into its constituent parts of role, capacity and effect has merely further emphasised the complicated and contradictory nature of political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland. To be sure, matters were not as simplistic as some peace and conflict scholars would have us believe. Again, this was one of the original points of this paper; that the interpretations of political leadership in peace processes offered by both the political leadership literature and the peace and conflict studies literature were often inappropriate to the particular context of Northern Ireland. Progress in the Northern Ireland peace process was not as a result of two strong leaders with a motivation to make peace, as Rothstein argues of peace processes more generally (Rothstein, 1999). It was more complicated than that. For a start, there were more than two leaders representing two political parties in the Northern Ireland case study. Each had their own strengths. There were leaders who had strong electoral support, as in the case of the Ulster Unionists, the SDLP and the DUP. There were leaders who had strongish electoral support coupled with additional strength garnered from their links with paramilitaries, as in the case of Sinn Féin. There were leaders who appeared relatively weak electorally, as in the case of the PUP and the UDP, but who gathered significant strength from their links and associations with paramilitaries. There were leaders who were strong in terms of

gender representation, as in the case of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and in standing for the 'silent majority', as in the case of the Alliance Party.

As a further indication of the complicated and contradictory nature of political leadership, progress in the peace process was not necessarily made as a consequence of the actor transformation which amounted to either a change of character, a change of leadership, a change in the constituency of the leader or adoption of its goals, values and/or beliefs, as argued in a more general context, by Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999). Again, it was more complicated than that. The research on political leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process has demonstrated that the 'transformations' of leadership in terms of a change in character have not been binding. So, while there might have been a change in character which allowed for some unionists to engage with Sinn Féin during the peace process, for example, this was not necessary a change which was absolute. Indeed, some political leaders veered between only engaging publicly, to only engaging privately, to not engaging at all during the process. Equally, there was no change of leadership during the 1994-1998 period with the notable exception of the election of Trimble after the resignation of Molyneaux. In the three other largest political parties, the leadership had remained unchanged for nearly twenty years. The fact that the key political players remained the same in Northern Ireland and yet the political situation dramatically shifted is highly significant. The question is, what has allowed the political changes to take place, if it was not a change of leadership within the main parties?

Quite clearly, a different dynamic was created with the change of leadership in the UUP in 1995. Trimble's election as leader of the UUP cannot be ignored in this respect. However, the previously parochial nature of political leadership in Northern Ireland was overturned with the emergence of additional, new actors into the process. These actors did not represent a 'change of leadership' in terms of replacing an old party leadership. The political 'arrival' of the UDP, the PUP and the Women's Coalition onto the political scene brought a new dimension to the process, and may have been one of the most influential catalysts for change during the peace process. In reference to the arrival of the PUP and the UDP in particular, one party leader said:

> When that voice came to the table in terms of having read widely, having studied the situation, and having engaged with other people, they came to the table with a very different analysis, and

they were courageous individuals because they were contesting their own tribe, and that is a real

sign of a leader (Author Interview, 2000).

Therefore in the context of Northern Ireland, a 'change of leadership' was probably no more important as a factor than the introduction of additional leadership to that process, alongside the already existing and established leadership.

How then is it possible to use these results from this examination of the role, capacity and effect of political leadership, and the inherent contradictions therein to contribute towards a new theory of political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland, and of political leadership in peace processes more generally? The multiplicity of contradictions that have been thrown up in the course of this research highlights the limited value of the creation of any new dichotomies, classifications and/or typologies to explain political leadership in Northern Ireland. Classifying individual leaders as either one type or another (for example as either transformational or transactional) runs the risk of being disproved as a consequence of another shift in leadership behaviours dictated by broader political circumstances. Thus, a conscious attempt has been made throughout the course of this paper not to identify particular traits with particular leaders but rather to consider political leadership in Northern Ireland as a collective entity. The argument that follows then is applicable to the collective.

Chameleonic leadership - developing an understanding

At the heart of the argument lies the rather novel concept of 'chameleonic leadership'. Chameleonic behaviour suggests behaviour that changes in response to certain stimuli or situations. In a sense then, chameleonic leadership might be considered to have a degree of synonymy with situational leadership in so far as both acknowledge that the leaders' perception of themselves, the situation at hand and other factors such as stress and mood affect leadership behaviour (see Blanchard et al, 1993; Graeff, 1997 on situational leadership). However, much of the work on situational leadership is directly related to teaching people to become more effective as leaders. In other words, at the core of situational leadership is the idea of leaders learning. Conversely, chameleonic leadership should not be considered of as a way of 'doing leadership' but rather should be considered as a way of understanding leadership. A recent theoretical exchange between Bedeian and Day (2004), while touching on the concept of 'chameleons' in

descriptions of high self-monitors (HMSs) as leaders, in part alludes to and is accepting of a rather normative framework. Bedeian asks how HSMs (or chameleons) 'ever qualify as legitimate leaders, when they are guided by signals bounded off others, are predisposed to engage in false fronts and opportunistic chameleon-like behaviour…'. (2004: 696). The fundamental difference with this article's interpretation of chameleonic leadership is that it has no real value base, in so far as it does not judge whether the various shifts in behaviour and attitude make for 'better' leadership or not. Overall then, chameleonic leadership in the context of this paper is presented as an analytical tool, as a way of describing political leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process.

In behavioural terms, the ultimate argument of this paper is that the multiple contradictions and inconsistencies inherent within political leadership in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process can best be explained as a form of 'chameleonic leadership'; an inconstant form of political leadership which shifted according to the opinions of others and the climate in which it existed, just as a chameleon can change its colour to blend with its background, or in response to other chameleons. The concept of 'chameleonic leadership' in the context of the peace process is based on the notion that when political leaders find themselves in a position which compromises their intentions during a peace process, they seek to find an alternative position. Finding themselves in positions which compromise their intentions is usually dictated by broader political circumstances and changes in the political environment. It is this idea of environment which gives the concept of 'chameleonic leadership' its currency. Just as chameleons can change their colour rapidly in response to changes in the light, or temperature or mood, political leaders can change their positions in response to new issues coming to light during a peace process, the temperature of the peace process increasing or decreasing, and the mood of themselves, their followers, and/or their political adversaries. There can be considered as the key conditions of chameleonic leadership in Northern Ireland. Each can be considered here briefly, in turn.

Firstly, when new issues came to light during the peace process, many leaders changed their positions. For example, the news of the admission of Sinn Féin to the talks process in September 1997 resulted in a shift in position for the DUP and the UKUP from involvement in the peace process to withdrawal from it. It also saw a shift in the position of the leadership of the UUP from one which refused to engage with those with links to paramilitarism to one which used the loyalist political parties,

complete with their links to paramilitarism, in an attempt to garner further legitimacy from its decision to continue to stay in the talks process despite the arrival of Sinn Féin and the departure of the DUP and UKUP. At a later point, the peace process saw a shift in position again by the DUP and the UKUP once the Agreement had been signed, at least insofar as they decided to engage with the process once again by contesting the Assembly elections in 1998, rather than remain withdrawn from the process.

Secondly, when the temperature of the peace process either increased or decreased, changes of leadership were also detected. As the British and Irish governments turned up the heat on the peace process by fixing absolute deadlines for an Agreement to be signed, the positions of the various political parties shifted considerably to allow for the eventual compromises inherent within the Agreement. At other times, when the peace process appeared to have been put 'on ice' when there was virtually no political activity, as was considered to be the case during the last year of John Major's premiership, the cooler temperature afforded the various political leaders the opportunity to shift their positions to become more hard-line than compromising.

Thirdly, and finally, when the mood of the process shifted from being positive to negative or vice versa, the attitude of leadership also often shifted. In such instances, an emphasis was placed on the need for leaders to find ways of adapting to changing conditions and environments. Many examples can be used to illustrate how political leaders strategically moved from previously held positions while managing to retain the majority of support within their respective political parties and constituency bases. The tactic most often used in this respect was to articulate such changes as being on the grounds of confrontation rather than mere concession (Smith, 2002). Indeed, it was this tactic of alleged confrontation which allowed David Trimble to sit down alongside Sinn Fein during the talks process in 1997 after publicly stating that he would not do so.

There were, however, consequences which derived from political leaders' practice of a type of chameleonic politics whereby they said one thing and did another, or said different things to different audiences in different places for different purposes. The primary consequence, which did affect progress in the peace process, was in relation to the issue of trust, or more appropriately, the lack of trust which existed between the political leaders. It is reasonable to assume that any progress on issues of trust and good faith that came through the building of personal relationships during the peace process had the

potential to be negated by structure of the actual negotiation process, which was adversarial by its very nature, but equally, trust invariably diminished between leaders as a consequence of the practice of chameleonic politics. A classic case in point to illustrate this is the story of Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams' address to an assembled rally outside Belfast City Hall, in the summer of 1995, just one year after the declaration of the IRA ceasefire and at a time when Adams was urging unionist political leaders to enter into all-party talks with them. In response to a crowd heckler who called out 'bring back the IRA' Adams' response was 'they haven't gone away you know'. While, the remark went down well with the assembled crowd who cheered loudly, the response from the unionist community and the British government was that it indicated the absolute need for the decommissioning of IRA weapons as a matter of urgency at the time and emphasised further their problems with the issue of trust and Sinn Féin. Indeed, it has been a lack of trust between all players which has continued to mar political progress yet still and thus as a consequence of chameleonic leadership is highly significant.

Conclusion

One of the more memorable images from the day that the Good Friday Agreement was signed was when the leadership of the Women's Coalition, on the steps of Castle Buildings, threw their negotiating papers high into the air to the delight of the international media assembled there, in a scene similar to students throwing their mortar boards into the air for graduation photographs. The symbolism suggested that the political leaders finally graduated from war to peace. Such symbolism was easy to understand. Indeed, much of our understandings about political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland have been symbolic rather than substantive, where progress in the process was illustrated by handshakes and meetings with Prime Ministers, Presidents and Taoiseachs. This paper has sought to move away from the symbolism of political leadership towards an understanding grounded in knowledge of their role, capacity and effect. The analysis presented here has attempted to move the narrative of political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland beyond the personalised accounts offered in the various biographies and autobiographies produced, and also beyond the analysis which focused on who shook hands with whom. This analysis has been an important development for both the literatures in the field of leadership studies and in the field of peace and conflict studies.

The development of the concept of 'chameleonic leadership' fulfils the purpose of this paper which was to contribute towards a new understanding of political leadership during the peace process in Northern Ireland in particular, and of political leadership in peace processes more generally. This new understanding, in itself, does not necessarily amount to a theory of political leadership. It is merely a beginning. In exploring the understandings of political leadership in peace processes and contributing to such understandings with the articulation of the argument that political leadership, in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, amounted to a case of 'chameleonic leadership', it is hoped that this highlights the significant opportunities for further research into this relatively untapped area. This is important not only in academic terms, but also in terms of the real world where we seem to know more about the role of leaders in stimulating ethnic and communal conflict than we do about the role of leaders in diminishing it. Thus, chameleonic leadership is a concept which all of those involved in current peace processes elsewhere might learn from. The potential impact of such learning on the nature and direction of other peace processes simply cannot be underestimated.

Finally, though this paper has focused on the peace process in Northern Ireland, there do seem to be wider implications of this analysis for political leadership in other contexts. In almost every country and context, both the contradictions and inconsistencies of political leadership and examples of chameleonic leadership can be found. From the culture of chameleon politics in Malawi (England, 2002), to the argument that Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats all specialise in chameleon politics in the UK, to Herbert Hoover's pronouncement on Franklin D. Roosefelt as 'a chameleon on plaid', illustrations abound. While the concept in such contexts is often used derogatorily, the scope and potential exist to use the concept in the manner in which it has been done here with no real value base, in so far as it does not judge whether the various shifts in behaviour and attitude make for 'better' leadership or not. In doing so, it also allows us all to move away from the perpetuation of often false dichotomies which have been used to explain the phenomenon of leadership. The dichotomies of heroes and villains, foxes and lions, positive and negative leaders, power-wielders and power-seekers ignore the likely difficulties in assigning villainy in matters of politics. Chameleonic leadership is grounded in the reality of politics which is much more complex and nuanced and therefore 'fits' with the multi-dimensional nature of all politics and the political leaders therein. Consequently, as a way of understanding the

realities of leadership, as opposed to the normative ideals of how leadership ought to be, it has much to offer.

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